

**THESIS**

**THE ROLE, POSITION AND EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE TEACHERS WITHIN FAITH SCHOOLS**

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(BSc. Women and Gender Studies, MA Development Studies and Gender)

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Central Lancashire

School of Education and Social Science

June 2016

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to give thanks to all the people that have been a big part of this research. This thesis becomes a reality with the kind support and help of many individuals. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all that have played a significant role in my studies.

Foremost, I will want to thank God Almighty for the wisdom, knowledge and understanding He bestowed upon me; the strength, the peace of mind and good health rendered in order to accomplish this great achievement.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Carolyn King for her full support, expert guidance, understanding and encouragement throughout my research and study. I am thankful not only for the academic and professional expertise rendered but also for her incredible patience, and confidence that I was up to the task in completing my research. I could not wish for a better and friendly supervisor. In addition, I express my appreciation to Dr. Martin O'Brien for having served on the supervisory team. His thoughtful comments were valued greatly. I extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Frank Harrington, Dr. Mahmood Chandia and Mr. Andrew Clitherow for acting as gatekeepers for the researched schools. Without their assistance, this research would not have been possible. Additional profound gratitude goes to Mr. Frank Harrington for his invaluable support in providing links to assist in analysing the data for the study.

I would like to thank the participants for accepting to take part in the research, and for their cooperative response to all the research questions solicited. My research would not have been possible without their contribution.

I am highly indebted to my father Njah Tah John for his excellent guide and support throughout my education. I also like to extend my deepest appreciation to my mother Elizabeth Leina for her support, encouragement, kind words and prayers that has brought me this far. My sincere gratitude equally goes to my brother Prof. Joseph H.M. Tah for his support both academically and financially throughout my higher education studies. I am grateful for my son, Emmanuel Moses for being a source of motivation in completing my research. In addition, I will like to thank every member of my family for the unconditional love and support which they provided throughout my studies. Their encouragement, moral and spiritual support gave me the self-confidence to continually progress in my research.

Finally, I am thankful to the University of Central Lancashire for partly sponsoring my research.



## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- CPD — Continuing Professional Development
- DBS — Disclosure and Barring Service
- DfES — Department for Education and Skills
- DCSF — Department for Children, Schools and Families
- GTCW — General Teaching Council for Wales
- RE — Religious Education
- IBR — International Business Report
- IICBA — Institutional institute for Capacity Building in Africa
- ICJ — International Christian Embassy Jerusalem
- IIEP — International Institute of Education Planning
- INEE — Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
- IOE — Institute of Education
- LEA — Local Education Authority
- LMS — Local Management of Schools
- MORI — Market and Opinion Research International
- NSSE — National Survey of Student Engagement
- NUT — National Union of Teachers
- SACRE — Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
- SENCO — Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- OECD — Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- OFSTED — Office for the Standards in Education
- RCS — Religion, Culture and Society
- TA — Teaching Assistant
- TSN — Teacher Support Network

UN — United Nations

UNICEF — United Nations Children’s Fund

UNDAW — United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

UNESCO — United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNIFEM — United Nations Development Fund for Women

WHO — World Health Organisation

## **ABSTRACT**

For hundreds of years leadership of religious organisations has been dominated by males, despite the acknowledgement that much religious work and support of the institutions has been done by women. Historically, leadership carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men were born with certain leadership traits and therefore make better leaders than women. Nevertheless, current thinking contests this view and argues that leadership can be taught and learned and it is possible to develop leader traits in any individual, regardless of gender. This research sets out to contribute in promoting women's leadership in faith schools.

The research employs a qualitative method of data collection, and adopts the critical realist and feminist theorising standpoint. This research presents results of case studies involving the Catholic, Anglican and Muslim faiths. Through in-depth interviews, an exploration on the views of religious authorities, school authorities and female teachers, regarding the role, and position, and experiences of female teachers within faith schools is presented. The research reveals the reality and complexity of barriers encountered by female teachers from a cultural, social, institutional and religious perspective that hinder women's career advancement. These case studies provide strong first-hand evidence that is hoped to influence both practice and policy. Through the interaction and involvement of head teachers, school governors and religious authorities concerned with the management of the schools, the research aspires to support a process of enlightenment — particularly to individuals who influence decision making processes — to implement strategies that will allow equal representation among the genders in leadership positions within education in faith schools.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of Thesis**

In spite of the numerous interventions that stress the importance of gender equality, particularly in education, which include laws protecting women, constitutional agreements, feminist critics (UNESCO and IIEP, 2011; Mestry and Schmidt) and the increased feminisation of education, men still occupy a majority of leadership positions in education (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). This is especially true with faith schools whose religious teachings and practices are thought to hinder women from assuming leadership positions.

By examining the role, position and experiences of female faith teachers in faith schools, I aim to demonstrate that women are not supported in pursuing positions of leadership or higher management within religious environments. I argue that, within a religious context, women are not supported, encouraged or inspired to develop their career aspirations; particularly in aiming for leadership roles within the school they work, by the faith institution and/or governing body of the school, by church authorities or by religious policies. Several strategies have been proposed in order to address the situation; perhaps the most predominant of these is for the above named actors to implement structural changes such as providing leadership training for women, instituting changes to male-dominant cultures, and mentoring and networking opportunities to tackle gender inequality.

This study proposes a holistic approach to an investigation of support mechanisms for women that will include structural, cultural and individual strategies including strategies that are specific to faith schools. The implementation of these strategies is expected to bring about positive change at all levels in offering women, particularly those in faith institutions, the opportunity to assume leadership positions that will augment women's status and minimize status differential amongst female and male leaders.

## **FEMALE TEACHERS IN FAITH SCHOOLS: AN INTRODUCTION**

There has been a virtual explosion of research on women and social institutions over the last 20 years (Wallace, 1997). Many studies have been conducted by individual researchers, governments and organisations on social institutions such as the family, politics and the economy with a focus on women. This is revealed in the works of individual researchers such as Goldman et al (2000); Warsh, (2010); and Kohen, (2010) on 'Women and Health'. Furthermore, organisations like the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have conducted extensive research in areas such as domestic violence, equity, equality and women's empowerment. For example, UNIFEM conducted research on domestic violence legislation and its implementation (UNIFEM, 2009), and on 'Women's empowerment principles (2010). However, most of the early works focused more on law, work, family, and the media than on religion (Wallace, 1997). Though studies have been based on women and education, this has not been extended to the role of female educators as women of faith. This is particularly evident in the role of women within faith schools.

There has been much support for the establishment of faith-based schools. This has been popular with both parents and government, as faith-based schools are found to produce higher levels of social capital (Gardner, 2005). They achieve the highest levels of pupil performance and often find themselves at the top of Local Education Authority (LEA) league tables (Schagen and Schagen, 2005 as cited by King: 2010). Faith schools also demonstrate high contribution in promoting academic excellence (McKinney, 2006). Further, it has been noted that faith-based schools foster a religious ethos and moral values in students (King,

2010), and promote community cohesion and diversity (Ofsted, 2007); which explains the reason for labour government's support in 2005 for faith-based schooling.

Research has revealed that it is necessary to value the roles of female faith teachers as educators (Shah, 2012). This is particularly important in order to offer them working conditions that will support the development of the children under their care. Educational success, however, profoundly depends on the level of commitment of teachers, their job satisfaction and the moral and economic recognition accorded to them. Research evidences that female teachers have shown a very high level of commitment to their jobs and have performed excellently (Karakus and Aslan, 2009) especially those teaching young children in elementary grades and nursery schools (Klassen and Chiu, 2010).

In spite of the significance of the teaching profession, it can be observed that it suffers from low status and low salaries, particularly with teachers at nursery and primary school levels (Rao, Pushpalata and Harshita, 2003; Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, and Frame, 2005). Women who teach at the elementary level are considered to be extending their social roles of nurturing and educating children. Consequently, very little recognition is accorded to female teachers at this level and primary teaching is regarded as a low status job. This is more glaring in faith schools where some religious teachings and practices promote an unfavourable environment for female teachers to rise to positions of professional importance.



Research in the educational domain has mainly focused on students. The present study seeks to extend research to educators, with a focus on female faith educators. This study therefore sets out to investigate the activities and the achievements of female faith educators. To achieve this, the project will explore the roles carried out by women in religious education, particularly those in faith schools. The study seeks to investigate women as faith educators and potential faith leaders.

### **Overview**

All the way through history, men have created religious and secular institutions within society; they have formulated the beliefs of religions, composed and passed on the sacred writings and have been the prime interpreters of religion (Holm, 1994). Religious leaders treat women as inferior to men. This is reflective in religious teachings which are used to control women. It is for this reason that women have been denied leadership positions in faith institutions (Lucas, 2010). It can be observed that for a long time leadership of religious organisations has been and continues to be dominated by males, despite the acknowledgement that much religious work and support of the institutions has been done by females, as will be discussed later in the study.

As noted by Holm (1994), throughout history men have controlled religion; in view of this, they have very much constructed a religious language that designates a God of patriarchy (Ebere, 2011). Patriarchy refers to *“a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”* (Walby, 1990). From a gender perspective, *“patriarch refers to a societal-wide system of gender relations of male dominance and female subordination”* (Witz, 2004; pg.1). Both definitions of Walby and Witz indicate that

patriarchy is not biologically determined and that men occupy an authoritative position while women are on a subordinate. It is important to point out that patriarchy has been in existence for a long time. According to Hartmann (1982), historically, patriarchy was established in the society where the labour of women and children was under the control of men. The study notes that even with the introduction of the private and public spheres, men still continued to exercise control over the labour power of women. This suggests that there exist two main forms of patriarchy, the private and public. On the one hand, private patriarchy is promoted by individual heads of family, obviously male, and the main strategy is exclusion. On the other hand, public patriarchy is collectively endorsed and the main patriarchal strategy is segregation and subordination (Walby, 1990). This has led to Hartmann (1982) suggesting that exploitation and oppression of women is not by accident but a phenomenon that is inherent within the society. However, from a British perspective a change in the degree of patriarchy has been observed. This comprise of a minor reduction of the wage gap between men and women and the closing of the gender gap in education of females and males (Walby, 1990). The changes, therefore, do not suggest that patriarchy has been eliminated within the British society, but that only a decrease in the degree of patriarchy is observed. The above analysis suggest that in order to have a balanced world, where men and women operate on an equal basis, patriarchy needs to be eliminated in society as a system of social governance.

When there is a patriarchal God at the head of a religious system; common with most monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the matter of women's place in religion becomes even more problematic (Barnes, 1987). For example, the initiators of

monotheism fashioned the role women play in the reproduction of human beings. The dominant view on feminine fertility that was highly esteemed witnessed a replacement by the introduction of a masculine norm of a superior male god who was understood as the creator of all things. The founders of monotheism reversed the natural biological preponderance which saw every human being — be it male or female — as conceived in the womb of a female and born of a woman. The founders of monotheism held that women emerged from the body of a male (Ratcliffe, 2012). Thus, the analyses of Ebere, Barnes and Ratcliffe indicates that men have constructed the concept of the divine as male, implying that men have been given the divine authority to rule and control women.

Consequently, the patriarchal supremacy in which religious authority that is primarily masculine has been considered as the norm and accepted as the natural order of things (Ebere, 2011). This has influenced some women to accept societal norms that ascribe femininity and domesticity to women. Some contemporary women choose to adopt and live by rigid patriarchal norms in order to gain male approval, love and familial security. Gender roles thus influences the extent to which patriarchal norms informs female consciousness as women within religious communities have been socialised with the values of a dominant male culture (Jacobs, 1991). Thus, within the powerful patriarchal religious organisation, one can pinpoint a model of male dominance and control. Since the majority of religions claim that their teachings are divine and hold eternal truths, this leads to a situation where socially and historically determined interpretations of reality are incorporated into unchangeable and fixed prescriptions and practices (Berkday, 1998).

Men are not only seen as having authority within the religious sphere, but research also indicates that this authority is dominant in almost all domains of life. It is a general belief that men are better leaders than women. This notion of leadership carrying a masculine connotation is still common at present. Kimbia (2008) notes that, in the past it was widely believed that leaders were born with certain leadership characteristics. The study, however, maintains that this position has been challenged with the current thinking on leadership; arguing that leadership characteristics can be taught and learned. This, according to the study, can be reflected in the many leadership training programmes that have been developed. The traits commonly associated with leadership include, but is not exclusive to; confidence, problem solving, effective communication skills, task completion, responsibility, originality, decision making, experience and power. These 'leader traits' of a leader make evident the likelihood that any individual, irrespective of gender, can cultivate leadership skills. The manner in which culture constructs leadership initiates inequalities. Culture exemplifies profound perceptions of leadership as masculine. Nevertheless, this is now being contested as women gain access to leadership positions.

In many religious organisations it is observed that time and again women are marginalised to the background and hardly ever occupy leadership positions. This suggests that women do not receive the recognition that male clergy do. Across many religious organisations women are prohibited from holding a leadership position. This demonstrates the patriarchal nature of religious bodies. Many religions are patriarchal in their beliefs, sacred images, language, and practices (Ozorak, 1996). In most cases, women are prohibited from gaining educational knowledge that would either permit them to question religious beliefs or gain access to leadership roles. Some of these barriers to women occupying position of authority

and power are justified by scriptures (Marshall, Hayward, Zambra, Breger and Jackson, 2011). This male dominance in terms of leadership positions is characteristic of major world religions. In Buddhism; for example, the most senior nun must obey and respect the most junior monk. In Judaism, the discussion of halakhah — the legal part of Talmudic literature, an interpretation of laws of the Scripture — is applicable to men only. This is also similar with Orthodox Judaism in which public worship is reserved exclusively for men. In Christianity, during the early centuries of the churches history, many of the most prominent philosophies were developed by men. In Islam all legal decrees have been made by men and in some regions of the world women are not even allowed to be present in the mosque for public worship (Holm, 1994). From the above analyses, it can be observed that because men were those who developed religious ideologies, this gave them authority to dictate the place of women in religion; and of course an inferior position vis-à-vis males.

Despite the existence of male dominance in religion, women nevertheless outnumber men in terms of church attendances. In England, in every 100 people attending church, 55 are women and 45 are men. In the liberal nonconformist churches, the difference is more striking; for example, in the United Reformed Church women make up 57 per cent and men 43 per cent. Similarly, within the Methodist Church, women make up 60 per cent and men 40 per cent of church attendances (Walter, 1990). Women's participation in religion does not only dominate in numbers but they are pronounced as being more religious than men. Ozorak (1996) maintains that women regularly enunciate that they are closer to God. They are more likely than men to pronounce themselves as religious, always present at church, and often pray regularly. Even though women may be more religious, churchy and spiritual than men, they are often excluded from holding leadership positions.

It is only within recent decades that women have gained admission into the leadership role of religion; although a position within the clergy or a leadership role is still contested by a majority of religious denominations (Kristof, 2010). Even when women do occupy a leadership position, this is subordinate to the role of men (Holm, 1994). The Christian religion has been, historically, the principal means for controlling women's bodies in Western societies. Female emancipation did not only target political factors, but also the struggle against religious conceptualisation of sexuality. In Catholic Europe, the church is still seen as an essential part of public tool by which women are allocated subordinate social positions. In Italy, for example, the fight against the domestication of women was fuelled by the Catholic Church's teachings and doctrines on marriage, reproduction and divorce (Berkday, 1998). The pursuit for women's leadership and gender equality in religious institutions has often fallen on deaf or defiant ears. Spiritual places of worship have welcomed women's voluntary labour but have been resistant to opening the doors of priesthood, power or religious authority to their female followers. The pew rather than the pulpit is regarded as a woman's place, serving as an auxiliary worker while men dominate in authority (Nason-Clark, 1997).

It is within this remit that this project sets out to investigate the role, experiences and leadership position of female faith teachers within three faith schools. An emphasis will be placed on women's leadership roles and the strategies that create the possibility for them to take leadership positions in faith institution. The study will examine some of what Mills (1995, pg. 5) labels "*personal troubles*" that can be uncovered through face-to-face interviews with the subjects. Thus, exploring everyday encounters and the thoughts and feelings of individuals who are part of religious organisations and institutions will help to

expand an understanding of the situation of women in religion, and discover some strategies for change that might be implemented at the institutional, organisational and individual levels.

### **Research Outline**

This project explores the roles assumed by women in various faiths, and principally the roles they may take in religious education and faith schools. The project seeks to address the issue of women as faith educators and potential faith leaders. The study investigates the roles women occupy as leaders, role models, counsellors, facilitators, planners and information providers.

### **Aim and Objectives of Study**

The aim of this study is to explore the roles carried out by women in various faiths, and in particular the roles they may take in religious education and faith schools, and to examine strategies implemented by institutions to recognise women as faith educators and support aspirations of potential faith leaders.

#### **The objectives are to:**

- Investigate current interpretations and applications of religious teachings and practices of women and how these influence their personal and professional pathways.

- Explore the role and experience of women within various faiths, particularly the experience of female teachers within faith schools.
- Investigate strategies employed by institutions to recognise women as faith educators.
- Examine mechanisms within schools, organisations and institutions that support and develop female faith leaders.

### **Research Question**

To what extent are women supported in pursuing leadership or higher management positions, specifically in relation to the role, position and experiences of female faith teachers in faith schools?

The research intends to also answer the following questions:

- To what extent do religious teachings influence women's decision to occupy leadership positions?
- To what extent are schools masculinised in terms of management and leadership?
- How effective is the role of the female teachers within the schools?
- How effective are the strategies employed by institutions to promote female leadership in schools?



## **CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 RELIGION IN SOCIETY**

#### **1.1.1 DEFINING RELIGION**

Actually, defining religion has been problematic as there are many debates surrounding its definition. All of the definitions from teachers, doctors, politicians, the religious and lay people fuel counter definitions, because all have an interest in how religion is defined. Debates surrounding the definition of religion carry ethical and political implications for society and people of faith and no faith (Aldridge, 2007). According to Bateyer (2006) people frequently associate religion with moral codes of fundamental worldviews and cosmologies, with the term referring to anything in life that is taken very seriously that informs approaches to the world. Durkheim, the father of Sociology, saw religion to be essentially social in character, involving the incorporation of people into a distinct ethical community. As people get involved in performing rituals and hold very similar sacred beliefs, the power of religion is generated within the community (Aldridge, 2007). It can be argued that while Aldridge and Bayer interpreted religion as something that infiltrates every aspect of society and has an influence on all members of the community, Durkheim conversely narrows down religion as something that affects just the members of the faith. However, from the above definition it can be observed that religion is whatever happens to integrate society and eventually unites people into a moral community. The ultimate concern of most sociologists of religion is to apprehend the role of religion in society, with a focus on understanding the social factors that affects and shapes religion, to analyse its influence, and its importance in the society (Hamilton, 1995). The latter definition is appropriate to the research as the present study seeks to investigate the role and impact of religion upon human society.

### **1.1.2 THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY**

It is within the above concept that this section sets out to discuss the role of religion in society. As a way of structuring arguments, this chapter addresses issues relating to the impact of religion in society, with a focus on how religious beliefs, practices and teachings affect the economic, social, and political sphere of society. Some of the discussion will demonstrate how religious texts or scriptures have been used to condition the hearts of its followers regarding their social, economic and political lives. It will argue that religion is very instrumental in determining how society functions and affects almost every facet of society. It also argues that if religion influences every aspect of society then, there is likelihood that it will influence the choices women have to make regarding their personal and professional lives.

It is apparent that in the past few years, discussions on religion have occupied the top slot of global discourse. A majority of people who have for a prolonged period of time indicated no interest in issues relating to religion, and who despised those who did, have at present shown interest in theological issues (Beyer and Beaman, 2007). Dating back as far as the sixteenth and seventeenth century, religion infiltrated into all agenda of English society. For example, religion was used as a tool in understanding how to structure discussion involving individuals and the state; how people should govern themselves as well as how the state should be governed (Cressy and Ferrell, 1996). The Roman Catholic Church, for example, is seen to have transformed into a global religious organisation, addressing all peoples regardless of religious affiliation. Makrides, (2007) holds that the Catholic church have been noticed intervening in several issues affecting the world as a whole; with the involvement of

the Pope on issues regarding politics, economy, world peace, environment and social order. As a consequence this has led to the labelling of the Pope as *“the ‘First Citizen’ of an emerging global civil society”* (ibid, pg. 552). It is interesting to see that religion is such a powerful tool in society to the extent that it exerts influence not only on those that practice it, but also the rest of society. Again, Cressy and Ferrell’s analysis of the influence of religion in the English society confirms the earlier argument made by Aldridge and Bayer; that religion permeates every aspect of society.

### **Religion and the Economy**

Churches have become places that provide an opportunity for constructing social relations and reinforcing values and patterns of behaviour, which encourages organised behaviour in society. In offering a framework that supports self-control, religion promotes self-control as it offers adherents attributes on what is logically and morally right for the society (Mustea, Negru and Opre, 2010). This is achieved through the beliefs and rituals that support the structure of a society in which they occur (Bourdillon, 1990). Several ways have been mentioned in which religion, to a varying degree of intensity and significance, affects economic attitudes and behaviour. For example, Protestant Christianity has glorified and elevated the jobs of individuals through its emphasis of their work as a ‘calling’ with the individual worker believing that they are working for God, not just their employer. As a result, religion has an impact on the economic environment because it is successful in inculcating virtues in its members such as honesty, conformity to established rules, and commitment to work. These virtues are essential in maintaining a successful economic structure (Johnstone, 2007).

Conversely, despite religion playing such a vital role in the economic structure of society, some churches have been accused of subordinating the economic realities of the material world (Bourdillon, 1990). This is particularly eminent among new religious movements which have been criticised of brainwashing their members — they are charged with taking attention away from the content of religious beliefs and practices. These new religious movements frequently use Bible quotes in a way that believers are brought to a state of passive dependence on the movement (Aldridge, 2007). For example, the Bible exalts poverty in statements like *“blessed are the poor for they shall inherit the earth (Mathew 5:3)* or *“how hard is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mathew 19:24)*. By means of such messages, Bourdillon (1990) argues that churches are seen to subordinate the economic realities of the material world for people who are struggling economically. Bourdillon notes that some churches discourage their members not to be burdened by the quest for material goods, and as a result they have a tendency to regard poverty as a virtue. Consequently, people who are economically poor, being the unskilled and unemployed, find in religion an escape from their failure to succeed in an assertion that material success is not of major importance. In the analyses put forward by Johnson (2007) and Bourdillon (1990) studies, both are interested in presenting how religious messages are used to control the human mind with respect to the economic sphere. On the one hand, while Johnson acknowledges that religious messages help shape the mind and thought of people in a positive perspective; Bourdillon on the other hand considers some religious messages as having a negative influence on the thoughts of people. However, it would be erroneous to totally dismiss the contribution of religion in bringing about economic benefits such as the virtues identified by Johnstone in supporting a successful economic structure.

## **Religion and Individual/Social Needs**

Moving from the economic function of religion in society; religion equally plays a significant role in meeting individual and social needs. Hamilton, (1995, pg. 117) suggests that the promotion of beliefs, such as the view that in doing good one will certainly be rewarded and doing evil will be punished, helps to endorse the values which might be undermined if people were to believe that evil will lead to prosperity and good will go unrewarded. This thus entails that religion achieves a social function by means of meeting the psychological needs of individuals and upholding a moral order in society. Thomas (2007) therefore, postulates that morality is a property of individuals that is attained through virtue, not through fulfilling group obligations. However, such views have been contested. Beyer and Beaman (2007) argue that religion must be considered a property of the system since it is a social matter and is concerned with the development of social rites and customs. Nonetheless, Hamilton (1995) reconciles Thomas' (2007) and Beyer and Beaman' (2007) views by arguing that religion has a dual function as it meets both the needs of individuals and that of groups.

Apart from the socio-economic role of religion, world politics and international relations are profoundly bound up with religion. There are a variety of ways in which religion is found to relate to the institutions of politics. A social construction is said to have emerged between the religious community and political community. Religious communities are noted to play a vital role in defining social networks and the ways for individuals to engage in communities, with most people believing in the assertion that a good follower of a religion; be it a Jew, Christian, or Muslim, should inevitably be a good citizen (Bompani, 2010). This view is

confirmed by Sacks (2011) who concedes the idea that people who often attend worship services belong to professional associations, community organisations and civic groups. In participating in these groups it is believed that this makes them active citizens as they contribute to the civic and political life of their communities and nation as a whole. Similarly, another research has demonstrated how religion is used as an instrument in instilling a spirit of optimism in its members. Spickard, (2007) suggests that in most areas witnessing declining state power, the people are exposed to threats against which they construct religions and/or ethnic primordialisms. As a result, such communalism is said to bring hope and common purpose in a world that seems organised for others' benefit. The important thing to take from these studies is that people who practise a religion are in a better position to foster developments in their communities. However, it can be argued that there is likelihood that not everyone belonging or following a particular faith are good citizens.

### **The Church and the State**

In the past, churches used to be powerful for the reason that they were branches of the state, but recently major Christian denominations have lost an enormous deal of power and influence due to the separation of the church and the state (Bruce, 1995). Those who favour such separation deem that religion is exclusively subjective and individualised, while the State and politics serve the group, are entirely secular and deals with externals relative to survival (Johnstone, 2007). It is maintained that for a long time now, the separation of the roles between religion and politics has come under pressure due to the growing impact that religious organisations have on public issues (Braeckman, 2009). These organisations hold

that religious leaders rule the entire society in the name of God and in accordance to God's wishes. They also maintain that the government is perceived as an implementation agency of religion; depending on religion for authority because of the propensity of individuals to deviate from social norms (Johnstone, 2007). This division between religion and politics has been criticised by Braeckman (2009), who argues that religion should not continue to be seen as a private issue. Braeckman (ibid) believes that governments ought to offer religion its rightful place within the public sphere and that religion deserves more recognition within the public domain. This view is further affirmed by Bruce (2010), who suggests that it is unrealistic to adopt the secularist notion that religion and politics should be separated. Bruce (ibid) further argues that if such notions of separating religion from politics are embraced this will only lead to the breakdown of pluralism, which is important for the democratic functioning of society. Bruce (ibid), therefore, strongly recommends that people of faith are part of society and they deserve to be able to bring their beliefs into the public sphere. In this analysis Johnstone highlights the notion of favouring separation of religion from the State, suggesting that the two function separately and serve different purposes. On the other hand Braeckman and Bruce are arguing that religion and politics are intertwined and see religion as an integral part of society. While agreeing that religion influences politics and is crucial for maintaining diversity in society, Bruce's suggestion that religious beliefs be brought into the public sphere is contentious. There is an unstable atmosphere in many countries where minority religious groups are in constant conflict with the majority religious group who want to impose their rules and laws on others. Indeed, it can be argued that religion is so important for those who are staunch believers of their faith. Bringing religious beliefs into the public sphere would create more problems. Rather, people should be allowed to exercise their religious practices and observances privately. It can

therefore be argued that bringing ones faith into the public sphere threatens the social stability of a nation.

Even though religion is said to play a significant positive role in society, it has been criticised as a source of conflict in society. Various anti-religious movements justify their course based on the association of religion to violence. It has been observed that some intelligentsias and politicians continue to undervalue religion by reducing it to material matters despite glaring links with political issues such as the 9/11 incident in the United States of America and the 7/7 tragedy in the United Kingdom (Beyer and Beaman, 2007). Islam is one of the religions that have been identified as being greatly associated with political power. Its founder Mohammed was a conqueror, spreading his religion through force. The imposition of Islamic law has been an issue within Islamic states, because occasionally conflict arises when an Islamic state imposes Islamic laws on unwilling minority groups. Such is the case of the imposition of Islamic laws on the minority Christians in an Islamic dominated Southern Sudan (Bourdillon, 1990). For the devoted defenders of Christian Europe, Islam is incompatible with European democratic standards; they argue that it is an alien religion that needs to be kept out of Europe — Western Europe in particular (Makrides, 2007). This has resulted in a perceived necessity to control religion, as religious freedom is seen as a possible source of trouble. Thus, while the European Convention of Human Rights allows an absolute right of freedom of belief, it maintains that any expression of religion must be governed by the need to respect the rights and freedoms of others, while at the same time maintaining public order, morals and the general wellbeing in a democratic society (Trigg, 2010).



Despite the above distinctive position of religion in society, there has been a debate on the decline of Christendom in the Western world. This, according to European scholars, is eminent among churches in Britain and Western Europe which have experienced dechristianisation. Other scholars regard the decline of religion in Europe as an exception and not the rule. It is argued that universally there has been no decline in religion not even with respect to the Christian religion and that on the contrary most Christian religious movements are flourishing. Such is the case with the Evangelical and Pentecostals movements that are seen to be prospering (Popp-Baier, 2010). It is held that their flourishing is as a result of Pentecostals providing a more informal and lively form of worship coupled with the adoption of a people-oriented leadership style (Aldridge, 2007). Pentecostals are seen to have played a very instrumental role in promoting positive behaviour, social respectability and economic enhancement within faith communities. In this regard, Bruce (1995) notes that Pentecostal churches play a significant role in controlling deviance, providing its members with the positive benefit of mutual support and promotes economic and social advancement. Members engage enthusiastically in fundraising activities and as unpaid volunteers in community projects. In a broader setting, these churches are noted to have created homes for the elderly, schools and orphanages to cater for the wellbeing of the entire members of their communities (Aldridge, 2007).

The main focus of this chapter is to investigate the role of religion in society. It has been argued in this section that religion is inherent within many aspects of society. Religious beliefs, practices and teachings inevitably affect the economic, social, cultural and political realities in society. This can be observed from the way religion meets individual and group

needs, from basic needs of the poor, psychological and economic needs of communities to meeting broader political needs of society. Despite the significant position of religion in society, it has been criticised for subordinating the economic realities of the material world and for being a source of conflict. It can be argued that religion has been used by power hungry men to bring instability in communities. However, the affirmative significance of religion in society cannot be overlooked given that it provides a way in which people interpret and give meaning to the world. One of the objectives of this study was to explore how religious teachings influence women's personal and professional pathways. It has been revealed that religion affects every aspect of society. It can therefore be argued that there is likelihood that religion will influence the choices women have to make regarding their personal and professional lives within society generally and career aspirations particularly. The following section will shed more light on how religion influences women's leadership position.

### **1.1.3 WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP**

Men are still in greater control of most religions both in representation and hierarchy. Ebere (2011) maintains that the religion and religious vocabularies of humankind are generally the religions and religious vocabularies of males. Nevertheless, most studies have consistently revealed that more women continue to outnumber men in terms of church attendances and their religious affiliation (Bruce, 1995; Marler, 2008). Despite women's religious involvement, they face severe constraints when it comes to occupying positions of authority within religious organisation. This is particularly evident with respect to religious leadership, especially those relating to clerical positions. Despite the UN declaration regarding the

equality of men and women — which every country is bound to endorse — the recommendation has been fully applied by a majority of religious systems. This section thus raises the question of whether some of the reasons advanced for the exclusion of women from leadership positions are rooted in religious beliefs, teachings, practices and laws. The first part investigates the reasons for excluding women from leadership roles; specifically examining the viewpoint of some of the major world religions including; Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. An argument will pose that some religious teachings and laws regard women as inferior to men, and as a result within most faiths women are denied the opportunity to lead; on the rare occasion when they are allowed to lead, this is often limited to specific groups of people. The second part proceeds to examine the experiences of women in leadership position within religious spaces. There will be an exploration of the performances of women leaders in some denominations that have taken steps to include women in leadership roles. From this point, it will be argued that women have the capacity to lead and that those in leadership positions have proven to be exceptional in their performance.

### **Reasons for the Exclusion of Women from Religious Leadership Position**

Within many great religions — Catholic, Islamic, Protestant and others — there is a widely held assumption by most men that women are unfit to serve God on an equal basis with men. In Grundy's (2013) study, religious leaders argue that the reason for excluding women from leadership roles is because women are inferior. Grundy (ibid) points out that within most religions women are not permitted to be ordained as priests, they are not allowed to be pastors and they are precluded from being chaplains; meanwhile men are considered to be worthy of holding positions of leadership and authority in the service of God. It is worth

noting that Grundy stated that men are those who claim that women are incapable of serving God in the same capacity that men do. It can be gathered from this that negative cultural stereotypes and religious teachings held by society are generally in conflict to what is stated in the Holy Scripture. This view is held especially by men, who are partly responsible for the underrepresentation of women in religious leadership positions. However, as will be discussed below, there are also multiple examples from the Holy Scriptures acting as a hindrance to women occupying leadership roles.

Some of the reasons advanced for the exclusion of women from leadership roles within various religions stems from the laws and religious teachings they observe. From the perspective of Christianity, St Paul advised Timothy that; *"I do not permit a woman to teach nor to have authority over a man but to be in silence"* (1 Tim. 2.12). St Paul also advised the Corinthians; *"Let your woman keep silent in the Church"* (1 Cor. 14.34). Such scriptural narratives are likely to endorse women's silence in the churches and promote male headship. It can be argued that this will lead to a situation where women are dispirited to exercise freedom in taking up leadership positions within the religious community. Indeed, Yadgar (2006) examples the reaction of a female member of a synagogue in Israel, who expresses her disgust with women participating and being actively involved in celebrating the service on the main stage of the synagogue. The woman in Yadgar's study stated that; *"I've never seen anything like it, that a woman would stand on the bimah, and I don't like it. Women should not be cantors and rabbis"* (Yadgar, 2006; pg. 366). Yadgar's example is a very strong indication of how religious messages have been internalised not just by men but women alike to the extent that women themselves are in absolute denial of a woman

leading in a place of worship. This also suggests how powerful religion can be in shaping people's thoughts and moulding their lives.

However, St. Paul's messages relating to endorsing female silence in the church seems contradictory as there are evidences where he encourages female leadership. There are instances in the Bible where St. Paul recognises and encourages the work of female leaders. For example, St. Paul praises female leaders of house churches and compliments one woman for assisting to make comprehensible the doctrinal confusions of a male fellow worker (Romans 16:7). In addition, Bateye, (2007) brings to light a case in point of women preachers within the Holy Bible found in Mathew 28: 1-2, where Jesus instructed the women after His resurrection to go and tell His brethren that He had risen. Jesus also had many women disciples and it was the women that He first appeared to after His resurrection — this speaks volumes about who was entrusted with the central message of early Christianity. These can all be interpreted as giving women the mandate to go and preach. Thus, the opposition and subsequent exclusion of women from the role of spiritual authority contradicts the historical relationship between Jesus and His female followers. It is not surprising that most theological literature hardly mention some of the examples made by Bateye indicating how women in the Bible exercised leadership in various capacities. It can be argued that since men have been the prime interpreters of religion, as noted earlier in this study by Holm (1994), it would not be surprising that the example of women actually taking lead roles are barely brought to light.

In Buddhism the model of leadership is the Buddha himself. The Buddha teaches the pathway of awakening, which is a process that involves the purification of the mind of every form of pain, suffering or distress — such as ignorance, hatred and greed. The Buddhist pathway is open to all its followers and can be followed by both women and men. However, the Buddha, being male and highly regarded as the model of human perfection, implies that men have the ability of developing more than the women (O'Connor, 2010). In Buddhism, laws that propagate the subordinate position of women within the Samgha are effectively regulated. Thus, women are left with little hope of assuming leadership roles. There are lots of regulations that govern nuns within the Buddhist religion. Among these are the Eight Chief Rules which require all nuns to indulge in respecting all monks as their seniors and superiors. For example, all nuns' formal ceremonies are to be implemented under the guidance or in the presence of monks. There is also a rule which allow nuns to receive teaching on the dharma (teachings of the Buddha) from monks but does not permit nuns to teach monks (Barnes, 1997). With a subordinate position assigned to nuns, it has become customary in Buddhist societies to offer greater opportunities to monks than to nuns, likewise greater opportunities to men than to women and to boys than to girls. A Barnes analysis indicates a system where every female is regarded as inferior to males and lacks the capacity to function as men do in society. Barnes therefore is suggesting that the Buddhist religion, though accepting women to be involved in religious affairs, is restrictive for women in leadership positions. The situation is similar with the Islamic faith.

Throughout history, women within the Islamic faith were not involved in the centre of religion in matters relating to learning the Holy Scriptures, the interpretation of scripture, or the history of Islam. In most parts of the Muslim world few women can speak back, as it is

perceived that they lack the required religious knowledge that would authorise their challenge. There are differences of opinion when it comes to the issue of women's leadership. Some Islamic scholars propose that women can hold leadership positions, but that these should be restricted and limited to specific domains which they assume will suit women's natural constitution and physiology. Consequently, within the Islamic faith, a woman cannot be a leader or Imam in a prayer session constituting men and women. According to Quranic text relating to gender relations, it is stated that "*men are the protectors and maintainers of women*" and that "*those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity*" (Quran cited by Ammah, 2013; pg. 231). Consequently, as Ammah points out, these messages have continued to condition the minds of Muslims, both men and women alike. Critically looking at the Islamic example it can be argued that the Quran does not clearly state that women should not be in authority, unlike the Christian perspective where scripture categorically states that women should be silent and not teach in church. Thus the Islamic example could be seen as an advice in which again men have interpreted as not giving women the power to lead in their faith. This may justify the existence of a few Muslim women leaders, even though their power is limited.

The few Muslim women that actually occupy positions of religious authority advocate a range of causes whilst simultaneously trying to overcome multiple obstacles that women face in religion and society. Women in positions of authority seeking to teach other women have to study the Islamic scriptures. Purposefully or unintentionally, this knowledge gave them entrance into the conventionally masculine world of the interpretation of the holy Islamic texts. Although this gave women a chance to be in a position of authority, this was only partial because they are not allowed to exercise full authority, especially in issues that

involve men. Thus, while male leaders in Islam can be 'in authority'; for example, when holding positions of power from which they enforce certain rules upon society in the name of Islam, women always remain 'an authority' because they never hold official positions of religious power (Doorn-Harder, 2006; pg. 206). Doorn-Harder was not just interested in revealing that women within the Islamic faith held positions that were restricted and limited to specific domains as Ammah indicated earlier; Doorn-Harder revealed that even when women do occupy positions of leadership they were just like figure heads, not exercising power and therefore described women as being 'an authority' rather than being 'in authority'. Therefore, In Islam, leadership continues to be an ordeal for female followers. According to Islamic laws, being male is a precondition to becoming an Imam — a religious leader. Also, candidates aspiring for the position of Caliph are required to fulfil two conditions: being male and being Arab. The condition of being Arab was objected by non-Arab's practicing the Islamic faith, but there was no objection to the condition that the title of Caliph remains a male prerogative (Berkta, 1998).

### **Women Experiences in Religious Leadership Positions**

The existence of the above laws and teachings deters women's leadership. Most often when women attempt to take leadership roles they face opposition from the religious community, most especially by men and at times from the female adherents as well. Lehman's (1994) study in a Catholic Parish reveals how parishioners resent nun pastors. The study highlights that the idea of a woman pastor is so absurd that the members struggle to tolerate it. The parishioners hold that the idea of a female pastor is incompatible with their image and understanding of a Catholic pastor, a priest; the dominant figure in the parish historically being an ordained male. For example, a male parishioner addressed a nun pastor with the



following statement: *"I hope you're not sensitive, but it was our turn for a good priest and we got you. It's not you; you have to know that. No matter how good you are, you are not going to be good enough. People are not going to accept you, and you are going to have a hard time"* (Parishioner cited in Lehman, 1994: pg. 20). Lehman's study suggests that the reason for excluding women from leadership roles is not about their capability to deliver the services required, but that it is a mere fact that they are female. It can be argued that people are comfortable with the orthodox way of doing things and are not ready to give room to new ways of thinking, interpreting scripture or accepting change.

The immense opposition to female leadership can also be noted within Hindu religion. According to the Holy Scriptures the status of women in Hinduism is an inferior one. In general, it can be said that traditionally a Hindu woman is subordinated to men throughout her entire life: as a child she has to do as she is told by her father, as an adult she is under her husband's control and when the husband dies she is under the control of her son(s) or other men in the family (Meler, 2006). Jacobs (1991) reveals how women practicing Hinduism were made to feel inferior and incompetent should they occupy a leadership position; a woman will perform a task and a man will come along and do it over. According to Jacob, this result in women eventually losing their self-esteem and ending up feeling like they cannot do anything for themselves.

Recently, a few Christian denominations have begun to ordain women as ministers within the church, such as the Presbyterians and Lutherans. However, some denominations — like the historic traditions of Eastern Orthodoxy, Conservative Protestant groups and Roman

Catholics — maintain the tradition of excluding women from ordained ministry (Ruether, 1987). Much research has been conducted into the patriarchal underpinnings of many of the world's major religions. Miller (2013) reveals that while a majority of religions have reluctantly made reform in the nature of the relationship of women to religion and to the church, progress is slow. The recent years have nevertheless witnessed the elimination of some of the barriers placed against female authority within religions. A majority of mainstream denominations at present offer women the opportunity to occupy leadership positions. As a result, the ordination of women ministers has been on an increase. Bruce (1995) reveals that such denominations have decided to embrace women into ministering because they had no theological justification for regarding the clergy as spiritually distinctive. Within the Catholic Church, although women are excluded from the priesthood, they minister widely in the church and many can be found participating in several domains. Multitudes of women can be found serving in many of the church's offices such as; pastoral associates and administrators in parishes, directors of religious education, in hospitals and prisons, and in the totality of parish life in general. In contrast to the women of ancient times, women today play a very important part in public life, holding high offices in business, government, the professions and education. Wcela (2012) asserts that the exclusion of women from the office of diaconate no longer exists in the West. Wcela (ibid) further suggests that the ordination of women into the office of diaconate would offer women a new dimension of official recognition as this will mean that women have the essential intellectual and spiritual abilities to lead thus demonstrating their key role in the church's life. With this in mind, it is questionable why women continue to be so suppressed within the majority of religious organisations. By defending the status of women with such an argument, Wcela's position seeks to challenge religious teachings that label women as

inferior and unfit to serve God. His recommendation on the official recognition of women is in line with one of the objectives of this study that seeks to examine the strategies that have been employed by institutions to recognise women as faith educators and potential faith leaders.

Most prominent among denominations that have embraced the inclusion of women in leadership roles is Pentecostalism. This new movement has greatly promoted women's leadership position in the church. Women can be found acting and functioning as Teachers, Pastors, Bishops and General Overseers. They execute most of the work of ministers, such as conducting baptismal ceremonies and performing funerals and marriages. These churches have been seen to promote women into leadership positions that have long been denied women in other ministries. These churches present women as being spiritual, innovative and having self-esteem (Bateye, 2007). The Church of England has equally made advances to promoting women's leadership, though facing a lot of criticism and rejection. Grundy (2013), reports that the governing body of the Church of England has confirmed its commitment to ordain women as bishops. It aims to reach its final approval by November 2015, although opponents against women bishops are insisting that women bishops would be looked after by male priests and bishops. It should however be pointed out that such an agreement would imply that exercising full authority for women bishops will be a challenge.

Women that have occupied leadership positions within the Presbyterian, Lutherans and Pentecostal churches are said to have presented an exceptional performance vis-a-vis their male counterparts. This is justified by the distinct leadership style that they employ contrary

to that of males in leadership positions. Research points to the fact female leaders use a collaborative style as the principal pattern of leadership. This sort of relationship is characterised by equality rather than hierarchy; the leader guides rather than commands, and draws on the talents of others to work together to achieve a common end. This is a direct contrast to the male pastors who usually perform like *“a one man band, rather than the conductor leading the orchestra”* (Lehman, 1994; Pg. 21). Similarly, in a study involving the experiences of female rabbis against their male counterparts practicing Judaism, the female rabbis represented their leadership style as less power difference with rabbis being closer to the worshipers, thus rendering the relationship less hierarchical. To this, the women described themselves as *“less formal...more engaging...more approachable...more likely to reach out and hug...less likely to seek centre stage...more people oriented...more into pastoral care...more personal and less concerned about power struggles”* (faith adherent cited in Simon, 1994; pg. 50).

Studies have revealed that females who have taken the challenge to ascend leadership positions have put forward an excellent performance. In China, the Buddhist nuns have been outstanding in their accomplishments in learning and teaching, in their meditation and in their faith. This has earned them credibility in their communities. The nuns society has been reported to be a very significant institution since it offers women the chance to have a life outside the traditional family organisation and consequently assisting women to live active lives and be highly regarded within their communities (Barnes, 1997). This prominent position female leaders occupy within their communities can be equally noticed within Hinduism. Female leaders in Hinduism who have demonstrated exceptional leadership

qualities in their work have become ascetics and have taken over the leadership of the ashram (a settlement where a group of people live religiously) (Young, 1987).

The subsequent decision to ordain women into leadership positions by the Presbyterian, Lutherans and Pentecostal churches has not come without reservations. Though with the increasing number of women ministers ordained in many mainstream denominations, organisational barriers have been observed to act as an 'invisible ceiling' on their opportunities to take charge in larger congregations or higher levels of responsibility and authority in religious positions (Baer, 1994). It is maintained that despite the institutionalisation of affirmative action policies for women ministers, it has been difficult to obtain effective results because of women's propensity to desire just to enter the vocation rather than striving to move to top positions (Nesbitt, 1994). The studies of Nesbitt (ibid) and Baer's (1994) therefore reveal that the barriers female leaders encounter take on a double root; on the one hand there is the presence of organisational barriers and on the other hand women voluntarily opt to maintain a low profile rather than striving to move up their career ladder. Possibly, the latter option is a product of the socialisation process coupled with gender roles of society that women are expected to observe. According to the socialisation theory, children are exposed to models within their community that guides them on how to think, talk, feel and act in an appropriate way. As children grow up these views are reinforced with the people they interact with such as their siblings, parents, teachers and peers (Mwamwenda, 2011). Consequently, each gender becomes familiarised to the roles assigned to them based on what society expects of them. Jianling (2000) suggests that females internalise the roles assigned to their gender and later use them to inform their choices in life. As a result of the limitations placed by society on women, some

women feel inferior and doubt their capability to lead and this discourages them from advancing as they prefer to maintain a low profile (ibid). In this regard it can be argued that gender stereotypes shape women's decisions regarding leadership. Gender stereotypes therefore play a crucial role in human decision making in society. However, it is worth noting that research conducted, such as Bateye, (2007) and Wcela (2012), have revealed that many women are beginning to change their perspective on issues regarding leadership and are entering domains which used to be male-oriented.

The current wind of change experienced in Christianity in terms of demography should be well understood as a women's movement, as it has been indicated that women outnumber men in most religions and are more active in the religious body. As noted previously by Ozorak (1996), women are naturally more religious than men and they always outnumber men in churches. This, therefore, necessitates the urgent need to recognise the indispensable role of women in the churches. According to Robert (2006), failure to recognise this significant role will imply that the system has failed to do justice to the complexity and diversity of women's experiences of Christianity. Religious bodies are observed to be primarily masculine and this has been taken as a rule and acknowledged as the natural order of things (Ebere, 2011). Female religious leaders can be heard declaring that the recognition of subordination is not natural but socially determined (Bateye, 2007). These women reject the notions that women's nature of being or existence and their spirituality or religiosity is different from men; that the woman is made in the image of God simply as co-operator while the man is made an operator; and that the nature of woman is to surrender. Bateye's approach therefore highlights not only how women are challenging

gender stereotypes that society holds about them, but also challenging religious teachings that regard women as inferior.

The request to discard negative gender stereotypes that society holds against female leadership has begun to gain grounds with the subsequent response to include women into the leadership capacity within most religions, as indicated earlier in the study. Despite many advances, women desperate to answer a divine call to leadership in their communities still have a long and difficult path ahead. For Nason-Clark (1997), this journey is very challenging and has many obstacles. Shouts from women in various faiths can be heard demanding their freedom to participate fully in their religions. These women maintain that women are not weak and they see no reason why a woman should be dependent upon a man since there is no eternal rule which states that leadership in a society should remain in the hands of men. These women strongly hold that women can assist in achieving human progress if society can accept them as having the potential to shape and develop themselves (Young, 1987). This, therefore, calls for an urgent need to review structures of power within most religions that will transform current leadership roles in religion and society.

In this section two central points have been made. First, it is worth acknowledging that there is the existence of religious teachings and laws that exclude women from leadership roles. However, it appears that most religious organisations are beginning to change their position regarding female leadership and there is evidence of women serving in leadership roles within some faiths. However, there are some positions that are still not open to women. It has been argued that though there exist religious teachings that point to the claim that women should not lead, there are equally examples in the Holy Scriptures where

women were given the opportunity to lead. It has also been argued that because the sacred writings have been composed and transmitted by men and they have been the principal interpreters of religion, most of the scriptures relating to female roles in leadership are not promoted.

The second point acknowledges that though some organisations have admitted women into the leadership milieu, the women do not exercise full power as they are expected to operate only in specific domains. It has been argued that women who have managed to gain entrance into leadership roles have put up an excellent performance even though some still face outright opposition from their members, including the women. From this analysis, I have been able to claim that the barriers women face in occupying leadership positions are not exclusively as a result of religious teachings but also a product of the socialisation process. In this regard it has been argued that religious teachings and gender stereotypes can and do shape women's decisions regarding leadership.



## 1.2 WOMEN WITHIN EDUCATION

The teaching profession in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was among the few professions available to women yet their position and status was considerably inferior to that of their male colleagues. The Institute of Learning at London University notes that during this period in the United Kingdom teacher training was approved and this witnessed the opening up of numerous teacher training colleges, as well as those designed explicitly for female teachers such as Whitelands College. It was observed that female teachers were paid considerably less than their male counterparts and this prompted organisations such as the National Union of Women Teachers to campaign for equal pay. A reduction in the wages of teachers was observed after World War One. Though the educational cuts affected all teachers, female teachers were mostly affected as their wages witnessed a significant reduction compared to that of male teachers (IOE, 2009). As a result of the continual increase in unemployment and educational cuts, a majority of local education authorities were forced to set forth marriage bans which obliged female primary school teachers to resign on marriage. Pending the introduction of the marriage bans, female teachers upon marriage resigned from the teaching profession while others who were already married were fired (Redmond and Harford, 2010). The introduction of the marriage bans was said to be greatly influenced by an economic justification and also in conjunction with assumptions about a woman's rightful place in society. The marriage bans implied that a married woman's primary responsibility was her domestic responsibilities and this goes a long way to endorse a significant moral and social agenda. Research established that *"the marriage ban exemplified the assumption that families should be composed of a male breadwinner with dependent wife and children"* (Oram, 1996; pg. 256). We can assume from this that the claim to institute the marriage ban had very little to do with an economic justification

because men could have well been asked to resign. Thus, it can be argued that the main reason for the marriage ban was to relegate women back to the home/private sphere which society believes is the rightful place for women.

Due to a series of demonstrations and campaigns against the marriage ban, it was lifted in 1944 (Education Act) and equal pay for both genders was established in 1961. The removal of the marriage ban instigated changes in other areas of the teaching profession. In 1975 the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, which forbids the discrimination of women teachers in respect to promotion. This consequently permitted female teachers to advance in their profession, supposedly, without difficulty (IOE, 2009). Although teaching became an occupation undertaken by both men and women, it was ambiguously gendered. Oram (1996) explains that on the one hand this was partly related to feminine responsibility in the nurturing and rearing of children, and on the other hand, could be perceived as masculine, working in the public sector, involving intellectual work, a lifetime career, and being in receipt of substantial payments.

The introduction of the elementary state education in the United Kingdom in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century was carried out by women and the teaching of young people was considered to be female work; the situation still holds true even at present (Skelton, 2002). A report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2011) indicates that the feminisation of education in English speaking countries was apparent towards the end of the nineteenth century with the dominance of many women at the primary level of education. It reveals that the predominance of women in the primary sector of education is an established occurrence that has been evident within the educational sector of several

countries. UNESCO further notes that the term 'feminisation' refers to countries having substantial numbers of women in the teaching profession. Consequently, the inclination to studies relating to feminisation has come from countries such as the UK, South America, Australia and Canada. According to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2006) report, in England and Wales there were 521,780 qualified teachers in 2006 employed in the state sector and approximately 69 per cent of all teachers were women: 84 per cent in primary schools and 56 per cent in secondary schools (DfES cited by Conley and Jenkins, 2011). As Conley and Jenkins note; teaching has historically been dominated by women and its ethos of nurturance and dedication defines it as 'women's work', drawing on stereotypical notion of the 'caring woman'. According to Cortina (2006) the reason for incorporating women into the teaching profession was mostly associated with the assertion that they will offer to children innate feminine qualities that are absent in men. When convinced that their maternal qualities make them irreplaceable agents to be put in charge of young children, Cortina (2006) emphasises that women have been an important component for many centuries through which most countries have expanded their educational sector. However, Cortina strongly believes that such an achievement has come with serious negative consequences for women as employing them because of their innate feminine qualities undermines their level of professionalism and their pedagogical knowledge. Similarly, UNESCO (2011) confirm that teaching capacity, professionalism and career development of female teachers is devalued when their competence is associated to maternal qualities as these are not regarded as appropriate for instructional knowledge. It can be agreed that motherly qualities should not be used as a justification for employing women to teach young pupils. Rather, such qualities may support women's teaching roles but should not be considered as the principal element for employment. Therefore, it can be

argued that for women seeking to take on leadership roles within the education profession, maternal qualities should not be considered when examining the qualities that are expected of a leader.

The following chapters focus on understanding the lives and profession of female teachers. They review current research and critically analyse the roles, experiences and position of female teachers. Particular consideration is given to the measures that can be adopted to promote female teachers into positions of authority. In addition, research related to the faith of teachers will be incorporated into the study. However, because of the limited research on female faith teachers, much of the work will be grounded on literature relating to female teachers as a whole.

### **1.2.1 ROLES OF FEMALE TEACHEERS**

This section will be concerned with investigating the roles of the female teachers. In order to have an understanding of the role of teachers, it will begin by exploring the debates surrounding what has been termed the most important role of a teacher — seen as providing an excellent learning for the children. The study reflects on what makes a good or effective teacher and explores some of the roles of a teacher relating to; being a lecturer, transmitter of the cultural legacy of society; a motivator; a regulator of social relations, and as a collaborator with other colleagues. The literature argues that even though teachers act in various capacities to promote children's learning, the most important role is that of being an effective facilitator.

Apart from investing the role of the teacher in the teaching process, another significant role external to the classroom which can sometimes be missed out is also that of the teacher as a role model. The study reflects on the role of a teacher as transmitters of values, mentors and role models. The role of the female teacher to the education of girls is specifically examined. The study claims that a teacher's beliefs and principles influence learner's values and faith. Research also claims that not only are female teachers instrumental in motivating girls to succeed they are equally a role model to the community.

Given that the present study's interest is based within faith schools, this section also examines the role of teachers in faith schools towards the development of the learners. I argue that because teachers view teaching as a 'calling' they will be committed to their job in seeing that learners develop not only academically but also faith-wise.

This section finishes by comparing the role of teachers in terms of gender. The study examines various debates on the effect of having a same-sex teacher and how this affects the gender grade gap in school performance. The results indicated mixed findings; some claiming that teachers of the same sex affects school performance, and other claiming that both genders implement different teaching styles and approaches that results in disproportionate achievement of boys and girls. The study argues that female teachers are significant in promoting the learning of both boys and girls given that in addition to their

knowledge and skills in teaching they have great experience in nurturing and upbringing that acts as an added advantage to the development of learners.

In the past few years, discussions about faith schools have been widespread and have generated much educational difference of opinion in the United Kingdom. Considerable arguments have sprung up as a result of much public attention regarding the current increase in the number of faith schools (Coll, 2007). These discussions nonetheless hardly ever focus on the role of the teacher. The significant role of a teacher in the educational milieu is indisputable. A number of studies emphasise that the task of teachers is central to education; pointing out that the teacher is the most important factor in the success of a pupil (Conant, 1993; Gupta 1996). It has been established that the quality of educational instruction delivered to learners is proportional to a teacher's degree of effectiveness and teachers can either prosper or damage society. This has been confirmed by observers of the education process including researchers, school officers, policy-makers, parents and guardians, that the quality of teachers is the most important institutional determining factor to academic achievement (Islahi, 2011). It is worth noting that on the one hand earlier studies of Conant and Gupta were interested in revealing a single positive picture of teachers as key to children's success. Islahi, on the other hand, though accepting this fact argues that teachers can also play a negative role towards learner's achievement. Nonetheless, this study claims that the role of the teacher is to enhance the learning of those under their care and therefore will focus on exploring the positive role of teachers to learner's development.

## **The Teacher's Role in Creating a Learning Environment**

Many researchers maintain that the responsibility of the teacher is to transmit to learners the cultural legacy of society — the customs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills learned over many years. They nevertheless strongly hold that the effective teacher should be capable of creating a desire to learn (Hussain, Ali, Khan, Ramzan, and Qadeer, 2011). It is established that the most vital factor influencing student achievement that is associated to the school is the effectiveness of teachers that greatly promotes student learning. Teacher effectiveness is expressed as *“the power to realize socially valued objectives agreed for teachers’ work, especially, but not exclusively, the work concerned with enabling students to learn”* (Islahi, 2011; pg. 53). It has become an axiom that the efficacy of education is very much reliant on the efficacy of its teachers (Islahi, 2011). It can therefore be argued that the quality of education is directly related to the quality of instruction, with the teacher being instrumental for efficient instruction. Hussain et al (2011) notes that in order for teachers to transmit knowledge and develop the essential skills in learners, they have to employ the utmost strategies and practices to enable them meet the demands and challenges of the profession. Hussain’s claim of teachers utilising strategies and practices in order to address the demands and challenges of the profession seems to be overzealous. It would be taken that Hussain was referring to the problems faced in the teaching process and not to challenges pertaining to the totality of the profession. It will be observed later in this study that there are numerous challenges that teachers face that are above their capacity to source for means and ways of overcoming these challenges.

One of the skills expected of effective teachers is that they should be dedicated to their work and have the ability to take their own initiative. Apart from teachers utilising different

teaching methods and being grounded in their subject area, effective teachers are expected to prove that they are aware of the learning style of their learners, and should be proficient in selecting numerous study materials reflecting the varied group of pupils in order to promote optimum learning (Vermunt and Verschaffel, 2000). It can be claimed that a good teacher thus possesses the potential to create an appropriate learning environment for the students.

Smith (2002) suggests that schools should be capable of maintaining a positive ethos and a learning atmosphere where every child succeeds and where every adult, be it teacher, head teacher, school governor and other administrative members, work towards supporting every single child to achieve maximum potential. The roles of a teacher, however, stand out to be very significant among those of others responsible for children's achievement. According to Kely, Dorf and Hohmann (2013) teacher roles are not limited only to their instructional capacity but can be seen as mediators across the wider educational environment. Teachers have been said to have numerous roles which can be grouped into various capacities that they serve. Zlatkovic, Stojiljkovic, Djugic and Todorovic (2012) identified four major roles of a teacher. The first is the teacher's role in the teaching process that includes; being a lecturer, a partner in educational communication, a lesson organiser, and a teacher as an expert in his/her own subject area. Secondly, is the teacher's motivational role, which includes a teacher as a role model for students, and motivating students and maintaining their interests. Thirdly, the teacher is regarded as a regulator of social relations in the classroom. Fourthly, is the teacher's role as an evaluator which includes; evaluation of knowledge, personality and assessment of student's behaviour. Studies suggest that the main role of the teacher is to act as a facilitator, preparing activities



for children and then encouraging the children to learn at their own pace through discovery (Jianling, 2000; Wyse, 2002). According to Wyse, there exist two schools of thought regarding how children learn. The first school of thought believes that the teacher will interact with the children more to encourage them to learn for themselves than to instruct them. The second school of thought believes that the most important role of the teacher is to convey instruction and information to learners. However, Wyse concluded that children can learn best through the combination of both methods; learning independently and also supported with instruction from teachers. One common assumption about the purpose of schools is that they should develop the intellectual, social, emotional and physical abilities of all children (Smith, 2002). In considering the school as an institution that should contribute to the overall development of each student as suggested by Smith, it can be argued that this leads to an increase in the number of roles that a teacher has to realise. Therefore, it can also be argued that it takes a good facilitator to be in a position of developing children's learning in every area of their life. It can be observed that Zlatkovic et al (ibid) presented an elaborate analysis indicating various roles of the teacher; while other studies have focused on the limited roles of transmitting knowledge and developing the essential skills in learners — claiming this is the most significant. It can be argued that, though being an effective facilitator can be very instrumental to children's success, this on its own will not achieve the overall development of the children. I argued earlier that the task of the teacher is to develop the learners academically, socially and to some extent faith-wise. Therefore, a combination of multiple roles of the teacher is crucial to children's complete development.

Research has indicated that the teacher's role extends beyond the task of contributing to the learning and development of the student's under their care. Good teachers work collaboratively with other staff members, and are willing to share their ideas, assisting other teachers with difficulties and consequently contributing to the development of their colleagues (Stronge, 2007). This is especially evident with teachers who assume a leadership role. It is argued that interacting closely with single teachers is the most essential element of the leadership role of a teacher since this promotes mutual learning and effective teaching (Alma, 2005). This is achieved through collective efforts when teachers in leadership roles support their colleagues to follow a specific development, and when teachers volunteer to become mentors to teachers who are new to the profession (Strong, 2007). As a result, working together contributes towards the achievement of communal goals and consequently helps to improve success rates in school. Stronge (2007) confirms that collaborative environments create positive working relationships and helps to retain teachers. Thus, effective teachers are seen as instrumental in the improvement of education for all students. However, Alma (2005) elucidates that of all these roles, those of induction, mentoring, and continual professional development of teachers are vital in developing collaborative relationships with colleagues as this also contribute to the development of the school — both teachers and learners alike.

### **Teachers as Role Models**

The social learning theory holds that human behaviour is transmitted principally through the role model phenomenon (Shein and Chiou, 2011). Therefore, teachers, identified by students as models in an educational context may play a particularly important role in the

students learning processes. Students learn a great deal from teachers, and not all of what they learn is academic content. Benson and Guerra, (1995) identified teachers as transmitters of values, mentors and role models. They hold that teacher's beliefs and principles, whether intentionally or unintentionally, become known to students and these influence their own faith and values. The importance of role modelling in teaching and learning has been explicitly expressed by Majzub and Rais, (2010). They expressed positive views on role modelling and are convinced that a good role model enhances learning by setting a good example, showing kindness and concern for students, not using negative or harsh words, treating all students fairly, showing enthusiasm in learning, using good language and portraying a good image, being honest and sincere, and being able to model interest in learning and good thinking skills. It can be claimed that a teacher comes to school with a host of personal viewpoints. Indeed, teacher's views, attitudes and behaviour have a direct effect on student development, as these attributes influence how teachers counsel, teach, advice, and act as role models to learners.

So much emphasis has been placed on the education of the girl child recently, especially in developing countries, because of negative cultural stereotypes which regard women as a liability. Girl's education has become a focus of attention because there is proof that educating girls offers many benefits, not exclusively to the girls but for the families and the community at large. The World Bank (2014) reports that educated women are likely to be healthier; have smaller families, make sure that their children are educated and have better health care, be more involved in the formal labour market and have increased earnings. Thus, educating girls is seen as a long-term development asset. In addition to the benefits of

educating girls identified by the World Bank, Herz and Sperling (2004) assert that women's empowerment assists women to stand up for themselves and their children. Similarly, UNICEF (2014) reports that educating girls will offer them much authority and influence that will assist them to make informed choices in life. Apart from the personal, familial and community benefits of educating girls, their education is seen as a basic human right protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of a Child (The World Bank, 2014, UNICEF, 2014).

The presence of female teachers in school has not only been positively linked with increased enrolment and retention of girls in school; there is also evidence of a link between female teachers and higher test scores (Lloyd and Young 2009). For example, Joseph and Wodon's (2012) study found that female teachers led to a two-three per cent increase in test scores in Ghana's National Education Assessment tests. Also in Ghana, a study of female teachers' experiences in poor rural areas showed that low self-esteem among girls was a key factor preventing them from achieving higher levels of education, but that the presence of female teachers acting as role models helped to improve this (Casely-Hayford 2007).

The presence of women in schools is found to impact positively on girls' enrolment and retention in school and also on their achievement. Female role models are significant in listening to girls and guiding, supporting and encouraging them to complete their studies and can also boost girls' confidence to progress with their studies in becoming teachers (UNESCO, 2006). The presence of female teachers in schools is not only associated to their increase in enrolment and retention but is also related to higher scores. Plan UK (2013) cites

Joseph and Woodon's (2012) study in which the presence of female teachers led to an increase in test scores. They also reported that girls were probably more comfortable in asking questions and believing that a particular subject would be useful in the future if that subject was taught by a female teacher. This was important in encouraging more positive attitudes from girls towards maths and science. As a result, these are some of the most persuasive justifications advanced for increasing the number of female teachers in schools as female teachers are thought to impact positively on the education of girls. Kirk (2004) identified specific initiatives that have been designed to increase the numbers of female teachers as a vital approach for improving girls' access and retention to education in South Sudan, and in refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Guinea. These initiatives have been employed because it is believed that female teachers are influential in encouraging, counselling and acting as role models to assist girls in completing their studies. Apart from the effect of female teachers on girls learning, it is argued that the presence of female teachers assists in providing security for girls in school. In this respect, Kirk (ibid) emphasises the need to increase the numbers of female teachers in schools, as this will imply that girls are less prone to sexual abuse and harassment from both male students and teachers. There is evidence to show a correlation between the number of women teachers and girl's enrolment. According to a report by UNESCO (2006), gender equality in student enrolment is observed in countries where there are equal numbers of male and female primary teachers, meanwhile in countries where women constitute only 20% of teachers, there are far more boys than girls entering school.

Although, female teachers are regarded as good role models for girls, there have been concerns on the limited availability of male teachers as role models for boys. Most countries of the West regard the low number of male teachers in primary schools as a very crucial issue that necessitates considerable and immediate attention (Smith, 1999; Lahelma, 2000; Hutchings, 2001; Sargent, 2001). This concern has grown from the premise that the relative boys' underachievement is a result of the feminisation of primary education. Drudy (2008) however argues that connecting boys' underachievement in schools with the feminisation of education is unacceptable. While accepting that in many countries data on school achievement in terms of gender reveals that overall girls perform better than boys, Drudy argues that there is no evidence to indicate that this is a result of the feminisation of education. The quest to recruit more male teachers into primary schools has been highlighted by a number of studies (Majzub and Rais, 2010). Indeed, Skelton (2003) argues that male teachers are regarded as role models for boys and are also crucial in inspiring boys to study (Skelton, 2003). Males are said to be good role models because they have the advantages of having the assumed familiar interests and inclinations as boys (Majzub and Rais, 2010). Though accepting that male teachers would act as role models to boys, it should be cautioned that stressing so much on bringing in more male teachers would likely imply that this would take the society back to the state where boys outnumbered girls in education. It is because of the failing education of girls that governments and organisations such as the UN and its agencies had to step in to emphasise the necessity to employ more female teachers. Therefore, emphasising on recruiting more male teachers would likely result in a greater gender gap in education, in favour of boys — a situation that governments are trying to avoid. It can be suggested that because the society is patriarchal,

it is only fair to encourage the employment of female teachers to boost the education of girls.

It can be observed that the task of the teacher is not only limited to being role models to students — both male and female — but is also extended to being role models at community levels. The school is understood to be an important institution and is regarded as a model to the broader community in which it is located. Kirk (2004) suggests that the active and full participation of female teachers in schools through their appointments to positions of responsibility is important, because a positive impact may be created not just on the female teachers and the students but also on the wider community in general. Kirk (ibid) added that the educational structure is also one of the State's most important institutions, and that women should be accorded opportunities for equal access, full and active participation in positions of management and leadership where they can be involved in decision making processes — the same as men. Education, therefore, is a powerful empowerment tool for motivating women from very young ages to be actively involved in the advancement of their communities by taking on positions of authority within society.

### **Teacher's Role in Faith Schools**

Faith schools are popular with parents, and their popularity is a reflection of the high standards they achieve. There is documented and published data which outlines measures of academic attainment, deemed by governments as appropriate for school comparisons (Godfrey and Morris, 2008). An exploration of the influence of school denomination on

educational output outside the core curriculum indicates a change in pupil's behaviour in terms of their actions, preferences and attitudes. The religious socialisation of young people leads to the development of a philosophy of life that promotes the formation of attitudes that children hold about themselves and that of other people (Dijkstra and Veenstra, 2001). Studies on the importance of faith schools reveals that there would be no particular need for faith schools if the task of education were simply to train and nurture the mind (Burtonwood, 2003; Clements, 2010; Judge, 2002) . This assertion is confirmed by Benson and Guerra's (1995) research, which reveals that Catholic schools achieve more in terms of academic performance compared to public schools. Benson and Guerra further (ibid) argue that this is not sufficient to justify their existence. They believe that Catholic schools would be advised to reallocate their resources both human and financially to other areas requiring attention if the only reason for their existence is that of promoting academic achievement. They argue that Catholic schools have an important task, which is that of a commitment to enrich the heart, spirit, and mind of pupils. Thus, an effective Catholic school is seen as an institution that builds the faith of its pupils, promotes the desire to serve the community, instils a passion for justice in its pupils, and accomplishes an academic purpose. Livingston and Jun (2011) concisely describe the determinations required to integrate spirituality into every facet of an educational institution as a 'balancing act'. They believe that effective teaching in faith-based institutions should be concerned with the spiritual guidance of pupils, and the integration of faith into the curriculum. It can be observed that what draws and retains many teachers is a view of teaching as more than just a profession. In Eckert's (2012) study in a faith school, a majority of the teachers regarded teaching as a calling and a vocation, proclaiming that students have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26-27) and therefore have significant potentials. The teachers stated that they will continue to



teach because of the joy and satisfaction they receive from seeing students become who they were created to be. This will be achieved when teachers of faith offer students superb learning experiences that will assist them to grow and develop academically and especially in their faith. It can be argued that the fact that teachers of faith view their students as having been created in the image of God shows that all students are highly valued and regarded as having great potential. Hansen (2001) confirms that the thought of seeing teaching as a lifetime calling and vocation is advantageous in two ways; firstly, in providing a structure for the coordination of thoughts that guide concrete actions in the classroom, and secondly in providing the possibility for retaining teachers.

### **Comparing Teacher Role**

Research on the effect of having a teacher of the same sex has presented mixed results. In a study using student's variation across subjects, Dee (2007) finds that the interest of a student on a particular subject and examination scores improves greatly when students have a same-sex teacher. Results in another study investigating the possibility of explaining the gender grade gap in school performance with the sex of the teacher indicates a positive relationship between girls' achievement and female teachers. However, the assertion that a same sex teacher has a positive effect on student's performance — when course grades are taken into consideration — was not supported by the study (Holmlund and Sund, 2008). It can be drawn from this study that gender interactions cannot explain the gender grade gap in school performance for students. Reconciling the female and male role model concerns, a suggestion has been made that positive role models, regardless of gender, can be found in the teaching and learning environment. Majzub and Rais (2010) maintain that positive role

models enhance effective learning by demonstrating good body language, transmission of knowledge and communicating skills. They concluded that to be good role models both female and male teachers need to be competent in addressing the needs of students, regardless of gender. It can be argued that female teachers would still be needed especially in areas that promote boys education over those of girls; in communities where young girls are not given the same opportunities as young boys.

Women teachers have been identified as critical in the education process. The socialisation and teaching of young children has long been considered as the ideal work for women (Grannerud, 2001). In addition, recent studies have confirmed that infant and junior teaching has for a long time, and to an even growing extent, been a predominantly female profession (Kirk, 2004; Drudy, 2008; Sari, 2012). As indicated earlier in this chapter, female teachers have been considered suitable for teaching young people because of their possession of knowledge and experiences that men lack in nurturing and educating children. However, Rich (1996) argues that society places unreasonable demands on women with the assumption that women are natural in mothering and as a result assume that women should take on the sole responsibility of rearing children. For Rich (1996), this belief is oppressive to women since the task of taking care of children is considered as the exclusive responsibility of mothers. Grannerud (2001) concedes that knowledge and experiences from private and professional life are entwined and are used in both areas. Following this claim, Grannerud (ibid) suggest that parental experiences offer a better insight into an understanding of pupils' needs, and that those experiences change female teachers understanding of their professional role. In line with this thought, it has been established

that female teachers, because of their experiences in nurturing and upbringing of children, have a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession as compared to male teachers (Dodeen et al, 2003). However, it has been argued that the above assertion is a consequence of the belief that 'teaching is a female job' and female teachers internalise such a stereotype, believing that teaching is a suitable job for women (Hussain et al, 2011).

The relationship between teaching and gender has been one of the most interesting aspects for research in the recent past. The effect of gender on teacher effectiveness has been reported with varied results. Gender influence of teachers on learner's achievement might be related to differences in teaching styles. In Crawford's and MacLeod's (1990) study, learners reported that female teachers were extremely efficient in organising a participatory form of learning for learners. Likewise, another study found that female teachers implemented learning styles that were more informal and easy going in their attitude toward learners and their thoughts; while male teachers' learning styles were found to be more formal, dominant and tough (Islahi, 2011 cites Lacey, Saleh, and Gorman, 1998). Female teachers in Singer's (1996) study were found to spend much more time in planning lessons, planning teaching/activities for learning and in evaluating student learning than their male colleagues. Grasha and Anthony (1994), in their study, suggest that women are more likely to implement a facilitator style of learning that accentuates interacting with students as a resource person, guide and or adviser, and also in implementing a learning style that emphasises setting learning goals, conveying knowledge, and providing comments and suggestions. This was confirmed in a study where students perceived that female teachers were more likely than male teachers to be more sensitive and respectful of their

ideas (Basow, 1995) and also in implementing effective educational practices (Kuh et al, 2004). Similarly, the National Survey of Student Engagement, (NSSE, 2005) reports that women faculty members emphasise active and collaborative learning and a multiplicity of experiences more than men.

Despite the above studies stating that women make effective teachers compared to men other reports argue that gender has no influence on the effectiveness of teachers (Islahi 2011; Majzub and Rais, 2010). They argued that the effectiveness of a teacher does not depend on gender but rather on the teaching methodology employed. For example, Majzub and Rais (2010) maintain that; female teachers are more compassionate than male teachers; are usually easier going than male teachers; and that male teachers lack the patience of female teachers. They also argue that female teachers favour the hard working girls and thus promote their performance in examinations. Following the above assertion, it can be concluded that female teachers produce good results in teaching. However, there were some deviations from the overall gender influence when different demographic factors were taken into consideration. Islahi's (2011) study revealed that variances in the effectiveness scores of female and male teachers in relation to their training — that is either trained or untrained — and marital status — that is either married or unmarried — did not show any gender related differences in total scores. Conversely, marital status in Kulkarni's (2000) study indicated a very fascinating result on the teaching effectiveness of male and female teachers. Kulkarni (2000, pg. 289) reports that results on the effectiveness of teaching indicated that "male married teachers and female unmarried teachers were found to be more effective teachers than the male unmarried and female married teachers". In all, regardless of gender, teaching styles and trainings undertaken, effective teachers are

regarded as those possessing a strong desire and displaying distinctiveness in their work. Livingston and Jun (2011), describe the teachers who have a major impact on the learners as those who love and have a passion for their job are dedicated and put in every effort to promote excellent academic performance. Perhaps this has a link to teachers being especially effective if they consider their job role (as in faith schools) as being a vocation rather than a job.

This section has attempted to investigate the roles of female teachers in various capacities. The present study has, as one of its objectives, an exploration of the roles of female teachers in schools. Literature review has shown the significant role of teachers which included; transmitting to new generations the cultural heritage of society; imparting knowledge and developing essential skills in the students; a lesson organiser; a facilitator; a role model for students and the community; and a teacher as an evaluator of knowledge, personality and assessment of student's behaviour. It was concluded that the most important role of a teacher is to develop the intellectual, social, emotional and physical abilities of all children. It is clear from the analyses that faith schools present a further advantage of spiritual guidance and integration of faith into the curriculum that enhances the commitment to heart and spirit, as well as the mind of children. However, the main focus of the study is on female teachers, and even though research presented mixed results on the effect of gender on teacher effectiveness — with one assuming that women make better teachers than men, and the other claiming that the gender of a teacher has no influence on teacher effectiveness — it is argued that the imperative role of female teachers cannot be ignored. Given that female teachers far outnumber men in the primary field of

education — as indicated by the literature review — it can be argued that without doubt much of the task of educating children is accomplished by females.

It is important to note that, considering the roles of female teachers, research in female teaching is crucial to understanding how significant they are to the pupils, school and community at large. Despite the significant role of female teachers they are hardly recognised. As revealed earlier when the faith factor is included, there appears to even be more reluctance in encouraging female teachers to achieve more professionally or advance themselves in their careers. This suggests that because of the significant role female teachers play in the education of children, they ought to be recognised for their hard work through the creation of more opportunities and avenues for women to advance in their careers. Summarising the main results of this review on the role of female teachers, the most obvious conclusion is that they play an essential and extremely effective role in the development of the pupils under their care.

### **1.2.2 EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE EDUCATORS**

The purpose of this section is to explore the experiences of female teachers. This section is divided in to two parts; the first part investigates the experiences of female teacher's careers within the general teaching profession and the second part is specific to exploring their experiences within the school environment. The study begins with considerations regarding the reasons for choosing the teaching profession over other professions by female teachers. There will be a further analysis of why female teachers execute their professional work in conjunction with their personal responsibilities, exploring how their public life

affects their private lives and vice-versa. The research argues that even though the teaching profession has many elements that are especially considerate of family needs and constraints, it therefore presents as an ideal job for women (especially those with young children), female teachers still experience more stress than their male counterparts. The research also investigates some of the experiences women face as a result of their gender i.e. being female. The research argues that though initiatives have been undertaken to tackle inequalities between the sexes, the results have only been partial and have not been practically applied fully. The study also investigates the dominant male culture prevalent within most educational settings and considers how this impacts upon the career advancement of women. The study argues that activities within most institutions reproduce the existing gender order in society. The last part of the study explores some of the positive experiences of female teachers, arguing that though female teachers experience challenges, some are extremely satisfied with their job even though such satisfaction is attained at the expense of their career advancement.

### **Justifications for Choosing the Teaching Profession over Other Professions**

As seen from the previous chapter, teachers are identified as the key actors in the processes of educational development. Studies on stress in the teaching profession have repeatedly reported that teaching is found to be the most stressful among all professions (Travers and Cooper, 1996; Vandenberghe and Huberman, 1999; Kyriacou, 2001; Seibt, Matz, Hegewald and Spitzer, 2012). Research holds that over a quarter of the teachers in the United Kingdom reported their profession to be extremely stressful (Seibt, Matz, Hegewald and Spitzer, 2012). Consequently, it was concluded that the highest stress levels are found

within the teaching profession. Despite the profession being considered stressful, a widespread assumption about teaching as a profession is that it has many elements that are especially considerate of family needs and constraints. These include, among others, a relatively short workday at the job site, no work on school holidays, no work most of the summer and reduced workload for mothers of young children (Woodward, 2003; Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Cooper and Mackenzie, 2011). According to Cinamon and Rich (2005), it is believed by many that the above job conditions for teachers permit them to implement their work duties and responsibilities with minimal interruptions from family responsibilities and at the same time enable the home to function without any major disruptions by the demands of the job. In addition, Calabress (2001) notes that women often choose teaching because the teaching profession offers a position that allows them to frame their work day and year in conjunction with their children's school day and year. Potek (2009) notes that, it is for these reasons that many women choose to take teaching as a career since their working hours overlap with the school hours of children. As a result this enables women to combine both child care responsibilities with career responsibilities (Potek, 2009). Though the above presumed characteristics of teaching make it an ideal job for women, most women still struggle with the job (as will be discussed later). It can be argued that women get involved in teaching not because they like the profession entirely but probably because they can combine teaching with other private responsibilities. In addition it can be argued that because women in most societies have the responsibility to take care of family needs, they often go for teaching that will allow them juggle housework and school work.

Though research maintains that teaching work is suitable for women because of the long holidays and no school work at summer holidays, these are barely assumptions. The



teacher's job is not a 9-5 job. Most of the teaching work is extended to the home. For example, marking homework/exam scripts and developing lesson notes for the next day or week. In addition, teachers do not get the summer off work; they are usually developing next year's curriculum. In addition, generally, women are principally responsible for childcare and other domestic responsibilities. In most cases, the woman rather than the man will have to take on part-time teaching work or casual work in order to care for the children. Therefore the assumption by Cinamon and Rich (2005) that teaching permits women to execute the job task with little interruptions from family responsibilities and without major disruptions by the demands of the job is contentious; actually it's a complete assumption. The woman's work is literally never done and involving very heavy workloads.

### **The Effects of Family Responsibilities on a Teacher's Career**

Substantial changes in the nature of employment and family patterns have occurred worldwide over the past few decades. Research has indicated that more women, including mothers, participate in the workforce, meanwhile fathers are more likely to be absent for the most part of their children's lives (Palmer et al, 2012). Furthermore, the same research added that a majority of the parents that make up the workforce are from dual-earner families or single-parent families, as opposed to the old-fashioned two-parent, single income family. As a consequence, workers are more likely to experience conflict between work and family roles since they have to balance demands both from work and family responsibilities. Some writers maintain that the main obstacle to women's advancement, particularly those in developing countries, relates to family responsibilities (Coleman, 2002; Celikten, 2005). Similarly, Potek, (2009) suggest that women in traditional societies are expected to be responsible for looking after the home and caring for children and husband

including extended family members. Potek 's (2009) study in a developing country confirms that a majority of female teachers are under a lot of stress in trying to live as teachers and mothers in addition to struggling to implement the cultural duties meted out on them as daughters. However, Potek (ibid) concluded that both male and female teachers identified heavy domestic responsibilities as barriers to career advancement. Even though Potek pointed out that female teachers face a lot of stress and tension in balancing work and family responsibilities, it was surprising to see that he erroneously concluded that domestic responsibilities hindered the career advancement of both male and female teachers. It can be argued that though the competing demands of balancing work and family responsibilities are felt by both men and women alike, when the overall work-life balance is considered, women, whether married or unmarried, are under much more pressure of balancing the responsibilities since society has delegated the primary duty of caring for children and adults to women as pointed out by Potek.

### **Consequences of Work and Family Role Conflict**

A number of research studies have been conducted on the conflicts that emerge from individual's work and family roles. As noted earlier, major changes in the work environment such as the increasing numbers of women with young children at work and dual-income earners, has stirred up considerable research in the area of work-family conflict. Work-family conflict has been defined as *"a form of inter-role conflict in which pressures from work and family roles are incompatible"* (Cinamon and Rich, 2005; pg. 366). Workload has been a recurring theme within teaching, and its significance as a major concern surfaces in a census conducted for the General Teaching Council of England. Results indicated that 56 per

cent of the respondents identified workload as the key demotivating element (MORI, 2003). Similarly, in Conley and Jenkins' (2011) study, teachers identified workload as the major reason for leaving the teaching profession. Research has demonstrated that many teachers are incapable of separating their professional and family roles effectively. Conley and Jenkins (2011) affirm that most of the teachers in their study reported that their teaching work spilled over into their home life, and teachers had to work in the evenings and at times during the weekends. Okonkwo (2013) also confirmed Cinamon and Riche's assertion of teaching responsibilities extending beyond the work environment. They note that the task of reading, preparing lesson notes, marking scripts and other work tasks are often conducted within the home environment. Conley and Jenkins (2011) added that when unpaid care responsibilities are considered in conjunction with the above responsibilities, teachers are left with limited time to carry out other extracurricular activities. It can be understood from the above studies that bringing teaching work to the home is something that is unavoidable. A balanced workload would be acceptable, but when workloads reach a level where teachers become stressed and are unable to perform other responsibilities it becomes unacceptable. It can be argued that within such circumstances, teachers do not have a life outside teaching and in the long run this can result in lower productivity.

An investigation into the circumstances in which teachers have to combine both work and family responsibilities shows drastic results. According to Okonwo (2013), the extension of work responsibilities overflowing into the home means that the time that should have been reserved for family responsibilities is divided to accomplish work responsibilities. As a result, Okonwo (ibid) suggests that sharing this limited time between work and family responsibilities will likely result in time constraint; therefore exposing teachers to time-

based work interference with family; and consequently resulting in emotional exhaustion. Results from numerous studies portray a picture of individuals who struggle to manage demanding multiple responsibilities, including child care responsibilities, maintaining a home and working as teachers (Moore and Gobi, 1995; Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Sari, 2012; Okonkwo, 2013). In Cinamon and Rich's (2005) study, female teachers clearly stated that being a mother and a teacher was an inconvenience. They pointed out that they were forced to take on a triple role comprising teaching, house work and childcare responsibilities. Again here, it can be observed that workload negatively affects the private life of teachers. What is most crucial about these studies is the fact that the tasks outlined as being challenging, such as combining teaching work with childcare and family commitment, are most often implemented by females. This certainly supports the argument made earlier; that female teachers undergo more stress compared to males.

Research has shown that occupations identified as male-oriented are unresponsive to family responsibilities. Such occupations are said to have a structure that is based on the supposition that the male employee's major role is their work, and that the work role can be extended into the home; therefore, reducing the time available for partaking in home responsibilities (Moore and Gobi, 1995). The construction of these occupations, according to Moore and Gobi, (ibid) is geared towards the career-focused or breadwinner roles, which are mainly dominated by males usually necessitating a great deal of work commitment and long hours that are less flexible than occupations that are female oriented. According to this construction, women who opt for male-type occupations, particularly those with children, are more prone to experience conflicts in their role as compared to women who choose

female-typed occupations. Moore and Gobi argue that women who enter into male-type occupations will encounter more role conflict, however teaching is considered a female occupation and women still face a lot of work-family conflict. Sari (2012) has also confirmed that women teachers who find themselves busy with familial affairs at home and occupational responsibilities at school, have to struggle more than their male counterparts do in order to fulfil their multidimensional roles and expectations.

Calabress's (2001) study found that job role conflict and role overload affect all working females, but they affect females who enter the teaching profession more so than those who enter other fields. This effect is greater because females who enter teaching have a higher predisposition to nurture than those who choose a non-social service profession. Female teachers in Calabress's (2001) study reacted to conditions which cause stress significantly more than male teachers. The females had significantly higher levels of stress when responding to statements concerning the number of subject matter preparations, preparation time, lack of classroom materials, and the lack of breaks from the classroom during the day. Each of these areas is related to job role conflict or role overload. The females concluded that school related time demands ultimately infringe on their personal time. This effect is compounded for females who enter the profession when their children are relatively young. Accordingly, it is reasonable that among teachers with younger children, family demands will interfere with school work more than they will among their colleagues with older children (Higgins, Duxbury and Lyons, 2010). In addition, Moore and Gobi (1995) confirm that insufficient time to implement their duties and responsibilities is a major source of conflict for female teachers. This is further worsened when they are

married with young children; especially with the working hours being inflexible and teachers are expected to put in long hours of work. It can be observed that while some studies have simply made a general claim that workload affects women more than men, other studies have gone a step further to be very specific in their analysis. For example, the studies of Higgins, Duxbury and Lyons, including that of Moore and Gobi reveal that it would be wrong to identify all women as a single group of individuals, but that they are to be considered as belonging to various categories and therefore go through different experiences. Teaching workloads are excessively challenging for females, especially those with families and even more challenging for females with young children. Also in traditional societies, particularly in communities where religion defines the woman's principal role as motherhood, females who attempt to take on the teaching job find it extremely challenging to combine both career and work responsibilities.

Another area that has witnessed time related demand is the increasing paper work associated with the teaching profession. In a research commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), workload was identified by teachers as the major reason for leaving the teaching profession. Smithers and Robinson (2003) point out that this was particularly true for teachers in primary schools, where the respondents expressed that government's ambitions on numeracy and literacy have been influential factors in increasing teacher workloads. Similarly, a report by the General Teaching Council for England (2003) indicates that though teachers are convinced that they perform well at their jobs, have a conviction of personal achievement and are enthusiastic about working with young people, they also felt that paperwork discourages them to the extent that most have considered

leaving the profession (Woodward, 2003). It can be understood that instituting policies without adequate resources to implement them is a major concern which requires considerable attention, especially with the constant reports on shortages of teachers in England at present.

As noted previously, a majority of married working women find it challenging to balance work role and family role. Research has shown that the participation of female teachers in both roles lead to undesirable consequences as a result work interference with family roles (Okonkwo, 2013). The consequences have been identified to be associated with several negative conflicts in the work and family spheres. Palmer et al (2012) study on the consequences of conflict between work and family roles found that increased conflict is associated with negative outcomes at work, such as: discontent with job, less commitment of organisation, intent to quit the job, and general occupational-related stress. Likewise, Cinamon and Rich (2005) revealed that the negative outcomes in the work domain include lateness, inadequate performance in job roles, low occupational well-being, high job dissatisfaction, burnout, a greater intention to leave the job and high turnover. Apart from the above occupational negative consequences linked with work and family role conflict, other studies have identified non-occupational outcomes associated to increased conflict between work and family. These include increases in life dissatisfaction, marital dissatisfaction, family dissatisfaction and distress, general psychological strain, physical/somatic symptoms, depression, burnout, and general non-occupational-related stress (Palmer et al, 2012). An area that the female teachers suffered most was within their family life. The roles ascribed to most women in the domestic sphere create a huge challenge. Caplan's (1993) study in the United States and Canada on the tension between

family and career among women teachers reveals that women find themselves in a perplexing state. For women who refuse to take on a job because of family responsibilities the society regards them as not serious with their careers, and for those who take on a career and also have a commitment to the wellbeing of family, they are labelled as unwomanly and uncaring. Looking at the above analysis on the consequences resulting from work and family role conflicts, the situation seems really destructive. Given such a level of shocking consequences, perhaps the claim made previously by Potek (2009) that teaching profession has many factors that are considerate of family needs should be analysed.

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the experiences of female teachers and at this point literature reveals that their experiences are extremely disagreeable. This study has argued that despite teaching being considered as family-friendly, female teachers still face numerous challenges in balancing career and work responsibilities.

### **Coping Mechanism Employed to Reduce Work and Family Role Conflict**

In many societies, especially in the more traditional ones, deciding to work rather than looking after the family is an unimaginable option for women. In view of this, the main strategy adopted by women is reducing work responsibilities by opting for part time employment or seeking for employment in occupations offering flexible working (Moore and Gobi, 1995). Smithers and Robinson (2003) concedes that female teachers faced with heavy workloads at home and in school have two choices to make; either to reduce their hours of work or to leave the profession either permanently or until their care responsibilities reduces. Conley and Jenkins (2011) study reveals that the increased demands placed on teachers means that many women teachers at the present opt to return



from maternity leave only if they can transfer from full-time to part-time work. The National Union of Teachers, (NUT) (2006) claims that the reason why women opt for part-time work is because they want to safeguard evenings and weekends; often working outside of their contracted hours, but for part-time pay rates. The union, however, warned that the move to part-time work is clearly detrimental to women teachers for two reasons; firstly some head teachers do not positively view part-time workers amongst other teaching staff; and secondly, the increased decision-making power conferred on head teachers by the Local Management of Schools (LMS) have a negative impact on women teachers. Conley (2003) suggests that a majority of female teachers are faced with the difficulty of negotiating for part-time work or flexible hours and are often denied both. Conley further argues that even when female teachers try and secure part-time work, this is usually on a fixed time period rather than on a permanent basis. This is disadvantageous to women's promotion prospects, their job security and their access to training opportunities. Similar observations were reported by Seibt, Matz, Hegewald and Spitzer, (2012); they confirm that the decision by female teachers to move from full-time to part-time employment is detrimental as this may lead to a reduction in income, fewer chances of promotion, and less entitlement to employee benefits and retirement pension. In this analysis, women with children face serious problems in securing employment, and even when they do they are prone to face challenges that will affect them for a life time. It can be argued that while NUT and Conley and Jenkins' analysis are geared towards indicating short term consequences of taking up part-time work, Seibt et al were keener on identifying long term consequences that greatly affect the future of female teachers.

Nonetheless, not all studies on the lives of female teachers found family and work responsibilities as presenting conflicting challenges. It is widely believed that the teaching profession offers quite a few non-pecuniary benefits for women with children, such as consistent holidays and vacations that will enable teachers to work with ease compared to other professions (Shin and Moon, 2006). An interesting point made by Grannerud (2001) is that for some of the teachers in his study, private responsibilities in the family serve as a genuine reason to evade continuous and definite workload that leads to teacher burn out. Grannerud suggests that for teachers who do not have familial responsibilities are under threat of their private lives invading their professional work since they have no genuine reason to evade extra work responsibilities. Following Grannerud's assertion, given that women are mostly responsible for rearing children and looking after the family, it would be expected that they would be free of work stress since they have a genuine reason to avoid extra work responsibilities. Conversely, from the analysis of various studies discussed earlier, the results have proven otherwise. Results reveal that women rather than men face the highest levels of stress, thus rendering Grannerud's claim questionable.

Some female teachers have adopted other coping mechanisms that are more robust than opting for part-time employment. Rhoads and Gu's (2012) study of women academics in Malaysia revealed that some female teachers may in fact receive support from their families, particularly those with understanding husbands. Conversely, Parsaloi and Steyn's (2013) study on the experiences of female teachers reveals that, even though most female teachers in the study received support from their family members, they were left with the guilt of taking such an action. The women believed that they had failed in executing their duties as wives and mothers. From the above analyses, it can be observed that the

socialisation process has a great impact on the lives of women to the extent that they no longer think of what is beneficial to themselves, but rather how to please others, putting others first and themselves last. This suggests the need to further empower women to take charge over their lives rather than let society determine how they should run their lives.

### **Disadvantages and Advantages of being Female**

The consideration of teaching as a female occupation suggests that the journey will be a smooth one; but this is not actually the situation. On the one hand there are situations where teaching acts as an advantage to female teachers and on the other hand women teachers do experience significant drawbacks as a result of their gender. When it comes to the issue of being valued or appreciated, in a majority of cases, teachers usually feel that they are respected, especially by their colleagues (Woodward, 2003). However, this is not the case when learners are considered. MORI (2002) argues that newly qualified teachers do feel that they are not respected by pupils as opposed to teachers with many years of experience. The newly qualified teachers are also more likely to refer to pupil's behaviour as a demotivating element in the teaching profession (MORI, 2002). In a study to investigate how gender roles of women teachers affect their practices in the classrooms, women teachers recounted that problem-students are usually referred to their classrooms for reasons that they possess the virtue of patience and are able to resolve issues easier (Sari, 2012). However, it can be argued that such an assumption is invalid when older male students are taken into consideration. The women teachers in Sari's study reported having several problems with some older male students who demonstrated considerable disrespect and presented challenging behaviour in their dealings with them for the mere fact that they are women. The teachers stated that as a result of having to deal with the difficulties

presented by senior students which affected them negatively, they became completely worn-out. It can be argued that problem-students can pose a challenge to both male and female teachers; however, the situation can be worse when the students find themselves in a class under the control of a female teacher. It is not surprising that most parents often raise concerns about the discipline of male children when a female teacher is involved. Inandi (2009), in his study, observed that parents are usually apprehensive about the discipline problems when their male children are placed in a female teacher's class because they have the conviction that female teachers are unable to discipline male students. Even though Woodward (2003), in his study, did not specify the sex of the teacher when he stated that newly qualified teachers feel disrespected by their students, Inandi and Sari's study confirms that female teachers in particular undergo considerable challenges in dealing with male students compared to their male colleagues.

For Sari and MORI, older students were identified as posing a threat to female teachers. Nonetheless, older students are not the only group of individuals that constitute a menace to female teachers. Poraj (2010) noted that parents and school authorities at times create difficulties that make the school a very challenging workplace for women. The high expectation of parents regarding their children's development; the handling of parent's grievances including pressure from school authorities regarding children's success, and the vast reporting and frequent supervision involved, extensively contribute to the development of occupational stress in female teachers (Poraj, 2010). For example, in recent years, it can be observed that great changes in the teaching profession have resulted in a decrease in teacher's satisfaction levels with the profession. Key factors in the United Kingdom that has contributed to increasing levels of dissatisfaction include increased

workload, pupil's disrespectful behaviour, and actions instituted by the government that make it difficult for teachers to cope with the demands of the profession (Smithers and Robinson, 2003). This, according to Cooper and Mackenzie (2011), can lead to low morale and stress-related problems at some point in a teacher's career. It can be argued that the school, which is meant to promote female empowerment, is rather promoting actions which lead to the reproduction of existing gender order in society. By means of reason that female teachers have to undergo pressures regarding children's development and experience vigorous supervision and reporting, indicates that parents and most especially school authorities, often men, (as will be discussed in the next chapter) still hold stereotypical notions and reservations about women's capacity to manage children. Also, the government emphasis on vigorous supervision and reporting poses an additional bureaucratic burden on teachers which may result in stress thus leading to inefficiency, instead of contributing to efficiency that the policy was meant to achieve.

It is not surprising that other studies have indicated that being female is advantageous to the teaching profession. This is the case with Granerud (2001) who developed a theory that is distinctively opposite to the views of MORI, Sari and Poraj. Granerud argues that women who are both teachers and mothers exert a positive influence on the relationship with students and parents as a result of their motherhood nature that creates an atmosphere for easy communication with students and their families. This sense of motherhood, according to Gannerud (ibid), helps female teacher appeal to common experiences in discussions with parents, and often uses this as a strategy, to create a more conducive atmosphere. Granerud, MORI, Sari and Poraj have so far indicated that they are interested in female teachers and how they deal with dilemmas posed by male senior students and parents.

Nevertheless, other studies have identified head teachers as those faced with the challenge of managing badly behaved pupils. Head teachers have been reported as those preoccupied with the task of dealing with the pressure and responsibilities brought about by students, teachers, parents, supervisors and the community (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). They further note that the caring, nurturing, helpful and gentle characteristics of women assist female heads in the way in which they deal with such dilemmas. Similarly, in Coleman's study, nearly two-thirds of the head teachers reported that they had found it an advantage to be a woman head teacher with the most mentioned advantage being that they are able to defuse macho behaviour on the part of males: students, teachers and parents. Coleman concluded that in this case, the fact that men feel the need to be aggressive with other men, and that aggression is not associated with females, acts to their advantage. It can be argued that though female teachers are struggling to deal with problems of bad behaviour of students, parent's grievances and of bad government initiatives, studies have however revealed that female head teachers have been successful in dealing with these challenges. As seen from the studies above, most female teachers, especially those in a patriarchal society, find this task difficult, particularly when older students are considered. The derivation of different ways in which men and women approach and deal with issues, suggests the relevance of gender to the profession.

### **Male Dominant Culture**

Evetts (2000) establishes that the type of behaviour expected from women within an institution negatively influences women's career advancement decisions. This is found to be more popular with institutions that promote a culture of a male-dominated structure. Even if women do not take on the behaviour expected of them, it can be argued that some men

would take steps that would maintain and/or promote a male-dominated culture in an institution. Studies have observed that some men in management positions do not want to work with women in management positions and this contributes to a male-dominant structure. Male managers would work cooperatively with other male colleagues, but will do anything under their power to exclude women from being part of the management body (Simpson, 1997; Thompson, 2003). In this respect, such attitudes are likely to create conditions that promote male behaviour and roles as the acknowledged model for society (Simpson, 1997). Since the social system is patriarchal, women's work is guided by patriarchal practices which render their emancipation in the area of work extremely difficult (Sari, 2012). The school as an institution is often proclaimed as gender neutral. However, this position of neutrality has been questioned in feminist research, since most social institutions have integrated gender into their organisations (Gannerud, 2001). It would be expected that women, by way of participating in public life, will have the opportunity to escape subordination since most governments have ratified treaties on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It can be argued that though nations and organisations have taken steps to combat inequalities between the sexes, this has mostly remained on paper and has not been practically applied fully. Women have come a long way to be where they are today, as reflected by the fact that they were initially banned from teaching (as discussed earlier at the beginning of the chapter). Indeed, women make up a greater proportion of those employed in the teaching profession. Thus, one cannot totally dismiss the fact that most organisations have strived to bring about changes in the gender order at work and this has resulted in great improvements in women's work. However, it can be argued that men, as individuals, in most cases believe that it is their prerogative to occupy positions of authority. Evetts (2000), Simpson (1997), and Thompson (2003) strongly

believe that the activities within the institution induces and replicates the existing gender order in society; patriarchy.

### **Positive Experience with the Teaching Profession**

While women have expressed their dissatisfaction with the teaching profession, they often find themselves driven back in to it unwillingly. Cooper and Mackenzie (2011) reported that a majority of the responses from female respondents in their study communicate that women were negatively entrenched into the teaching profession, especially when it concerns career prospects. The female teachers used terms such as being 'trapped,' 'stuck', and 'institutionalised', which describe the feeling of being undesirably rooted into teaching. However, Cooper and Mackenzie saw teaching as offering a family-friendly employment and a regular and secure source of income, making it difficult for their female participants to consider leaving the teaching profession. Shin and Moon (2006) supports this view, suggesting that female teachers incur a small risk in their re-entry wages when they take temporary leave from work due to pregnancy since there are no charges on wage penalties for female teachers who go for such leave. Just like Cooper and Mackenzie, who supported the claim that teaching is ideal for women, Shin and Moon (2006) further confirm that only a small amount of earnings is lost from career breaks by women due to pregnancy, and that within the teaching profession there is the presence of working conditions that are conducive for childrearing. It can be argued that Cooper and Mackenzie ignored the negative emotional feelings of female teachers. Describing themselves as 'stuck' and 'trapped' which is a serious concern that should not be overlooked by researchers. The fact that there exists other factors that make teaching conducive to female teachers does not imply that these should be used to cover up for the predicaments they are experiencing.



Even though much literature reveals that women teachers experience challenges in the teaching profession, there is also evidence of a positive experience in the profession. Most female teachers express that they derive great satisfaction in educating children (Cooper and Mackenzie, 2011). This is in line with Woodward's (2003) report on factors which most motivate teachers in which teachers identified working with children/young people as the main reason for choosing teaching over other professions. Conversely, Al-Khalifa (1992) suggests such perceptions of women believing that they obtain greater satisfaction in working with the children have a likelihood of affecting women's choices and opportunities to career development. It can be argued that though choosing to work with children is likely to affect women's career development, the fact that they still derive satisfaction from their work cannot be disputed, even if this is done at the expense of their career advancement.

## **Conclusion**

This section was concerned with exploring the experiences of female teachers in schools. The key elements that were identified from the literature review with regards to the experiences of female teachers were that: family responsibilities negatively affects women teacher's career; work and family role conflict affects mostly women particularly those with young children; coping mechanism employed to reduce work and family role conflict are not robust enough; the negatives outweighs the positive effect for being female in the teaching profession; male dominance culture is a major setback to women's career advancement,

and that despite all the challenges faced by female teachers there is still a positive experience with the teaching profession.

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the experiences of female teachers. Results indicate that the experiences of women are both negative and positive. However based on the above analysis, there is an indication that women encounter numerous negative experiences and these outweigh their positive experiences. Though teaching still remains an ideal profession for women, it can be argued that this appeals more for women with young children, and that once women's responsibilities have reduced they can consider the option of moving up to management positions. However, and as discussed, most women are quite content being in the classroom with children, having limited career commitment or aspirations and devoting themselves to familial responsibilities in order to satisfy others at the expense of their career advancement. The experiences of women so far evidences that for them to succeed in the teaching profession, they have to take radical decisions such as defying cultural norms which assign familial responsibilities to women, working longer hours, and to an extreme, opting to go childless. Unfortunately, despite equality legislation, there is still no guarantee that women will succeed given the presence of a culture of male dominance in most institutions.

It has been argued that the lack of concern for gender equality by society, including individuals, institutions and governments, has had profound impact on the careers of women teachers. In order to address the situation, cultural stereotypes that continually relegate women to familial responsibilities need to be discarded. In addition, an even more important recommendation is for governments to consider revising policies that will address

some of the issues raised in this section (enormous paper work, vast reporting, frequent supervision, negative effect of part-time teaching and inflexible working hours) to offer a platform for women to compete equally with men.

### **1.2.3 THE POSITION OF FEMALE TEACHERS**

In spite of the many policy interventions emphasising gender equity (Mestry and Schmid, 2012) — with laws protecting women, constitutional agreements, support for female privileges and more importantly the massive awareness raising on the dilemma of women with respect to education by the United Nations (Suguna, 2011) — elements of preconceptions, discrimination and stereotyping are seen to continually propagate submissiveness and remain a terrible barrier for hindering women to assume leadership positions (Mestry and Schmid, 2012). Many studies (Shah, 2004; Aladejana, 2005; Morley, 2013; Ward and Eddy, 2013; Gray and Ayres, 2014) have given attention to the topic of women's leadership positions in education. These studies reveal an underrepresentation of women in leadership at all levels of the education system, including primary schools, secondary schools, universities and other educational institutions. Although the teaching profession, with the exception of a few countries, is dominated by women (Drudy, 2008; Sari, 2012), Celikten (2010) argues that men continue to occupy most management positions. It can therefore be observed that although women make up a greater number of teachers in education as reflected by the feminisation of education, men are those in control, occupying preeminent positions. This clearly indicates that issues of gender equality relating to educational leadership positions are still in existence.

Research has revealed that the likelihood of women becoming head teachers is much lower than that of men. This suggests that women have yet to attain equality with men with respect to career opportunities. Even though the factors responsible for gender inequalities indicate a variation in developed and developing countries, many studies reveal common barriers to women's leadership. In the United Kingdom there have been continuous reports on the underrepresentation of women in management positions. In 1987 the Department of Education and Schools revealed that in England and Wales female teachers outnumber men in primary, junior and infant schools, making up to 78 per cent of the teaching staff. In 1991 reports on England indicates that about 50 per cent of the head teachers are males even though women made up to 80 per cent of teachers (Thornton and Briecheno (2006) cites Alexander). In 1998 it was reported that women only make up about 20 per cent of headships and managers in education (Schein, 2001). A UK Parliamentary Publication in 1998 argued that though more appointments were made in favour of female teachers, this was only found within the primary sector and that within secondary schools appointments to headship positions was in favour of men with a ratio of 70:30. In 2007, a report by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) revealed that in England and Wales women make up 57 per cent of teachers in secondary schools, but only occupy 36 per cent of headship positions. In 2013, it was reported that in colleges in England, men far outnumber women on the governing boards and only 17 per cent of the boards were chaired by a woman (Dicketts, 2014). Even though the above statistics reveal a steady increase in the number of women in headship positions, it also demonstrates that generally women are still underrepresented in leadership positions. This, therefore, confirms the

assertion that though women make up a greater proportion of teaching staff, they are generally underrepresented in leadership positions.

The problem of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions within academia is not only specific to the UK, but is observed in most countries of the world. Identical gender patterns characterise most academic institutions with regards to headship positions. In the United States, whereas women make up 76 per cent of the teachers, only 50 per cent of them are school principals (Litmanovitz, 2011). With regards to developing countries, research in Vietnam reports that in one of the two national Vietnamese Universities, of the total of 42 faculties, women only occupy 9 deanship position (Nguyen, 2012). In Kenya, Parsaloi and Steyn, (2013) cites Obura (2011) that under 15 per cent of the head teachers in Kenyan primary schools were women. It would therefore not be surprising that many studies have come to a conclusion that within education women are proportionately underrepresented in management positions (Kirk, 1994; Schein, 2001; Collard and Reynolds, 2004; Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005; Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; Smith, 2011; Nguyen, 2012; Rhoads and Gu, 2012; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). These studies argue that despite the advances made in most countries in terms of policies and numerous interventions to promote women to headship posts, women still continue to predominate as mere teachers, while men disproportionately hold leadership positions. Other studies have questioned the underrepresentation of women from the perspective of the feminisation of education. Earlier in this study it was suggested that education, especially primary education, has become feminised with women presenting a majority of teachers compared to men. These studies argue that despite the increased feminisation of education there is still significant bias in the allocation of senior management and leadership positions

in favour of men (Dfes, 2005; Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; UNESCO and IIEP, 2011). Cortina (2006) elucidates that the feminisation of education was a result of two similar trends. There was the change in social values that offered the opportunity for women to be involved in the labour market, and also orthodox gender roles that remained unchanged. Consequently, women teachers became underrepresented in positions of authority, mainly represented as classroom teachers, meanwhile men were in control as principals and supervisors (Cortina, 2006). Men, therefore, tend to be significantly overrepresented at management levels. The above assertion is supported by the argument that *“in all sectors of teaching men are roughly three times more likely to occupy the top slot than women”* (Bolton and Muzio, 2008; pg. 293).

Following the above overview, this section will be concerned with investigating the position of female teachers within leadership capacity. The literature review reveals a global pattern in which women are underrepresented in leadership positions within academic institutions. This study, therefore, endeavours to examine a full range of factors that contributes to the gender imbalance of power between male and female teachers at management levels. It argues that the main barriers to female leadership are: negative gender stereotypes that disregard females as leaders; organisational culture that promotes male dominance through promotion of masculine patterns of leadership; lack of mentoring and communication, constraints faced by women due to family responsibilities and female unwillingness to take on positions of leadership. This study argues that culture stands out as the major barrier to female advancement as it can be seen manifesting from the individual (perceptions women hold about leadership), and then penetrating the home (family barriers) and finally to the

work place (organisational barriers). The study does see culture as deeply rooted in almost every aspect of the barriers to female leadership. The study concludes that there is need to move beyond the task of analysing the barriers to female leadership role to a position of investigating measures that can be implemented to promote female advancement in academic leadership.

### **Cultural Norms and Practices**

The patriarchal culture that is firmly rooted in society has long been observed and continues to be observed as a major barrier to women's advancement to positions of authority. This patriarchal culture manifests itself in the form of stereotypes that are prescribed relating to the male and female genders. These stereotypes are said to have originated from the belief system that is aimed at conserving the privilege, power and culture of society. The patriarchal system is noted to be biased against women and as a result creates inequalities between the genders. For example, culture often depicts men as powerful and women as weak (Mestry and Schidt, 2012). It is suggested that the gender differences between men and women are passed down to various generations through the socialisation process and then through the various developmental stages in life. Under the socialisation process sex differences in roles and gender identity are acquired through different learning processes such as imitation, reinforcement and modelling. Children learn and acquire gender stereotypes termed as acceptable behaviour relevant to their gender when boys learn from watching other men and boys, and girls from watching other women and girls (Cleveland, Stockdale, and Murphy, 2000). Consequently, the assigning of roles and selection of

occupations defined as suitable for a particular sex type is often regarded as a result of the socialisation process.

Another study explains the influence of culture in terms of the Social Role Theory. According to this theory, men and women take on the social roles that society has prescribed for each sex. The theory further explains that the roles are defined by stereotypes that society has approved as acceptable behaviour for men and women (Gage, Mumma and Fritz, 2004). However, it can be argued that the roles that each gender has to observe do not only affect the individual as suggested by the above studies, but affect others. For example, research has indicated that in addition to roles affecting the individual, they also affect how individuals interact with each other including how resources are allocated in the society. The study further suggested that the gender system represents a strong conservative system that leads to the production of gender inequalities at various levels in the society (Correll, 2001). It has been argued that gender roles provide a basis for other power relations across ethnic groups, religion and social class and that it is difficult to bring about change in society because of the constant support for gender roles (Cleveland, Stockdale, and Murphy, 2000).

The effects of the socialisation process can be observed in education. Some of the barriers women encounter in education are said to be the product of gender stereotypes that society holds about men and women. Most gender stereotypes convey messages that claim a natural difference between men and women. According to Inandi (2009) women are prevented from promotion to managerial positions due to the gender stereotypes held



about the sexes. He further suggests that more often within most cultures, gender stereotypes stipulate that the position of educational leadership should be held by men. Inandi's study confirms earlier findings of Whitaker and Lane (1990) on the differing stereotypes held about the sexes. They reveal that; as a result of the socialisation process, males are socialised to strive for professional advancement while females are socialised to take on the traditional role of mothers and carers through nurture and support of others. It can be argued that little has changed over the past decades; as recent research indicates that men continue to dominate in management and leadership positions. A recent study reveals that the patriarchal culture manifests itself in many schools, because traditional stereotypes often associate school headship and principalship to males. According to this study, such myths contribute greatly to women's underrepresentation and affect their performance as leaders (Mestry and Schidt, 2012). Correll (2001) argues that when a certain degree of competence and skill is required for a particular job, it influences gender differences in views regarding the competence to execute the task. Research, therefore, concludes that because women have learned that power is associated to men, most lack the confidence to take on positions of power (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). Since society continually regards men as better leaders, efforts to bring about equal opportunities — that are stressed by most organisations and laws governing a country — are stifled. Consequently, the attribution of dominant roles to men has serious negative connotation for female teachers. Thus, cultural values, norms and beliefs reveal immense discrimination against women in their professional roles in academic settings, and constitute a major impediment to achieving gender equality and equity in educational establishments (Allana, Asad and Sherali, 2010). Other factors associated with cultural stereotypes include the reluctance, and at times rejection, of women leaders by men. The male dominant culture in

organisations and familial problems act as a barrier in preventing women to advancing up the hierarchy (Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005) (to be discussed later in this section).

### **Institutional Factors**

Since the 1990s, studies have constantly reported that organisational and structural barriers contribute to women's underrepresentation in management and leadership roles. Most research reveals evidence on the effect of how organisational structures, values and norms hinder women's career development. Schein (2001) found out that one of the most common impediments to women's career advancement is the continual labelling of management being male. The study argues, therefore, that the association of management with masculinity implies that male applicants will be highly favoured compared to female applicants when applying for positions of leadership. Ridgeway (2001) confirms this view by stating that academic institutions evaluate men more favourably than women in terms of competence to a management position. Many studies conclude that despite organisational and legal changes made for the past two decades, the belief that men make more successful managers than women still prevails (Acker, 2009; Litmanovitz, 2011; Smith, 2011; Grant Thornton International Business Report; IBR 2013).

Another way in which the organisational structure is found to impact on women's advancement is through the occupational gender segregation that excludes women from networks that are essential in supporting career development. The professional ethics of most institutions is observed to place emphasis on models that strengthens male

managerial capacities such as in structural, financial and mechanical matters. The absence of women in these formal networks makes it difficult for them to attain management positions (Gage, Mumma and Fritz, 2004). To this end, Potek (2009) notes that the school environment has failed to provide female teachers with role models that can assist in their career progress. Potek argues that the lack of formal and informal networks, including the lack of mentors and lack of support from senior executives, places an invisible ceiling to women's career advancement. Litmanovitz (2011) suggests that the socialised belief that women are perfect for teaching and men as leaders has resulted in a situation where very few women can be found in leadership positions. This has a detrimental impact on women because there are few female leaders who can act as role models for other female teachers that have an interest in educational leadership.

The concept of a glass ceiling, which is a product of both people's attitudes and biases present within establishments, has been a reoccurring concern identified by a number of studies. The glass ceiling is defined as *"invisible and insurmountable barriers that exist between women and levels of top management and that prevent women from making progress"* (Inandi, 2009; pg. 1144). In addition, Wright, Baxter and Birkelund (1997; pg. 164) notes that the glass ceiling *"applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women"*. Wright et al adds that women may be given the opportunity to attain leadership positions but employers and top-managers most at times are very hesitant to allow women to take on positions of real power. As a result, they concluded that women are kept away from assuming top level management positions. Similarly, Acker (2009) suggest that the underrepresentation of women in higher ranks in

management is a result of the glass ceiling that blocks women from opportunities to progress in their careers. The study further notes that even though some women do occupy upper level positions in organisations, only a small number of women actually assume the most powerful positions. From the analysis of the above studies on the glass ceiling, it can be suggested that the hindrances in terms of discrimination and disadvantages that women face at work increases severely as they move up their career ladder. In addition, it can be argued that the problems women face are associated to their gender and have no relation to their capacity to implement the tasks that comes with the position. Therefore, it can be argued that women are prevented from reaching high levels of power or upper management because of their gender, not because they lack the ability to be successful in the position.

A number of reasons have been advanced highlighting the importance of having women at the top of organisations. Simpson (1997) pointed out that the absence of women in top positions is disadvantageous for women at the bottom, as this makes work life more challenging for them as decisions will be arrived at mainly by men who may be ignorant of the experiences of women. According to Inandi (2009) the gender gap at the lower ranks of organisation will be extremely small when women occupy top management positions. In addition, Acker 2009 (cites Cohen and Huffman, 2007) found that the presence of women in higher positions is extremely important in curbing gender discrimination within organisations. Thus, the presence of women in leadership positions is not only advantageous to the individual women, but will equally benefit other women within the organisation that have not got a voice to influence decisions that affect them.

The access to acquiring new skills and attaining promotion is based on the location of staff within an organisation. It can be observed that certain roles within one's job can either provide opportunities for upward movement or ensuring a static position. Some of the roles that female teachers occupy act as a barrier to their career advance. Most of the roles have no prospects for progression. According to a study by UNESCO (2006) a majority of women are said to teach 'soft' subjects and often at lower grade levels. These women are seen, therefore, as occupying a lower status since majority of men teach 'hard' subjects such as science and mathematics. This implies that men are still in control, occupying higher status because they are seen teaching at higher grade levels and prestigious subjects. UNESCO concluded that women's low status suggests that they would be left out of the decision-making process that could act as a spring board to moving up the career hierarchy. As far back in the late 90s women were said to be assigned "*stereotypical 'role traps' which include the mother role (comfortable and caring), the seductress (sexy and dangerous), the pet (sweet but incompetent) and, if the woman refuses to conform to any of these, the iron maiden (asexual and strident)*" (Simpson, 1997; pg.122). All of these roles reveal the kind of relationship women have with male co-workers that undermines the power they have at both personal and professional levels. UNESCO (2006) is of the view that women are disadvantaged when it is claimed that they have a natural affinity with children and are subsequently allocated roles that relates to women's nurturing and caring capacity. According to UNESCO this promotes the reproduction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes, which stress women's innate qualities rather than their pedagogical skills that are essential for career progress. It can be argued that until gender stereotypes within society that associate women with nurturing roles are challenged; women, especially those in traditional societies, are less likely to be promoted. The likelihood that the situation will

change in the coming years is very slim given that the same issues that were identified two decades ago still present themselves to date.

Aside from gender or sex segregation roles, a study has identified another concern within institutions that acts as a barrier to women's career advancement. Collard and Reynolds, (2004) found out that the size of an institution is crucial; they believe that women often teach in schools which are small while men teach in schools that are highly populated. They argue that there are more prospects for teachers in a big school to move up and occupy management positions because of the presence of many departments compared to small schools with very few departments.

Women work in a domain that is claimed to be suitable for them (classroom teachers and working with young children). Yet, as discussed they face numerous challenges. Also, women who manage to find themselves in senior leadership positions are often confronted with serious structural barriers, mainly as a result of the male-dominant culture present within most institutions of learning. Ridgeway (2001) talks of the status belief theory, which describes the kind of people that are expected to occupy a specific position of authority in which it is seen as their legitimate authority. The theory states that women's attempts to assume positions of authority provokes resistance in institutions which hold the belief that power and authority is a male prerogative. This is consistent with Simpson's (1997) observation; that males in positions of authority work collaboratively with other male co-workers but they make every effort to exclude women from management positions. As a consequence, women who struggle to make it to the top find their power and effectiveness weakened due to the failure to establish collaboration with others (Ridgeway, 2001). In view

of this, Inandi (2009) notes that the determination of men in authority objecting to working with women in positions of power promotes a culture of male-dominance in institutions. It can be suggested that the fact that men object to working with women in positions of authority and power may explain the reason why some women are reluctant to apply for promotion. Thus, in support of Inandi's assertion, the objection of women may contribute to higher number of males in leadership positions.

Conversely, the career path of males leading to management positions is smooth with little or no rejection. A study on the barriers to promotion and career development of women teachers in England reveals that male head teachers have an advantage over female head teachers to advance in their careers because of their gender. One of the male teachers expressed that; *"I'm sure there are incidents where the man gets appointed because he's a man and perhaps there was a woman who would have fitted the role better but then the school thinks of the benefits of having a man"* (Male participant cited in Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005, p. 92). It can be suggested that women who find themselves in the prescribed traditional male domain often encounter challenges in their attempt to assert authority over men. It can also be argued that the resistance put forth by male managers against female managers supports an assumption that managerial effectiveness is solely characteristic of males. Thus, the studies of Simpson, Ridgeway, and Inandi (pg.483) strongly confirm the assertion that *"think manager—think male"* is commonly held by society, especially among men. Women, therefore, are discounted as leaders because of the association of leadership to masculinity. In view of these problems it can be argued that it

would probably be difficult for women to achieve and maintain leadership positions, particularly in higher management.

### **Leadership Styles**

As noted earlier various organisations, including governments for a while, have been advocating for equality for the sexes with much focus on equality for women. This has led to changes within various organisations. Literature on women and leadership reveals that changing the culture of organisations is crucial for women's empowerment in terms of their leadership development. The behaviour of men and women in leadership positions has generated so much debate. It is a universal phenomenon that females undergo several more obstacles on their journey to leadership than males. However, there are many arguments surrounding the behaviour of both sexes when they get to occupy a leadership position. Literature reveals that males and females possess different leadership styles; with female's style of leadership being seen as not as effective as males. Some researchers have come up with a set of attributes that are characteristic of female leadership which include: subjective, tolerant, empathy, intuitive, people-oriented, non-competitive, fair-minded, caring, and non-judgemental (Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005; Potek, 2009; Coleman, 2010). Other researchers have classified the characteristics of leadership styles in to two categories; communal and agentic attributes. Studies have distinguished between general communal characteristics and those that are specific to the work place. The general communal characteristics include; affectionate, nurturing, helpful, kind, soft-spoken, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, caring, nurturing, helpful, gentle, and friendly (Nguyen, 2012; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). In addition to the general characteristics, Eagly



and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) suggest that there are some characteristics that are specific to the workplace. These include: seeking solutions to interpersonal problems, speaking cautiously, not drawing attention to oneself, considering the opinion of others, accepting others' direction, supporting and comforting others. Women are thought to exercise communal characteristics and therefore these are generally seen as feminine attributes. These communal characteristics are often considered to be inappropriate for effective leadership and management. Since women are claimed to possess these characteristics, Nguyen (2012) suggests that this hinders their career advancement.

With regards to agentic style of leadership the following attributes were identified as associated to it; aggressive, normative, controlling, self-confident, disciplined, objective, assertive, competitive, independent, formal, influential, dominant, and conformist (Gage, Mumma and Fritz, 2004; Coleman, 2010). Again Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) identified agentic characteristics that are specific to the work place including: making suggestions, influencing other people, speaking boldly, initiating activities, competing for attention. These agentic characteristics are said to be predominantly possessed by men and therefore are generally considered as masculine attributes. These agentic characteristics are perceived as beneficial to management (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001).

As a result of the assumed distinct leadership styles utilised by both genders, it is suggested that men and women would lead differently. Parsaloi and Steyn (2013) reveal that female leaders are viewed more negatively than male leaders since they are thought to possess

characteristics that are not appropriate for effective leadership. It can be argued that because of the superiority attached to male leadership style, women leaders will be under pressure to adopt leadership behaviours that are classified as masculine if they are to succeed in management.

Though accepting Parsaloi and Steyn's assertion that women lead different lives from men, Potek (2009) argues strongly that the differences are not inborn but are an outcome of the socialisation process where women are socialised to nurture and care for other people. The study therefore asserts that the low numbers of women in leadership positions can be associated with gender stereotypes that society holds about women's leadership ability, including the reluctance and sometimes refusal by women to apply for promotion. Following this line of reasoning, it can be argued that the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions cannot be associated to differences in leadership styles. Since the leadership styles attributed to men are not innate they can be learned and applied by women as well.

Even though past studies have indicated that various leadership styles are adopted distinctively by women and men, claiming one to be superior (agentic) over the other (communal), a recent study nevertheless concluded that there is no leadership style that can be classified as correct. Mestry and Schimdt (2012) argue that various individuals will adopt different leadership styles in different situations. The study therefore maintains that for heads of academic institutions to determine the type of leadership to be adopted, note

should be taken of the situation in hand and the people involved. Mestry and Schimdt were not just interested in classifying various leadership styles and stating which is superior over the other, as other researchers did, but were interested in when to use a particular leadership style. In this respect they are assuming that each of the different leadership styles can be employed by both genders depending on the circumstances at hand.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

In addition to the barriers identified above, other obstacles hindering women from occupying management and leadership positions are attributed to familial responsibilities. Female teachers have two roles that they perform; their profession and family responsibilities. These two roles are in conflict with each other. From when a female is born she is socialised to nurture, care and support others. On top of performing these duties, as a teacher she is expected to keep up with the demands of the profession (Potek, 2009). Similarly, research indicates that women, especially those in traditional societies, bear the burden of family responsibilities more than men. Most often, because females are responsible for family responsibilities, this acts as a barrier to female teachers' career advancement. Studies from Nigeria (Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005), Ghana (Ammah, 2013), Turkey (Inandi, 2009), South Africa (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012), China (Rhoads and Gu, 2012), Kenya (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013) confirm that family responsibilities influence women's career development. These studies affirm that most female teachers face the challenge of accomplishing their roles as teachers and mothers or wives. Even from the perspective of developed societies, familial responsibilities are also a hindrance to women's career progress. In the UK (Moreau et al 2007; Conley and Jenkins, 2011) and in New

Zealand (Palmer et al, 2012) there are reports of female teachers, especially those with young children, finding it difficult to combine work, domestic and family responsibilities. The important thing to take from this is that no matter the location of a woman, family responsibilities (especially caring from young children — that are considered the prime responsibility of the woman) impacts negatively on a woman's career development prospects.

Even though there has been much emphasis and support for flexible work and work-life balance for female teachers, work interruption due to familial responsibilities constitutes a major setback to women's career development. Research has shown that career breaks associated with childbirth, caring for children, and part-time work are some of the major barriers to women's career advancement. Nguyen's (2012) study reveals that female teacher's experiences interjections in their jobs such as working part-time and taking days off to meet family needs. As a consequence, female teachers are regarded as not having enough work experience due to career breaks and part-time work and that they put in less number of work hours compared to men. In effect this is found to hinder their career development. The female teachers in the study thus identified family responsibilities as the major obstacle to career development.

Similar to Nguyen's assertion, Litmanovitz (2011) strongly suggests that having career breaks is detrimental for career development as this will mean that women will not have enough experience compared to men who have been in work full time — putting in many

hours of work. This then places men at an advantageous position to compete for leadership roles as compared to women. Research notes that men have the advantage of being promoted when an opportunity comes up since they are continually on the job, meanwhile women may miss this opportunity while they are on a break (OECD, 1998). The study concluded that since women tend to have more of a combination of part-time teaching and career breaks than men, their career development is hindered. In the analyses of Litmanovitz and OECD the relationship between the length and quantity of time put into work appears to be very significant determinant of career development.

However, Litmanovitz (2011) argues that there have been changes to traditional gender roles with men becoming more involved in family responsibilities, though admitting that most women still hold the perception that they have the principal responsibilities of taking care of their families. These women believe that in a situation where one of the parents have to step back and take care of these responsibilities, it would be them — the women, and not their partners or husbands. Other studies report that women are too scared of getting promoted for the reason that promotion comes with many responsibilities; problems may arise in their families because of less attention paid to family duties (Nguyen, 2012). There is no doubt that in Turkey, the society believes that for a woman, being a good spouse and mother are a woman's utmost priorities (Inandi, 2009). This is confirmed in a report by International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) in which, following a conference held on 'Women and Justice in Istanbul', the former president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, declared that; *"Our religion (Islam) has defined a position for women (in society): motherhood"* (2014; pg.1). Thus, it can be suggested that such stereotypical notions on how

women should function may negatively influence the choices women make regarding their employment, which in effect influences their career development. Also, it can be argued that by reason these negative messages regarding the role of women in society are coming from a person with the highest authority — a man — they may serve to preserve and reproduce gender inequalities at work that hinders women's career advancement.

Women find balancing work and family responsibilities a source of pressure. Research indicates that for some women considering taking a leadership role is a huge challenge since this will lead to additional stress. Female teachers with young children are found to be more concerned about looking after their children and remaining within the classroom setting; they hesitate to seek promotion into management position in order to strike a balance between work and family responsibilities (Inandi, 2009). This, therefore, brings us to the discussion on some of the personal factors that hinder women's career advancement.

### **Personal Factors**

A number of researchers found that the reason for women's underrepresentation in leadership positions was associated to individual factors such as lack of confidence, preference for classroom teaching, socialisation and sex segregation. Since the 80s and 90s research reports that female teachers seek promotion less than male teachers because women lack the confidence. The same research further suggests that the career paths of women have often taken the route of internal promotion as a result of encouragement from authorities, as opposed to men who are more positive and likely to apply for positions of

leadership and attain career advancement (Evetts, 1989; OECD, 1998). In another research, women received encouragement from other female head teachers, female colleagues and senior administrators to apply for leadership positions (Sherman, 2000). To date, this same pattern towards women's promotion can be observed. Recent research reports that most women still do not want to apply for leadership positions, just like the women in the past decades. A study on factors that impede the advancement of women into leadership positions in primary schools reveals that the underrepresentation of women in leadership position is as a result of lack of ambition as well as lack of confidence and fear of failure (Chabaya *et al.* 2009). Female teachers' career paths are often unplanned and they will only seek for promotion after being encouraged by others (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). From the above studies it can be argued that women's decision to stay away from leadership positions cannot be attributed to their inability to manage the position, but is an indication of lack of confidence and therefore they do not see themselves as leaders. Smith (2011) found that the group of female teachers in his study depended on encouragements before seeking to apply for leadership positions. This group have been described by Smith (2011) as 'protégées'. Similar to Parsaloi and Steyn's suggestion (2013), Smith asserts that the career path of this group of women is externally defined. The protégées depend on senior authorities for support through encouragements, suggestions and mentoring regarding their career development, rather than taking the initiative to further develop their careers. Another distinguishing attribute of this group of women is that they lack confidence; they do not perceive themselves as having the ability and potential to strive for leadership positions (Smith, 2011). It can be suggested that an influential factor in the development of women's careers is the support received from others. However, in an environment where

the male-dominant culture exists, it is likely that women will not receive such encouragement and support needed to develop their careers.

Research has established that one of the reasons for female teacher's reluctance to apply for promotion to leadership positions is because of fear of success which puts women's personal lives at risk. A study found out that a majority of women are in constant fear of the adverse effect they may encounter should they venture to enter a domain that is considered to be a male prerogative. They are scared of losing their femininity as well as encountering disapproval and social rejection from society. As a result the study concluded that women will still choose to maintain a low profile even if they meet the criteria to apply for higher positions (Gobena, 2014). Even though it is widely held that women have a low self-esteem and lack the confidence to assume leadership positions, it can be argued that the reluctance by society, especially men (as discussed earlier in this section), to see women in positions of power may constitute the main contributing factor as to why women choose not to seek promotion but maintain a low profile.

Another general barrier that affects female teacher's participation in school leadership that operates at an individuals' level relates to women's hesitance about putting themselves forward for leadership positions because of their desire to stay within the classroom setting with the children. Smith (2011) clearly categorised different groups of teachers: Politicized Leaders, Pragmatists, and Pupil-Centred teachers. The main characteristics of politicized leaders are that they are extremely motivated and possess a strong sense of mission and purpose, as seen in their high aspirations to gain status and power in order to make a difference in their lives and those of others. Regarding the pragmatist type of leaders, their



main characteristic is that careers are fitted around other preferences or responsibilities. More often childcare, family and responsibilities are given top priority; but in some instances a partner's job and health related issues or a partner's career are very influential. The women in this category are usually willing to assume leadership positions only when they can strike a balance between their work and family roles. The third category is the pupil-centred teachers. Those belonging to this group have a high affection for the achievement and welfare of children. They look upon themselves as nurturers and obtain a great deal of job satisfaction in their interaction with the children. They usually prefer to stay in the classroom with children rather than seek leadership positions (Smith, 2011).

In a study on the barriers to promotion and career development of women teachers in England, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2005) found that women's primary objective for entering the profession was to have contact with the children. The women in the study therefore perceived a headship position as distancing themselves from teaching children, because this contradicts their primary motive of entering the teaching profession. This is further confirmed by Litmanovitz's (2011) study, where women expressed the view that they entered the teaching profession because of their desire to work with children and that taking up a leadership position is external to the sphere of teaching. In addition, Thornton and Bricheno (2000) asserts that for some women who gain more job satisfaction from interacting with co-workers, assuming a headship position takes away such satisfaction as the position is often isolated. Similarly, MacMillan (1999) notes that women gain more job satisfaction in the classroom from teaching children than men do. MacMillan's study concludes that women teachers may be reluctant to leave the pleasing classroom environment to take on leadership positions where the environment is often associated

with work-pressure, stress and conflicts. Further, Parsaloi and Steyn (2013) found that most women teachers had concerns regarding the responsibilities related to the headship position and therefore preferred to stay within their comfort zones where they can avoid conflict, stress and many responsibilities.

Following the above factors acting as barriers to female leadership in education, it can be observed that these contribute to the underrepresentation of women in school leadership. The situation has been observed as not only detrimental to female teachers but can be seen to indirectly affect the perception children hold regarding leadership. It is reported that women's absence in decision-making positions creates an unfavourable atmosphere in schools, particularly as it damages the aspirations of the girls in becoming leaders within the educational milieu (OECD, 1998). In addition, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) suggest that the nature of the underrepresentation of female teachers in school leadership positions poses a serious problem. They are of the strong opinion that the disproportion of power communicates to children that it is rational for men to occupy leadership positions. They therefore argued that because a school is an institution through which gender divisions are reproduced, issues relating to gender imbalances in power needs to be addressed. In line with this, UNESCO/UNICEF (2005) has called on governments to encourage women to take on leadership positions and also demand that society should change their behaviour and attitude towards women teachers. In addition, Koch (2007) strongly suggests the need to break down gender stereotypes in schools in relation to leadership, as he recommends that this is crucial not only for teachers, but equally for the role model capacity that they portray to children. It can be deduced from the studies of OECD (1998) and Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) that pupils are given the impression that female teachers are incapable of

being leaders. It can therefore be argued that the presence of women in educational leadership positions will create a positive impression in children that women are capable of being leaders.

## **Conclusion**

In summation, research has revealed that the underrepresentation of women is mainly a result of culture that produces gender stereotypes which are internalised and used as a means to exclude women from leadership positions. Other factors that have been identified to have arisen as a product of gender stereotypes include the institutionalised male-dominant culture that alienates women from leadership positions and the difficulties experienced by women in balancing work and domestic responsibilities. Apart from the above barriers related to culture, other factors were identified as acting as a barrier to women's leadership. These include long hours of work, lack of mentors and networking opportunities, and lack of training geared towards the promotion of leadership. All of the above barriers represent external factors that work against women's progress. However, there were also indications of women themselves acting as a hindrance to their own progress, as revealed by the reluctance and wilful objection of female teachers to take on leadership roles because of their desire to stay in the classroom with children, and also because of the challenges incurred in combining childcare and other family responsibilities with leadership responsibilities.

This section has argued that the problems women encounter are associated to their gender and have no relation to their capacity to implement any task that comes with a leadership position. Research clearly establishes that leadership styles assumed to be associated with males that are considered as appropriate for leadership are not inborn and therefore, can be learned and applied by women as well. Research has further evidenced that the reluctance by society, especially men, to see women in positions of power may constitute the main contributing factor as to why women have a low self-esteem, lack confidence and chose not to seek promotion but maintain a low profile. It has been argued that the presence of women in educational leadership positions in schools will create a positive impression in children (especially young girls) that women are capable of being leaders.

One of the objectives of the present study was to examine the extent to which primary schools are masculinised in terms of management and leadership. This section has argued that even though statistics reveal that the number of women in leadership positions has increased in primary schools, looking at the overall picture women are still significantly underrepresented in these positions. Faced with all of the obstacles, it is of critical importance that measures are employed to permit women — especially those who desire to advance their careers — to achieve their aspirations. The following section seeks to address this position by investigating measures that can be implemented to promote women's advancement in academic leadership.

#### **1.2.4 MEASURES FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION**

Education, as discussed earlier, is understood to be feminised with the predominance of females as classroom teachers. Not only do women make up a great proportion of teachers

but also there have been recent reports that the enrolment of women into higher education exceeds that of men (Morley, 2013; Badat, 2014). However, this greater number of women in education and the increase in the number of female students has not been translated to an increase in the number of women in senior leadership positions within education. The glass-ceiling has been used to explain why few women attain top leadership positions within education. In the previous section it was observed that a number of barriers including — organisational culture that promotes male dominance, male's objection to working with females, balancing career, familial responsibilities, lack of mentors and lack of networking opportunities — have all acted as an invisible ceiling hindering women from attaining leadership positions.

Prior to examining some of the measures to promote female leadership in education, it is important to consider why it is crucial to have women in leadership positions. Dicketts (2014) suggests that every organisation needs a diverse senior team and therefore women will bring in different ideas, knowledge, experiences and skills that will be essential in moving the organisation forward. Looking at it from an educational perspective, as mentioned earlier in this study, having women in senior leadership positions such as head teachers and education directors will contribute to the breaking down of negative gender stereotypes in schools in relation to leadership. It is maintained that children will come to the understanding that women are just as capable of being leaders as men (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2007; Koch, 2007). As a result, Dicketts (2004) suggests that women leaders need to take charge over their lives by stepping up to challenge these stereotypes as this will contribute to raising the aspirations for other women and young people aiming to

have a career in a leadership role. However, in the previous chapter research indicated that structural and cultural barriers equally hinders women's leadership. It can therefore be argued that changes are required not just from women, as Dickett suggests, but that structural and cultural changes are necessary as well.

This section will be focused on identifying measures aimed at overcoming obstacles to women's leadership role, in other words, strategies for enhancing women's effectiveness as leaders. The measures will include structural and cultural changes as well as changes at personal levels. Structural and cultural changes will be in the form of professional development through training in leadership, stress management strategies, mentoring and networking, and changes to the male-dominance culture. At a personal level, the strategies proposed are changes to individual values and attitudes. However, an additional strategy that cuts across structural and cultural domains is family support mechanisms at both structural and familial levels. The study will argue that lack of policies is not the principal challenge to women's leadership but that actually implementing policies is the main concern and suggest that more attention is required at this stage. The study also argues that changes should initially be made at structural and cultural levels to facilitate changes at personal levels. Finally, this section will argue that rather than focusing on a particular area, changes should take place in all three areas; cultural, structural and individual levels all of which hinder women from assuming leadership position.

### **Leadership Training**

One of the contributing factors to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions as explored earlier in the previous section relates to women's reluctance, and in some cases total refusal, to seek promotion. However, Parsaloi and Steyn (2013) argue that reluctance to apply for leadership positions could be associated to the fact that women lack leadership training. Arguably, training would boost confidence in female teachers and encourage them to seek leadership roles. There are several calls from international organisations and researchers for education authorities to design and implement both formal and informal training for female teachers on leadership (UNESCO, 2006; INEE, 2010; Ward and Eddy, 2013). Training and continuing professional development are noted to be extremely crucial for female educators. Vineall (2002) defines continuing professional development as *"any activity that increases the skills, knowledge or understanding of teachers and their effectiveness in schools"* (p. 28). In light of this, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2005) suggest that through continuing professional development including targeted training such as in leadership, assertiveness and public speaking, women will be better equipped to apply for leadership positions, thereby fostering their career development.

It is believed that because men have occupied leadership positions for so long, women would need targeted training in leadership in order to get rid of the conception that they lack the ability to lead. The eventual development and implementation of training on leadership for women would equip them with effective leadership skills. It is believed that these skills will enable women to increase their competencies as leaders, and would go a long way to ensure that women have the confidence they need to gain entrance into the masculinised world of leadership. Consequently, the study suggests that this would resolve

the problem of imbalances in power within educational institutions (Litmanovitz, 2011) particularly in addressing gender imbalances in staff at senior levels (INEE, 2010).

Apart from developing training on leadership for women, several studies have indicated the necessity for governments to encourage adequate representation of women in leadership roles in education by means of designing policies that will promote the qualification of women to assume leadership positions. Examples of such policies include policies that will be geared towards the enrolment of women into higher institutions of learning, and policies that will provide financial assistance to women in higher institutions (Sherman, 2000; Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005; Ward and Eddy, 2013). However, one of the studies further points out that colleges and universities equally have a role to play in promoting female leadership development. Ward and Eddy (2013) suggest that leadership development programmes should be set up in colleges, and that discussions about gender, work, and family should be incorporated into the programme. In order to encourage even more greater access of women to leadership positions, Dicketts (2014) strongly suggests that universities should not only create leadership programmes for women, but should also encourage women with aspirations of becoming leaders to enrol in these programmes and to provide students with female professors that would act as mentors and role models. It can be observed that Sherman, (2000); Aladejana and Aladejana, (2005); and Ward and Eddy, (2013) were interested in strategies that will create awareness on leadership and offer females the opportunity to gain qualifications that would act as a spring board to be eligible for a leadership position. Dicketts was more concerned with practical strategies that will enable females to gain experience that would facilitate their leadership capacity.



## **Stress Management**

Research reveals that teaching is among one of the most stressful professions. In responding to a questionnaire requiring teachers to rate their stress experience, a quarter of them indicated that teaching is an extremely stressful profession (Kyriacou, 2001). Similarly, according to a report by the National Union of Teachers (NUT, 2008), teaching was found to be the most stressful profession in the UK. Indeed, they reported that the level of stress experienced by teachers is twice that of all other professions. This claim is supported by a recent statement from the northwest regional secretary for the National Union of Teachers, Avis Gilmore, who revealed that *“For many years teaching has been the profession with the second highest levels of work related stress after those working in health and social care,”* (Fitzgerald, 2014, pg.1). Previous literature revealed that teachers experience stress as a result of excessive workload and difficulties experienced in trying to balance both career and family responsibilities (MORI, 2003; Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Okonkwo, 2013).

According to a report by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, (UNDAW) (2010) family responsibilities constitute one of the major obstacles to women’s labour force participation. In view of this, Calabress (2001) emphasises on the necessity to redefine the role of female teachers by policy makers. Calabress suggests that role redefinition should consider two elements: firstly assessing the physical and emotional

needs of female teachers; and secondly assessing the needs of the institution. The study cautions that by failing to meet these needs the school will continue to promote a culture of burnout and stress among female teachers, and that individuals suffering from these will be incapable of producing the desired results expected of their position. Similarly, Cinamon and Rich (2005) assert that for female teachers to maintain a balance between their career and family responsibilities, educational administrators need to create a suitable professional environment that will permit them to realise their goals in both areas. Just like Calabress, they warned that failure to create an appropriate working environment will result in teachers stress frustration. As a result, this may eventually lead to teachers opting for part-time work or at its worst quitting the profession. What can be drawn from the above analyses is that structural support in the form of creating a positive work environment is crucial for the effective functioning of female teachers, especially in promoting their movement up the career ladder.

Research has shown that career breaks associated with childbirth, caring for children, and part-time work are some of the major barriers to women's career advancement since they are regarded as not having enough experience compared to men who worked full time, putting in many hours of work (Nguyen's, 2012). However, Dicketts (2014) suggests that institutions should pay more emphasis on results and impact rather than dwelling on the number of hours worked. Nguyen further argues that the success of an organisation should be defined in terms of working smartly and effectively and the emphasis on the number of hours worked should become less of an issue. In support of Dicketts' argument, it can be suggested that if institutions continue to associate the qualification for being in a leadership

position to the number of hours worked, this puts women in an unfair situation; particularly because women have always been, and continue to be, largely responsible for childcare and other family responsibilities. This implies that it would probably be difficult, if not impossible for the majority of women to occupy senior positions in institutions if focus remains about the quantity rather than the quality of work realised.

Research has shown that female teachers bear undesirable consequences as a result of work-family conflicts. The consequences identified include occupational and non-occupational negative outcomes. Occupational consequences, among others include high job dissatisfaction, less commitment to organisation, low occupational well-being, an intent to quite the profession, lateness, inadequate performance in job roles, burnout, and high turnover. Non-occupational outcomes include; family dissatisfaction and distress, general psychological strain, increases in life dissatisfaction, marital dissatisfaction, depression, physical/somatic symptoms, and burnout (Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Palmer et al.'s, 2012; Okonkwo, 2013). Following the stress and burn out experienced by teachers, there has been the quest for institutions to establish a healthier work environment to promote a culture of work-life balance for its employees and female teachers in particular. According to Cinamon and Rich (2005) this may be realised by bringing to organisational managers' understanding the effects of work-family conflict on women's careers and wellbeing as well as identifying the advantages of implementing family-friendly policies. Examples of family-friendly policies may include flexible working aided by the use of technological development (using Google docs — a web-based application for creating documents where files can be accessed on any

computer) (Dicketts, 2014); working on a term time contractual basis, especially increased opportunities for part-time work and job sharing between partners (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). It is suggested that family-friendly policies can play a major role in permitting teachers to combine both work and family responsibilities and equally prevent teachers, especially women with young children, from interrupted career breaks (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). In addition, Palmer et al (2012) suggests that the development and implementation of programmes and policies promoting work-life balance would result *“to decrease occupational stress, increase job satisfaction and produce better occupational performance reflected in less time away from work, better performance while at work and lower turnover”* (p. 1056).

What becomes clear from the analysis on strategies to reduce teacher stress and burnout is that academic organisations have a greater responsibility of developing and implementing several strategies to reduce work overload. Flexible working was suggested more often in literature as one of the strategies, but as noted earlier flexible working by opting to work part-time is detrimental to women’s career development because of the less number of hours put into work. It can be argued that part-time work could be advantageous for women with no career development prospects but unsuitable for those aspiring for a leadership position. It can be suggested therefore that in addition to flexible working opportunities, government and educational organisations should focus more on implementing other measures suggested, such as developing services on the use of information technology and providing affordable day care centres [to be discussed later] that would benefit all groups of women.

The other area identified as a contributing factor to creating stress among teachers is workload. Literature revealed that many teachers identified workload as the main reason for wanting to quit the teaching profession. A majority of teachers, particularly female teachers, are faced with the difficulty of being unable to separate job roles from family roles to the extent that teaching work is extended to the home (Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Okonkwo, 2013). Faced with these challenges, female teachers are left with three options; reduce their working hours, quit the job or leave temporary till their care responsibilities lessens (Smithers and Robinson, 2003).

In order to prevent any of the above three options from taking place, it is suggested that schools should implement strategies to manage and reduce work overload. One of the strategies suggested is for schools to provide support staffs to carry out administrative tasks that are required of teachers (Vineall, 2002; Palmer et al, 2012). It should be noted that one of the elements identified as the reason for teachers' job dissatisfaction was the amount of paper work involved in teaching. The same studies also revealed that female teachers were reluctant to seek promotion because of the amount of paper work associated with managerial and leadership positions (Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Woodward, 2003). It is believed that support teachers play a key role in reducing workload for teachers. As Palmer et al notes, the provision of support staff will assist to reduce the number of hours teachers have to put in, and in effect reduce the work load since support staff will carry out most of the clerical tasks initially completed by permanent staff. Likewise, according to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as much as 20 per cent of teachers' time could be covered by support staff. DfES' guidelines outlined 25 tasks which were believed could

be offered to support staff. In view of the government's promise in 2002 to provide over 20,000 extra support staff in a period of four years, the DfES asserted that there was a great possibility that this would go a long way to reduce teachers' workload. However, this was dependent on the fact that the support staff would be trained, managed and posted into schools (Vineall, 2002). They could also employ more teachers; invest in PGCE courses to train and sponsor schools to take up newly qualified teachers.

It would seem that DfES's 'projected' vision is yet to be realised. As indicated previously, recent reports (Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Okonkwo, 2013) continue to reveal an increase in the workloads experienced by teachers. However, DfES did caution that significant results will only be achieved if support staff were trained, managed and deployed. It can be suggested that if these conditions are met, there is a possibility of achieving great results that would contribute to reducing teacher's workload and consequently attracting more women to apply for leadership positions — particularly as increased paper work was identified as one of the barriers hindering women from seeking promotion.

An additional measure proposed as very important is implementing health-related strategies to manage and reduce stress — basically, to promote teacher's health and general wellbeing. Most studies emphasised the role of counselling to achieve this objective. Seibt et al (2012) suggest that institutions should put in place programmes that would comprise of preventive and intervention mechanisms such as occupational medical examinations and psycho-therapeutic counselling for female teachers. This strategy aims to maintain a positive state of health. In addition, Calabress (2001) suggests that institutions

should establish support networks in the form of individual/group counselling or in-house training for female teachers battling with stress. Similarly, Palmer et al (2012) suggests that teachers should be taught about strategies to control and reduce stress and burnout. Seibt et al and Calabress' approach therefore sees external strategies, i.e. strategies to be developed by the government and schools, as crucial in tackling stress. Palmer et al, however, are more interested in recommending strategies that will enhance individual efforts to reduce stress.

One other measure identified that has long been operating to tackle stress through counselling was the establishment of a telephone 'helpline' jointly by the teacher unions, education authorities and the government. This 'helpline' known as 'teacherline', offers support by free telephone counselling to teachers struggling with stress related problems (Kyriacou, 2001; p. 32). Presently, this support agency is called the 'Teacher Support Network' (TSN). They operate a 24 hours service and are open seven days of the week. TSN strongly believe that no teacher should be left to deal with emotional stress on their own (TSN, 2015). However, it is quite shocking that even with TSN in place the level of stress faced by teachers is so far still high. It is, however, possible that teachers generally are not aware of the services available to assist them manage stress. If this is the case then institutions of learning have the duty to provide additional information and create more awareness on the services available for teachers in managing stress related problems.

### **Familial Support Mechanisms at both Structural and Family Levels**

Child care and other family responsibilities were identified by previous literature as constituting a barrier to women's leadership success either because of the difficulties involved in caring for family or because most employers are reluctant to offer women leadership opportunities for fear that they will be hindered by family demands. The literature on the experiences of female teachers did outline some of the difficulties that women face when trying to balance both work and family responsibilities. One of the studies mentioned that marriage and having young children limits women's control over their employment choices (UNDAW, 2010). In a study involving female teachers, most being classroom teachers, sacrificing career progression in order to meet the needs of their families was also cited (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). Similarly, in another study involving eight female head teachers, five of them were either single or divorced (Coleman, 2010). Thus it can be observed from the above studies that women pay a heavy price for being career minded and family orientated to the extent that they adopt a selfless attitude at the expense of either their personal or career achievements; or in some cases both.

Consequently, there have been requests for school organisations and government to set up mechanisms to support women with young children. The United Nations Development Agency for Women (UNDAW, 2010) recommends Governments to provide adequate-funded schemes for accessible and affordable childcare to teachers. Likewise, others have suggested that educational institutions should provide on-site day care centres for children of teachers (Calabress, 2001; Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; Litmanovitz, 2011). It is believed that the provision of these support mechanisms would make it possible for female teachers with young children to pursue senior leadership positions (Litmanovitz, 2011).



However, other studies have identified familial support as an important complementary element to assist women to reduce stress and eventually facilitate their career advancement prospects. UNESCO (2006) recommends the sharing of family responsibilities among women and their partners/husbands as very helpful. Their suggestion has indeed proved successful. For example, a female head teacher in Litmanovitz's study stated that she was able to focus on her work and work effectively because her husband was very supportive in helping out with some of the family commitments. Equally, in the same study, another female head teacher reported that she received much assistance from her mother at the beginning of her career and this made it possible for her to combine both raising her children and advancing in her career (Litmanovitz, 2011). Nguyen (2012) noted that women leaders in a number of studies declared that family support was integral to their success in becoming leaders. From the above analyses, the role of familial support appears to be extremely significant in facilitating female teachers' aspirations to advance their careers.

## **Mentoring**

An objective of the present study is to explore the measures to overcome barriers that hinder women from occupying leadership positions. In the course of reviewing literature, one of the factors identified as constituting a hindrance to women's educational leadership is the lack of mentors. Mentoring is recommended as vital to individual's aspiring to senior positions in education. Mentorship is defined as the *"special and favoured relationship that is cultivated whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both*

*personally and professionally*” (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, 2000; p. 5). Similarly, Enrich (1994) asserts that mentoring is an essential process, as it offers many opportunities for the mentees to gain professional skills as well as other important skills related to the profession such as educational management and administration (Enrich, 1994). Thus, from both definitions, one common element identified as beneficial is that the holistic development of the mentee.

In relation to women in education, mentors are very crucial as they have a positive influence on women who are aspiring for a position in educational leadership (Sherman, 2000). This is confirmed by another study revealing that the mentorship relationship is very instrumental in providing career guidance and encouragement to women who want to advance in their careers, particularly those with an interest in leadership, mentoring supports female teachers on how to become successful leaders (Ward and Eddy, 2013). Women leaders acknowledge that in order to overcome the barriers to attaining a leadership position in education, the use of a mentor is extremely important. In a study by Litmanvitz (2011) a majority of women leaders revealed that the use of a mentor was essential in providing encouragement, particularly in seeking applications for senior positions. The significant role of a mentor was also highlighted by the study of Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, (2005) in which many teachers expressed satisfaction with the success of their careers. As a result of the encouragement and support received from senior teachers, teacher educators, and local inspectors, the teachers had the motivation that they possess “what it takes to reach the top” (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; p. 86). Similarly, Nguyen (2012) cites Harries et al (2011) on a study investigating the career pathways of African American women in a

presidency post (local education governing body consisting of three individuals). Mentoring was found to be critical in providing information and opportunities that assisted these women to advance in their careers. Indeed, the importance of mentoring in women's careers has been described as a panacea for women aspiring for a position in the educational hierarchy (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, 2000). Consequently, it has been suggested that mentoring programmes should be formerly implemented in educational institutions. It is believed that pairing up women teachers with an aspiration for leadership positions with women in positions of power within education will provide them with the encouragement, guidance and support they need to succeed in a senior position (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, 2000; Litmanovitz, 2011). Likewise, Yoder (2001), strongly suggests that organisational agents should promote women's career advancement by providing them with mentors to support their effectiveness and that women should not be left on their own to run in the race of advancing their careers.

The analysis of the above studies reveals the very crucial role of mentoring in promoting women to occupy leadership positions as well as contributing to the effectiveness of women leaders. However, for Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000), to make such an overzealous claim; that introducing mentoring programmes on its own will promote female leadership; is an overstatement. There is no doubt that mentoring is crucial for career development, but mentoring on its own will not solve women's underrepresentation in leadership as research has indicated that there exist several other factors that act as a hindrance to women's leadership development. It can be argued that, a holistic approach is required to promote

women's career advancement that would include changes at structural, cultural, and individual levels.

Despite the above mentioned advantages of mentoring, research has established that there appears to be lack of mentors for women, particularly female mentors. Women have not been mentored extensively for leadership positions compared to men. Sherman (2000) suggests that one explanation for this is that when men do act as mentors, they prefer a protégé who is male. Sherman further points out that the justification for male mentors choosing to work with a male protégée is that the mentors want to avoid the sexual implication that is usually assumed to be attached to the relationship, especially sexual harassment. Another explanation is that male mentors feel more comfortable supporting a male protégé since some of the mentoring will take place within informal environments (Enrich, 1994). In addition, the lack of female mentors is associated to the scarcity of women in leadership positions (Dicketts, 2014). Murrill (2015) cautions that, if the male-to-male mentorship pattern continues to exist there is a possibility that a majority of upcoming female leaders will not have the opportunity to work with experienced mentors.

One of the objectives of the present study was to investigate measures that can be implemented to promote women to leadership position. One of the measures identified was mentoring that will enable women to break through the glass ceiling and attain leadership positions. Though there is evidence of this beneficial relationship, it can be argued that mentoring does not completely break the barriers women encounter. This is reflected in the

justifications above where men chose to mentor other men, and eventually there is a possibility that this will continue to widen the gender gap in power relations between men and women. It can also be suggested that for women to succeed through mentoring in breaking the glass ceiling, female mentors will have to double their efforts to take on more female protégés.

### **Networking**

Another method similar to mentoring identified as crucial in developing the capacities for women interested in leadership position is networking. The setting up of networks is suggested as a means of supporting women aspiring for a leadership role to meet with other female leaders (Sherman, 2000). Networking thus appears to be similar to mentoring in that they are both concerned with junior individuals interacting with seniors, though what differentiates them is that mentoring is a one-to-one relationship (mentoring) and networking is a group relationship (networking). Though mentoring and networking are both important for career advancement, Enrich (1994) argues that in relation to career development, networking has not got as much strength as mentoring. Enrich explains that networks expose individuals to be more visible within their profession and in the community, i.e. networks are important in providing support and nominations to its members; but mentoring equips the mentee with the necessary skills and experience that are crucial for the position sought for.

Nevertheless, networking has been regarded as less influential for women compared to men. Women sign up with women-only networks, which are often feminist and socio-cultural in nature. According to Enrich (1994) the implication is that not only are women-only networks less powerful, they are equally made up of females who have less power compared to males. Enrich therefore suggest that women will have to join networks comprising males since these networks have males possessing much power and influence that will facilitate their exposure to the community. In the same light, Murrill (2015) advises that women should embrace cross-gender networking to enable them to gain more power to advance their careers. This approach therefore sees the need for women to step out of their comfort zones and interact with more conventional networks that would provide the necessary support to gain more influence and advance in their careers.

### **Changes to Male-Dominance Culture**

Furthermore, another major impediment to women's advancement to positions of authority identified in the literature review is the patriarchal culture that is firmly rooted in society. This has contributed to a culture of male dominance within institutions where male senior managers refuse to work with other senior female managers. Research suggests that in order to redress this situation, school organisations should review their policies, rules, regulations, curricular and other mechanisms to establish a non-sexist environment for women to operate effectively and efficiently (Calabress, 2001).

The male-dominance culture in schools promotes gender stereotypes that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Gender stereotypes originate from the patriarchal system that seeks to preserve the culture of male-dominance in society. Some of the negative stereotypes identified in the literature include, among others, the beliefs that men are more powerful than women; that men make better leaders compared to women; that men possess innate qualities that are necessary for leadership position; that women are better suited for teaching children and therefore they should remain in the classrooms while men manage the institution. Consequently, these stereotypes are observed to act as a hindrance to women's career development. Women who have been able to succeed in the male-dominant work settings expressed the view that this has not been achieved without challenges. They acknowledge that gender inequality is firmly rooted within the educational setting, making it extremely difficult for women to survive and thrive within a leadership role (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). It is maintained that because social status and power are determined by gender, the career pathway of female teachers is already susceptible to challenges even before they begin their journey into a leadership role (Yoder, 2001). The above analysis thus sees gender stereotypes as embedded in the nature of men. This implies that in order to discard these stereotypes robust strategies need to be put in place.

One of the strategies recommended very strongly as a powerful approach to overcoming gender inequality is the process of gender mainstreaming. It is concerned with *“making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political,*

*economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated”* (UNESCO-IICBA, 2012; pg.7). According to the United Nations (UN), gender mainstreaming is a global approach to achieving gender equality and therefore should be implemented at all stages of development. In education, it is recommended that the design and implementation of all educational programmes, policies, and interventions needs to be gender sensitive (Allana, Asad and Sherali, 2010). Though admitting that gender should be mainstreamed in all the areas identified by Allana et al, the Council of Europe (2004) emphasised that mainstreaming should be implemented by all actors involved in policy making. Likewise, UNESCO (2006) suggests that gender responsive training should be organised for all decision-makers in education, including male and female teachers. UNESCO believes that this will challenge negative attitudes held by society and family and equally guarantee that educational institutions are women-teacher friendly. The Council of Europe (2014) notes that attention should be paid when delivering training to managers and teachers because past experiences has revealed resistances to both the concerns identified and strategies recommended. The Council therefore suggests that educational training programmes need to clearly outline the responsibilities of the schools in promoting gender equity and equality.

What can be gathered from the above studies is that confronting gender inequality is something that requires a lot of resources and commitment both at structural and individual levels. As mentioned in the previous chapter, though many interventions in terms of policies, laws, constitutions etc. have been instituted by many nations to fight gender equality in society, discrimination and stereotyping still continue to manifest in society and hinder women from progressing (Suguna, 2011; Mestry and Schmid, 2012). From this



assertion, it is clear that most institutions do actually have gender equality policies put in place but the problem lies at the implementation stage, and as the Council of Europe suggest, this is the area that requires considerable attention. This indicates that more responsiveness and resources should be directed towards the implementation of policies.

### **Changes in Individual Values and Attitudes**

So far, this literature review has been concerned with investigating mostly external measures to tackle some of the barriers faced by female educators to assuming leadership positions. The study will now examine some of the internal measures to facilitate women's career advancement. Some personal factors were identified by previous literature as constituting a barrier to women's advancement. These included their reluctance to apply for leadership positions reflected by their lack of confidence, ambition and fear of failure. It is suggested that women need to change their frame of mind; have confidence in themselves, believing that they possess the ability, competence and skills needed to occupy a leadership position (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). A study involving women aspiring for leadership positions in education revealed that even though they found themselves in an aggressive male-dominant environment, they were determined to make it to the top and presented themselves as confident and self-motivated (Nguyen 2012). In another study, attributes including confidence, ambition, being proactive, and drive were used by head teachers to describe themselves. They acknowledged that it is these attributes that have contributed to their success as head teachers and were looking forward to assume other leadership positions within the field of education (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005). It can be

maintained, therefore, that possessing personal skills and adopting a positive attitude are very instrumental for enhancing success in a masculinised environment.

However, Yoder (2001) argues that it is unfair to expect women to resolve challenges caused by structural inequality and suggests that less successful women will feel the guilt of self-blame; looking at the failure to advance in their careers as caused by individual factors rather than as caused by structural factors. The study concluded that in as much as personal effort is important this should be complemented with structural support to strike a balance between the two extremes. Similarly, Badat (2014) suggests that cultural, structural and attitudinal changes are needed to challenge inequality in the education sector to enable a greater representativeness of both genders in the field of education, and other sectors of the society at large. Thus, Yoder and Badat acknowledge that it is what society expects of women that pushes them to adopt negative attitudes towards leadership. It can be agreed with Badat that, for women to gain ground in leadership, change is required from structures, cultures, and individuals. It can be suggested that if change takes place at both structural and cultural levels, there is a possibility that this will lead to a change in values and attitudes towards female teachers in respect to leadership. Consequently, this may instil in female teachers the confidence to seek leadership positions.

## **Conclusion**

One of the major objectives of this study is to investigate measures that can be established to promote women's leadership in education. A number of strategies have been identified

that can be implemented. Some of the strategies proposed include; leadership training; stress management; mentoring and networking; familial support mechanisms at both structural and family levels, changes to male-dominance culture; and changes in individual values and attitudes. While most of the measures identified are specific to the educational sector (leadership training, changes in individual values and attitudes, and stress management) others have been more general (male-dominance culture, mentoring and networking). This approach was adopted in order to address gender concerns holistically.

Cultural stereotypes act as a barrier to women's advancement within educational structures. It has been argued that educational organisations need to put in place firm policies that will challenge the barriers women face as a result of their gender. This will in effect create a positive work environment for women to develop in their careers. From the literature review on 'the position of female educators; it was evident that many laws and policies have been put in place to combat gender inequality, especially in education for both students and teachers. I have connected this assertion to the recommendation that policies need to be put in place to challenge structural barriers to women's leadership. From this analysis, I have claimed that the problem is not the complete absence of policies, but that the government and educational institutions need to focus more and ensure that the policies put in place are actually implemented.

Research has indicated that women are reluctant to seek leadership positions because they lack confidence, ambition and are afraid of failure. It has been suggested that they need to

change their mind-set, adopt a positive attitude, be proactive, have ambition, and have confidence in themselves that they possess the ability, competence and skills required for leadership. In this way, it is claimed that this will enhance their success in the masculinised environment in which they find themselves. I have argued that women lack confidence because of the stereotypes held by society — men in particular — concerning women's ability as leaders and also because women lack leadership training that would boost their confidence to seek for leadership positions. I have therefore argued that changes need to first of all take place at the structural and cultural levels. When this occurs, it will possibly facilitate changes at individual levels and women will be more likely to have the confidence and drive to seek for leadership roles.

Some studies claim that addressing barriers in a particular area will solve the issue of women's underrepresentation in leadership. I have argued that change has to come from all areas, because the barriers are intrinsically linked to each other. What happens is culture infiltrates into the workplace and to the home, and also the workplace creates barriers that affect the individual. From this I have claimed that a holistic approach is required to address barriers to women's leadership i.e. policies and interventions will operate at structural, cultural, and individual levels to ensure that all areas are covered to permit the creation of opportunities for women to progress to leadership positions.

In view of the overall literature review, it is remarkable that there is much less information about the role, experience, and position of female teachers, with even much less

information about female faith teachers. It is evident that further research is required in these areas. This is especially true for female faith teachers. Although the above review has shed some light on this domain, the material available is insufficient. There is the absence of any considerable information on female faith teachers. Based on this review of literature, the gap in the knowledge that is the subject of the study has only be narrowly studied. Against this theoretical background I will therefore continue with field research to further investigate the role, experiences and position of female faith teachers.

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Qualitative Methodology**

My project design is grounded within the interpretive paradigm of social science research, and uses a qualitative method of data collection. I have selected this method because qualitative data comprises of *“detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, beliefs, observed behaviours, direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, correspondence and thoughts and excerpts or entire passages from documents, records, and case histories”* (Glenn, 2010: p.120). For the research I have undertaken I needed to know about the personal experiences and opinions of participants in order to gain the information required to answer my research question. Further, qualitative research, according to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), is seen as an interpretive approach where the principal goal is to unravel the meanings which people attribute to their decisions, actions, values, and beliefs and decisions. It is therefore concerned with understanding the psychological interpretations that people use to give meaning to the world around them. For me, this is a vitally important factor within my research; without

understanding the reasons behind participants' decisions, actions, thoughts and feelings towards career aspirations etc. my research would not make sense. Therefore, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate one for this specific study.

I did consider adopting quantitative methodology, but this is more concerned with explaining occurrences by collecting numerical data and analysing them mathematically. In quantitative research, numerical data is collected, and I did not need this. Indeed, data has to be in numerical form to permit mathematical techniques to be employed in its analyses (Muijs, 2004 cites Aliaga and Gunderson, 2000). Numbers can be analysed using statistical methods and they are used to record considerable information about science and society; for example, population, pressures, densities, bending forces, and cost indices (Walliman, 2010). Although quantitative methods are appropriate for some research projects, and can also be used in conjunction with a qualitative approach, it would be unsuitable for my design to work effectively. Indeed, it is impossible to reduce a great deal of useful information to numbers; this can only be analysed in words. Examples of meaningful information include people's judgements, ideas, feelings, emotions and beliefs. Words therefore cannot be handled mathematically. Hence, my use of qualitative rather than quantitative methods within my study. My study seeks to explore peoples' religious beliefs and teachings; their experiences; what they feel about their beliefs and teachings and how these have impacted upon their career paths — this data cannot be obtained using quantitative methods. Another reason I choose not to use quantitative research methods is because large scale projects do not offer due attention to people's 'voices' (Oakley, 2000), and it is the 'voices' of participants that I am most interested in. Also, quantitative or large scale projects do not offer respondents the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings

and experiences. Instead of focusing on information that respondents feel is important, most quantitative research focuses on information that the researcher thinks is significant, and this is not something I want to hinder my research. In addition, Muijs (2011) points out that quantitative research will be unsuccessful in a situation when a problem is to be explored in depth. Quantitative research is commendable at providing extensive information from a massive amount of components, but when a concept is to be investigated in depth, quantitative methods are unsuitable as they can be excessively narrow. Obviously, this would be contrary to the basic idea of my research and to really explore the depth of a phenomenon, qualitative techniques such as ethnographic methods, interviews and case studies are required.

My study requires real life, empirical based data, therefore affording respondents the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences relating to the role, position and experiences of female faith teachers. This allows me to gather in-depth information from the respondents. This is exactly why I selected smaller but focused samples, because they are ideally suited to my design, as oppose to large random samples where it would be difficult for me to understand fully their behaviour and action or the reason that govern such behaviour (Glenn, 2010). Again, this supports my reasoning to adopt a qualitative approach, it is undoubtedly more appropriate for this research. Also, religion is a sensitive topic, and using a qualitative approach allows for proper investigation into the nature of the role, position and experiences of female faith educators, which is the basis of my research. Lichtman (2006) maintains that the principal concern of qualitative research is to provide in-depth description and understanding of human discourse, human dealings or human occurrences, and this is what I intended. Therefore, the use of qualitative data technique in

my study enables in-depth exploration of the views of religious authorities, school authorities and female teachers. It also provides me with strong empirical evidence in the form of case studies that will hopefully influence both practice and policy.

## **2.2 Theoretical Standpoints**

An essential concern that challenges the study of the social sciences that is unrelated to the natural sciences is the query of the place of the respondent and researcher, and the position of social occurrences. The positivist school of thought holds that human society is subjected to laws that are present and independent of the human actors that make up society; meanwhile the interpretive school of thought believe that individuals and groups create their own versions of social forces (Walliman, 2010). Regarding the theoretical standpoint, I have adopted an interpretive perspective, specifically critical realism and feminist theorising. I have selected these methods because the positivist approach to scientific investigation is based on the accepted fact that the world is real, and that these realities can be found (Walliman, 2010). There is an order that is composed of many simple elements, distinct and visible events. The positivists equally believe that through sensory experience based on scientific techniques; by use of experiments and comparative analysis, knowledge is generated. The main purpose of the positivist approach is to develop a distinctive and an ingenious explanation on any facet of the world that is true, irrespective of the opinion people hold regarding the aspect. It is believed that by means of establishing these scientific truths, knowledge is built up in a cumulative manner. Thus science builds on what is already known. This approach is in direct conflict with what I want to achieve, and therefore not suitable for me. The major break with positivism which comes in the role of theory and interpretation, is critical realism. Critical realist researchers do not concern themselves with



establishing facts and discovering theories in the manner that positivist researchers do. Rather, facts are interpreted and theories are derived by taking into account the interpretivists' view which upholds that it is out of question for researchers to understand the world in an exclusively objective and unbiased manner (Denscombe, 2009). The critical realist school of thought can subsequently be regarded as a reconciliatory approach which acknowledges the presence of a natural order in social events, but argues that it is impossible to discover this order by simply observing a series of events. Walliman (2010) upholds the view that in the social sciences, the order of events is disclosed by means of interpretation in the process of theoretical and practical work. As opposed to positivist thinking, Walliman (ibid) argues that critical realists refuse to claim that there is a direct connection between the concepts they generate and the observable occurrences. The critical relativists maintain that theories and concepts about social phenomena are generated based on their observable effects, and interpreted in a manner that can be comprehended and acted upon; even if the interpretation is still prone to revision, as much insight is gained regarding the particular phenomena. The critical relativists equally hold that the view of the world that is seen is the creation of the mind. This is exactly the way I wanted to approach my research; looking at the world through the mind of the participants. I wanted to explore how they interpreted the world around them and how and why they made decisions based on their interpretation of their world.

However, because I am investigating the world through the mind of participants, and exploring how they interpret the world around them, this does not imply that the world is unreal. Rather, I am exploring how and why a particular understanding of the world can be explained through an individual's viewpoint that is shaped by their beliefs, values and

prejudices. The critical relativists, therefore, maintain that individuals are spiritual observers but are also a perceptible part of a society, this is something I agree with and believe is a strong theoretical standpoint to base my study on.

Also, and unlike the natural sciences, critical realist researchers do not concern themselves in explaining phenomena from the outside, but rather, they are intricately part of the phenomena that they are investigating (Walliman, 2010). My task, therefore, is to make known the meaning individuals attach to phenomena as oppose to discovering laws, which is the principal concern of the positivists. Thus, critical realism underpins my theoretical standpoint and interpretivism is the approach that I used for this research.

Critical theory in qualitative research seeks to change the social context. In particular, socially constructed theory in education is informed by the principle of social justice that seeks to remove barriers that people face because of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability (Lichtman, 2006). As I am working within the critical paradigm, my purpose is to uncover philosophies which maintain the status-quo, particularly where the access of gaining knowledge and power is restricted to particular groups of people within society (O'Donoghue, 2007). Equally, I have the responsibility of raising the consciousness or awareness about the physical conditions that oppress or limits these groups. It is important to me to understand the root cause of powerlessness, identifying limitations or restrictions that face specific groups that are present within the system. My aim is to respond as an individual, but also to encourage a collective challenge to these systems in order to change the conditions of life.

My research has investigated how religion influences the professional pathway of female educators. My focus was to examine how the religious teachings and practices of various religions impacted on the leadership perspective of female teachers within their institutions. I further examine how positions were ordered and if there were any scriptural basis for a woman to be in a position of authority within the church and faith institutions – or not. Critical theory as the base of my theoretical standpoint is, therefore, the most appropriate because it seeks to promote social justice in a way that both male and female faith educators have the chances and opportunities to utilize their talents to the full, and to make the most of their lives.

I have also utilised feminist theorising because this focuses on the processes of gendered subjectification. This refers to historical processes whereby one is subjected to the discursive regimes and regulator frameworks through which gendered individuals and their social context are constructed (Davies and Gannon, 2005). Feminist theorising is concerned with how power relations between men and women are constructed and preserved by admitting that men are natural, normal and rational as opposed to women (Davies and Gannon, 2005). In this regard, feminist research addresses experiences of women and is concerned with social inequality and hence seeks to remove the imbalance of power between the sexes (Lichtman, 2006). My study focuses mostly on women and has examined the experiences of female faith educators and the position they hold within their institutions. My adoption of feminist theorising involves an analysis of unexamined suppositions about women, which is committed towards improving their conditions of life. I also aimed to support the development of individual and professional practices within a feminist framework (Burns and Walker, 2005). I have attempted to understand the extent to

which the path women take on their personal and professional lives has been influenced by religious teachings. I have also investigated what religious teachings profess regarding the equality of men and women.

The consideration of the above issues leads to the creation of a theoretical framework that is hoped to instigate thoughts for social change, particularly as my research seeks to explain and challenge the existing patterns of power relations between the sexes that are influenced by religious teachings and practices. Consequently, my adoption of feminist theory is not only appropriate to this study, it underpins the theoretical framework.

### **2.3 Sample**

My study is based in Lancashire, and the samples are from three faith schools; two Christian schools (Catholic and Anglican) and a Muslim school. The schools were chosen because they fall within the same geographical area, as this facilitates accessibility and equally because colleagues of my supervisor acted as gatekeepers; Frank Harrington (a member of the Religion, Culture & Society (RCS) team) acted as gatekeeper for the Catholic school — where he is also a school governor; Andrew Clitherow (UCLAN Anglican Chaplaincy) acted as gatekeeper for the Anglican school — where he is working with the RCS team; and Mahmood Chandia (another member of the RCS team) acted as gatekeeper for the Muslim schools — where he is a governor.

The main participants for the study comprise of two female teachers from each school. Other participants include; the head teachers of each school; one religious leader; one representative from a religious authority — this may include a school governor, a

representative from the Local Education Authority (LEA) or a representative from the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The teachers selected provided first-hand information on the role and experiences of female teachers. They also provided information on measures that can be adopted to meet their professional aspirations. The school authorities, such as the head teachers and governors, provided valuable information on the positions women occupy within the institutions and how such positions are ordered. They also provided information on the strategies that have been implemented by the institutions to promote women taking up positions of leadership and authority. Religious authorities provided information from a religious perspective that aided in analysing the role played by religion in shaping women's career development.

## **2.4 Case Study**

I have chosen to use case studies as a way of ordering and organising my research; a case study is a common term for the investigation of a group or phenomenon with a unique characteristic, being that human systems develop a distinctive feature of wholeness and reliability (Bassey, 1991). The case study is a very useful design when exploring an area entity where limited knowledge is available and where there is necessity to have a complete comprehension of a situation, phenomena, group or community. This implies that the design is appropriate when the focus of the study is on exploring and understanding, instead of confirming or quantifying (Kumar, 2011). I have used a case study method because my study focuses on exploring the experiences of women in faith education, aiming to capture the reality of their experiences. My aim was to gain objective orientation and responses from participants relating directly to the research. I sought information that was presented

factually. Although Kumar (2011) advises that case studies should not, as far as possible, be influenced by participants' emotions or personal prejudices, I was seeking absolute truths from respondents – by their way of expressing their interpretation of the world around them. Therefore, I was not discouraged if participants expressed emotion or strong opinions.

Within each case study (the Catholic, Anglican and Muslim schools), I also conducted a critical analysis of each school's policies, together with an examination of the faith institution's policies; particularly those regarding employment and the ordering of positions and promotional opportunities. The information that I obtained from the analysis of these documents aided in gathering background information and also in further confirming the limited and/ or the unavailability of gender equality policies within institutions. The review of policy documents equally revealed a difference between formal statements and actual implementation.

Feagin et al (1991) suggests that although the case study is conducted in detail, it often relies on the use of several sources of data. Consequently, in addition to analysing policy documentation, I conducted a number of interviews with female teachers and representatives of school governors, religious authorities, LEA or SACRE. My justification for adopting interviews in my research methods is discussed in section 2.5.

I considered other methods for collecting and analysing empirical evidence; these included surveys, questionnaires, histories, and experiments. Any of these strategies can be used,

depending on the purpose of the research – exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. For example, surveys are generally, but not exclusively, associated with descriptive phases of research – they seek to identify outcomes. Although there is often overlap between purposes and methods, categories of preferred methodology can be distinguished. Yin (2003) categorises the suitability of methodology according to the questions posed within the research. Types of questions Yin (ibid: 5) supplies as examples are: ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’ and ‘why’. Research questions that focus on ‘what’ are usually exploratory in nature. This focus seeks to develop a hypothesis and/or proposition for further investigation. Within this category any of the methods mentioned previously would probably be suitable. Yin (ibid) suggest that ‘who’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ questions, such as ‘how many’ and ‘how much’, are typical within economic research, particularly where the research goal is descriptive – seeking to describe the occurrence of a phenomenon or predict an outcome – and therefore require a survey or analysis method. Surveys particularly seek to identify outcomes (Yin, 2003).

My study, however, sought to investigate people’s thoughts about the activities – specifically aimed at the aspirations and achievements of female educators. My methodology, therefore, was refined to suit the focus and purpose of the research.

Surveys were not appropriate for my work because they are associated with descriptive phases of research. Also, questionnaires were inappropriate, given that there is a level of researcher imposition within the questionnaire. For example, in the act of designing the

questionnaire, the researcher is often misguided and makes their own decisions and claims of what they deem as 'what is' and 'what is not' important (University of Surrey, 2013). In this manner, researchers may be omitting things that are of significant value. Also, with the questionnaire it is difficult to determine the context and meaning behind a response. Sometimes questions used are closed ended, possibly leading to a situation where a respondent's preferred answer may not be included, and this does not allow for much information or detail to be collated. My study requires detailed responses to the researched area, and the case study offers a holistic and in-depth investigation since they are designed to bring out the details from the view point of participants. This is exactly what I aimed to achieve, therefore the case study is what I adopted.

My study uses multiple sources of evidence such as; interviews, documents, and direct observation of events. These methods are combined with the purpose of illuminating a case from different angles. This would have been impossible to achieve if I had used other methods, such as those mentioned above. Therefore, the case study was the most appropriate for my research.

## **2.5 Interviews**

I have used interviews as my main method of collating data for my study. I have done this because interviewing is a means of finding out what others think and feel about their worlds (May, 2011). My aim in conducting interviews is centred on generating discussions with people on a precise topic or range of topics – in this case, seeking to find out if the career aspirations of females working within faith schools are hindered because of their gender.



The Interviews provided me with sufficient understandings into the participants' values, experiences, thoughts, state of mind, goals, and attitudes towards their working environments, career aspirations and also how they interpreted their role within this framework.

Other methods common with qualitative research that I could have used are focus groups and questionnaires. Although focus groups are valuable in providing in-depth information on how people think about an issue, they can sometimes be problematic (Bell, 2005). This is because a focus group involving people with strong personalities can influence, and in some cases take over, the whole group; making it difficult for the less assertive members to speak out. In situations involving a mixed group – composing males and females – most often the men tend to control the centre stage of discussion leaving the women, or some of them, silent. May (2011) maintains that caution should be exercised in attributing the opinions of a dominant few to the whole group. Furthermore, certain members of the group are likely to be silent and not express their views if they consider their views to be contradictory to predominant views within the group. I wanted to explore individual responses and examine each participant's responses in detail; therefore, a focus group would have been unsuitable for my research. In a one-to-one interview the interviewee can express their opinions without fear of contradiction from others (Bell, 2005). Therefore, one-to-one interviews are more likely to yield a more open discussion. Regarding my study, religion is a sensitive issue and focus groups would not work best since respondents may find it difficult to talk to each other about their religious experiences and how individual values, beliefs and teaching impact upon their profession. Denscombe (2010) suggests that personal interviews are

better used when the research covers issues that might be considered sensitive or personal, since participants can be encouraged to discuss sensitive and personal issues in an honest and open manner. For me, this was imperative, and another reason why I selected one-to-one interviews over focus groups for data collection.

Also, in focus group discussion, tape recording poses a problem given that it is difficult to identify who said what in the discussion and the vast range of views and opinions presents a risk of being poorly managed. In a one-to-one interview, I found tape recording to be useful in checking the wordings of statements that I wanted to quote, this also allowed me to keep eye contact with the interviewee, which maintained the rapport, interest and warranted an accurate interpretation of what was discussed (Bell, 2005). Once I had transcribed the interview I cross-checked the content of the discussion with the participant to ensure I had interpreted the session accurately. In the one case that required amendment, I re-submitted the transcription to the participant for confirmation, which I received.

I used semi-structured interviews, focusing the questions on the role, position and experiences of females either as teachers within faith schools, or faith educators within the church. The advantage of using a semi-structured interview is that it ensures an open, non-intimidating atmosphere, and thus created a relaxed environment for discussion (O'Donoghue, 2007). I considered structured interviews, but they offer less opportunity for respondents to express their own opinions in a way that is convenient for them (May, 2011). Therefore, my use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, active participation

and continuity (Lichtman, 2006). Other studies have shown that in a study involving sensitive and complicated issues, semi-structured interviews are the most suitable since the interviewer has the opportunity to explain the research to the respondent in person and to prepare the respondent before asking sensitive questions (Kumar, 2011; Desai and Potter 2006). Given that my study is based on religion, which is a sensitive topic, the use of semi-structured interviews generated rich and abundant data, and in effect allows for more reliable and representative information to be obtained (Desai and Potter, 2006). Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews allows respondents to speak openly about their experiences and opinions. Willis (2006) maintains that semi-structured interviews provide respondents with greater opportunities to convey their individual ideas and thoughts into the research, which is exactly what I aimed to achieve.

My interview questions were open-ended, and were instrumental in providing in-depth detail on the nature of the role, position and experiences of the respondents. By asking the same questions in a number of different ways I reduced the chance of my questions being misunderstood (Mikkelsen, 1995). Kumar (2011) argues that in situations where in-depth information is required, the use of semi-structured questions are ideal, since they offer an opportunity for the investigator to obtain in-depth information by probing. Thus, my use of open-ended questions facilitated the opportunity to probe beyond the respondents initial answers. My use of this method, therefore, allowed for adaptability. This is one of the reasons why I adopted the interview method over other methods, such as the questionnaire. Similarly, another reason for choosing interviews over other methods is that the interview technique allowed me to follow up respondents' opinions, probe their

responses though permitting them to keep their opinions, while at the same time I could explore the feelings and reasons behind their views. I would not have been able to gather this information with a questionnaire. I also observed the ways in which responses were made – such as hesitation, facial expression and the tone of voice; noting these responses provided information that a written response would not uncover. For example, I could clarify particular responses to a question by asking a further question or seeking amplification; a questionnaire does not provide understanding or motive behind the respondents' opinion (Bell, 2005). Thus, questionnaires offer insufficient flexibility, and for me would be inappropriate; specifically because I would not be able to check the accuracy of the answers given by the respondents. Also, difficulties are encountered with questionnaires because the answers are given at a distance, and I would not meet the respondents; therefore, I would not be in a position to gain trust or confidence and certainly not be able to understand, appreciate or interpret any given response adequately. Indeed, Denscombe (2010) asserts that it is difficult for the researcher to determine if the responses from a questionnaire are genuine or not. Using the interview method permits the interviewer to identify some inconsistency with the responses from the same interviewee and be able to probe and investigate the issue. Similarly, when the interest is to investigate matters relating to opinion or ideals, very little room is left for the questionnaire to challenge the responses if respondent answers in a particular direction. This is very common with questionnaires that are anonymous, and another reason why they were unsuitable for my study.

Sherman and Webb (2001) argue that the presence of the field researcher influences the behaviour of participants, and respondents may withhold information or distort the truth. Thus, this may lead to incomplete, incorrect and biased data. However, I agree with Kumar (2011), who argues that in-depth interviews involve repeated contact with respondents, thus, the researcher spends extended length of time with them, and through the spirit of togetherness, build an enhanced understanding and development of confidence between the two, leading to in-depth and accurate information being exchanged. I found this to be a fairly accurate description once I had conducted my interviews.

There is always the danger of bias affecting interviews, mostly because interviewers are human beings, and their comportment may have an effect on respondents. In situations where research is to be conducted by individual researchers, there is always the possibility of bias occurring. This is observed mostly with researchers that hold strong views about the area that they are investigating. The bias may occur either purposely or unconsciously. Bell (2005) maintains that it is not difficult for researchers to be biased at interviews. For instance; the researcher may decide to pick out something in the literature review which supports their opinions; may indicate a strong point of feeling in a specific route by use of unsuitable language; and may allow the use of unsuitable language to influence the interpretation of research findings. In order to avoid such bias I was very conscious of my keen interest and strong views on the topic under research. As someone who is keen on promoting gender equality, I constantly reminded myself that this is an investigation into other people's views regarding the issue being investigated, and therefore, ensured that the results were presented objectively. In addition, I adopted a critical approach when analysing

data and frequently questioned my own practice. This approach was significant in recognising signs of bias; I was cautious of my own subjective viewpoint. Constant reflection allowed me to identify with the participants and I was able to respect their views, thus distorting my own subjective interpretation and avoiding bias.

Although I maintain that the interview method was the best approach for my specific research, it was not without problems. For example; I had negotiated an excellent timeframe for interviews with all participants within the pilot. However, two of the school authorities needed to re-schedule because of an unforeseen work issue that arose, and it took several weeks to re-negotiate a new interview session. Initially, this caused disruption to my time table and planning, therefore putting me behind schedule. The greater consequence, however, was the impact upon both transcription and analysis. As I was unable to transcribe the data within the same timeframe as the other interviews I was delayed in perceiving a holistic understanding of the collective material. This then impacted upon my ability to analyse accurately the information I already had – it was like a jigsaw with a puzzle piece missing. Although I eventually caught up and completed the analysis, I was quite stressed and a little frustrated about losing so much time. I had assumed all the interviews would run smoothly and on schedule and therefore had not included a contingency plan for unforeseen setbacks. The positive repercussion of this was that I not only gave myself extra time for the interview sessions for the remaining research, I was also able to reflect on how important each piece of information was to the categorisation of themes within the analysis of data. This enabled me to identify and code data more professionally with the actual research. In addition, delaying the interview offered me

enough time to reflect on my interview technique. I had time to reflect if I probed into an issue appropriately and I was able to ensure that any area that was not appropriately covered was stressed during the subsequent interviews.

Also, a telephone interview was conducted with one of the respondents because it was difficult to arrange for a face-to-face interview. The phone interview led to some problems such as echoes from the speakerphone and lower sound quality. The process of transcribing the interview took much longer as I had to listen a couple of times to the recording to ensure I understood what was said. Also, with the telephone interview, there was lack of visual cues – I could not observe the body language of the respondents. However, this had little impact on the analysis of the data because I forwarded the final transcription to the participant for confirmation, which was agreed. In support of my using telephone conversation to cross-check interview data and transcription; O'Donoghue (2007) notes that telephone interviewing is a productive supplementary data-gathering strategy. He argues that they allow coding and analysis to begin almost immediately and also assist respondents to clarify their perspectives. I found this to be true, and once I had confirmation from participants to the accuracy of the interview recording I was able to begin my coding and analysis. Though much time was spent listening to the interview to be transcribed, there was a positive element involved as I was totally immersed within the data obtained.

Below are examples of questions that I asked the various categories of respondents.

#### QUESTIONS TO SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

- What position of authority do women currently hold within the institution? What can you say about the performance of female staff, especially those in managerial positions?
- How are positions ordered? Are they based on one's personal profile (male, female or ages), on professional background (qualifications, years of service) on religious commitment (their religion, how often they attend public function or worship) or are they based on a scriptural basis? Which of the above element is considered most essential and why?
- What are the institution's policies governing employment, the ordering of positions and promotion modalities?
- What measures have been put in place to encourage female teachers to take up senior managerial positions within the institution? What other measures will you recommend to be implemented in order to promote women taking up managerial positions within the institution?

#### QUESTIONS TO FEMALE TEACHERS

- What are some of your achievements in your present role as a teacher or as part of the management team?
- What are your professional aspirations? Are there any religious teachings that you consider a hindrance to achieving your professional goals?
- Do you think being a female teacher is advantageous or disadvantageous in terms of professional opportunities and why? What measures will you recommend to be adopted by the institution to assist in meeting your professional aspirations and why?



## QUESTIONS TO RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES

- What are the major roles of women within the religious community?
- What position of authority do women currently hold within the religious community? How are positions ordered? Are they based on scriptural narrative?
- In your opinion, do you think the religious community especially the authorities, regard women as playing an important role within the religious community? What has been done to demonstrate such sense of recognition? What other measures will you recommend to be implemented to promote women taking up leadership positions?

### **2.6 Initial contact**

My initial contact with the school management team, religious authorities and the teachers to discuss the project was through my gatekeeper (discussed earlier). I also sent a letter to each of the prospective participants outlining the purpose of the research and a basic outline of the questions to be asked during the interview. I also wanted give respondents an opportunity to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. The sample of the respondents that participated in the study was chosen from the list of those who agreed to participate. I arranged a meeting with each participant to further explain the purpose of the study and to clarify any concerns that they might have had regarding the study. During this meeting, participants were given a copy of the consent letter, which we discussed in depth before they signed it. We then agreed an interview date, time and place; the participants preferred to meet at their place of work – mainly to minimize disruption to their teaching

programmes and/or work commitments, but also to ensure we had a familiar and safe environment to work in.

I also gave an information sheet to each participant prior to the interview explaining what the research was about, the purpose of interviewing them, what would be involved and what would be done with the information gathered. I sent the information to participants before the interviews took place in order to provide an opportunity for respondents to query the meaning of the study and also discuss any concerns they might have. In addition, providing information before the interviews offered participants the chance to decide if they wanted to withdraw at that stage (Bell, 2005).

I commenced my study with the conduction of a pilot phase. My pilot study was exploratory and served as a pioneer to the research proper. Teijlingen and Hudley (2001) remarked that the use of a pilot study would assist in confirming the factors identified in the literature review and any other factors which may be relevant in fulfilling the research objectives, and also allows any changes to be made before the main study is conducted. Therefore, during the pilot phase of the study, I conducted trial interviews with participants in order to refine the structure of the questions and the questioning techniques. I also used the pilot to check the authenticity of my methodology and to see if I needed to change anything.

I scheduled interviews with participants which included female teachers, head teachers, representatives of religious authorities, school governors, members of the Local Education Authority (LEA)/or and members of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

(SACRE). Following respondents' permission and agreement, I recorded the interview sessions and transcribed from the tape. I was, however, prepared to take down notes in a shorthand system if some respondents did not agree for the interview to be recorded, thankfully every participant was happy to agree to being recorded. I transcribed each interview as soon as they were over, I did this in order to minimise the possibility of forgetting some information. Bell (2005) points out that if the interview guide or schedule has been well planned and piloted, the questions, items and headings will assist not only to record responses but will act as a reminder of what was said under each heading. I used this idea and it worked well for me.

I cross checked every transcript with each individual participant to make sure that they had been accurately interpreted during the discussion, and confirmed their agreement of the final transcription.

I made it clear to the participants that the principles of confidentiality would be observed throughout the entire study. The interviews were coded and the breakdown is given within the appropriate case study sections.

## **2.7 Data analysis**

The process of data analysis in qualitative research is *"an on-going process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials"* (O'Donoghue, 2007; p. 147). I adopted the content analysis method, which is a means of

analysing the content of the interviews in order to identify main themes from the responses obtained from the respondents. The process of content analysis involves detecting the main themes and concepts, allocating codes to the main themes, interpreting the replies under the main themes and further incorporating themes and replies into the text of the report (Kumar, 2011). In assigning codes to the main theme, I used what is known as open coding. This type of coding involves the development of concepts through coding and analysing data concurrently. This is done by frequently comparing specific responses in the data. This allowed me to refine concepts and find out their characteristics in order to establish their association with each other and incorporate them into a comprehensible theory (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). For example, in a question relating to the influence of religious teachings and practices on teachers' career development with the Muslim case study, I began by comparing the responses from all teachers and identified characteristics. Most of the respondents made reference to the wives of Mohammed, the founder of Islam, as their source of inspiration to progress in life. This developed into a theory on the Islamic teachings as a promoter of career development. Other characteristics identified relates to practices of the Islamic religion such as the dress code and the prohibition of females from associating with males. These together were incorporated into a theory termed the cultural impediment to women's career advancement.

I collated the main data for analysis through my interviews, and my secondary data was obtained from policy documentation, such as school reports, OFSTED reports and mission statements. I recorded the interviews with the consent of participants and then transcribed them, which enabled me to familiarise myself with the data. I read through the data many

times to identify aspects that may be of value. In the process of reading through the transcripts, relevant text and material that was significant to the research concerns was selected. I highlighted the relevant text in each of the transcripts and then I reviewed the transcripts to identify similar and differential phrases and patterns. I combined relevant text from the entire transcript, and then I organised the material into categories that indicated a common theme. Some of the categories came from the ideas that set the framework of the research; and after going through all the material, I assigned each theme to a category.

I generated many categories at the beginning of my analysis; this was in order to maximise the extent of categorisation and also to identify attributes within the data that may have gone unnoticed (Boulton, and Hammersley, 2006). I wanted to ensure I had as many categories and themes as possible to start with and then I could work through them, narrowing down to align specifically with the research aim.

I then compared and contrasted all the items of the data in a given (the same) category. This is known as the constant comparative method. The aim of this was to identify relations among categories and to clarify what the categories mean (Boulton, and Hammersley, 2006).

After working through the list of relevant text, there was some of the text that was not used because it was not directly relevant to my research. I discarded any of the material that did not fit into the groups that I needed or that was not directly linked to the research theme.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) explain that individual differences have an important place in such a paradigm because qualitative research is not focused on quantity. Although I started with a mass of quality data, I eventually focused down the categorisation of themes in specific relation to the research.

## **2.8 Consideration of Confidentiality, Consent and Ethics**

Consideration of ethics in research has been identified as a key element in conducting a successful study. According to Burgess (2005) the code of ethics is very important in that it provides the basis within which 'good practice' can be implemented. My study follows the code of practice outlined by the University of Central Lancashire to ensure that the research complies with the Data Protection Act of 1998. Informed consent often governs the ethics of research involving human participants. The presumption is that any research undertaken with human participants without their consent falls short of an adequate ethical basis (Gregory, 2003). From the onset of my study, I provided clear information on; the aim and purpose of research, what would be expected of the participants, how data would be collected, processed stored and disseminated. Participants also signed a consent form which offered them the opportunity to withdraw at any time during the study. I also took note of Oliver's (2003) suggestion that the researcher has to be sensitive to any issues that may emerge which may be very upsetting to the respondent. Following this suggestion, in case any of the respondents presented as being upset, I was prepared to ask if it was acceptable to continue with the issue at hand, therefore providing an opportunity for the interviewee to be withdraw from the study. This, according to González-López (2011), offers the opportunity for interviewees to feel in control of the discussion and to decide how much

information they feel comfortable enough and safe enough to share with the researcher. Nonetheless, all the respondents in my study felt comfortable responding to all the interview questions.

Studies have suggested that as part of the negotiation for consent, assurances of confidentiality will go a long way to securing participation, and confidentiality will be best assured on the basis of anonymizing the data collected (Gregory, 2003; Oliver, 2003). Therefore, the principles of anonymity and confidentiality was observed at all times during my research in order to prevent individuals from being identified within the study; thereby eliminating the possibility of any adverse effect from their involvement in the study. However, taking confidentiality as an important issue does not only mean intentionally taking upon oneself not to reveal to others what has been discussed in confidence, but to equally make sure confidentiality is not breached by accident or as a result of carelessness in handling of data (Gregory, 2003). In view of this, I took appropriate security measures which encompassed; the storing of manual data in a securely locked cabinet with restricted access, all my electronic data was stored on a password protected computer, my electronic devices were stored in locked units and were not be left anywhere in the view of others, and the content of my email discussions were encrypted with the added protection of securing codes – thus ensuring that the right address was chosen before I sent any mail.

It should be noted that confidentiality was maintained as far as possible but I cannot guarantee absolute and complete anonymity because faith schools are not in abundance in Lancashire; therefore there is a possibility that one of my case studies maybe identified.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PILOT CASE STUDY – CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

#### **3.1 Overview**

The pilot study was conducted in the Lancashire community area. The school is a Voluntary Aided Catholic primary school. It is an average sized mixed primary school and the majority of the pupils are registered as baptised Catholics, with a few pupils from other Christian denominations. The pupils are drawn from a wide area, which includes a variety of socio-economic groups. They are taught the values and beliefs of the Catholic Church and pupils have a clear understanding of the school's distinctive Catholic nature. However, the faith background of each pupil is respected. The pupils enjoy religious education because the teaching is varied, interesting and effective. All members of the community value prayer which is central to the life of the school. Worship takes place on a regular basis; before meetings and when it is felt that prayer would be of value and appreciated (OFSTED, 2005).

Religious Education (RE) is at the heart of the curriculum of the school. The children have an excellent knowledge and understanding of RE and reach great standards in learning from religion. The quality of provision of RE is outstanding. This can be attributed to the leadership and management of RE, which is exceptional (OFSTED, 2008). The staff believe that their focused emphasis on the gospel; the values of the Catholic faith; and the links with other faiths contributes greatly in improving standards in learning and teaching. The effective work on the part of the curriculum leadership team has resulted in improvements being made and as a result high standards have been achieved (OFSTED, 2008).



The school has made very good improvements and is working hard to maintain its high standards. The pupils' personal development, including their social, cultural, moral and spiritual development, is outstanding. Consequently, pupils' general achievement is outstanding. In addition, the excellent teaching and the outstanding curriculum set in place significantly contributes to pupils' exceptional progress throughout the school. The school is well regarded by parents, the wider community and the parishes with which it has constructive links. Of the teaching staff, 7 out of 9 are Catholics. The 2008 OFSTED Report confirms the school's judgment of the leadership and management of the Catholic Life of the school as being outstanding.

### **3.1.1 Outline**

Interviews were conducted with school authorities, teachers and a representative of religious authorities and school governors. The interview questions focused on investigating the role and experiences of female teachers; the positions they occupy; and the strategies implemented to promote women's leadership. The following categories for analysis have been identified: Female Predominance in Management; Exceptional Performance in Roles; Religious Prominence; Overall Development of Pupils; Reluctance in Seeking for Career Advancement; Equality in Opportunities; Non-Impingement of Religious Teachings on Career Development; and Self-Motivation.

In the process of analysing the data, for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the data will be anonymised and identifiers will be removed from the data and replaced by a code as follows:

The Head Teacher will be represented by the code HT

Teachers will be represented by the codes T1 and T2

Representative of School Governors will be represented by the code SG

Representative of Religious Authorities will be represented by the code RA

## **3.2 Initial Findings**

### **3.2.1 Female Predominance in Management.**

The result concerning the positions of authority occupied by women within the school indicates that women are highly represented in management positions. When a question was asked on what positions women occupy in the school, HT stated that the school is primarily female in terms of staffing, and that women are predominantly responsible for the management of the institution. This was highlighted in the following statement;

*The majority of staff here are females, all my teachers are female, my deputy is female and all my teaching assistants are female.*

In addition, SG, confirms the predominance of females in staffing and management and pointed out that all key stage managers are female. SG stated that;

*There is the Head teacher involved with the management of the whole school, the curriculum, the fees, and the management on a day to day of the teachers and the auxiliary staff as well. There is the key stage one and key stage two managers. At the minute we have only got one teaching assistant who is male. It is a largely almost entirely female staff.*

The responses from the school leaders reveal that women are predominantly responsible for the management of the institution. This is contrary to my literature review, which reveals that primary schools are increasingly masculinised in terms of management regimes (Mahony and Hextall, 2000).

SG's account above indicates the limited representation of men in the teaching profession. Concerns were raised relating to the gender disparity in staffing. The authorities of the school expressed concerns regarding the lack of role models for the boys as a result of not having male teachers within the institution. Indeed, HT stated;

*I do worry sometimes that we have no male members of staff .There are a lot of children at school who don't have fathers or haven't got a positive male role model.*

The sentiment was supported by SG, who said;

*If we were fortunate enough to have a male teacher, it would be good from a role model point of view for the little boys.*

In order to temporary redress this concern; while seeking for a more concrete solution, HT notes that a male Teaching Assistant (TA) has been recently recruited for a short period to act as role models for the boys in school.

The desire to have male teachers in school has received support from many governments. There are calls for more male teachers in primary schools by governments in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, North America and across Europe. This is followed by the implicit message that male teachers provide masculine images for boys and their absence creates problems for boys in terms of discipline, motivation and social interaction (Skelton, 2002).

When it comes to the position of authority women occupy within the church, the results obtained are similar to those from the school setting. Given that the religious faith is Catholic; the Parish priest, being male, heads the school/church community. However, women have been given the opportunity to hold positions of authority within the church community. This is confirmed by RA as follows;

*The women head the parish pastoral council, the liturgical committee and Parish Centre Development Group, 70% are women. They hold key positions. The parish centre is managed by a woman voluntarily... The liturgy is nearly all women, the parish centre all women and the Parish pastoral council is 50/50, the music is 50/50.*

This indicates that women have a voice in most of the structures within the church. However, their authority is limited given that they do not have the mandate to function in all positions of authority within the church. Zagano (2012) emphasizes that the bottom line is that actual authority in the church — in terms of governance of structures — is always exercised by ordained persons. For the present in the Roman Catholic Church all ordained persons are male.

This section has revealed that within the Catholic faith, women are involved in management. However, management is not senior leadership.

### **3.2.2 Exceptional Performance in Roles**

Staff performance is crucial within the institution; the staff performance is monitored in order to analyse if the school meets its objective, which then allows it to strive and survive. An obvious theme that emerged was the exceptional performance of teachers. SG notes

that the performance of staff is measured in terms of meeting the mission statement of the school: 'You are Precious in my Eyes', and this has been achieved by giving every child that comes to the school the best possible opportunity. HT notes that giving children the best possible opportunity requires a very good teacher. In fact she discussed this in the following account;

*When I appoint teachers I always go for the best teacher. In terms of gender, I never really think about gender. I just go for the best teacher. When I interview, I will do a formal interview, I will watch them teach, I will watch them interact with the children and then I make my decision based on who is the best teacher and who will deliver the best learning for the children... My female teachers are outstanding. We have a very strong learning community, and we all learn together and have a really good professional dialogue.*

It can be gathered from HT's account that professional development and team spirit greatly contributes to the success of the school. The outstanding achievement of the teachers is demonstrated not just within the school, but also beyond the institution. This was confirmed by HT in the following account;

*Currently we have been asked to be a coaching school, and as the system is completely changing, good schools have been asked to support other schools. I think that is an exciting new area to look into; to mentor and support other schools.*

Even though the interviews did not require the teachers to rate the performance of the head teacher, the teachers acknowledged her excellent leadership. A very impressive remark was made by the teachers regarding the head teacher, describing her as a great leader with faith at the centre of what she does. It is quite interesting how most of the

teachers spoke passionately about the impact the head teacher has brought into their teaching career. T1 praised the head teacher, stating;

*I feel very lucky to have worked with a brilliant head teacher and I have learned from her because I think it would have been a very different career experience had she not had such a deep faith and acted it out in such a compassionate way and I see that all the time.*

The head teacher is seen to make use of religious ethos — putting her faith in her leadership capacity — thus leading the school very effectively. Perhaps this is the reason for the school opting for a Catholic head. However, the exceptional performance of the school has been realised not only by the independent effort of the head teacher, but a collective effort of all staff in management positions — all women. The performance of the head teacher and the leadership team as a whole was also commended by Ofsted inspection report (2008). Ofsted stated that the excellent leadership of the head teacher and the highly committed staff, including the governors, ensures that the pupils achieve the best in every area of their life. It is no doubt that the school has been successful in attaining an outstanding status.

This section has demonstrated the exceptional performance of females — both teaching staff and those in management. Their performance is noted not just internally but externally and the progress recorded by the school is a reflection of the strength of the management of the school. This relates to my research objective which is to ascertain that women are capable of being potential faith leaders. Thus, the results of the study do indeed confirm that women have the capacities to assume leadership positions within faith schools.

### 3.2.3 Religious Prominence

Following the exploration of the positions women hold within the institution, I wanted to investigate how the positions are ordered within the school. To this, an essential theme emerged, which is that of religious prominence in relation to the ordering of positions that staff hold within the school. Regarding positions that directly deal with the management of the pupils, the spirituality of the candidate is very significant. Because it is a faith school, much emphasis is placed on applicants having a spiritual standing. However, in circumstances where applicants have no faith but are willing to follow the ethos of the school, are good teachers, and are willing to develop their faith in God; they would receive assistance from the school. This was explicitly expressed by HT in the following account;

*The most fundamental point to the school is our mission statement; 'You are Precious in my Eyes', and the learning comes from that. When I appoint somebody they have to have a deep spirituality. They must have deep connection with their own faith. If they are an outstanding teacher but are prepared to develop that relationship with God that is something we can assist them with.*

Though HT declared that the faith status of applicants is very important when hiring staff, she further expressed that the professional background of an applicant is even more significant than the religious element; however, HT cautions that the applicant must have a basic level of spirituality. HT clearly emphasised this in the following excerpt;

*Somebody can have a first class honours degree [but] that does not make them a good teacher, real good teaching comes from within and is something that you are born with and something that you can facilitate children. If I am faced with two candidates and one of*

*them is a practicing catholic who is a poorer teacher than a person who is Catholic but not practicing, but is a really good teacher, I will go for a good teacher at every time, but there has got to be a balance. I wouldn't hire an atheist or somebody with no religion at all because they have to embrace where we are going from and be able to nurture the children's learning and their religious growth. I will not hire somebody that has no beliefs at all. They should have that base because they will have to deliver two and a half hours of religious education a week.*

An interesting finding emerged from data concerning the recruitment of teachers with no faith. From HT's account above, during the recruitment of teachers, those with no faith but who are qualified for the position, and are willing to develop their faith are offered recruitment. This is an interesting point, if someone has no faith how can they develop it? SG further expresses that for teachers who refuse to accept the Catholic faith, they will not be employed. SG stated that;

*We were always asking Catholic teachers that if they were appointed to the job, will they uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church and school, and we were very hurt when they say no, but obviously I don't think we will be willing to appoint.*

SG's narrative indicates that religion is a hindrance to teachers who are not of the Catholic faith. Though the school authorities stated that the religious element mostly affects those seeking management positions (as discussed below), SG's account reveals that classroom teachers are equally affected by a religious requirement. The only difference is that, non-Catholic teachers are offered the opportunity to decide if they are willing to accept and embrace the ethos of the religion, then they can be employed, meanwhile applicants for



management positions must be practising the faith, and if not, then, they are automatically disqualified for the position.

Although the institution declares that they pay greater attention to the professional background of teachers and to a lesser extent on their faith during recruitment, there are three positions which are difficult to compromise. SG states that, the head teacher, the deputy head teacher and the foundation governor in a Catholic school must be practising Catholics. This was highlighted in the following account;

*If you are recruiting a head teacher or a deputy head teacher in a Catholic school they must be practising Catholics. That has to be evident and has to be part of your decision making process to appoint staff... To be a foundation governor in a Catholic school you must be a practising Catholic and the Bishop appoints foundation governors.*

RA confirms SG's position, declaring that it is a rule within Catholic institutions that the head should be of the faith. However, in rare cases, where individuals from the Catholic faith cannot be sought for, people of other faiths can be employed. RA, however, cautions that they will have to be committed to the vision of the school. RA stated that;

*Within the school, being a Catholic school, the head and the deputy and the others have to be committed to the vision of the school which will be a Catholic vision. A majority of them are catholic. It might do, in the dioceses I would think that it would be a policy that if possible it should have a Catholic head. There are one or two in the diocese that are not Catholics but I think it's due to shortage of Catholic teachers, ideally you would want a Catholic but you could appoint someone who wasn't, but they must be committed.*

Within the governing body of the institution, one's professional background takes precedence over the religious factor with the exception of the foundation governor. According to SG, the Bishop is responsible for appointing foundation governors. In order for one to be a foundation governor in a Catholic school, they must be a practising Catholic. This is because they are accountable for sustaining and developing the Catholic ethos of the school. Drifting down to the governing body, a more relaxed rule is noted when appointing members. SG notes that members of the governing body are appointed according to their abilities and strengths and describes the governing body as "a real mixed pie"; with members being lawyers, accountants and housewives. As a result, the governing body comprises of people with various abilities, bringing their skills to promote the success of the institution.

Following an exploration of the ordering of positions within the school environment there is not much difference when it comes to ordering of positions within the church. RA reveals this in the following statement;

*The positions are not based on a scriptural narrative, just based on people volunteering to do the work. Overall, the women predominate in the running of the parish. There is just one woman who has been trained as a catechist. It's just voluntary. We don't have strong criteria. We usually just ask people to give their time voluntarily.*

Information gathered from both the school and religious authorities relating to how positions are ordered within the institution reveals that none of the respondents made mention of a teacher's personal profile; for example, being male or female; as a condition for employment. Much attention is paid to the teacher being a good teacher and committed to delivering the mission statement of the institution. This suggests that the institution is

less concerned with gender sensitivity in hiring members of staff, possibly because women predominate in terms of staffing and management, than it is about the ability of the candidate — and to a less degree on the faith of the candidate.

Essentially, this section has demonstrated the important role of religion to teachers' recruitment. I have argued that though the religious element considered during recruitment affects both teaching and management staff, applicants seeking for senior management positions are more affected. This is in line with my research objective which is to examine the extent to which religious practices influence women's professional pathways. The study has revealed that as a faith school, religion to a greater extent acts as a barrier to career development — for those not practising the Catholic faith — wishing to assume leadership and management positions regardless of gender.

#### **3.2.4 Non-Impingement of Religious Teachings on Career Development**

From the above analysis, religion plays a significant role within the researched institution. When asked if religion presents as a hindrance to teachers achieving their professional goals, the responses indicate that religion does not in any way act as a barrier to their determination to progress in their careers. Indeed, T1 commented;

*I have never thought of the teachings in my faith holding any aspiration back, I have always found my faith to be very empowering... I have never read the scriptures and found to be holding me back.*

Following the inability to provide a more elaborate response to the question relating to religion as a hindrance to achieving professional goal, I had to refer the teachers to an

example from my literature review on what St. Paul wrote against women's authority in the following statement; *I do not permit a woman to teach nor to have authority over a man but to be in silence* (1 Tim. 2.12) and *Let your woman keep silent in the Church* (1 Cor. 14.34).

The teachers responded in the following statements:

T2 Stated that;

*I think as a society we have moved on, the role of women in society has changed. In the primary school the majority of people are women. If we didn't talk faith to the children, if we didn't talk education to the children, if we didn't talk social things to the children, then the children wouldn't learn because there aren't very many men in primary schools. And I think children will miss so much there. I think times have moved on. I am sure if St. Paul was around today teaching it will be a different kettle of fish because he will be looking at the society that he is living in.*

Similarly T1 stated that;

*There are times when I have spoken, and have been quite passionate about something, I have not been quiet. I am a feminist.*

From the above responses, and in view of what the literature review reveals — that some religious teachings impact negatively on women's ability to assume positions of authority and responsibility — the narratives from the teachers reveal that religion has not negatively impacted upon the career choices of these particular female teachers. It is worth noting that earlier on in this section, religion was found to impact on teachers' careers. The findings revealed that teachers who were not practicing Catholics had challenges in getting employed. However, the teacher's proclamation reflects their personal experiences;

probably all of them are from a faith background and therefore have no issues in getting employed from a religious standpoint.

### **3.2.5 Overall Development of Pupils**

The critical role of teachers in determining the academic achievement of children is visible within the participating school. Though pupil's academic achievement was not stressed by teachers, the outstanding status of the school implies that children achieve excellent academic success. A striking finding was the pupil's achievement in mathematics, which is headed by a female teacher. T1 expresses her contentment with the achievement in the following statement;

*Academically, I am very proud that I am in charge of mathematics in the school. We have been a very successful school for mathematics.*

Because the school is almost entirely made up of female teachers, T1's statement indicates women's success in teaching mathematics. This finding is contrary to a report by UNESCO (2006) communicating that a majority of female teacher take on 'soft' subjects while men mostly take on 'hard' subjects like mathematics and science. The female teachers in the present case study have challenged this assertion by proving that the stereotypes held about female teachers capacity in taking certain subjects are invalid.

The findings further revealed that teachers were viewed to be very instrumental not just in promoting the academic progress of pupils, but are keen on enhancing pupil's social, moral, and spiritual development. Consequently, the theme that emerged from the finding included teacher's enhancement of the overall development of the pupils in meeting their

goals in life. In faith schools, teachers' roles are extended to inculcating and enhancing a religious character in children. The achievement in roles by the teachers did not just concentrate on the academic potentials of pupils but also the spiritual and religious. Starting with the account of T1, the contribution to children's spiritual development is revealed. T1 stated that;

*We start our week with prayer with the children. Prayer is always there. It slips through everything and that is the biggest achievement because it is a living faith school.*

The excellent RE curriculum put in place by the school greatly promotes pupil's spiritual and religious development. Indeed, T1 emphasised the importance of this;

*My role here has mainly been to be a really good teacher; as a teacher and a deputy head to lead the curriculum, to lead the creativity of the curriculum, to lead relationships with children and that always centres around the RE curriculum, because the RE curriculum is at the centre of everything we do.*

One important point made by T2 portrays the significant role teachers' play in making sure that the children placed under their care develop not just academically and religiously, but that they develop in every other area of their lives too. This is highlighted in T2's account below;

*As a teacher, my role has been to help children to achieve what they are capable of achieving and helping them to reach their potential; teaching the Catholic faith and helping the children to develop their belief in the Catholic faith; working with the other teachers to make sure the whole school is working to the same ethos, supporting each other, showing people that this is how I do it so they can copy but also watching other people. All the time*

*we are striving for the best possible outcomes for the children in our school; faith wise, academically, socially, in fact you just want them to be good all round.*

Indeed, Ofsted's school inspection report (2008) confirms that the children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding.

The above narratives demonstrate the significant role of female teachers in contributing to the overall development of learners. The findings from the case study suggest that the school's excellent religious education curriculum, and the mission statement where all children are deemed as precious contributes to the development of children from an academic, social, moral, and spiritual perspectives. This result lends support to my research in demonstrating that teachers play a crucial role in contributing to children's progress in almost every area of the lives, though apparently nothing has been done to recognise this invaluable effort of the teachers.

### **3.2.6 Reluctance in Seeking for Career Advancement**

Another theme that emerged from the findings of the study was the reluctance by teachers to seek for promotion. When the question was asked on teacher's professional aspiration, the teachers expressed individual set-backs preventing them from moving up the career ladder. For T1, the main barrier is childcare responsibility, and because greater responsibilities are associated with occupying a position of authority, she was reluctant to seek for promotion. T1 had the following to say;

*I am a mother of young children. I should really aspire now to be a head teacher but I have barriers in my personal life because when you become the head teacher of a school it's all absorbing, and must have a complete devotion to it. It's not because I am too afraid to move on, and if I didn't have that as a barrier, I probably would have left may be a couple of years ago to do what the head teacher is doing here.*

The above finding on childcare acting as a barrier to career advancement ties with previous research stating that family responsibilities, especially women with young children find it challenging to seek for career advancement (Coleman, 2002; Celikten, 2005). It was interesting to find out that, T1 did not lack the aspiration to seek for promotion. She has the desire to take on a headship position, but this wish is hindered by childcare responsibilities.

Another factor identified by the teachers as contributing to their reluctance to take on lead roles relates to the workload associated with senior positions. Staff reluctance to seek for promotion — due to heavy workload and policies, characteristic of the teaching profession — was identified by one of the school authorities, SG, in the following statement:

*What we have found in the past is that we go through phases where people don't just want to be promoted because there is an awful lot of budgets, there is an awful lot of paper work and a lot of policy.*

SG's declaration was confirmed by T2 who shares the following;

*I wouldn't want to be a head teacher or deputy head. I think if you are a head, there is a lot of paper work. Personally I am not a great paper work person. I don't like paper work.*



The findings again support the assertion made by previous studies, identifying workload as one of the factors that leads to stress, and consequently results to a state where some teachers consider leaving the profession (Conley and Jenkins, 2011).

SG suggests that teachers are reluctant to take on promoted posts because of the responsibilities that accompany the position. However, other teachers had different reasons against being promoted. T2's account below indicates that she is apprehensive in advancing her career because she wants to maintain contact with the pupils. T2 stated that;

*I wouldn't want to be a head teacher or deputy head. I want to be with the children and I think if you are a head, you would not spend as much time with the children as I will like to spend. I am happy being in the classroom, doing the job that I do. I want to carry on learning and realising new ways of doing things and improving myself in that way but I don't want to go any further or any higher with my career in terms of role.*

Teacher's reluctance to progress in their careers as a result of a desire to stay within the classroom environment confirms previous research. Smith (2011) establishes that female teachers obtained great job satisfaction in staying in the classroom with the children. Likewise, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2005) state that because some women's principal objective of taking on a teaching job was to have contact with the children, they are usually reluctant to seek for promotion. Teachers were therefore hesitant to take on headship position as this will compromise their major objective of joining the profession, interacting with the children.

This section demonstrates that women's reluctance to take on leadership roles are based on the challenges they face from both the home front and work environment. I have argued

that women's reluctance to occupy leadership positions is a result of the lack of support towards child care and in reducing workload. This is in line with my research argument that female teachers do not receive the necessary support that would permit them to progress to senior management and leadership positions.

### **3.2.7 Equality in Opportunities**

To ascertain if a teacher's gender has an effect on their career opportunities, a theme of equality in opportunities was introduced; particularly in the availability and access to opportunities for both sexes to personal development and career advancement. T1, for example, stated that;

*I have never experienced any prejudice from being female. It's a female dominated profession.*

Similarly, T2 said the following;

*If you are teaching in a primary school, the majority of people are women. If you want to get on, there are probably far more women primary heads than male primary head. If you want to aspire to be a head, then most people that want to be a head can get there because they are crying out loud for heads. If that is where you want to get, I don't think there will be any problem... I have not worked with an awful lot of men. I have probably worked with six or seven, which compared to the number of females that I have worked with is really quiet low.*

The narratives from the teachers indicate that equality of opportunities is promoted. Both T1 and T2 support this claim with the commonly shared notion that the predominance of

women in primary schools is an indication that gender equality is respected. However, female teachers' predominance in teaching may not necessarily mean that gender equality is promoted, since research maintain that most women get into teaching because the profession is considerate of family needs (Calabress, 2001; Cinamon and Rich, 2005). This implies that the predominance of women in teaching may be a reflection of the greater numbers of women applying for jobs in the profession rather than the assumed viewpoint that it is a reflection of equality being respected.

### **3.2.8 Self-Motivation**

The authorities were interviewed on measures that have been put in place to promote women taking up managerial positions within the institution. The responses obtained introduce a theme of self-motivation as the driving force for career improvement. According to HT two measures have been put into action within the school. HT highlights these measures in the following excerpt;

*Firstly, we do lots of training together. We are very much a learning community. There are lots of in-house training. Secondly, each member of staff will have their own professional development plan. There is a programme for all my teaching assistants. Every member of staff has objectives to follow throughout the year.*

Though HT mentions that two measures are employed by the school to support teacher's progress, actually, it is only a single measure — training. It turns out from the teachers narratives that the second measure referred to, as the objectives teachers are to follow, still pertains to training. The findings from the teacher's perspective indicate that the needs

identified by teachers in their professional development plan mainly cover trainings. T2's narrative highlights this view;

*If we need training in whatever way, either we go on a course, or HT (name withheld) regularly discusses what needs we have, and the head teacher then tries to either put it into our school training or she will allocate for what you have asked.*

HT's account further indicates that the training offered to teachers is based on the needs identified by the teachers. This was confirmed by L1, in the following excerpt, stating that teachers have to be proactive towards their career development;

*Don't wait on anybody to tell you, you have to grow, you have to develop, formally meeting with other people... It's all left to the individuals to develop themselves.*

The above findings suggests that if teachers failed to identify developmental needs, then the chances of the school providing opportunities for staff development is slim. Teachers are therefore left at the mercy of school heads in relation to career advancement. It is surprising that the teachers are in total support of taking charge over their career development through their own initiative.

In order, to find out if teachers needed any further support, apart from what is being provided by the school, a question was asked about any additional measure that teachers may desire to be implemented. A general view was that the school is already doing a lot to support teachers, and therefore, teachers did not consider it necessary for the school to take action in implementing any further measures. In addition, T1 went further to emphasise that teachers should not concentrate on promotion because teaching is a vocation. Indeed T1 emphasised that;

*There is nothing much that the institution can do to assist teachers in meeting their professional goals. I don't know how it can be formalised because I honestly think you have to want to grow as a teacher. And if you think growing is to get promotion, and growing is to get more money, and growing is to get up the ladder, it is not what being a teacher is all about. Teaching is a complete way of life. It's a vocation, especially in a faith school, and it's what you want to share with the children.*

T1's claim that because teaching is a vocation, teachers should not be so concerned about getting promoted. This could explain the reason for the institution's decision for not instituting concrete promotional measures to encourage teachers to take up positions of authority.

The account of T2 below also indicates that the school is operating effectively in providing what teachers need in relation to professional development. T2 was very confident of this, stating that the head teacher acts very responsively to teachers needs for career development. Again, the emphasis on teachers to use their own initiative for development is highlighted by T2 in the following account;

*The head teacher is very aware of everybody because we are a very close community, and I think if somebody had an aspiration and discussed that with HT (name withheld), then I think she will support them whole heartedly in helping them to get there, and I think that people that have got aspirations to go on and do things have gone on and done them while HT has been the head. If you have got an aspiration, most people would have discussed it with HT because she is very open to listening and she will support everybody. If you have got an aspiration and you don't share it, then that is not anybody else's fault, that is your own fault*

*for not going further with it. Anything that I have wanted to do HT has backed me up. I don't think I have got any aspirations that haven't been met.*

It was interesting to note that even though teachers identified childcare responsibilities, paperwork, and workload as a barrier to career development, they did not mention any measures that could be taken to tackle the concerns. This is an indication that teachers are unaware of the support they can receive; support that would promote a balanced life, where teachers can have a prosperous career, and a pleasant personal and social life. In like manner, the findings suggest that school authorities are equally unaware of the various strategies — such as mentoring, networking, family-friendly policies and work balance policies — that can be employed to support teacher's career development.

A main objective of this study was to investigate the strategies that have been employed by schools to promote female leadership. The findings from the present case study reveal that only one strategy is running. In addition, the training offered applied to all teachers; none specifically targeting women.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that females do not receive support to advance in their careers. Rather, initiatives are taken to support recruitment of males within the teaching profession. Even though, the data revealed that female teachers play an incredible role to children's development, there were no initiatives set in place to recognise and support the teachers towards their own career development. Although, attention has been paid to increasing the number of males within the teaching profession, the lack of women in leadership position has not received the same attention. This is in line with my research

argument; that females are not supported in pursuing leadership or higher management positions to the same extent as men are.

### **3.3 REFLECTIONS ON PILOT STUDY**

Prior to conducting the main study a pilot study was conducted in a faith school similar to those in the main study. A pilot study is a tentative small-scale study to pre-test and modify study designs and procedures (McBurney, and White, 2009). The purpose of this pilot study, therefore, was to improve upon the research design; from developing interview questions to collection, processing and analysis of data. This pilot study did identify some areas within the design that needed to be corrected before the main study was conducted.

The pilot study has enabled me to reflect on the problems involved in securing permission to conduct the interview and in gaining access to the participants. The time allocated for arranging the interviews was not sufficient enough. More time was allocated for rescheduling of interviews in the main study. Also, the time that was allocated for each interview slot was insufficient for some of the interviewees. This was also corrected with the main study, making sure that sufficient time is allocated for interviewees to express their opinions. All of the above indicated that some alterations to the design was needed.

The recording equipment that was used for the pilot was not suitable and too much time was spent listening to the recordings. Transcription of the data also took much more time

than originally anticipated. A better quality recording equipment with the right resolution was sorted out for the main study to maximise time and achieve efficiency.

Some of the questions in the pilot study followed on with leading questions. I realised that such questions were challenging for the respondents to answer. Consequently, I found that at the end of the interviews some parts of the questions were not answered. However, part of the question that was unanswered was asked again later on in the interviews. It has been learned from the pilot that only one question should be asked at a time and this was incorporated into the main study. However, the pilot study proved reliable as the responses from interviewees did demonstrate a high level of clarity with the questions.

The pilot study was instrumental in checking that the data collection techniques were right for the study. Conducting the pilot helped to test my research questions and also to test the validity of the study, making sure that all the main areas of investigation were covered. One area was noticed as not providing as much information to the study; one of the main objectives was to investigate the strategies employed by institutions to promote female leadership in schools. Because respondents were struggling to provide information on this question, another question was included to specifically target the policies that have been instituted to promote female leadership. The additional question included was: *What are the institution's policies governing employment, the ordering of positions and promotion modalities?* For respondents who were unable to identify policies, a copy of the policies —



that is if they exist — served to provide information that would be used to conduct a documentary analysis of the policies.

What has been learned from the pilot study is that good instrumentation is crucial for achieving efficient results. Also, the pilot has proven that clearly data collection procedures need to be well defined in order to enable its applicability. The pilot has also indicated that poor procedures and poor equipment can make analysis of data very challenging.

The pilot study was important in identifying problems with the design and implementation of the study. It looked at the research methods used, gaining access to the research site, structuring research questions, the time spent by respondents in answering questions, the reliability and validity of the data. Thus following the pilot study, various changes were made in these areas, as explained above. The pilot study has offered the opportunity to test the feasibility of the main study. Equally, the pilot study has enabled me to test the research methodology, and has assisted me in finding out the reaction of participants to the study. From conducting the pilot study I have gained experience that has boosted my confidence in conducting the main study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CASE STUDY: ANGLICAN SCHOOL**

#### **4.1 OVERVIEW**

The Anglican school is an average size primary school found in the Lancashire area. It is a Church of England voluntary aided primary school. It is a mixed school and a large majority of the pupils are from a white British background. The overall teaching in lessons is rated as good with some of the lessons classified as outstanding. Consequently, pupils are seen to be making good progress. Indeed, a majority of the parents are pleased with the progress and achievement of their children. The behaviour of pupils during learning is excellent due to the fact that teachers make learning exciting, fun and challenging. The rich school curriculum that is provided to pupils ensures that they are very enthusiastic about learning and they gain diverse learning experience which contributes to their progress. The attendance rate of the pupils is excellent, and is thought to exceed the national rate. The school's initiative to invest in books has proven beneficial to the pupils. This is believed to have contributed to improvements in pupil's reading, particularly the boys (Ofsted Inspection Report, 2013). There is no doubt that the school is regarded as a place for learning almost exclusively for boys. There were no explanations as to why there was much emphasis on promoting boys' reading, but, surely this would impact negatively on girls' performance.

A report from the school's website indicates that learning is at the heart of all they do, and that they are committed to providing excellent education to pupils in order to assist them

achieve their full potential. However, a recent Ofsted inspection report (2013) reveals that teaching is good but is yet to achieve an outstanding status.

The pupil's behaviour and safety in school is said to be outstanding. In terms of their interaction with other pupils and adults in school, they are understood to be polite, friendly and helpful. The pupils feel very safe at school as they are properly cared for by the staff, who are very approachable and always available to listen to the pupils (Ofsted Inspection Report, 2013). In addition, as stated on the school's website, the strong Christian ethos and pastoral care extended to the pupils is excellent, and fulfils the school's aim of creating an environment in which pupils feel secured, confident, responsible and happy. This was confirmed by the recent Ofsted inspection report (2013), which stated that the pastoral care extended to pupils is excellent and the pupil are very aware of what is expected of them, and they possess a good knowledge between right and wrong.

#### **4.2 OUTLINE**

The interview method was used to collect data for the study. Interviews were conducted with school authorities, teachers and a representative of religious authorities and school governors and a representative from the Local Education Authority (LEA). The interviews with the female teachers were aimed at exploring their achievements and accomplishments, their experiences and views on equal opportunities issues as faith teachers, and the resources available to foster career advancement. This included any recommendations on what they think could be further developed to facilitate their

progress. In summary, the central focus of the interview questions was to collect information on the role, experiences and position of female teachers, including strategies that can be implemented by institutions of learning to promote women's leadership.

The sample of the interviewees is diverse; they occupy different positions, are of different ages, all are Christians but belong to different denominations of the faith, and have different family circumstances. The results from the findings are presented under five categories. From these categories themes were developed on various aspects; both the private and professional lives of female teachers. The first category dwells on the effect of religious teachings on the professional lives of teachers. The theme of ambiguity of religious teachings as a barrier to career development emerged. The second category deals with the role of the teacher. The following themes emerged from this category: role models, behavioural/spiritual development, academic achievement, team work, excellent leadership. The third category focuses on the position of female teachers. Under this category the following themes were developed: female predominance in leadership, low aspirations towards career advancement, inequalities by gender, inequalities by age, and inequalities by religion. The final category focuses on measures to promote female leadership. Two themes emerged from this category: negotiating suitable working arrangement and training.

In the process of analysing the data, for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the data has been anonymised and identifiers have been removed from the data and replaced by a code as follows:

The head teacher will be represented by the code HTa

The deputy head teacher will be represented as DHTa

Teachers will be represented by the codes T3 and T4

The school governor will be represented by the code SG2

Representative of local education authority LEA1

Representative of religious authorities will be represented by the code RA2

### **4.3 INITIAL FINDINGS**

#### **4.3.1 RELIGION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Ambiguity of Religious Teachings as a Barrier to Career Development**

Research holds that women face severe constraints when it comes to occupying positions of leadership within religious organisations (Ebere, 2011; Grundy, 2013). Some of the explanations advanced for the exclusion of women from leadership roles were directed towards the laws and religious teachings observed by various religious organisations. Investigating this claim within the present case study revealed mixed results. The deputy head teacher (DHTa), who happens to be teaching as well, categorically refuted the existence of any teachings of the Church of England acting as a barrier to women's leadership. Though taking this stand, it was surprising that DHTa expressed that other believers of the Church of England admitted to the existence of teachings against women's leadership. DHTa stated that;

*Some Anglicans feel that there are. I do not believe that. I think they find things in the Bible that say that women should not be priests or vicars or leaders within faith positions. At my personal parish church, our vicar is a woman. I do not think there is anything here [at the school] that reflects that belief.*

In contrast to DHTa, interviews with the teachers acknowledge the existence of Biblical teachings that may prevent women from taking leading positions. However, with regards to their own experiences, the barriers were not directly related to religious teachings. T4 highlighted the effects of some of the requirements expected of teachers that are typical of faith schools when applying for leadership roles. According to T4, these requirements act as a huge barrier to attaining a leadership position within faith schools. T4 stated that;

*The things that hold me back are more practical things like there is a church school; very small headship being advertised at the moment that I will apply for, but my church reference of how often I go to church will not be strong enough. In that way the church side holds you back.*

Essentially, T4's account implies that applicants seeking for high ranking positions must have an accompanying church reference supporting the application. The inability to provide a church reference thus acts as a constraint to securing a leadership position within an Anglican school.

Even though some interviewees agreed to the existence of religious teachings that prevents women from assuming leadership positions, they however expressed strongly the view that as individuals these teachings do not hinder them from progressing in their careers. For example, T3 had the following to say:

*I think you can find in the Bible things that people do not agree with. I do not think there is anything that stops me from developing or stops me from doing anything particularly. Personally, I do not feel that I am being held back at all, other than my personal choice of what I want to do... While I am a Christian I think that times are changing, and the way that you interpret lots and lots of things in the Bible is personal interpretation. Arch Bishop of Canterbury is a great one for sort of saying 'do not take it literally', and I will agree with him.*

It can be observed that even though DHTa previously disclosed the non-existence of religious teachings within her faith acting as a hindrance to female leadership, she subsequently admitted that the problem with religious leadership lies in how individuals interpret the scriptures. It can be drawn from this that she acknowledges that these teachings exist, but as an individual, religious teachings do not render any limitation to her career advancement.

It was interesting to find out that, though the responses from the interviews indicated that religious teachings had no impact on the career advancement, there was evidence of its impact on women's career within the religious community. This was revealed in the following account by HTa:

*I do not think the Bible teaching particularly has that impact. I am Roman Catholic. One of the reasons I almost stopped worshipping regularly because it is anti-female. You can do the flowers and you can clean the church, and maybe do the reading from the Bible. That is about it. That is not just right. I find that very uncomfortable. It is interesting to kind of see that tension within the Anglican Church about the role of females, female ministers and female bishops and where that is going.*

The above account demonstrates the subordinate role assigned to women within the Catholic Church. Women's services are greatly required to engage in subsidiary roles but are denied the opportunity to ascend to positions of real power and authority within the church. This supports my research argument, that women do not receive support to pursue leadership roles. As opposed to leadership in a faith school where applicants are not permitted to apply for leadership roles because they are not practising the faith (to be discussed later), women within the church setting are discriminated against even when it is evident that they actually practise their faith and even make up the majority of the faithful. It would seem that because of their gender, they are relegated to the background, while men receive the support to take on lead roles.

Although some teachers were of the opinion that religious teachings and/or practices did not act as a barrier to their career advancement, interviews with the school authorities, however, indicated that religion does indeed impact on career advancement. All school authorities interviewed mentioned the fact that applicants aspiring for the headship or deputy headship position must belong to a particular group of churches identified by the Church of England. DHTa stated that:

*To be in a senior leadership role within the school it is obligatory that you are a practicing Christian. There is a cluster of churches called 'Churches Together' and you have to be on that list to be able to apply for a senior leadership role within the Church of England primary school. But this is only for the head and the deputy head.*

DHTa's statement clearly evidences that being in a leadership position within the Church of England school is reserved strictly for practising Christians from the list of churches



identified. This clearly supports my argument that religious practices act as a barrier to career advancement.

Similarly, HTa points out in detail the requirement expected of applicants for senior leadership positions by the Church of England. In addition to the prerequisite of belonging to a particular faith, it revealed another tough condition that has to be met by applicants; the requirement of providing a church reference. HTa stated that;

*For the head teacher role, you have to be practising within the group that they have identified. You may be a Catholic, Methodist, United Reformed or a Baptist. There is a whole list of churches that the Church of England recognises as kind of practicing Christian faith. So long as you are within the list you are ok. When you apply for the job you have to have a faith reference; you have to have your priest or vicar write a reference to say this person does regularly worship and they play this role in our church. It is the same for the deputy post.*

The condition of belonging to and practicing a faith to gain leadership positions within a faith school was confirmed by T4. In the following extract T4 describes the hostile experience she went through while seeking to secure a deputy headship position in a Catholic school. Because T4 was not of the Catholic faith, her desire to become a deputy head teacher in a Catholic faith school was short lived. T4 stated that;

*In order to be in leadership in a church school, you have to have a church reference that says you are a regular worshipper; which means more than once a month and that the church in your community knows you when you are taking active part in it... I went to a Catholic school last term. They wanted to borrow me for a year to be their deputy, even though I am not a*

*Catholic, but at the end of that year when the job is advertised permanently I will not be eligible to apply; which is very silly because there are not enough Catholics around.*

The present case study is with an Anglican school, but the responses from the participants have pointed out some of the difficulties faced from a Catholic perspective. This shows that generally teachers from a faith background encounter more barriers compared to those seeking for employment from public schools. The above quote evidences that occupying a leadership role within a faith school is extremely challenging; not just for those with no faith or those practising other faiths but also to those who belong to the faith but are not active participants. This supports my argument that religious practices hinder teachers' career advancement.

Despite the challenges faced by teachers in securing a leadership role as a result of not being able to provide a satisfactory church reference, the authorities did not consider the requirement of belonging to a particular faith as a concern towards career advancement. This is possibly because applicants were given a whole list of churches from which they could be accepted, as pointed out by DHTa previously.

However, the mere fact that there was an element requiring applicants to belong to a specific faith puts those who practise other faiths at a disadvantaged position. Furthermore, the requirement of providing a church reference equally stands as a barrier not just to those who may not belong to the identified list of churches, but also to those who may find themselves as members of the identified churches but are not practising their faith or are not active within the religious community. The requirement of providing a church reference, as indicated earlier, acted as a barrier to T4 in applying for a headship position since she was unable to provide a satisfactory church reference stating her activeness within

the church. Thus, the requirements of belonging to a particular faith, and also providing a church reference indeed acts as a barrier to career advancement to teachers who are unable to meet both requirements. This was particularly evident with non-Catholic teachers who wanted to secure a leadership position in a Catholic school.

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate how religious teachings and practices influence women's personal and professional pathways. Two points were gathered from the investigation. Firstly, the present case study has revealed that as individuals religious teaching do not in any way affect their personal lives as it is a matter of personal interpretation. Secondly, religious practices were found to hinder women's career advancement where there was failure to meet the religious requirements expected of individuals aspiring for a senior leadership post.

In this section I have demonstrated that religious practices act as a barrier to career advancement. Using the narratives from the female teachers, it is evident that gaining access to a leadership role in a particular faith school is an ordeal for applicants from different faith background or those with no faith. This section supports my research objective that religious practices hinder teachers' career advancement within a faith setting.

#### **4.3.2 ROLE OF FEMALE TEACHERS**

The significant role of a teacher in the educational milieu is indisputable. A number of studies continuously emphasised the task of teachers as central to education; pointing out that the teacher is the most important institutional determining factor to academic achievement (Conant, 1993; Gupta 1996; Hussain et al, 2011; Islahi, 2011). Interviews with

the teachers on their roles revealed their significant contribution to the success of children. This confirms the discourse that teacher's task is central to education and that they are the most important element responsible for children's success. Four themes were identified from the findings, revealing teacher's roles in the following capacity: role models; behaviour/spiritual development, academic achievement, and building team spirit and effective leadership that contributes to children's learning and development.

### **Role Models**

The teachers in the study stressed the importance of personal development of the children. Their roles included being instructors/facilitators, information providers, counsellors, and role models. The teachers expressed the view that their role was to guide the children in their personal development. They professed that the personal development of children was crucial, and therefore supported children's personal development by acting as role models. T4, who is a teacher and also a key stage two manager, talks of being a role model to the children; promoting the right standard of behaviour. T4 stated that;

*When you are on the leadership team, in a church school in particular, I feel a very big responsibility to be a role model with the sort of upright moral issues of being in a church school.*

T4's quote is of great importance to my research theme. Her account demonstrates the significant contribution of faith teachers to children's moral development. It evidences that even when teachers are not keen towards developing a moral dimension in children, the

urge to act as a role model to children in adopting a moral standing become inevitable due to their affiliation with a faith school.

Discussions on the part played by teachers as role models revealed a very interesting phenomenon. In the literature review, the feminisation of teaching was seen as detrimental to young boys since this implied the lack of male teachers to act as role models for the boys. Hence, research claims that the absence of male teachers contributes to a boy's underachievement in schools. As the review points out, this view has gained so much support from governments to the point that initiatives have been taken to increase the number of male teachers in classrooms. During the interview with the deputy head teacher (discussed below) a new trend became evident. At present males are often regarded as full-time teachers and women teaching assistants; even when males are teaching assistants. For some reason there is always a tendency to see males as teachers. In a way, this promotes the stereotyping of women's roles — the propensity of always associating the subordinate roles to women. To the deputy head teacher (DHTa) it was important to challenge the undesirable notion of always attaching teaching assistant positions to females. DHTa stated;

*We have a very high percentage of female staff. We only have only one male class teacher and all the other class teachers are female, which is common for a primary school. What is nice here is that one of our full time teaching assistant is a man and that is very unusual. It is nice for the children to see that teaching assistants do not always have to be women and teachers do not always have to be men.*

For DHTa it is important to eliminate stereotype gender roles in the school. The stereotyping of roles according to gender is a main concern of the current study, following the assumption that women are best suited as classroom teachers and men as managers. This

relates to my research theme because gender stereotyping will contribute to the further masculinisation of schools in terms of management and leadership.

### **Behaviour/Spiritual Development**

In advocating the significant roles teachers have as role models, the teachers felt that being an effective teacher also meant educating children about behaviours and values. By virtue of the fact that the school is a faith school, it uses this advantage to bring in scriptural teachings to build the children's personal values. This demonstrates the commitment of faith-schools in nurturing not just the minds, but also the spirit of the children. T3 explicitly discusses this in detail:

*I just like them to know that they are liked and that they are loved. That is by people around them in school. They know that when we are talking about God, God is welcoming, that God is there for everybody and that they are valued. For the children to feel self-value is really important. The fact that we have a very strong Christian ethos that really supports that idea of children having self-worth and they are as worthy as everybody else and that they are welcomed the same as everybody.*

In the interview, T3 went on to explain even more ways in which the school supports and positively influence children's behaviour and attitudes; helping them to overcome fears, and also assisting in accomplishing their dreams. T3 stated that;

*I have been teaching here for over 20 years. Generally, as a teacher, when the children leave me they have gained self-confidence, they know what they are good at, they know how to improve in things they find hard, they come to school feeling happy and secured, they can*

*talk about any problems they have got, we are in an environment that is nurturing and we will listen to them and help them have some self-confidence.*

This statement clearly indicates that the role of the female teacher is significantly important because children find it easier to communicate to them any challenges they may be facing. This relates to my research theme as it demonstrates the crucial role of teachers to children's development. Children were not only supported in building positive self-behaviour and attitude, but were also taught to value others and to understand their place in a multi-cultural society. A document on 'School Values' emphasises the necessity to respect different faiths and beliefs. To achieve this, people of other faiths were encouraged to share their beliefs and practices through collective worship to assist in developing children's understanding of other faiths.

The spiritual development of pupils, including the celebration of 'others' faith was something that came up frequently during the interviews. Being a faith school, the teachers were very concerned with the spiritual development of the children. Surprisingly, though it is a Church of England school, they did not only stress on developing the Anglican or Christian faith but welcomed other faiths. Indeed, SG2 observed that;

*The Christian ethos of the school is the foundation of the school, but there are a good percentage of children from other faiths who attend the school primarily because of the university [children of international students attending the University close to the researched school]. At the school, children have become very aware of other faiths and look to celebrate other faiths.*

Likewise, HTa stated that:

*Although we are a Church of England school, we value and celebrate other children's faiths.*

*If it is Ramadan, we do something in our worship that celebrates that with other children.*

The interviews revealed the institution's commitment towards building a religious character in pupils. In addition to this, the acceptance of other faiths implies that children get to learn about other faiths and this is likely to promote acceptance of diversity and community cohesion within the community.

This section demonstrates the indispensable role of female teachers to children's moral and spiritual development. It also demonstrates the important role of faith schools in nurturing individuals and bringing them to a state of awareness on the various faiths in society. As a result, this contributes to peace and stability in the community as children learn to accept other faiths. This supports my research theme that female teachers from faith schools are instrumental not only in developing the character and behaviour of individual children but that this directly has an effect at a community level by supporting instilling community cohesion.

### **Academic Achievement**

While some of the respondents discussed roles that go beyond the classroom, others discussed roles that pertain to the classroom. The results reveal the significant role teachers play in their instructional capacity in promoting children's success in learning. T4 explains one of her most significant achievement in the profession;



*My greatest achievement is probably the standards that we achieve in the SAT at the end of key stage two. SAT is the standard attainment test that the children across the country take, that the school is measured on. We are measured on how much progress have the children made since they were seven, and how they compare nationally, and our school achieves very highly.*

T4, as all the teachers in this case study, felt that her ability as a teacher was a great achievement because she could relate the efforts put into her teaching methodology to the success and achievements of the pupils. The role of the teacher here is more than simply transmitting knowledge; it is personal engagement and support with each individual pupil. Therefore, my research supports the importance of the role of the teacher in guiding, nurturing and supporting pupils to reach their potential; a role that is vital to society and perhaps a role that is not always recognised or acknowledged to the extent that it should be, particularly for female teachers – which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Further, the discussions surrounding the role of the teacher extend beyond the children's personal development and their classroom achievements to the community as a whole and perhaps to the entire nation. Even though the teachers did not bring this up when discussing their roles, the head teacher, HTa, did speak about the teacher's role in educating children to build a more desirable community as well as the entire nation. HTa said;

*We just look to do the very best for our children that we can. In terms of their educational achievement, what we do as a faith school, we are more about developing them as people and as good citizens and as people who will make the world a better place.*

This is absolutely significant in demonstrating the place of religion in society in contributing to world peace. It therefore, implies that the teachers play a significant role in developing future citizens who will impact on the world positively. This relates to my research in demonstrating that female teachers are exceptional, particularly, at the present period in time where world security is seriously threatened by religious turbulence.

Most of the respondents referred to the school as doing effectively well academically and this was associated with the brilliant efforts put in by the teachers — the majority of whom are female. This was confirmed by the school's assessment data which revealed that both past and current all year groups made good progress. Also, the school authorities interviewed (HTa and LEA1), supported the contributions of teachers towards the achievement of children's progress in the following excerpts:

*We just strive for the best all the time for the children to fulfil their potentials academically and we do very well here (HTa).*

*The performance is very good but is monitored closely by the head and subsequently the governors (LEA1).*

Similarly, DHTa expresses the contribution of teachers to learner's development as reflected in an Ofsted inspection.

*We had a very successful Ofsted inspection last year where everybody performed very highly and we also had an outstanding church school inspection; all the staff again played a big part in that. We are very proud of the performance of all our teachers and all our members of staff.*

The above quote is significant to my research in counteracting the assumption that females in management positions perform less than their male counterparts. The management styles of female teachers have been continually rated as ineffective. The present study has challenged this assumption by proving that females have the potential to perform well in lead roles.

Though the school authorities described the school as outstanding, my review of the Ofsted inspection report (2013) revealed that the school's overall status was 'good'. What was classified as excellent was the behaviour and safety of the children. The inspection report noted that teaching is good and improving and the school leaders work ceaselessly on improving teaching standards.

Nonetheless, the achievement of children as professed by the teachers and acknowledged by the Ofsted inspection report was further supported by testimonies from parents confirming the progress of their children in school. According to Ofsted inspection report (2013), a majority of the parents were very happy with the success of their children. Further confirmation was made by SG regarding the enormous contribution of teachers and school leaders to the development of the children under their care. Indeed, SG had the following to say:

*From my personal point of view as a parent, and as Christian parent, you do spend time with other parents and you share experiences and people will talk about schools and teachers. I have been amazed at the time my children spent there, how my children were also educated to a very good standard.*

The important role teachers play in contributing to the learning and development of children was not only confirmed by parents, but also by the learners themselves. This was mentioned by HTa.

*I do know that we do that [learning and developing children] very successfully here. And I know that from what parents say to me, from what the children have said. We have had an external inspection of our faith school and it was outstanding. We know we are doing the job very well.*

HTa was certain that children in the school received not only the best educational support, but also the best personal development opportunities. She was particularly pleased to be part of an institution of learning that provided this level of dedication and support to pupils. This clearly demonstrates the commitment and on-going perseverance of the head teacher and teaching staff – all women – to the educational and personal wellbeing of the children in their care.

Essentially, all responses point to the unanimous claim of the satisfactory progress of learners, despite the school not attaining an outstanding status. This suggests, however, that further improvements in the quality of teaching will raise the school to the desired outstanding status. In order to attain the desired status, some of the concerns presented by women in this study necessitate considerable attention. This section demonstrates that female teachers from faith schools take on multiple roles to promote an all-round development of pupils. Unfortunately the individuals behind this success do face challenges that need to be addressed if the school is to keep up with its progress status.

## Team Work

The interviews revealed that one of the contributing factors to the progress made in children's learning was the unity that existed among staff. The theme of team spirit was frequently mentioned as a strong force in contributing to the excellent performance of teachers leading to the good progress recorded in children's learning. SG2 highlights the great performance of teachers including their skills in team building. SG2 stated that;

*Excellent standard of teaching; very low sick leave for a majority of the teachers who are passionate in their role of educators; pastoral care and the nurturing of the students; they work very well as a team within the school.*

This is an important point, and relates directly to my research theme because this shows the commitment of female teachers to their job. It indicates that the reason for women entering the profession is not just for the fact that teaching is considerate of family needs, but because female teachers consider their jobs as a vocation. In addition, the accounts further demonstrate the collegial relationship that exists among teachers. On the one hand, this is advantageous to the institution's progress, on the other hand, collegiality and lack of competition among female teachers lead to strong teamwork. The teachers in this study are used to working harmoniously, they do not desire to compete against each other. Literature often associates work competition to males (Chabaya *et al.* 2009; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013).

Working as a team was not only recorded among teachers, but this was also visible among the leadership milieu. The response from the head teacher relating to the performance of those in managerial position revealed feelings of alliance, enabling them to cooperate and work well together. In line with this, HTa had the following to say:

*We are doing very well. I think we are very effective. We complement each other as well. The senior teacher is very methodical and very good with the kind of small minutia and detail whereas I am a big kind of thinker. We work very well as a team.*

The team spirit demonstrated by both staff and the leadership team – women – indicates how they complement one another and build a community among themselves, where there is respect for differences and interdependence. This relates to my research in demonstrating that women are good at their jobs if they are given the opportunities and support to fulfil their roles.

### **Excellent Leadership**

The role of teachers so far has been seen as significant in promoting personal values, acting as role models, and as instructors contributing to children's academic, social and cultural development. One of the factors contributing towards the achievement of all of the above relates to the brilliant leadership of the school. According to an Ofsted inspection report (2013), the school has a strong leadership team with high ambitions, determination and drive to bring forward improvements in every area of the children's life. The report further indicated that teachers were very positive about the leadership of the school. In the interviews the strengths of the leadership team was mostly associated to the significant role played by the head teacher. Her leadership was highly praised, particularly her ability to integrate faith in all she does. DHTa points this out in the following extract:

*The head teacher is very strong and this is reflected in her personal faith and her conviction. It is very obvious to the children that she loves God and she brings that joy to them with all*

*the worships and things that she does. She is our worship coordinator in school so the programme of worship that she puts together is always really lovely and imaginative.*

In the same way, SG2 reflects on the leadership capacity of past female head teachers of the school. Just like DHTa above, SG2 described the head teachers as strong leaders, putting their faith in all they do. SG2 emphasised that;

*I can say that the past three women leaders of the school have all been very strong faith leaders and also very inclusive of their faith.*

SG2 went further to emphasise the excellent performance of the present head teacher, who's performance has earned her recognition as an effective leader. Unlike previously, where women were hardly recognised for the work they perform, as stated in literature review, this study reveals the church's subsequent recognition of the work of female leaders. SG2 highlighted the recognition accorded to the head teacher in the following account;

*The current head has moved the school from where it was to a very strong standing within church school. While she has been there, she has received certain awards of recognition from the education department of the diocese that have recognised the standard of Christian teaching.*

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the possibility of recognising women as faith educators and potential faith leaders. The present study has revealed that women are indeed very strong leaders, both in their faith and professionally. In this section, I have addressed the roles of female teachers together with those in management positions. All points to the fact that females have done extremely well towards children's entire

development from an academic, social, and moral perspectives. Those in management positions have proven competent – they are more than capable of leadership. If women are so brilliant and have demonstrated great success in their roles, why are they not afforded top ranking authoritative positions of leadership? Why is their progression into higher management hindered?

#### **4.3.3 POSITION OF FEMALE TEACHERS**

##### **Female Predominance in Leadership**

While some studies have claimed an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within the higher levels of education, others have claimed an underrepresentation of women in leadership within all levels of education (see literature review). The present case study focuses on investigating the claim to women's underrepresentation in leadership position within the primary sector. When asked about the position of female teachers within the school, all responses from the school authorities indicated that the majority of the senior positions were occupied by females. For example, HTa stated that;

*There is the senior leadership team; there is myself as head teacher, then the deputy head teacher and the senior teacher. As a leadership team there are three of us, myself, the deputy and the senior teacher and we are all female.*

Similarly, LEA1 confirmed the predominance of women in leadership position.



*The head teacher and deputy head teacher are both female, and many of the teaching team within the school are female. The lead for the out-of-hours kids club, which is an integral part of school life, is also female.*

The findings from the interviews draws further attention to the fact that female occupancy of the majority of senior leadership positions within the school was not only a current experience, but rather has been a long standing phenomenon. The following extract from SG2 highlight this fact:

*I have had links with the school for the past fourteen years. Since I have been involved in the school, women within the school have 95 per cent of the time held the leadership role of head teacher. There have been three very strong female head teachers in that time...the senior teaching roles within the school have been held by and are held by women. The deputy head is a female and the head of both of the key stages are women... All of the leadership roles at the school within teaching have been held by women in my fourteen and fifteen years of experience at the school.*

The results from the interviews may have revealed that senior leadership positions in terms of teaching staff are predominantly occupied by females, but when other senior posts outside teaching are considered, the results reveal a different picture. Review of the present case study's school documents concerning school governors indicates that a majority of the governing body are men. The review reveals that not only are men in a majority but that the most prominent positions are occupied by men. For example, the chair of governors, the LEA representative, the foundation governor (trustee representative), and the two diocesan education committee representatives are exclusively men. Women tend to be found within the lower range of the governing body. Women were mostly represented as staff governors

and parochial church council representatives (Governors' Document, 2015). This demonstrates gender imbalance at higher management level within the governing body. This evidence suggests therefore that the head teacher and chair of governors do not have a complete awareness of gender issues in relation to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions. They only understand a snap shot of the whole — the fact that the head teacher and the deputy head are females.

The results from the analysis of school documents reveal that primary schools are still heavily masculinised in terms of senior management. Women may make up the majority of staff, but actual power and authority is still a male preserve.

Even though the school governor, head teacher and deputy head teacher claimed that leadership within the school is predominantly female, HTa however agreed to the claim that generally within teaching profession women make up the majority of the teaching staff but are underrepresented in leadership position. HTa stated that;

*In primary schools it is predominantly women. If you look at it statistically, at the percentage of male to female teachers, and then look at the percentage of male to female heads, you will find that female teachers very very large, male teachers very small; and then heads; very large male, smaller female. There is a disparity between the profession as a whole and the leadership. The structures above are still very male dominated and female suppressing; not for us in school and what we do but certainly kind of the world out there it is... when I go to my cluster meeting, men still do most of the talking there. The men just do it naturally.*

There are two things that can be drawn from HTa's extract above. Firstly, it would be worth mentioning that the last two sentences made by HTa reflects one of the concerns that was

identified in the literature review as constituting an obstacle to women's advancement in their careers — the lack of confidence demonstrated by a majority of women teachers. From the response of HTa, it can be concluded that women to a certain degree have been given the opportunities to progress in their careers, but their personal attributes and values hinders them from advancing.

Secondly, the above extract reveals the dominance of males at senior leadership roles within the profession. It is interesting to see that this male dominance was not as a result of any form of discrimination against women, but rather was suggested as the outcome of the innate qualities characteristic of men. In like manner, T4 supports the claim of the predominance of males in leadership positions within education. However, unlike HTa who associates this dominance to natural attributes, T4 suggest that it is a consequence of the socialisation process reflected in the stereotypes that are held by society regarding men and women. Indeed, T4 suggested that;

*Men have more confidence to see themselves as natural leaders. They enter the teaching profession with an eye on the top intending to get there fairly quickly, whereas the women don't necessarily think like that... It is a stereotyping thing. How the men have been brought up; what their expectations are; how they were treated when they were children, affects their confidence and their career aspirations.*

Following the above extract, it can be established that the 'natural' qualities proposed to be possessed by men, coupled with the way they have been socialised to always aim for the top, contributes to stimulate the desire in them to seek career advancement. It can therefore be argued that because women have been socialised to take a subordinate

position in life, they lack the drive that men possess to constantly seek progress. This leads to an exploration of the next theme, which points to the aspirations of female teachers.

### **Low Aspirations towards Career Advancement**

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is often said to be perpetrated by the policies and rules within structures, including a male dominant culture that is prevalent within most institutions. Up to this point it has been revealed that this is not the case with the present case study within the school, but it can certainly be argued that it is evident within higher ranking positions of authority such as the governing body of the school. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions has equally been analysed as a consequence of the gendered division of work in the home. Across the sample only one of the teachers had clear career plans to seek promotion at the onset of her career, and very few respondents had the aspiration to ascend to leadership positions. The study found the aspiration of teachers to be determined by the following factors; home responsibilities, personal values and attributes, and work responsibilities.

These factors are directly related to my research because I argue that women do not aspire for leadership positions because of lack of support and provision in the home, in the work place and by society generally; these are discussed specifically in the next section.

## Home Responsibilities

The traditional delegation of the caretaking role for family members —mainly women — particularly the nurturing and upbringing of children, has been regarded as a hindrance to women’s career progression for a long time (Coleman, 2002; Celikten, 2005; Palmer et al, 2012). Having to combine both work and family responsibilities has been identified as a major impediment to women’s career development. This confirms the viewpoint that leadership positions in most cases are incompatible with family responsibilities. The teachers in the study stated that they were unable to pursue career advancement when their children were young. Though DHTa acknowledged that childcare responsibilities presently hinder her from seeking promotion, she has prospects of moving to a headship position when her childcare responsibility lessens;

*As somebody who has gone into deputy headship I probably, at that point, must have been thinking ‘yes’ I want to move forward and be a head teacher at some point in the future. I am pregnant with my second child at the moment. It has not change my outlook on things. I obviously want to do my job to the absolute best of my ability. But I am certainly not career minded at the moment and thinking what is the next step, what is my next job going to be. I am more focused on having my children and getting them to school probably before I think about that. I think at some point in the future I will like to be the head.*

The account from DHTa above demonstrates how teachers with young children find it challenging to advance in their careers. The association of child care to women by society act as a barrier for women to fulfil their career goals. Women have to devote most of their time and resources to fulfil family responsibilities at the expense of their career development. This is an important point and relates to my research because it shows that

women lack the support from the institution and family in regards to family responsibilities. Thus, most women are faced with a challenge when pursuing leadership and higher management positions since these positions are accompanied with lots of responsibilities.

### **Personal Values and Attributes**

The enthusiasm to seek promotion observed by DHTa was not shared by all teachers. This is in line with the literature review, which indicated that most female teachers do not want to seek promotion. HTa supports this view, stating that it is a general trend within most schools for some teachers to resist promotion on the grounds that they receive much satisfaction from being in the classroom with the children. HTa stated that;

*In any institution you have some people who are just happy staying where they are. And they have been like that for a long time. That is not to say that they are not doing a good job, that is the job they want to do and they are happy doing that.*

DHTa shares the same view as HTa, stating that within the researched school, a majority of the staff were not interested in leadership positions. DHTa stated that;

*Quite a lot of our staff are long standing and have expressed the desire to stay where they are. It is an individual choice. Some people who go into teaching want to be in the classroom and they are happy in the classroom. For women, that can be their main aspiration in life. They have not got any desire to move into leadership positions.*

HTa and DHTa's claim above was confirmed during the interviews with the teachers. One of the teachers declared that she was not interested in seeking promotion because of her

desire to stay with the children in the classroom. Unlike T4 who previously identified child care responsibilities as a barrier to seeking for promotion, T3 was very comfortable in maintaining her position as a classroom teacher. T3 stated that;

*I am not looking for promotion. I am happy where I am. I am happy in the classroom with the children and I just want to make sure I am doing the best job I possibly can for them. I am not interested in management. The thing I like the job for is the time with the children. I like to see them understanding things. That is the thing that I am most interested in. I am not interested in moving away from the classroom and doing management at the moment. I like to do professional development so that I can move on and keep up with things. I am not looking to have any managerial role within the school.*

Even when probed about any factors limiting her from progressing in her career, T3 declared that there were no limitations to her progressing. Though accepting that childcare responsibilities acted as a hindrance, the obstacle was in terms of not being able to work full-time rather than being a barrier to seeking a lead role – as was the case with T4 who stated that;

*I do not feel limited. My children are growing up now. My youngest has gone to high school and that is where the opportunity to go full-time came up, and I am ready to do that now. I did part-time before this.*

The account of the above teachers who are reluctant to take on leaderships roles based on the pretext of maintaining contact with the children is a matter of concern. It provokes the question; if wanting to stay in the classroom with the children is an unconscious social stereo-typing. If this is the case, then this group of women require a change of mind-set to

discard stereotypes that associate female teachers to child-focused roles. However, some of the teachers did have genuine reasons for opting to stay within the classroom and not seek promotion. Although the teachers perceive there was no barrier to career advancement, clearly the lack of child care support limited their aspirations to seek promotion. Again this links to my research because it indicates the absence of measures to support female teachers at both structural and familial levels.

### **Work Responsibilities**

In the literature review, one of the reasons identified as a barrier to female teacher's reluctance to seek for leadership position was attributed to the heavy responsibilities that come with occupying a senior leadership role. This assertion is confirmed with the present study, in which the deputy head teacher, DHTa, revealed the challenging nature of her job.

*I am the deputy head teacher and the year one class teacher. It is hard juggling the class teacher role and the deputy head role. It is fine, but if ever the head teacher is out it is a bit hectic, like tomorrow – she is out whole day at the diocesan conference so I have to sort of oversee everything. We have got a whole school assembly at the end of the day that parents come to and I am leading that. I am sort of straight out of class with my children and then I'm stepping into the other role. That can be a bit tricky to juggle.*

The account above indicates that the teacher is taking on more than her allocated role. Perhaps institutions assume that women are good at multi-tasking. However, this should transpire at a level where individuals are able to manage. In DHTa's case she is overstretched, having to execute multiple responsibilities. This relates to my research



theme because it indicates that limited resources are allocated to women in management positions to execute assigned responsibilities.

It is not surprising that, using DHTa's experience as an example, the reluctance by female teachers to apply for senior leadership positions is understandable. This can certainly be attributed in part to their observation of the challenging experiences of those in senior leadership positions. Even for teachers who occupy low ranking positions within the school, such as key stage managers, echoes of the demanding nature of the jobs could be heard. Therefore, thoughts of advancing further were dismissed as the teachers could foresee even more challenges to be incurred should they occupy a senior leadership position. For example, T4 stated that;

*I lead key stage two. I lead the teachers and the teaching assistance in those classes. If there are behaviours issues in those classes I deal with those. I am the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. I look after all the special needs in school. All the interventions and the provisions for those children who need catch-up type of sessions. I am the assessment coordinator, so I do all the data analysis, tracking of children's progress throughout the school... I don't have any other aspiration. I am happy doing what I am doing. My job is quite challenging and time consuming.*

From this assertion it would seem that T4 will experience difficulty in pursuing any kind of career development simply because of the challenging nature of her current position and the time allocation she had to devote to it. Again, this claim supports my argument that teachers, specifically female teachers, are not supported enough to pursue leadership positions; in this case T4 demonstrates a workload that does not allow for flexibility. Therefore, T4 is not inspired or encouraged to seek promotion.

Similarly, the head teacher, HTa, confirmed the claim that senior leadership positions comes with lots of responsibilities. HTa stated that;

*As it turns out, the deputy head teacher is also the key stage one coordinator, and the senior teacher is also the key stage two coordinator. They share other responsibilities such as assessment, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, and overview of the curriculum.*

Thus, the claim made by the school governor, SG2, that “teaching is a career where women seek career progression” and that “teaching is a profession that women can go into and still balance that with family life” is rendered suspect.

In addition, the literature review regarding the experiences of female teachers revealed that a majority of teachers were incapable of separating professional roles from family roles effectively. Teachers recounted how teaching work spilled into their homes, indicating how teaching responsibilities extended beyond the work environment (Cinamon and Riche, 2005; Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Okonkwo, 2013). This fact was confirmed in the study by DHTa, demonstrating the difficulties in balancing work and family responsibilities. DHTa confesses that;

*Teaching has its challenges. It is a hard job to do. It is not the sort of job where you can go home at night and you have finished everything. You never finish. That is quite stressful. You just cannot switch off from it...you have to have a balance between family time and work time.*

The teachers’ accounts in this section demonstrate the demanding nature of the teaching job, particularly in extending to the home. Failure to reduce workload impinges on female teacher’s propensity to pursue senior roles. The fact that mere classroom teachers are

affected with workload makes it even more difficult for them to seek for promotion position since these are accompanied with even more responsibilities, as mentioned earlier.

In summary, based on the present study, women have less aspiration compared to men in seeking promotion. Family responsibilities, huge workloads associated with senior posts, and personal values held, were seen to be largely responsible for women's reluctance to advance their careers.

One of the main focuses of the present study was to examine the extent to which primary schools are masculinised in terms of management and leadership. Based on the present case study, leadership in terms of staffing is primarily made up of women, meanwhile in terms of over-all management of the school, males tend to occupy more influential positions within the governing body. The present case study indicates that the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles is a result of the difficulties encountered by women in balancing work and family responsibilities, the heavy workload associated with leadership roles, and individual attributes reflected in their lack of aspiration for promoted posts.

The findings in this section certainly support my research argument that female teachers do not receive support that will enable them to seek leadership roles. The absence of strategies such as; delivery of trainings on personal values and attributes aimed at discarding negative stereotypes that deter women from leadership roles; reduction in workload; and the establishment of child care mechanisms; all hinder women from advancing in their careers.

#### 4.3.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICIES

The findings from the present study reveal that the underrepresentation of women in senior management and leadership positions is not only specific to those professions that are considered as male-type occupations, but also extends to those professions that are considered as women-type or women-friendly occupations such as teaching — especially at nursery and primary levels. In a quest to ameliorate the situation, the government and stakeholders have developed equal opportunities policies to bring about a balance of power within the labour market. Though the interventions do not specifically target women, there is hope that this will target the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions since the policies take into account the gender of workers. The measure employed by the school under study to remedy inequalities among staff was outlined in the following policy statement;

*At this school, equality is a key principle for treating all people fairly and creating a society in which everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential - irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, disability, religious beliefs or other beliefs, sexual orientation, age or any other recognized area of discrimination (Proposed Outline for Equalities Policy).*

Though the school claims that equality is maintained in all areas stated in the above policy document, the interviews reveal three areas — gender, age and religion — in which inequality prevails within the institution. Of these three areas, age and religion indicated clear evidence of inequality, meanwhile gender presented mixed results.

## **Inequalities by Gender**

Generally, the school under study did not seem to understand the underrepresentation of women in leadership as being an issue. The findings from the study indicated that school authorities did not have a complete awareness of a gender imbalance at management level. In response to the question on equal opportunities with the teachers, while some of the teachers declared unbiased nature of opportunities in terms of gender, others however identified issues of unequal opportunities, especially gender imbalance at management levels within the teaching profession. When a question was asked on whether being male or female is advantageous in terms of professional opportunities particularly in teaching, a typical view was that both men and women have equal opportunities to advance in their careers.

Gender was not found to impact on women's suitability to assume any role within the researched school. According to the school's proposed outline for equalities policy (p.3) they *"are committed to the implementation of equal opportunities principles and the monitoring and active promotion of equality in all aspects of staffing and employment"*. The participants claimed that this commitment is respected at recruitment and promotion. The findings revealed that preference was not given based on gender but rather the success of applicants depended on their ability to do the job well. Results on the recruitment policy in school indicated that gender equality is observed at recruitment. The following excerpts from all three school authorities pointed to the fact that equal opportunities were accorded to both genders.

*It is equal gender; you will look at male applicant and female applicant without any bias. But certainly religious commitment and their commitment to taking the school forward as a church faith schools will be very important (SG2).*

*Within the school environment I do not think the male or female makes any difference at all. It is entirely down to their ability and capability in their doing the job based on references and experience. I have worked as a teacher for many years with ladies in senior positions without a problem and as a minister I have given references to ladies to get jobs in leading positions in schools. Certainly there is no exception in the Church of England when it comes to roles in schools. Roles are not specified to ladies only or specified to men only (RA2).*

*In terms of faith, as a church school one of the application criteria was that applicants were practising Christians. The sex of the applicants had absolutely no bearing on selection (LEA1).*

The accounts of the above authorities clearly reveal that the gender of an applicant is not considered during recruitment for senior roles. This is contrary to literature which holds that males are favoured over females in terms of competence to a management role since society continually associate management with masculinity.

A common theme that was shared among the school authorities was the emphasis on the religious aspect of staff's commitment to supporting and promoting the Christian faith. Though the question was on the sex of teachers at employment, the authorities mentioned the faith of teachers as being important. They were very much concerned with maintaining and promoting the religious status of the institution. This factor becomes crucial when recruiting for senior positions as applicants are expected to belong and also be practising a particular faith, as mentioned earlier. It can be established from this that there is still an

element of discrimination — faith, even though the school's proposed outline for equality policy stated that they are committed to upholding the principles of equal opportunities in all aspects of staffing and employment. Even though results from the interview indicated equal opportunities for men and women alike, in terms of recruitment and promotion, there were indications of the labour market's unfairness to women in general. T4 noted that other sectors of the labour market tended to be biased to women, with most of the management positions predominantly male dominated. T4 stated that;

*It is a general job thing. It is not just teaching, I think it is all jobs. A lot of careers are like that. There is a difference between the number of consultants who are men versus women; and a number of nurses who are men versus women etc., it is disproportionate.*

The above account indicates the persistence of role stereotyping within the labour market. When a certain role becomes associated to a particular gender, it is probable that any efforts to integrate the opposite gender into those roles will be insignificant. This relates to my research in that the association of management to males will discourage females from seeking higher roles. Though the present case study revealed that equality was maintained at recruitment and promotion levels, the very thought that management and leadership is for males may discourage most women for applying for such positions. Subsequently, very few women, as compared to a greater proportion of men, will be competing for management positions. Again, because most institutions are seen as a meritocratic work environment — which is noble — it is apparent that men will be highly represented within these positions, especially with the absence of a quota system in place. The lack of measures to promote women's representation at recruitment levels leads to their lower representation in management positions.

There was evidence of gender inequalities in terms of opportunities available for promotion for female teachers. This mostly affected women with children or who were likely to have a family in the near future prior to their employment or promotion. Though T3 started off declaring her uncertainty about the presence of gender inequalities within the teaching profession, particularly with regards to headship positions, at the end of her disclosure she admitted the existence of gender inequalities. T3 expresses her thoughts in the following excerpt:

*I do not know whether people may look at a woman and look at her age and they think 'is she likely to want family', 'does that mean if we give her this position she is going to go on maternity leave and we will be left without somebody, so will have a choice between this man and this woman who are both as good as each other, we will pick them out'... I do not know whether they have got an eye on thinking 'well that person likely to start a family and so why are we going to waste our time with them'. There must be something like that happening. Because otherwise, why are there so many men heads and then few women when women dominate the profession.*

The question posed by T3 has been a major concern. Research has questioned the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles despite their predominance in the profession. In answering this question there is always the tendency to point to barriers such as family responsibilities and women's reluctance to seek for promotion as the contributing factors to their underrepresentation. Very rarely is gender admitted as the principal perpetrator of inequalities leading to women's underrepresentation in the profession. Research, it seems, has failed to recognise that the very same factors that are regarded as responsible for women's underrepresentation have their root cause in gender. For example,



family responsibilities are a hindrance to women's advancement because society has delegated the care/nurture of children, including care for other family members, to women (Potek, 2009). Also, women's reluctance to seek for promoted posts can be attributed to the culture of male dominance within institutions in which males prefer to work with other men than women (Sari, 2012). The general tendency is a focus on the biological difference of staff rather than understanding the social and cultural differences between the genders that are responsible for promoting inequalities.

One of the major barriers to the advancement of women is associated with the patriarchal culture that is present within society. Culture prescribes different roles for women and men. Research establishes that these stereotypical roles are aimed at preserving male power and privileges in society. By assigning roles and selection of occupations defined as suitable for a particular sex type, the socialisation process is seen as responsible for creating inequalities between the genders (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). This viewpoint was confirmed by T4, who was of the opinion that the socialisation process plays a huge role in creating inequalities between the sexes because of the stereotypes held by society regarding specific roles that are expected of men and women. T4 explained that:

*I don't think it makes any difference whether it is a church school. Men progress through the career ladders more quickly and easily. There are less of them. In primary schools people like to have one or two male staff. If you go on special needs training there are hardly any male staff there; the teachers who are in charge of special needs in schools are almost always women. If I go on a course that is supposed to be for heads, then there is a disproportionately large number of men there. There is stereotyping going on. If you go on a*

*Maths or Science coordinator's course there are more men, if you go on literacy courses or personal self-certification courses there are much less men. So there are certain stereotypes; Computing, Maths and Science coordinators tend to be men's responsibilities in primary schools.*

Thus, the underrepresentation of women in leadership position is not only a result childcare responsibilities, but it is also a product of the system. This is clearly evident in lack of institutional support offered to women who intend to start a family or have young children. There seems to be a fear that these women would perform inadequately in leadership positions.

In this section I have demonstrated that gender plays a significant role in determining the positioning of men and women within the labour market. I have argued that in as much as equality needs to be respected, there is also the necessity for justice to be employed in making appropriateness towards fairness and accessibility to opportunities for females, since management generally has a masculine connotation. In addition, I have demonstrated that the reluctance to assume leadership positions by females is partly as a result of the gender division of roles in which women bare much of the burden for family responsibilities. These points are related to my research in confirming my argument that women are not supported in gaining leadership positions. The arguments stated in this section suggest that support for equality and justice is to be observed at structural, societal and familial fronts.

## **Inequalities by Age**

The government's 'Equality Act 2010' is committed to "*banning age discrimination in services, public functions and association*" (Government Equalities Office, 2011). The government's equality policy therefore calls upon all institutions to provide a working environment that is free from discrimination in terms of age in order to create a society where everyone has the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Interview data demonstrates that some institutions have failed to respect this commitment, as age was identified as a barrier to career advancement. In the opinion of T4, her age acts as a limitation to securing a deputy headship position. T4 believes that the younger generation have the upper advantage over the older generation in securing senior leaderships positions. T4 argues that;

*I didn't want the deputy headship earlier enough when my children were growing up and now I have kind of missed the boat. I think I am too old. When I go for interviews I am interviewed against people who are half my age. I just was not really interested in doing it then, until my children were in their middle teens. I was not looking for any promotion... once the children start to be more independent and not needing me as much then I was looking for another challenge.*

It could be suggested that older women in this category, because of their gender (as was discussed earlier in literature review), and then because of their age, face a double predicament in their attempt to seek for leadership roles. Therefore, by reason that they are women, and older as well, puts them in a more disadvantaged position. It is alarming that older women still have to face discrimination despite the existence of equal opportunities policies designed by government for schools; and also that schools have pledged their

commitment to upholding equal opportunities for staff in every area of staffing and employment. Though T4 did not state which schools she had made applications for headship positions to, equal opportunities policies were developed to cover all occupations — with teaching profession included — and institutions are obligated to uphold these principles. This suggests that neither age nor gender should stand as a hindrance to securing employment. However, from T4's experience, this is far from being achieved.

In this section, I have demonstrated that as females get older, the more difficult it is for them to secure a higher management position. I have argued that, though institutions of learning claim that equal opportunities are accorded to both genders, older female teachers are still discriminated upon at recruitment for lead roles. This is linked to my research argument because age discrimination has its root cause from the lack of support for family responsibilities. As a result, young female teachers with children delay their career progression till when child care responsibilities lessens and this places a constraint on their career advancement when they subsequently decide to seek for promotion, as they are considered less favourably by employers.

### **Inequalities by Religion**

One of the equal opportunities policy targets religion — stating that no individual should be discriminated upon in employment as a result of their faith status. It is interesting to find out that though it is a Church of England school, people of other faiths and those with no faith at all were given the opportunity to teach and could also occupy lower management positions. However, there was one condition that applicants (classroom teachers) were

obliged to meet; i.e. they must be willing to support the Christian faith of the school. This was made clear by HTa in the following excerpt:

*What we usually put on our job description and on the advert for anybody below head and deputy, we say 'supportive of the church school ethos'. If they can provide a reference and if they are worshipping and practising that is fine, we would accept that but it is not essential. But it is essential that you will be supportive of what we do as church school. You may be of a different faith, you may be of no faith, you may be quite secularist and quite anti religion but if you are going to work here you have to support our church school ethos.*

Similarly, DHTa commented on the school's non-discriminatory position in terms of teacher's faith status, and also emphasises on the willingness of applicants to be supportive of the Christian faith.

*For all other teachers, their job descriptions when we advertise for a teacher, it says, it is a desirable quality to be supportive of the Christian faith. We would always find people who could support it. We certainly do not really want any atheist. But as long as they are supportive of it, they do not have to be practising. They would be willing to partake and lead acts of worship, whether that is a whole school worship or worship in class; they are a good role model in terms of demonstrating Christian values to the children — in terms of the way we would expect the children to treat each other in a Christian way.*

From the above responses, it can be observed that there is flexibility on the conditions for employing teachers. When focus is turned to those seeking senior management positions, the conditions become very rigid. Unlike teachers who were considered, even if they were atheist, those aspiring for a senior leadership position are required to have a religion and be

practising their faith. This has been a real challenge to those unable to meet the conditions, as mentioned earlier in this section. It is interesting to find that the clause indicating that senior leadership positions could be of a particular faith was supported by the government's equality policy.

*Under the equality act 2010, in very limited circumstances, an employer can claim that a certain religious denomination or belief is considered to be a genuine occupational requirement of that role. An aided school may be able to rely on this for some roles in school, particular those roles that provide spiritual leadership. However this would not apply for all staff in school (Proposed Outline for Equalities Policy).*

Following the above government policy, the decision by the school under study to recruit particular individuals to senior leadership posts can be considered as non-discriminatory. However, the requirement of providing church references and stating applicant's activeness within the religious community presents a huge challenge to many applicants. Nonetheless, the fact that the school is a faith school makes it difficult for an atheist to secure the headship of a faith school. It will be difficult for an atheist to lead the school in faith, in spirituality, in religious ethos and values. This indicates that being the head of a faith school means the head needs to be a faith leader. This is an understandable justification why the head of a faith school needs to be of the denominational faith.

#### 4.3.5 STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

##### Negotiating Suitable Working Arrangement

Childcare responsibilities were identified as a major contributing factor hindering most women from advancing in their careers. It was revealed that whether the interviewees had children or was intending to start a family often affected their career progression. It was also found that for women who decided to take on a career break or decided to combine both school work and family responsibilities encountered far reaching consequences to career progression. Speaking from experience, T3 discloses the following;

*I think sometimes child care is an issue. I did choose to be part time. With previous heads it was frowned upon to be off if your children were ill and that if you are coming back to work you should have made sure there are other people to look after your children. That kind of attitude can hold women back if they think I am not going to be able to take time off if my child is ill.*

T3 was of the opinion that a flexible working arrangement should be put in place for women with young children. Even though T3 only cited one issue as hindering women's career development, when the question on the measures that could be implemented to promote women taking up leadership positions was asked, T3, in addition to flexible working, suggested that action be undertaken to reduce teachers workload. T3 argued that;

*I think child care issues are quite a big thing still. Maybe sometimes you just need a little bit of flexible working time, and being allowed sometimes to only take on what responsibility you think you can manage at that time.*

It should be recalled that workload came up very strongly in the literature review and also in the present study as one of the reasons why most female teachers consider leaving the profession. Therefore, from T3's perspective, setting in place flexible working arrangement and reducing teacher's workload would likely results in more women considering promotion.

### **Training**

Another measure identified by the teachers to promote women's career advancement was the development of training opportunities. All the teachers mentioned the existence of a general training programme for everyone. Equally, opportunities were offered for individual teachers to identify training in any area they wanted to develop. T3 shares this in the following extract:

*We have our school training days, same training for everybody. But also with our performance management, you have an opportunity to say what you want some training with. We have training for the whole school but also individual teachers can ask for specific training for themselves, the things that they think they need to develop.*

In addition to formal theoretical training provided by the school, T4 stated that the school equally provide opportunities for teachers to have practical training that will provide them with experience and build their skills towards senior leadership roles. T4 stated that;

*I think they are doing already what they can. They support me on training; I get good references; the head lets me go and do deputy headships in other schools when they need to borrow a deputy.*



Nonetheless, the training provided by the school is general and not specifically targeting women. Therefore, in answering the question relating to training that has been implemented to promote women into leadership positions, this case study had no measures explicitly directed towards supporting women's advancement.

The deputy head teacher, DHTa, in narrating the trajectory to her career advancement mentioned a number of training sessions she had attended that assisted her to move from a classroom teacher role to a deputy head teacher's position. Some of the training included 'Fast Tract', which was aimed at encouraging young teachers into leadership positions, and also other training courses organised by the Lancashire Council, such as 'Leadership Pathways' and 'Moving into Management'. However, DHTa pointed out that all the training attended were by her personal effort in a quest to advance in her career. By reason that such training is provided by organisations external to the schools, there is a possibility that most teachers are not aware of such programmes. Given the usefulness of the training, it can be suggested that in making them a part of the training provided by institutions, will ensure teachers are aware of them. As a result, teachers will be more likely to be motivated to attend and possibly seek career advancement.

A question was asked to the school authorities about the measures that have been instituted to specifically target women. The authorities seemed to discuss this question and were more concerned with attracting males to the profession. The fact that within the teaching profession women predominate was widely discussed by most of the school authorities. In view of this they were rather concerned with encouraging men into the primary sector of education to act as role models for the boys. The school authorities

referred to the need to increase the number of men in teaching. HTa discusses this in the following extract:

*In some ways it is the opposite in the primary school. You are really trying to encourage men. In my school we have got 10th professional teachers and one man. I have got 15 teaching assistants and one of them is a man. Within my institution in terms of encouraging females to apply, this is not an issue. Actually I do encourage the man to feel that he has got a role to play. There is nothing specifically I need to do within my institution to encourage women to take up those roles because by nature it is totally female staff. They are the people who are applying for the roles.*

DHTa labelled the school as an environment in which women and men are given equal opportunities in the following statement.

*The head teacher is always very supportive of all members of staff taking career development; in terms of sending people on training; it is hard to say for women because there is only one man.*

Similarly, SG2 describes the educational system as meritocratic, suggesting that women of today have the opportunities to develop in their careers compared to those in the past. SG2 states that;

*I think that women today are modern women and have choices. The education system has to be seen as fair and equal rights and I feel that women in our age are far more empowered than we were 20 years ago to make a decision which follows a career path.*

Though agreeing to the fact that women predominate in teaching, what the respondents seemed to fail to understand is that generally women only override men in terms of

teaching staff and not in terms of leadership roles within the school. Their thinking may have been influenced by the fact that within the present case study women predominate in leadership in the school. Nonetheless, even within the teaching staff, women were still found at the very least levels. For example, HTa mentioned that among the 15 teaching assistants only 1 is a man. This reveals that males are more interested in occupying better positions, irrespective of the status level, compared to women. In addition, literature review revealed that when men enter the teaching profession, they have an eye on moving to the top. Therefore, the decision to encourage more men into teaching implies that many more men than women will be found in senior leadership roles. Therefore, the need to support women in pursuing leadership positions is being overlooked because of a focus on recruiting male teachers.

At the beginning of the study, the research was concerned with investigating strategies that have been implemented by institutions to promote female leadership. The present case study has revealed that only one measure; training (courses and practical training by shadowing) is employed by the institution to promote teacher's progress in their careers. However, this measure again pertains to all teachers with none specifically targeting women as it is believed that women already predominate within the teaching profession. In addition, the training provided is that identified by the teachers themselves.

In this section of the thesis I have demonstrated that training is readily provided to teachers. I have argued that though teachers were introduced to the training opportunities, these

were not generally geared towards leadership and did not specifically target women. Indeed, unless training or professional development was actually identified by the teachers, little other opportunities are offered; certainly nothing will be done to promote leadership or higher management promotions for women. This relates to my main argument because women do not get the support that men receive to move to higher management positions. Instead of focusing on increasing the number of women in lead roles who happen to be represented as a minority, initiatives are rather taken to encourage and support more men into teaching. Because males are highly favoured for lead roles and because most men do not get entangled with family responsibilities, more men will move into higher management positions leading to the continual widening of the leadership gender gap within the teaching profession.

#### **4.4 DISCUSSION**

##### **Religious Teachings**

In line with other research (Kristof, 2010; Grundy, 2013) religious teachings were found to hinder women from progressing in their careers to leadership positions. The findings from the case study confirm the existence of religious practices that works against female leadership. There was evidence of religion acting as a barrier to career advancement seen in the employment requirements for senior leadership positions. These included belonging to a particular faith and also provision of church references. However, teachers were of the opinion that as individuals religious teachings and practices did not affect either their personal nor professional lives. This was justified with the claim that the influence of

religious teachings and practices is dependent upon individual interpretation. However, classroom teachers were exempt from providing the two requirements. This could explain the reason why a majority of the teachers did not consider religion as affecting their professional lives. The negative impact of religion on career advancement was thus identified only by teachers who had the desire to move to leadership positions.

Religious teachings and practices may have impacted negatively on teachers' careers, but its invaluable significance cannot be overlooked. The women's narratives also highlighted the importance of religion in today's society. Its importance was indicated by the acceptance of all other faiths within the school. In a society (Britain) that is mixed culturally, racially and religiously, celebrating others' faith promotes a culture of acceptance, peace and brings richness in terms of culture, language, traditions and practice and belief systems. As noted earlier in the study, faith-based schools foster a religious mind-set and moral values in learners (King, 2010), and equally upholds community cohesion and diversity (Ofsted, 2007). This was one of the reasons for the continuous support and establishment of faith-based schools. The school under study has demonstrated the very essence of establishing faith schools in developing children's faith, inculcating a religious character in students, and in promoting diversity and community cohesion in society.

The findings confirm previous literature review which reveals that spiritual places of worship have welcomed women's voluntary labour but have been resistant to opening the doors of priesthood, power or religious authority to their female followers. The pew rather than the

pulpit was regarded as a woman's place, serving as an auxiliary worker while men dominate in authority (Nason-Clark, 1997). This concern was raised by one of the teachers practising the Catholic faith, pointing out how women were relegated to the background while men took on lead roles within religious spaces. Some faith adherents and clergy of the Anglican faith, however, do challenge the subordinate position assigned to women within the church and advocate the ordination of women to senior positions of leadership. This lends support to literature review, which maintains that a majority of religious faiths have made some changes in relation to women and religious leadership. Miller (2013) suggests that recent years have witnessed various religions going through a process of eliminating barriers that work against women's leadership. The recent decision to ordain women as Bishops within the Anglican Church is a milestone towards the promotion of women to senior leadership roles within the Church. In this sense, the Anglican church is in some way recognising that women do not have the same support in gaining leadership positions within faith communities as men do – this is exactly the point I am arguing.

### **Role of Female Teachers**

Results from the interviews confirmed the assertion that the teacher is the most significant element to academic achievement (Conant, 1993; Gupta 1996; Islahi, 2011). Teachers were instrumental in contributing not just to children's academic achievement but were also influential in building positive behaviour and nurturing children's spiritual development. The teachers were also said to demonstrate role model characteristics. The numerous roles of teachers identified in this study reflect their significance in the educational sector. It should be recalled that a majority of the teachers within the researched school are female. The fact

that females predominate in teaching — particularly in primary schools — implies that they are greatly responsible for children’s success and development. The role of the female teacher in society therefore becomes indisputable.

Furthermore, the findings from the study show that leadership of the school in terms of staffing is predominantly female. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of females in leadership roles. One observation made was the frequent use of the term ‘strong leader’ by Ofsted, the school teaching staff and school authorities in describing the head teacher. This demonstrates the capacity of women to lead effectively. These results from the present study are contrary to most of the literature review, which claim that females possess leadership styles that are perceived as less effective than those of men (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013; Nguyen, 2012). The leadership capacity of the present head teacher has challenged this claim. The study found the leadership of the present and even previous female head teachers to be very efficient. This therefore necessitates the call for strategies to ensure more representation of women in leadership positions. The implication of having more female representation in leadership position is that considerable attention will be given to women’s concerns. In addition, having women at the top will probably inspire young girls with the notion that women can and do occupy leadership positions.

Cooperation among teachers seems to be of significance in the work of teachers in the present case study. The theme of working as a team was repeatedly mentioned during the interviews by the teachers. In their dialogue they described frequent interactions with

colleagues. It appears that when the teachers talked of working as a team, they referred to cooperation in the educational dimension of work. Cooperation in terms of offering moralistic support to each other was rarely mentioned. Apart from planning lessons, teaching together and fitting-in when a colleague is absent from work, literature holds that providing social and emotional support to workmates experiencing problems is equally essential. Such support can take the form of encouraging co-workers to reflect on effective problem-solving techniques. Research further holds that discussing problems and ways of managing conflicts is very important in developing professional knowledge and providing an enhanced comprehension into the social and emotional dimension of teaching (Gannerud, 2001). This suggests that while didactic support is crucial, support is needed in other areas outside instructive domain, especially with the demanding nature of the job as revealed by respondents.

Furthermore, teachers were seen to have an emotional attachment to the pupils and were all very passionate about their roles as teachers. This explains to some extent the reason for their reluctance to seek for promotion. Considering earlier literature, and as demonstrated by the present case study, one of the contributing factors to women's underrepresentation in leadership position was their desire to stay within the classroom environment with the children. Assuming a leadership role was seen by the teachers as distancing them from their primary goal of entering the profession, which was to be with the children (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; Litmanovitz, 2011). Thus, the expression of being emotionally attached to teaching is likely to suggest the reason why most of the teachers in the study were not interested in seeking for career advancement into leadership positions.



The results of this study brought in a novel element to literature on teacher's role model perspective. The interview with the deputy head teacher revealed a new trend in which, at present, males are often regarded as full-time teachers and women as teaching assistants regardless if this was actually the case or not. To the deputy head teacher (DHTa) it was crucial to eliminate the notion of always attaching the position of teaching assistant to females. This is something that was not revealed by the literature review. Most of the literature pertaining to teachers as role models concentrated exclusively on teachers and head teachers. This, therefore, suggests the necessity to conduct more research in this area to uncover any new discoveries in this domain.

In this section I have demonstrated that female teachers are a great asset to the teaching profession. Contrary to prevailing assumptions that leadership styles of women are ineffective, I have argued that women are great leaders based on the excellent performance of those in leadership roles in the present study. The study provides indisputable evidence not only pertaining to women's ability to lead, but their contribution to societal development. This is linked to my research theme in indicating that women are capable of assuming leadership roles and therefore should be encouraged and supported to advance in their careers. The absence of such initiatives will mean that institutions of learning will continue to miss out on women's potential contribution to leadership.

## **Position of Female Teachers**

The study highlighted the perspectives of teachers on the underrepresentation of women in management and leadership levels. A prevalent finding from the interviews was the strong claim by teachers that issues of gender inequality were either obsolescent or irrelevant in the teaching profession. They failed to identify women's underrepresentation in leadership positions as being an issue. The teachers argue that there was gender balance in terms of representations at management and in some cases even argue that women were more represented in these positions than men. The reason for their declaration was associated to the statistical domination of female teachers in the profession. The predominance of females in teaching was used as evidence to argue for the non-existence of gender-based discrimination against women's career development. This discourse was particularly strong among school authorities who all claimed that the school provided equal opportunities to men and women. This group maintained that gender does not play a role in recruitment and promotion; pointing out that appointment and promotion is on merit and emphasised that it 'is simply the best person for the job', as stated by the head teacher and governor.

However, it should be noted that the predominance of females in teaching does not necessarily translate into their occupancy of leadership positions. The teachers admitted to the general prevalence of males in headship positions — citing that most of the training with head teachers was dominated by males. Indeed, men held all higher management and leadership positions in this case study. It is surprising that it is in the most feminised profession that men rather than women have the advantage of securing headship positions. Though arguing that gender inequality is absent in teaching, some teachers acknowledged

that gender discrimination thus indeed exist in other sectors of the labour market, particularly in male-dominated professions.

The major problem identified by female teachers in the interviews as constituting a barrier to career development was childcare responsibilities. The problem was so severe that teachers with aspirations to occupy leadership roles postpone their progress to later in the future when childcare responsibilities lessen. The problem here is that they face more challenges competing with younger candidates who are preferred by appointment panels. This implies that many female teachers with young children are disadvantaged in entering the promotion race at a later point in life; thus, childcare acts as a glass ceiling preventing women from advancing in their careers. This suggests that effective intervention is needed to break the glass ceiling to allow more women to advance in their careers. This should involve intervention from two fronts, providing childcare support and reinforcement of policies/laws targeting inequalities by age.

The narratives of the teachers revealed the complexity of the option in considering between having a career and a family. While some of the teachers took time off to have their children, others transferred to part-time teaching. A majority of the teachers postponed career development to later in the future when their children were older. The women's accounts equally exposed the long term consequences that career breaks or flexible work can have on career development. While some were faced with the concern of not being able to put in more hours of work after having opted for flexible work, others were faced with

the challenge of age as a barrier. The variety of narratives identified in this study reflects the challenges that female teachers encounter in their efforts to remain and progress in the profession. The women's narratives demonstrate how a range of factors act to constrain upward mobility in the profession. This suggests that though teaching may be considered as a family-friendly career for women, in that they can take on part-time work and/or take time off to have children, these same features impact on women's career, particularly for those with an intention to advance in their careers.

The study confirmed Smith's (2011) and Litmanovitz's (2011) claim that women were less orientated towards leadership. Three determining factors were found to impact on female teachers' aspiration to occupying leadership roles. These include; home responsibilities, personal values and attributes, and work responsibilities. Government should give considerable attention to reducing workload as literature reveals that workload results from government initiatives. Regarding home responsibilities, government initiatives of creating more nurseries at the place of work, and also change in cultural attitudes by husbands and partners in assisting with childcare responsibilities, were identified by literature as crucial for taking the burden off women. While two of the factors — home and work responsibilities — are external to the individual, the other factor — personal values and attributes — is perpetrated by the women. This implies that while the government and institutions of learning are concerned with the task of designing and implementing policies to address the former, women equally have the responsibilities to change their personal values and develop positive mind-sets about leadership.

It should be recalled that literature stated that once men get into teaching they were always focused on getting promotion while women were reluctant to seek promotion. The present case study equally revealed women's hesitance towards securing leadership positions. It can be suggested that instead of providing general training, as is the case with the present case study, institutions of learning should be encouraging more women to take on leadership roles by instituting measures that will specifically target women. In this way the educational sector will strike equilibrium between both genders at management and leadership levels. Consequently, the role model concern for girls will be tackled, making sure that women are represented in leadership roles.

I have evidenced that women are less represented in leadership positions and therefore, effective intervention is required to increase the number of women in these roles. I have argued that family responsibilities and workload are major contributors to women's underrepresentation in lead roles. This relates to my main argument because it indicates the absence of strategies to promote women to progress in their careers. Strategies that will increase women's motivation to lead are crucial in creating a leadership culture in which men and women can thrive in their careers.

### **Measures to Promote Female Leadership**

During the interviews teachers only identified two measures that could be instituted to promote women's advancement, these included reducing workload and the introduction of flexible work. This was despite having identified a number of barriers hindering career

advancement such as child care responsibilities, age discrimination, and meeting religious requirements in applying for a leadership role. Though school authorities claimed they were doing very well to support teachers to progress in their careers, and the teacher professed that they were getting great support from the schools to build on their leadership skills and portfolio, it is evident that the measures were not enough to fully support these teachers. Only two of the measures were identified; training in terms of courses and practical trainings where teachers shadow in senior management in leadership positions within other schools. The literature review outlined numerous strategies that could be implemented to promote women taking up leadership such as, familial support mechanisms at family and structural levels, stress management strategies, changes in individual values and attitudes, mentoring and networking. The assimilation of some if not all of these measures have a likelihood of providing a secure and suitable work environment, including a platform for females to strive and progress in their careers.

As mentioned earlier, teachers identified flexible working such as part-time work as a means of enabling teachers to work while looking after their children. While such an arrangement will permit the teachers to continue working, this will however hinder their career advancement. Literature revealed that in the course of applying for a senior role the number of hours put into work is specifically considered by employers. Female teachers are often said to put less number of hours compared to their male counterparts due to days taken off work to meet family needs and part-time work. As a consequence, this seriously damages their opportunities for career development (Nguyen's, 2012). This implies that women are in a disadvantaged position compared to men. The findings revealed that most

often women take time off work to have children and even when they return to work the majority usually take part-time time teaching. Job share or provision of nursery at the school would be a good alternative as this will permit the women to still work full time and also look after their children without the number of working hours being affected. However, the only situation where flexible work on its own will not affect women's career progression is when employers start considering the quality of work delivered rather than the quantity of work (number of hours) put in by female teachers.

Within the labour market, certain professions are regarded as male type jobs and others female-type jobs. This classification does not only end at this stage, but it can be observed that even within particular jobs, certain roles are considered to be best suited to a particular gender. The findings from the case study revealed that generally men occupy headship positions. Interviews with the school leaders unveiled the apparent stereotyping of roles within the teaching profession. The authorities maintained that at training for headships, a majority of the attendees are usually males, and if the training is in Maths and Science, again more men than women are registered. Meanwhile, at training pertaining to pastoral care, women far outnumber men. This is an indication of the implicit existence of role stereotyping within the teaching profession. This suggests that training ought to be gender sensitive and in those areas where one sex dominates the other, specific training should be designed to target the particular gender. The authorities from the school maintained that none of the training delivered were gender specific, and that all teachers were given the same opportunities. The rationale behind their argument could be associated to the fact that because the institution is mostly female, issues of gender equality are not high on the

agenda of training. Though a majority of the teachers had no aspiration of advancing in their career, the situation is likely to change at some point in the future. In addition, the present government initiative to get more men recruited into teaching fuelled by the urge to have male role model for boys could result in more men occupying leadership positions. As it was noted earlier, men enter the teaching profession with the aim of making it to the top. This suggest that despite the fact that a majority of the leadership roles within the present case study are occupied by women, there is a necessity to encourage more women to maintain the representation of females at senior leadership positions. Therefore, in order to promote more women to take on leadership roles, training courses towards headships positions needs to target women more; while in other areas such as pastoral care, more men should be encouraged to take on training in this area. In this way, because teachers act as role models to pupils, a more balanced representation in terms of having role models for both boys and girls is a likely result.

I have evidenced that though the school has endeavoured to provide some measures to promote career advancement, additional measures are required to entirely address the challenges women face from various fronts. Therefore, my research supports the importance of all interventions aimed at promoting career advancement to be designed and implemented with a gender lens, with particular focus on women because they are underrepresented in higher management and leadership positions.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that women are not supported in pursuing leadership or management positions mainly because of the institutions belief in the predominance of



women in the profession. However, I have argued that women's predominance in the profession has not led to a majority of them occupying leadership or higher management roles. Though data from the study does not in any way suggest that males are supported to progress in their career — probably because males were not a part of the investigation — I have argued that female teachers require support to advance in their careers based on their experiences. This links directly to the aim of my thesis, which is to explore the strategies that have been implemented by faith institutions to recognise women as potential faith leaders. An examination of the experiences of female teachers reveals that females presented with a number of challenges incurred as a result of their gender. This suggests that female teachers face more barriers compared to their male counterparts in advancing in their careers. I have, therefore, argued that women ought to be given the support that will promote their ascension into lead roles.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CASE STUDY: MUSLIM SCHOOL**

#### **5.1 OVERVIEW**

The school is located in the Lancashire district. It is a voluntary aided single sex secondary school constituting of girls. Ofsted Inspection Reports of 2009 and 2013 pronounce the school as smaller than an average secondary school. This is contrary to current 2015 information on the school's website which states that the school has increased over the years and currently is large, serving 11-16 year olds. The majority of the students are reported to have come from a wide range of backgrounds mainly from minority ethnic groups that have high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Therefore, nearly all students come from families where English is a second language. However, only a small number of students are at the early stages of learning English language. Because the school is the only one of its type in the whole community, it is said to be profoundly oversubscribed. The school suffers from limited facilities and the school site is equally inadequate. In an attempt to overcome these obstacles, the school makes use of facilities in other establishments and also use these sites for delivery of instruction.

According to information from the school's website, they are committed to providing the best education to their students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The recent Ofsted Inspection Report (2013) pronounced the overall achievement of the school as outstanding. Ofsted further notes that the excellent teaching and support provided to students contributes greatly to the exceptional progress achieved in all five years of the school.

The school is strongly rooted in Islamic ethos. The girls are understood to be the mothers of the subsequent generation and are regarded as future representatives of the Islamic faith. A personalised curriculum is provided to individual students. However, students are supported with a vast range of extra-curricular activities that will enrich and build their character. In this way students are believed to be exposed to a broad and balanced curriculum that provides the prospects for the development of their potentials, guarantees their advancement and eventually moulds them to successful young British Muslimahs (Muslim Women).

## **5.2 OUTLINE**

The data for the study was collected through the use of interviews. Interviews were conducted with school authorities, teachers and a representative of religious authorities. The interviews with the school authorities and representative of religious authority were aimed at investigating their view points on the contribution of female teachers to children's learning, including the position women occupy within the institution and how such positions are ordered. Also, interviews with the authorities were aimed at exploring the strategies (if any) that have been put in place to encourage more women to take on leadership, including any other suggestions for additional measures that could be instituted. The interviews with the female teachers intended to obtain first-hand information on their roles as teachers, their perspective on their teaching journey and their thoughts on how the institution and government could support them in their career development. In conclusion, the principal focus of the interviews was to investigate the role, experiences and position of female

teachers, including any strategies that could be employed by institutions of learning and the government to promote women's leadership.

The sample of the interviewees is diverse. The respondents occupy different positions and are of different ages. A majority of the respondents are of the Muslim faith, with the exception of one who is of the Christian faith. A number of themes were identified with respect to the various categories for analysis. Under the influence of religious teachings on teacher's career, the following themes were identified: religious teachings as a promoter of career development, cultural impediment, exclusion from religious leadership and family responsibility barriers. Under the roles of teachers the following themes were identified: academic success, teachers as role models and comprehensive development of students. The following themes emerged from the category targeting the position of female teachers: positive inclination to career advancement, qualification and experience, equal opportunities, gender equality and good leadership. Finally, the following themes were identified under the measures implemented to promote female leadership: training/mentoring and family support strategies. The themes identified are based on the teachers' narratives and will be presented in the initial findings section. Direct excerpts are used to demonstrate a more detailed account of the teachers perspectives on the areas investigated.

In order to uphold confidentiality, the data has been anonymised and identifiers have been removed from the data and replaced by codes as follows:

The Principal will be represented by the code P

The Assistant Principal will be represented as AP

Teachers will be represented by the codes T5, T6 and T7

Head of faculty will be represented as T8

Representative of religious authorities will be represented by the code RA3

### **5.3 INITIAL FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1 RELIGION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Religious teachings and practices were identified in the literature review as constituting a barrier to women's career development. In order to investigate this claim, female Islamic teachers were asked if the teachings of Islam placed a heavy demand on their professional goals. The findings that emerged from the responses of the teachers in relation to religious teachings and practices are presented in four themes: religious teachings as a promoter of career development; cultural impediment; family responsibilities barriers, and exclusion from religious leadership.

#### **Religious Teachings as a Promoter of Career Development**

There was certainty among all respondents that Islamic teachings had no negative effect upon their professional lives. According to T6, she has the opportunity to progress in her

career and has not found her faith to impede upon her career at any point in time. T6 stated that;

*Not really because I have always wanted to be a teacher. I just had to look at ways where I could practise my religion. I do not think there has always been a conflict. Here I go to all courses, there is nothing ever stopping me from going.*

T8 used the evidence of the deputy head of the school to justify the assertion that Islam has no restrictions on the professional lives of Muslim women. She stated the following when asked if her religion impacts on her career;

*Not at all actually. Well I have not felt it so far. I am assuming there isn't. There are women in this school who are practising Muslims like the Assistant head and she has got very high inspirations for herself. At the moment I can't actually recall anything.*

Although T6 and T8 state that the teachings of the Islamic faith had no impact upon their careers, certain limitations were identified that requires observation by all women of the faith. T7 reveals this in the following statement;

*I do not think so because women in Islam are allowed to study and progress as long as you are within the boundaries... An example of boundaries in Islam for women is I am allowed to wear my Hijab where ever I go.*

The boundaries set forth by Islamic practices were also identified by T8. Her perspective indicates that religious observations differ depending on the culture of the particular ethnic origin and emphasised that it is a matter of interpretations. T8 offers a detailed example of the boundaries as follows;

*It's not hindering you but its put some rules in place for certain things and you need to observe the rules. It is the way you interpret the rules. For example, Islam is asking you to cover yourself as a woman. Some people's interpretation is that as long as your body is covered its fine. Other people's interpretation is that you need to cover your head as well. There are some more who think you should be covering your face as well, and there are some people who will probably cover their hands as well. So it is interpretation of the things which probably brings all these misconceptions. Culture gets mixed. Interpretation is because of the cultures.*

Though the above account suggest that the boundaries do not hinder women from advancing in their careers, this may hold true for women working in Islamic institutions. However, non-Islamic work environments may pose a challenge especially for women who believe their religion or culture dictates them to cover their faces and hands.

The most common rule that came up during the interviews was the dress code, which Muslim women are required to observe. For AP, in addition to dressing decently, she had no issues moving out to participate in public life. AP believed that women should fulfil their home responsibility, which is conferred unto them by God. AP stated that;

*There are things written about women covering up; women dressing modestly...As long as you follow within those restrictions; as long as you can still fulfil your duty at home, fulfil your duty to God; then you are fine to go and do whatever you need to do.*

Dressing modestly may permit females to gain approval from their families to participate in public life but the challenge may not be over yet. Females may still find it very difficult to work in non-Muslim work environment because of their dress code. This concern was voiced

by RA3, stating that women's participation in work life will be based on society's or the institution's judgement of their dress code. RA3 stated that;

*Scripture wise, as long as you are covered, you are modest and you are doing your job...Islam says we have to be modest in our conduct and modest in our dress and as far as we can do that, if the schools can accept that, then I do not think there should not be a problem for us.*

In the same light, the findings from the data indicate that the dress code of Muslim women, particularly for those having to wear a full veil, presents a challenge in some work settings. Even though AP had earlier claimed that Muslim women have no problems working if they dress decently, she subsequently admitted to the limitations the women encounter as a result of wearing a veil in non-Islamic work places. AP stated that;

*The other thing is that I do wear the veil. Because I work in this school environment it is a lot easier for me. Whereas, I know if I was to work in another school perhaps I have to leave my veil outside the school; not wear it to the school and then not wear it in school will be a lot difficult for me in that respect, to practise what I really want to practise because I have to compromise because of the environment.*

Citing an example in which wearing the hijab leads to challenges at work was the case of Dahlab v. Switzerland. After wearing the hijab for many years of teaching, the Director General of public education ordered Dahlab to stop wearing it. The Director General was supported by the European Court of Human Rights, proclaiming that the state has a duty of upholding public order and safety of its citizens, including protecting their rights and freedom (Calo, 2010). This, therefore, suggests that the dress code of Muslim females can act as a barrier in pursuing a career. Islamic females who happen to find themselves in the



same position as Dahlab would be faced with the challenges of; compromising their faith if they want to pursue a career, or defile their religious principles by not wearing the hijab in order to progress in their careers. Those who opt for the later decision may face extreme consequences, especially in countries that observe the sharia law.

What can be deduced from the excerpt regarding dress code is that, women will not encounter problems from their families and communities with regards to working if they dress modestly within Islam. This is particularly true for women whose families have no major concerns about them going out to work. The challenge they face is when they have to work in a non-Islamic work environment. AP was quite concerned about working in such settings as not wearing a veil compromises her faith.

It is interesting to note that these limitations were not perceived by the teachers as an issue. Rather, it seems that they considered it to have a purpose and were comfortable to comply with the dress code observances.

As discussed so far, the teachers did not consider their faith as limiting them in any way from progressing in their careers. Rather, most found their faith to be empowering. Drawing on examples from past powerful Islamic women leaders, the teachers used these illustrations to assert that their religion actually endorses female leadership. T8 used the example of past women leaders in Islamic countries who held top positions in politics to back the claim that Islam does not hinder women from attaining leadership positions. T8 stated that;

*Benazir Bhutto was the prime minister of Pakistan and similarly in Bangladesh there were women leaders. If there are such strict rules why will they be leading the countries?*

Similarly, other respondents used examples from a religious perspective to illuminate the assertion that Islam, from the beginning, offered women the opportunity to excel in life. Below are three respondent's viewpoints supporting the edification of women's leadership by Islam, beginning with the account of T7;

*If you look at the history of Islam there are many women leaders whom we look upon. It was Khadija Khuwaylid who accepted Islam first. She is a role model. She was like a leader. There was another one; Aisha Radiallahu, who was a leader. So there were leaders in the past. That is why more knowledge is important. Women have been given equal opportunities. I do not see any aspect within my religion that stops me from becoming a leader.*

Similarly, AP stated that;

*We always go back to Khadija, who was the wife of Prophet Mohammed, who was a successful business woman. Even before she married Prophet Mohammed she was a successful business woman in her own right. She is a classic example. We have other leading Muslim ladies at that time who ran their own business. For example, one of Prophet Mohammed's wives, Aisha, people used to flock behind her to learn about religion. She was a big scholar in her time.*

Further, RA3 added that;

*My understanding of my scripture says I can do that role because we believe the prophet's wives did the same roles; they were in the leadership positions; they were leading battles; they were leading teaching fields, etc.*

It can be observed that the most commonly cited examples were the wives of the founder of Islam from whom Muslim women gain their inspiration. This was understood as a model for all other women to follow suit. To the teachers, this was a clear example that they have been given the mandate to progress in their lives. Despite the teachers referring to examples from the Quran in justifying their assertion that Islam does not hinder women from advancing in their careers, there was evidence on the restriction of young Muslim females from engaging in public life (to be discussed below).

In this section, contrary to the perceptions of the female teachers that their religion promotes career development, I have demonstrated that religious practice does indeed hinder Muslim women from progressing in their careers. Though the teachers proclaimed that Islam has no effect upon their career development, their experiences indicate that religious practice (dress code) can hinder women's career development. This supports my research theme in indicating the negative experiences teachers encounter as a result of their religious faith.

### **Cultural Impediment**

The most common factor identified as constituting a barrier to female leadership was culture. The accounts from the teachers revealed that specific cultural beliefs and practices

are held by various Islamic ethnic groups defining the roles of women. AP shared the following;

*There is a lot of culture that stops women from going out. You will find some Muslim clerics who will say that the best place for a woman is in the home... I would not say that it is a religious restriction; I would say that it is more of a cultural thing.*

The findings from the study indicate that the negative effect of culture was evident within the researched institution. However, only a small number of students were affected. RA3 shared some insight about this:

*Our students have left from here and have become doctors and solicitors. They are all in leading roles. But there may be some; you would always expect a few that may be reserved and not be able to make progress because of the cultural atmosphere in the family.*

Further indication of the existence of cultural barriers to female advancement inherent within the researched institution was evident from the interview data. Though T6 expressed uncertainty about cultural barriers, the questions posed to her by the students indicate the existence of cultural values working against female development. T6 expresses her uncertainty in the following excerpt:

*I think there are some cultural things that we have. When I talk to the girls they ask me 'Miss isn't it hard', 'do you ever wanted to do something that you can't do'. Like when you are a child you know that you are not allowed to do this, you are not allowed to do that.*

Though culture was identified as a barrier within some Islamic ethnic groups, the teachers declared the nonexistence of cultural elements preventing them from pursuing their dreams. AP talks about the support she receives from her family in the following excerpt;

*There are still a lot of cultural barriers that a lot of women do still face and I feel that I am very lucky in the sense that my husband is fine with me working; my family is fine with me working. In fact they want to see me go forward and become a head teacher. I have got that support. But not everybody has that support and some people are held back because of the cultural belief that a woman's best place is in the home.*

Just like AP, RA3 recounts that her culture offers opportunities for women to chase their dreams. She went further to cite the example of her daughters who have excelled in their careers. She however cautions that this is only possible when the rules regarding dress code are observed and when they conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. RA3 stated that;

*They may be cultural people; but within my cultural system I would not have a problem. My dad was originally quite culturally narrow-minded, probably still a little bit, but I think he has realised we do not bring shame to the family. There may be cultural problems but personally I do not have any cultural problems and neither do my daughters. My daughters are working; one is a business analyst, one is a tax advisor – as long as they dress modestly and act professionally.*

While some people may experience cultural barriers, results from the data indicate that a majority of the teachers did not find any cultural barrier preventing them from progressing in their careers. However, the account of T6 suggests that actually some young girls within the researched school were trapped by their culture, preventing them from taking part in certain roles or activities. The most common justification for this relates to that fact that in Islam females are not often allowed to associate with males. This is demonstrated in the account of AP who revealed that;

*Within our Year 11 cohort at the moment the girls are going to leave next year. There is one particular child who is not allowed to go to college because her dad does not want her mixing with the other gender. There will always be a few who will be held back or who won't be able to go on to further their education. Generally speaking you will find that a lot of the families from Indian origin tend to push the children a lot more, whereas you will find a few children from especially Pakistani origin are held back because education is not as important in their household.*

Likewise, RA3 confirms the above situation by stating the following;

*We do have parents every year, one or two, that might not let their girls go to a mixed institute...Some girls accept that situation and they are fine with it because that is how they have been brought up. If it is strict parents then they may not even let them work. They will be at home.*

It was noted earlier that females were allowed to work and progress in their careers if they follow certain rules – mostly dress code. This did not appear to pose a huge barrier as those who follow the rule had no major challenges in pursuing their careers. However, the above accounts add another element which is very rigid and offers no room for negotiations. This stretches to the extreme where females are totally prevented from working. This therefore suggests the existence of particular Islamic cultures preventing women from progressing in life. The gender issues embedded in the discussions surrounding the challenges women face as a result of religious observation thus has its roots in culture as oppose to religion since women from less traditional Islamic ethnic groups have opportunities to participate in public sphere.

In this section, I have evidenced that culture stands as a barrier to women of some Islamic groups in participating in the public sphere. I have demonstrated that the Islamic principle of defining the woman's place as a home can have an overwhelming effect on the lives and careers of Muslim females. This is link to my research theme because the experiences of some groups of Muslim females reveal the challenges they face as a result of their culture. Though the narratives from the teachers claim that culture, not religion, is responsible for women's subordination, the very essence that Islam defines the woman's place as a home contributes to the development of specific rules prohibiting women from working or associating with men. Consequently, religion indirectly relegates women to the background, hindering their capacity to progress in life.

### **Exclusion from Religious Leadership**

Up to this point, the findings of the study has revealed that generally women of Islamic faith do not experience significant barriers to working and progressing in their careers as long as they fulfil their home responsibilities and also dress modestly. Apart from restrictive cultural groups, when attention is turned to women's participation in religious spaces, the results reveal quiet a contrasting picture. Women within the Islamic faith are not allowed to lead in prayers, especially in the presence of men. RA3 expressed the belief that women's exclusion from leading in mosques is justified by the fact that they have home responsibilities to be accomplished. RA3 stated that;

*In Islam it is not necessarily for a woman to go for congregational prayers. She can pray at home because she has got other responsibilities. It is not obligatory. Therefore, within our community we do not feel the need to have a woman leading the prayers.*

Surprisingly, the women did not consider the restriction placed on their leadership capacity as problematic. This was justified by the fact that leading in prayers is perceived as a male prerogative. T6 states this in the following words;

*In terms of religion, in terms of leading people in prayers, we leave it to men. Otherwise leadership in other things I don't think there is anything saying no.*

A detailed and more enlightening justification for excluding women from mixed prayer groups was shared by T8, who stated that;

*Prayers are not for women to lead, it is for men to lead it. There are good reasons for this. For example, it is because of the respect for women. It is how people translate it. A lot of people translate it as though women are probably being told off as second class and that is why in the prayers they are in the back role, they are behind men. I think it is more for respect that women should be at the back lines. Because in Islam we have to bow down and you have to go on the floor; you have to be on your knees and bending as well. As a woman, I will not be comfortable if I am doing that and there is a man behind me. So it is because of that respect for women that they have been put at the back so that men cannot see her when she is performing those actions.*

In all respects, the respondent's views about women leading in mosques were the same. It was clear from the teachers' responses that religious leadership is not something that they will want to pursue because it has been entrusted to men from the beginning of Islam, and



also because they want to fulfil the traditional gender roles that are seen as appropriate for their gender. All the respondents did not consider the exclusion of women from religious leadership as a matter of contention.

In this section, I have shown that religious leadership in places of worship is reserved for males, and females are in conformity with this rule. The fact that women are not allowed to lead in prayers, implies that they will find it challenging to lead an Islamic faith school. The school being a faith school makes it necessary that the person in the leadership role has to be grounded in the religious faith – obviously a male – in order to effectively promote Islamic ethos and principles. This is linked to my research argument because women within the Islamic faith are not offered the same opportunity as men to participate in lead roles. Their restriction to partake in religious leadership directly influences their ability to lead in a faith academic setting.

### **Family Responsibilities Barriers**

A shared concern identified by most of the teachers interviewed pertains to the limitation placed on women's career advancement as a result of familial responsibilities. The principal, P, of the school was very quick to identify the impact of religion and culture in terms of family responsibilities and how they affect women, participating in the labour market. P stated that;

*Women work just as hard as men and men work just as hard as women. Women have other additional responsibilities outside their careers, so do men. It just depends on how the family*

*unit operates. But I think generally, culturally there is more pressure on women than there is on men in terms of bringing up family and children. I'm not saying that is the case with everybody. But culturally I think there is more pressure on women.*

The findings from the study further confirm the assertion that women generally bear the brunt of family responsibilities and consequently hindering them from applying for leadership positions. AP discusses the hurdles faced by women in senior leadership positions and exposes the challenge of separating teaching work from home responsibilities in the following extract;

*I think what is happening is because of family responsibilities. So when I think of some of the things that I do and the time that I spend at home; managing my responsibilities, doing my teaching; and I think to myself that if I had a family I would not be able to work like this. I think that is one of the things that hold up a lot of the females is managing their extra responsibilities, because teaching is a profession where you take it home as well. You can't pack it in at 5 o'clock. You go home and you are still working on it. I think that is one of the things that do affect the number of women who do end up in a managerial position. Especially, I suppose, for headship. It is the commitment that a woman has to give.*

The impact of culture on women's career was identified by a majority of the respondents. Their accounts unveil the challenges faced by women in balancing both work and family responsibilities as a major hindrance to women taking on leadership roles. T7 cites an example of women trapped in their effort to work and fulfil their traditional roles;

*May be family could be a reason holding women back from moving forward. I have seen people because of family; they cannot move, but not because of religion. Because of family*

women have sacrificed, I have seen that. The women are taking care of children and playing different roles.

T8 reinforced this view stating that as part of women's dual responsibilities, they find it difficult to take on leadership roles because of the commitment involved. According to T8, the challenge is greater for religious women irrespective of religious affiliation. T8 stated that;

*For me personally, I don't think Islam is stopping me from anything. Other reasons could be family responsibilities for the women. Everybody feels responsibility for their children, obviously. But probably if you are a religious person you feel it more and you feel your preferences because obviously your family is your first preference as a mother; whether you are a Christian, which ever religion you belong to. But if you are a practising religious person I think you always think about your family first because Allah has given those children in your care, in your responsibility, in everything. Because your job is an option, it is something you chose to do; it's not put on you as your responsibility as such from God. God has given you responsibility for the children. It could be because of that that people feel that the job at top needs more time, and it needs ordered followed responsibilities and commitments. Obviously with these things it is very hard to give up that time. Their life gets in to a stage where they cannot manage time wise. So probably that is why women do not go for positions of authority. Personally I do not think it is Islam which is keeping them behind.*

The responses show that women put very heavy demands on themselves as mothers because of the belief that the responsibility has been entrusted to them by God. This suggests that subjecting to this position is normal among practising Muslim women. The narratives nevertheless signal that women find it hard balancing both work and home

responsibilities. Though the teachers did not regard religion as a hindrance to women's leadership, the narratives communicate that God entrusts the responsibilities of taking care of children and the family to women. Following this declaration, this suggests that literally religion is the driving force behind the allocation of child care responsibilities and home management to women. Contrary to the teacher's position in denial of the existence of negative impact of Islamic teachings and practices on women's career, a thorough analysis of the findings from the interviews leads to the argument that religion directly and indirectly impacts on women's careers. By means of assigning family responsibilities to women this in turn prevents women from advancing in their careers.

As one of the objectives of this study is the task of investigating the possibility of religious teachings and practices acting as a barrier to women progressing in their career; the findings from the study reveal that, personally the women did not find their religion as a hindrance to career development. Rather, with examples from the Quran, the respondents argue that their religion is quite supportive of women advancing in their professional lives. The interviews reveal that cultural values and family responsibilities, rather than religion, hinder women from advancing in their careers. However, embedded in the discussions with the teachers there was evidence of religion preventing women from achieving their potentials in life; whether they acknowledged that or not.

In this section I have demonstrated that women of Islamic faith are generally liable for child care and domestic responsibilities. I have argued that because these responsibilities are said

to be divinely allocated to women, the Islamic religion — in this respect — acts as a barrier to women's career development. Faced with these responsibilities and with little or no help from the family this impact directly on women's ability to progress in life. This is in line with my research argument in establishing that women do not receive support to pursue higher management positions.

### **5.3.2 ROLE OF FEMALE TEACHERS**

The teachers were asked about their roles in the profession. In answering this question, three themes were identified that point to the significant role of teachers to learner's development. The results revealed that teachers play a major role in student's academic success, especially in mathematics; they act as role models; and also contribute to the faith development of students.

#### **Academic Success**

Teachers felt that one of their greatest achievements was their contribution towards the attainment of an 'outstanding' status by the school. This would be considered a very significant achievement given that past Ofsted Report of 2009 rated the school as 'good'; meanwhile recent Ofsted Inspection Report (2013) rated the school as 'outstanding'. Unlike other schools, where an outstanding status was only recorded for particular sections of inspection, the present case study is recognised as 'outstanding' in all areas, including; achievement of pupil, quality of teaching, behaviour and safety of pupils, leadership and management.

The Ofsted Inspection Report (2013) affirms that most children usually join the school in year 7 at average starting points. When leaving the school they make exceptional progress across all years within a wide range of subjects. This was confirmed during the interviews with the teachers. For example, AP was quite impressed with her quality of teaching and how it has contributed to children's progress leading to their academic success. AP stated;

*I have been quite successful in my teaching. When the Ofsted came they said 'you are outstanding'. I know my teaching has a good impact. My kids enjoy my lessons. That is an achievement for me. That I teach well and they make good progress from when they came in the school at the beginning of year seven and when they are leaving year 11. If they are under my care and they are making good progress; I feel that it is a big achievement for me and I am quite satisfied with that.*

Similarly, P communicated that not only is progress attained by students but that teachers equally archive development in their careers while at the institution. P confessed that;

*The inspection says the performance of the school is outstanding. The ethos does affect not only the students but also staff and you do see a change in students and staff between when they come in and when they leave.*

A striking result that emerged from the data is that a majority of the female teachers interviewed taught Maths. This challenges the traditional philosophy of associating Mathematics to male teachers. The most remarkable success across all departments in the school was registered in this subject area. Ofsted report (2013) commended the excellent subject knowledge of the teachers in ensuring that they plan systematically for students to achieve their mathematical understanding. The teachers were quite proud of student's

achievement in this subject, which turned out to be the best department in the school. Their remarkable success is not only registered internally, but also externally at the level of the borough. T8 recounts her success in the following excerpt;

*I am a Maths teacher and have been head of Maths for three years. In the last three years the school has achieved excellent results. Every year they have been improving. This year has been especially brilliant for us because the school has got the best results. I mean as a school and Maths department has got the best results and we are the best performing school in ... [name withheld for confidential purposes] borough at present. The school is doing really, really well.*

T8 went on to mention ways in which students were provided with opportunities to further develop their knowledge in Maths. As a consequence, students made a name both for themselves and the school as a whole. T8 further stated that;

*It is not that in Maths we just teach them in classrooms. We try to expand their knowledge in Mathematics. Especially for our gifted and talented, we work quite hard. We put them in UK Maths challenges and our girls achieve like gold awards, silver awards and bronze awards.*

Although, T8 mostly talked about the strategies implemented to assist gifted and talented students, there was evidence of implementation of additional strategies to support students who were weak in Maths. T5 had the following to reveal;

*At the moment I am coordinating intervention for learners who are behind in Maths and English. Trying to look at who is behind and put in place extra classes for them to bring them up within the standards of numeracy and literacy.*

Another interesting finding that emerged from the data was that female teachers also taught Sciences. In addition to securing excellent Maths results, the teachers equally performed well in the sciences. According to T7, excellent academic achievement was registered in the Sciences. T7 stated that;

*Some of my achievements are: excellent results in science; leading a new department; and having excellent results. OFSTED rated my lessons as outstanding. That I can say is an achievement.*

The findings from this case study demonstrate the enormous contribution of female teachers in subject areas that were traditionally seen as masculine. This suggests a turn in the educator sector in which women are increasingly taking on subjects in these areas. The principal, P, voiced the importance of having females in these subject areas as a way of challenging the perception held by society. P clearly believes that;

*I think it is important for the girls to see females as scientists, technology teachers and Maths, because what it does is that it shows them that the females can take on any degree programme.*

Embedded in the P's assertion is the suggestion that the teacher's role extends beyond contributing to academic excellence to guiding students to discard stereotypes held by society regarding their career choices. This leads us to the theme of teachers as role model for the students.



## Teachers as Role Models

Another significant finding was the teacher's role as a role model for the students. This theme came up very frequently among the teacher's narratives, especially when trying to explain their success stories and how these have inspired the girls in school. The influence teachers have on the lives of their students was apparent in AP's narration. Students held her in high esteem to the extent that even after leaving school they still maintained contact. AP claimed that;

*Quite a lot of people say 'I see you as a role model'. Every year I have some kids saying 'Miss I want to be a Maths teacher just like you'. Obviously I have been here since 2000. So many of my ex-students have left, but a lot of them are still in touch and a lot of them still look up to me in that respect. I will consider myself as a role model.*

Of particular significance was the teacher's achievement amidst the restrictions encountered as a result of being working Muslim women. T6 touched on this when she relates to the way in which students appreciated her accomplishment, especially as a practicing Muslim woman. Indeed, T6 stated that;

*I really enjoy just helping them because they see me and they see a Muslim female teacher and that is what they are. They can relate to me, and they ask me lots of questions about it; 'how was it when you were at college'; 'how was it when you were at the university'; 'how did you deal with people'. I think that the relationship that you get with them is really nice.*

Essentially, these accounts show that female teachers of Islamic faith are a great asset to the institution. The findings suggest that, because the Islamic faith places restriction on female participation in public life, the presence of ambitious and excelling Muslim female

teachers in the school is likely to stir up inspiration for a career-focused life in students who may be facing challenges as a result of their faith.

### **Comprehensive Development of Students**

A distinguishing feature of the school is their accomplishment in attaining the academic progress of students together with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consecutive Ofsted Inspection Reports (2009 and also 2013) communicate that the school curriculum provided to students not only meets their academic needs but also offers students a wide range of enhancement opportunities targeting their moral, social, cultural — and most importantly — their spiritual development. The school's website concedes that a personalised curriculum is designed for the students to permit the development of extensive opportunities for students in their academic, emotional, social and spiritual development. It accentuates that students are equipped with lifelong skills which serves to prepare them as future strong Muslim women.

The responses in relation to the moral, social, and cultural development of students were very positive. These came up frequently during the interviews. Most of the discussion centred on ways in supporting the girls to observe the restrictions set forth by their religion. As a consequence, this builds on the girls' moral, cultural and spiritual development; including their career development. T6 talks about this in the following account;

*We teach the girls basic history and key events that have taken place in religion. They are sometimes surprised about how religion does help women. When we are talking about business, the prophet's wife was a business woman. It is not something new. And even some*

*of the other women being teachers, education lots of people...We do focus a lot on women because we are teaching girls. [T6 advise her female students] 'We are not stopping you from doing what you want to, but take into consideration that you are Muslim and you want to stay true to your faith'. They do ask you questions about 'how could I do this'; 'how could I do that'. If you show them a way how they can get where they want to, respecting their religion, they are very thankful to you.*

The findings from the study suggest that not much attention is paid towards developing children's faith by studying the Holy Scripture — the Quran — as can be observed with other denominations; such as the Catholic or Anglican faiths where children's faith is strengthened with Biblical knowledge. The lack of reference to ways of building students faith in terms of Quranic philosophies could be explained by the fact that participating in religious commitment is not the prerogative of women within the Islamic faith. As noted earlier, the main responsibilities assigned to women by God in Islam is raising children and managing the home. Therefore, much emphasis was directed towards equipping girls with guidelines on how to conform to the rules required of their gender within Islam.

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate the roles of female teachers in faith schools. The results from the present case study reveal that teachers play a significant role not just in the academic development of students but also in their moral, social and cultural development through the role model capacity. However, teachers' role to students' spiritual development was found to be limiting since teachers rarely made reference to developing students' faith through the study of the Quran.

In this section I have demonstrated the significant role of female teachers to learners' comprehensive development. This supports my research theme, especially in establishing the unique contribution of female faith teachers to learners current and future development. The roles were not limited to immediate academic success but also extended outside education from role modelling to counselling of young Muslim girls to overcome any uncertainties, and to progress in their studies and subsequently their future careers.

### **5.3.3 POSITION OF FEMALE TEACHERS**

Research often establishes that within the teaching profession women outnumber men — particularly within the lower age levels of the education — but argues that women are underrepresented in leadership and management positions (Drudy, 2008; Sari, 2012; Celikten, 2010). One of the preoccupations of the present research study was to investigate the position occupied by women within schools. Though the school is for girls only, in terms of employment both males and female are accepted as staff of the institution. The responses from the school authorities reveal that women make up a majority of the management team. According to the principal of the school, issues of gender equality did not present an issue since the teaching staff and management are predominantly female. The representation of females in management positions was identified by P as follows;

*We have a female vice principal; we have 5 Assistant Principals, 2 of them are women; the SENCO is female, the Director of Pastoral Care is female, we have 7 Directors of Learning, out of the seven 5 of them are female. Our Second in English and Second in Maths are also females, our Numeracy Coordinator is female; 95 per cent of our staff is female. It [the*

school] *is heavily female. In the management, I will say 65 per cent are female leaders. We are a minority as males [he jokingly said]. Gender is not an issue here, because 95 per cent of the staff are females.*

The fact that the school is exclusively for girls may explain the predominance of women, both at teaching and management levels. In saying this, the senior leadership position i.e. the head of the school, is male. It is interesting that the Muslim religion generally prohibits the association of males and females, yet the head of a female school is male. It would have been expected that because the school is exclusively for girls, the head would have been a female. In addition, the findings reveal that women make up 65 per cent of the leadership team. This percentage is not very impressive for a female-only school. This suggests the existence of bias in Islamic principles as men are allowed to rule in a female only settings but women are not permitted presence in male settings — such as leading prayer in the mosques.

Although the principal jokingly said the males in the school are a minority, an exploration of the governing body document reveal that all eight foundation governors are males. Meanwhile, females were represented as non-foundation/representative governors; three females and two males. The results from the case study indicates that though females make up a majority of the staff, and teaching managers, the most senior and influential leadership positions were occupied by males. Although the teachers do not accept a gender inequality to career development, low representation of females in senior leadership positions suggest that gender inequalities prevail in the school. The fact that the head of an all-girl school is a male, further supports the presence of gender inequality.

In this section I have demonstrated that leadership within a Muslim school is the prerogative of males. Contrary to the school authorities' claim that gender inequality is non-existent within the institution, I have argued that even though women predominate in terms of staffing, the most senior positions are occupied by males. This relates to my research theme in indicating that women are underrepresented in higher management and leadership positions in schools.

### **Positive Inclination to Career Advancement**

One of the justifications advanced for the inadequate representation of women in senior lead roles is associated to women's low aspiration to occupying leadership roles. The data from the study revealed that some women were hesitant to seek for promotion. As oppose to teacher's personal values acting as a barrier, the findings revealed that teacher's reluctance to seek for promotion was associated to the presence of controlling environment conditions — culture and child care responsibilities. RA3 shares her experience on how the roles assigned to women in the domestic sphere creates a huge challenge towards seeking promotion. RA3 said that;

*I am the Director of Learning at the moment. It will be nice to be Assistant Head; but this position is not available over here. I am too comfortable here. I only live round the corner. Rain, snow, whatever, I can be here. There is no problem with traffic. I have worked in schools, and it is always a problem travelling and then back. There is traffic and the time spent travelling. I think I could use that time quite profitably. If I have got something at my door step, that is fine. I am comfortable where I am. If an Assistant Head position comes in, I*

*will probably go with that. If somewhere else, I will have to look at it all round because I think my family is a priority. I do not want to miss out time. I do not get home from here till 5:30 pm. I do not want to then be going back and do some work. It will be nice to have some quality time, because otherwise I will be losing a lot in travelling etc.*

The information from the excerpt above demonstrate how geographical mobility acts as a barrier to women's professional advancement, as promotion meant that teachers may have to move away if they were unable to secure a position within their present school. Geographical mobility may seem to be the major reason behind RA3's reluctance to seek promotion, but actually the direct cause is the familial responsibilities she has to fulfil. Probably, if RA3 had no family responsibilities she would be willing to seek for promotion in other schools which may be a distant away from her location. Due to domestic responsibilities, RA3 preferred to wait until there was a position coming up within the present school. Though RA3 was faced with challenges from the home front, she had aspirations for developing her career; unlike other women who may decide to take themselves off the promotion ladder — as will be demonstrated by the example below.

The findings from the study further revealed mixed feeling towards seeking promotion. T8 expresses her desire to be with the children and therefore was reluctant to give this up for a leadership role, as this could mean that she would be unable to have contact with the children. T8, however, admitted to a willingness to seek promotion with the condition that she was allowed to have contact with the children. T8 stated that;

*I love being in education to be truthful. In education, a lot of people think that moving on means less teaching and more office work. For me, teaching is my energy. I get more of my energy from kids. As long as I am with kids I do not feel tired. I do not want to be out of the classroom. For me, that is the best place on earth; being with the bunch of youngsters and teaching. I will never be able to detach myself from teaching. I am not thinking of being head of school because that will take me away from teaching. Not because the school is not going to give me the opportunity, but it is because it will detach me from teaching. I love teaching. Probably, I will stay below there somewhere. That is my inspiration, going from head of faculty to assistant head or deputy if possible, as long as I stay in touch with teaching.*

Perceptions or lack of aspiration by female teachers constitute one of the major barriers to female leadership. The ambiguous position presented by the teachers in the present study was to a greater extent seen as a result of the heavy familial responsibilities assigned to women, and to a lesser extent to women's personal values — beliefs, self-perception and self-efficacy — which are not in alignment to those of the organisation. The findings presented very positive results towards women's aspiration to leadership roles. All four teachers interviewed expressed a desire in advancing to more senior leadership roles. Two were quite enthusiastic about moving up their career ladder, while the other two expressed challenges towards progressing in their careers but were willing to advance in their careers upon finding a solution to the challenge. All teachers expressed the aspiration of seeking promotion. It was found that some teachers were quite enthusiastic about this by undertaking a personal initiative to develop their leadership capability. In the case of T5 supporting her boss and in taking on some extra responsibilities was not just to gain



knowledge and experience but it was an opportunity to prove her leadership ability. T5 admitted that;

*I would like to be a SENCO [Special Education Needs Coordinator]. I am looking at doing some training towards it, getting qualified, may be taking on more responsibility within the department. I kind of support my boss at the moment, who is a SENCO. I am trying to coordinate this intervention programme and work with other staff and show that I can manage people and a team, and kind of move up to be a SENCO.*

The findings from the study further revealed that teachers who were already taking on some management roles within the schools were looking forward to developing further in their careers, and in some cases securing senior leadership positions. For example, T7 is seeking promotion not only within the school setting, but looking forward to becoming a representative at county level. T7 stated that;

*I wanted to be a director or leader and I am here. Presently may be to develop further as a leader- as a good strong leader. So whatever I am doing to develop more, and do it. If an opportunity comes I may move further to be a subject leader in the county, where I can help the teachers and the learners develop further.*

Unlike T5 and T7 who had preliminary thoughts to advance in their careers, there was evidence pointing to the fact that teacher's aspiration to seek promotion in some situations was unplanned. This was evident with T6 who did not perceive herself as a leader and hence was reluctant to put herself forward for any leadership position. The decision to take on a leadership role was not her initial personal decision; it came from others. The excerpt below

indicates how T6's leadership ability was acknowledged by others, encouraging her to take on the position.

*I have just taken the role of a second department, so developing myself there in term of leadership and then moving on to head of department sometime. I kind of get told 'it's time to start moving up now'. When this role came up for second department they were like 'you should apply for that'.*

Though the decision to take on the position of second department came from others, T6 nevertheless took the advice. This suggests that what some female teachers need is encouragement and support from school authorities and even colleagues to advance in their careers.

Following the results with respect to teacher's inclination to career advancement, two observations were visible. Firstly, the excerpts from the teachers suggest that though teachers expressed unwillingness towards applying for senior leadership positions, they were willing to change their opinion if their concerns were addressed. This implies that the implementation of strategies to cater for child care and also the decision to offer opportunities for those in leadership position to interact with the children may encourage more teachers to seek promoted posts.

Secondly, it can be observed that practically all teachers were engaged in extra responsibilities. They were not just classroom teachers; they were also engaged with middle-management responsibilities within their departments. This suggests that if they eventually assume leadership roles, they would not struggle since they already had prior

experience of being in a management position. The design of strategies to promote these women to leadership positions, such as training in leadership and networking, would complement the experience they already have and equip them with the skills and knowledge to support them towards high ranking positions.

In this section of my thesis I have demonstrated that female teachers have the aspiration to progress in their careers. Though some teachers were apprehensive to seek promotion, I have argued that the reluctance to seek for promotion is not because of their personal values or beliefs but because the burden of family responsibilities falls heavily on women. This supports my research argument because women's underrepresentation in leadership is partly as a result of the absence of support mechanisms to assist women overcome the challenges they face from the domestic sphere.

### **Qualification and Experience**

A question was asked on how positions were ordered within the school. The dominant response points to the claim that recruitment was mainly based on the ability of the applicant to perform the role, i.e. their professional qualification and experience. The faith aspect of the applicant was also thought to be of importance. However, the school was willing to employ people of different faiths depending on the basis that they will be sympathetic to the Islamic faith. P worded this in the following account:

*Faith is very important because of the ethos of the school. Qualification and experience is also important. The most important priorities will be faith, qualification and experience. The*

*faith aspect is important. But that does not mean that if you are not of the faith you would not secure a position. What we are saying is in terms of recruitment; it is important that we do recruit people of the faith, but if they are not down or if they are not suitably qualified, then we will locate the experience and somebody who is sympathetic to the faith.*

RA3 supports the viewpoint that all applicants needs to be supportive of the Islamic faith and offers an example of non-Muslim teachers who were employed by the school because they are sympathetic to the faith. RA3 said that;

*In terms of directors of learning, you should be sympathetic to the faith; so you should understand what the faith of the children is; teaching to understand what is acceptable and not. For example, we have two teachers in the English department who are not Muslims. However, they are running that department and they are aware of what Islam says, so they know 'this is what we can and this is what we can't do'.*

Unlike, P who stated earlier that qualification, experience and faith were the most important elements considered during recruitment; other school authorities though accepting that all three elements were important, concluded that the most important element is the professional experience of the applicant. The following excerpts from AP and RA3 reveals this point. AP stated that;

*We look at their professional experience, their capability, on the day of the interview; how they come across in the interview; how they do the lesson if they are going to be teaching for that particular post. We do not tend to look at which religion they came from or which gender they are...I think the professional profile is the most important. Because it is school and we want to maintain standards.*

The second extract is from RA3 and her perspective is indicative of the general standard that institutions of learning commonly observe i.e. the recruitment of individuals to particular posts were based on their area of specialisation. RA3 said that;

*I will think the most important element considered when hiring staff is the professional background. I think it is based on professional achievements and what they can contribute to that department. For example, my background is RS [Religious Studies] because my degree is in RE [Religious Education]. Obviously I am well suited for that role. The director of learning for Maths, her degree is in Maths, so she is well suited for that role. It is not based on your gender but what you can bring in to it...In a sense, but equally the faith is there; not necessarily of a Muslim faith. I think that is not how we run it in this school.*

The faith status of teachers may not be considered as an absolutely desirable element during recruitment, but three positions were identified that were reserved exclusively for people of the Islamic faith. These included the principal, the assistant principal and the religious studies teacher. The principal, P, offers justification for the reservation of the three posts in the following extract;

*In terms of the principal, because it is the leader, the top, has to be of the faith. The assistant principal who deals with spirituality and ethos has to be of the faith. The pastoral team has to be of the faith because of the faith element that is integrated into the pastoral care system. The RE teachers have to be of the faith. But apart from that, the other positions do not have to be of the faith.*

Essentially, these accounts show that for Muslim teachers, religion does not prevent them from occupying leadership roles. However, people of other faiths are disadvantaged. It also

implies that teachers of other faiths within the school will definitely, under no circumstances, have the opportunity to occupy lead roles; even if their potential exceeds those of other teachers practicing the Islamic faith.

The results from the study further demonstrate that religion does not affect the employment of teaching staff because emphasis is placed primarily on their professional qualification and experience. However, for senior leadership roles, in addition to having the expertise, the faith of the applicant is of particular importance. This leads to the investigation in relation to equal opportunities within the teaching profession.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The Equality Act (2010) focuses on discrimination law, and protects people from all the types of prohibited discrimination (DfE, 2014). The act is applicable in schools and it deals with how pupils and prospective pupils should be treated. It prohibits schools from discriminating pupils on grounds of disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, pregnancy or maternity, and religion or belief (DfE, 2014). In addition, according to the Government Equalities Office (2013), “the Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society”. Therefore, the equality act covers learners as well as teachers and those in management and leadership positions. However, an examination of the information available covering the equality act in schools generally focuses on protecting learners. The findings from the present case study equally revealed the same pattern. Most of the statements found in the school’s gender equality guidance document focused mostly on equality issues in relation to students. While much emphasis

was placed on the responsibility of staff to implement these policies, gender equality policies for staff were given very little attention. Only two statements were mentioned on the gender equality of staff in one of the school's policy document. It stipulates that;

*The school acknowledges to the lack of women in senior leadership roles "women are severely underrepresented in senior posts in schools making up only 30% of secondary head teachers and 64% of primary head teachers (Gender Equality Guidance Document, 2015; p.9).*

The document went further to instruct that;

*Action is required to encourage more women seek promotion and enable them to do so by widening the opportunities for flexible and part-time working. Schools and local authorities should also consider developing mentoring schemes and training for women looking to move into senior management posts (Gender Equality Guidance Document, 2015; p.9).*

The above statement is an excerpt from a government policy document outlining measures that schools are expected to implement. The school on its own has failed to develop gender equality policy in relation to staff. This may explain why within the schools gender equality guidance document, there was no mention of any strategies directed towards the design or implementation of policies to promote women seeking senior management positions. The school has simply acknowledged the position that women are underrepresented in leadership but has not taken any action in addressing the issue. The inattentiveness paid to gender issues in relation to staff may be explained by the predominance of women in management positions; although not in senior management positions.

The school also had policies related to recruitment. This did not in any way target recruitment in terms of gender. The policy was mainly concerned with safer recruitment in terms of applicants providing identification documents, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, undergoing interview to assess their suitability to the role applied for, and their attitudes towards vulnerable young people and adults. The recruitment policy thus made no reference to gender, even though the school acknowledged the fact that women were underrepresented in senior management roles in secondary schools. Since the students are all girls in the school, the teachers were provided with a list of requirements to follow in order to encourage the girls to take on any role. It was surprising to find that while gender issues in relation to teachers were ignored, they were expected to encourage classroom discussions on gender issues such as; gender stereotypes, gender expectations and the impact of gender on learning (Gender Equality Guidance Document, 2015).

A question was asked to the teachers, if being a female teacher is advantageous or disadvantageous in terms of professional opportunities. The general response to this question was that both men and women have equal opportunities. Most of the explanations pointed to the fact that teaching is a female profession and therefore it is advantageous to women. This is reflected in T6's comment below;

*To be honest with you, just being a female in some professions I think would be disadvantageous; but in terms of being a teacher, I think it is much more advantageous being a female. But I think generally in terms of teachers whenever we go to courses you always see more females teachers on the course, not necessarily Muslim females, it is just females in general. So I think I am just in the right profession to achieve what I want.*



T8 did not link teaching specifically to female profession, she thought equal opportunities were offered to male and female applicants. T8 said;

*I have never thought about it because if it had happened to me I must have thought about it. Probably it has been equal opportunities so far for me. That is why it has never come to me as a problem or as something which can stop you from doing anything. When I applied for Head of Faculty I was competing against men and women.*

Others noted that because the school is exclusively for girls women have the advantage of getting employed. Just like T8 above, T7 confirmed that equal opportunity is accorded to both genders in the following account;

*It is advantageous because it is a girl's school. You know how the girls work, you know them better. However, I wouldn't say the men don't know. There is a different kind of comfort between the girls and the female teacher. So definitely it is an advantage, that's why I am here since 12 years. No preference is given to the female teachers, it is equal opportunities because it all depends on the lessons; it all depends on the interview. We still have males in the school, nearly a quarter. The moment it is a Muslim girl's school, you will find more females applying, because it says girls. So I think the men do not apply that much.*

Contrary to the perceptions of participants discussed above, there was a disparity in terms of the proportion of female versus male managers. The assertion that within education women make a majority of the teaching staff, but are a minority within management and leadership was confirmed within the literature review and also the researched school. T5 expresses this fact in the following extract;

*If you look at statistics we have more female staff than male staff but then we have more male staff in management percentage wise...I have never felt that anybody will not take me seriously because I was a woman or that I could not go for a job higher up because I was a woman.*

A common judgement shared by the teachers was the acknowledgment that as individuals they have not encountered any form of discrimination as a result of their gender. Their narratives were however based on their experience at the present school. Since the school is exclusively for girls there would be a tendency to lean towards female employees, as mentioned earlier by the principal and his assistant. One is left to ponder whether the results would be different if a mixed school was considered.

### **Gender Equality**

The teachers were asked an additional question; if individual profile i.e. being male or female, were considered during recruitment and/or promotion. In response to this question, the general view was that the gender of the applicant was not considered and that both males and females were given equal opportunities. This was demonstrated by AP who revealed;

*If we got a position available we do not look at whether they are male or a female or their religion because that will be discriminatory.*

Though AP talks of giving equal opportunities to both genders, she went further to admit that as an individual she feels the need to be inclined towards employing female teachers.

That being said, AP went back to her original position concluding that both genders were treated fairly, stating that;

*I do have preference for female teachers because they can bond better with the girls. But when I am interviewing I am very neutral. I have to look at everybody and give everybody an equal chance.*

Unlike AP, who voices her personal preference for female teachers, but claims this does not influence her at interviews; P clearly stated that the institution will likely opt for the recruitment of female teachers. Indeed, P stated that;

*Gender is not an issue here, because 95 per cent of the staff are females. Obviously being a female school if we have two candidates; male and female who are equal, we will probably lean towards the female in terms of role model.*

The responses from P and AP thus contradict each other, and it remains uncertain what the school's actual position is regarding the consideration of female and male teachers at recruitment. That notwithstanding, one thing was clear from the findings; there was a general view for the preference for female teachers. It was not surprising that school authorities expressed preference for female teachers since the school is exclusively for girls.

In the above sections targeting equal opportunities and gender equality, I have demonstrated that the absence of policies regarding equal opportunities for staff is a matter of real concern; considering the marked distinction in the proportion of male versus female managers – in favour of males. Based on this discovery, I have argued that the school's claim on the existence of equal opportunities to both genders is questionable. This relates to my research theme because the absence of policies protecting staff' recruitment, promotion

and development will impede teachers careers. Though females predominate as teaching staff, equal opportunities are necessary to enable them climb up their career ladder – especially as women are still underrepresented in this category.

### **Good Leadership**

Another theme that emerged from the findings was the good leadership style of female leaders. The leadership and management of the school were rated as outstanding by the recent Ofsted inspection (2013). The report states that the principal and governors guide staff to provide an educational experience for students to progress both academically and personally. This report centres mostly on the strength of the principal and governors. The findings from the case study nevertheless bring to light the contribution of other members of the leadership team, such as the assistant principal and heads of departments.

The principal, P, was asked to rate the performance of staff in management positions. His response indicated that female staff performed highly as reflected in the outstanding achievement of students. P stated that;

*In terms of performance, the female staff actually performs quite well and the proof of the pudding is always in terms of the results that you get at the end that is a good measure of performance, but also for us inspections from external bodies. On both of those measures we have been judge outstanding. You do not become outstanding without the staff performing to a high level. The performance is of a high standard.*

An example of the high standard performance recorded with senior female staff was evident in the interview data. The assistant principal, AP, recounts the acknowledgement by others on her leadership style as follows;

*The other achievement is my working my way up. I am being recognised across the school like a successful leader. I do feel like I have got that little bit of kudos where people do respect the work that I do and they do acknowledge that I have a good leadership style and quite effective in the things that I do. I feel that is quite an achievement.*

A further example of the potential for women to perform well is presented in the following statement from T6;

*I think the women are more efficient. When you go to a woman with issues, they deal with it more quicker.*

T6's is referring to the leadership potential of females in comparison to those of males. She compliments the leadership style of women as opposed to those of men. Both accounts from AP and T6 demonstrate that women make good leaders. This is contrary to much research which claims the superiority of the male style of leadership and concludes that men make better leaders compared to women.

The present research was concerned with investigating the position of female teachers within faith schools in conjunction with exploring the possibilities of establishing women as effective faith leaders. I have demonstrated that in terms of staffing, women constitute a greater majority both as teaching staff and as part of the management team. However, the most senior position — that of the principal — is occupied by a male and all the influential positions within the governing body are exclusively occupied by males. In addition, I have

argued that the performance of women in lead roles is of a high standard and that they equally possess good leadership style. This therefore is linked to my research theme in suggesting that women are capable of being effective faith leaders.

#### **5.3.4 STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE FEMALE LEADERSHIP**

So far, results from the case study have revealed a number of challenges encountered by female teachers. These challenges were visible from the school, home, religion and cultural spheres. In a quest to find out how such challenges could be addressed, a question was asked on the measures instituted by the school to promote women to take on leadership roles. The results revealed that a number of strategies were employed by the school to assist teachers in their development and advancement. These strategies were generic and were not specific to women only. However, because the staff were predominantly women, they tend to benefit more from the initiatives.

##### **Training/Mentoring**

Findings from the study revealed that the most common strategies employed by the school were training and internal mentoring. Though training courses were organised for the teachers, most of the training was on-the-job training. Teachers were given responsibilities in the areas that they want to develop under the supervision of a senior member of staff. This strategy proved extremely effective, as findings reveal that a majority of the teachers in middle management secured the position through taking extra responsibilities and mentoring. This is demonstrated in the account of P who revealed;

*What we try to do is that we try to spot talent very earlier on, we try to nurture that talent, we try and ensure that they have some responsibility and that they are coached and mentored. So a lot of our middle leaders and senior leaders have come from within the organisation, they have been developed within the organisation. There is a lot of coaching that takes place. We have leadership training depending on the type of role. Our SENCO has been trained in the National Certificate of Special Needs; our Assistant Principals have had leadership development; our middle leaders have done 'Leading from the Middle'. So depending on the role there would be some sort of professional development and training programme around that role.*

P's account on the training offered to teachers was supported by AP. In fact AP narrated her journey from a normal classroom teacher to the position of assistant principal as aided by internal training. AP stated that;

*I wouldn't say that we have put in place any measures. I would say though that within the school we develop the staff so that if they want to go and become future leaders. We will always develop them and encourage them and help them to grow. Some of the positions that people have in the school is because they have been through the system and they have been appointed internally. For example, I was a normal teacher in the school, I was given extra responsibility and then I went on to become head of department. Again I was given some extra whole school responsibility and then I was appointed as the assistant principal. We tend to nurture people within the system to help them develop. We are always looking at the people in the school and thinking these are the future leaders in reality. We do try to develop them so that they can then take up positions of responsibility.*

It was interesting to find that internal training was not a formal strategy enshrined in any of the school's policy. It only applies to teachers whom authorities viewed as possessing leadership potential. This, however, only favours those whom the authorities believe have the ability for leadership. It therefore implies that teachers with aspirations for development, but not identified by authorities, may not get the training opportunity. It can be suggested that making training and mentoring official would encourage many more teachers to put themselves forward for training towards career advancement.

The importance of internal training and mentoring was voiced by T5. She strongly believes that the provision of such training will act as a springboard to secure her desired position of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Indeed, T5 said that;

*I just need the training and the support and the opportunity within the department to get experience and then ultimately to take the SENCO course. The support I need is the opportunity to do certain task and to gain experience; to work closely with my boss, take responsibility for meetings otherwise that my boss would have taken. Say, I could go and meet with the educational psychologist or I could go and meet with a service provider from the authorities. It is just being given that opportunity and ultimately the biggest thing is to be able to get on the course; because you need the position and the support of your school before you can get on the course. You have to be in a suitable role before you can be trained to be a SENCO. I have talked to my supervisor and she is confident that we should be able to get it sorted.*

Though internal practical training was viewed by authorities as valuable for teacher's development, T5 suggests formal training courses to be of greater importance. In as much as internal training is valuable, formal training courses offer the opportunity for teachers to



obtain officially recognised certificates and the qualification that can be used for promotion in other institutions.

The school was not found to be totally lacking in terms of offering organised trainings for the teachers. One of the teachers mentioned the fact that training courses were provided by the institution on a regular basis. Unlike the practical training and mentoring offered to selected teachers, organised training was made available to all following the developmental needs identified by each teacher. The training was rated by T7 as robust enough and does not warrant the need for any further measures to be implemented. T7 shares her contentment with the present training offered to teachers in the following extract;

*Every year we have targets. My target is developing as a leader. We have all the CPDs going on. We go on a course every week; how will you tackle this problem? how will you tackle that problem? how will you develop teaching of a staff? All of the training is given to us. Every Wednesday we have got training. We do robust training. We have been given a chance. So when we are writing our targets they do asked us: 'what CPD do you need?' They look at all the staff and then they cater for our needs. I think they are doing more. I would not commend any measures. I think the school is working fantastic. From where I started to where I am now I have progressed a lot.*

T7's account suggests that the training offered was generic and not specifically subject to leadership development, which was the main concern of the interview questioned asked. However, the significance of the training cannot be overlooked as evidence from teacher's testimonies indicated its valuable contribution to their professional development.

In this section I have demonstrated the significance of designing and implementing training to specifically target women. I have argued that training and mentoring should be made formal in order to offer equal opportunities for all teachers to participate in them. I have also argued that training needs to be geared towards leadership to encourage more women into leadership positions particularly given their underrepresentation in these roles. This is in line with my research argument in maintaining that women lack support towards leadership development or to assume higher management and leadership roles.

### **Family Support Strategies**

Apart from training offered to the teacher, the school was seen to employ further strategies encouraging female leadership. Earlier in this section family responsibilities, particularly childcare, was identified as a major barrier to women's career advancement. This was also brought up by the principal acknowledging the difficulties women face in an effort to balance both work and domestic responsibilities. The school was found to have engaged in a number of strategies to reduce teacher's domestic responsibilities; as revealed by P in the following extract;

*I think the issue for women more so than men is work-life balance, particularly those women who have families and children. If there is something that is holding them back from leadership and management it is the extra responsibility with leadership and management on top of also running a household and having children. And I think that is perhaps a bigger barrier than faith and gender. So in terms of addressing them we are trying to look at the work-life balance of staff and trying to make sure we have things in place which address the*

*work-life balance. We have a valeting service so people's cars can get valeted; we have somebody who collects the cars, does the MOT, servicing and so forth. So this gives them more time, they do not have to worry about that in the evenings or at weekends. We are trying to sort of see what other things we can do. We have somebody who comes and sells groceries here so they do not have to go shopping. We are looking at what is available and what the staff are interested in.*

Childcare responsibilities were identified by the teachers as the major hindrance to career development. Although P acknowledges this in the above extract, P made no reference to the implementation of strategies to reduce childcare responsibilities. Teachers were asked to identify strategies that could encourage women to take on leadership roles. Most of the responses point to the necessity for strategies in managing child care responsibilities. In addition, teachers equally expressed the need for flexible work to be made available for women. T6 shared this concern stating that;

*I think it will be more to do with the place where they are working; working conditions there, having the flexibility to work certain hours. Women have children. For some people it is either career or children. In terms of flexibility, in terms work hours, and then having enough childcare facilities at work as well so that people will not mind.*

Previously, P claimed that the strategies made available to teachers were based on the development needs identified by teachers. Clearly the excerpts from the teachers reveal the contrary. The strategies put forth by the institution were not identified by the teachers to be of prime concern. Sorting out car repairs and provision of glossary services were not mentioned by the teachers as posing a challenge to their careers. Rather, teachers were interested in strategies such as those that will reduce childcare responsibilities and also

flexible work that will enable them combine both work and domestic responsibilities. T6 expresses the necessity for instituting strategies to manage work-life balance by the institution as outlined in the following extract;

*For other women, I think it would have to be about thinking a little bit more about their circumstances at home. That would encourage women to pursue leadership roles a bit more. Leadership is more responsibility and the women will be thinking; 'am I going to be able to balance home life and work life'. If something could be done in that sense, where they could have more of a balance then you will get more women applying for those leadership roles.*

The excerpt above clearly suggests that the employment of measures to address the challenges women face from the domestic sphere will have a positive effect on teachers' career development. This will be significant in promoting a balance between work and family life and consequently encouraging women to apply for leadership roles.

This study has as one of its primary focus the task of investigation the measures instituted by schools to promote female leadership. The findings from the present case study reveal the existence of one major strategy — training — including; practical training/mentoring and theoretical training. Though the training did not explicitly target women's leadership development they nevertheless proved valuable to teacher's instructional capacity development. There was also indication of another strategy providing familial support to teachers. However, the school failed to consider tackling a major obstacle — childcare responsibilities — this was identified by a majority of the teachers, including the principal and assistant principal, as requiring considerable attention.

In this section I have demonstrated that the development of leadership training to specifically target women is crucial in promoting women's transition into higher management and leadership roles. I have further argued that the personal circumstance affect the professional status of female teachers. This, therefore, necessitates the adoption of concrete measures to address the challenges women face from the domestic sphere in order to enable them to function at full capacity and achieve their career goals. This relates to my research argument because the lack of such initiatives hinders women from partaking in high ranking positions. Thus, the current situation will be maintained as women continue to dominate as teaching staff with few attaining lead roles.

## **5.4 DISCUSSION**

### **Effect of Religious Teachings on Career Development**

The life and experiences of the female Muslim teachers described in this study with regards to how Islamic teachings influence women's career development is contrary to reports from previous studies. Research establishes that some Islamic teachings continue to condition the hearts of men and women alike and hinders women's development; particularly in the area of leadership, which is considered as an ordeal for female followers (Doorn-Harder, 2006; Ammah, 2013). However, in the discussions with the teachers, there was certainty among all respondents that Islamic teachings had no negative effect upon their professional lives. One of the prominent features in the narratives of the teachers that support this claim was the constant referral to the wives of the founder of Islam, whom were successful business women. This demonstrated how thoughts of advancing in their careers were promoted by

examples from the Quranic scriptures. Ultimately, though the narratives show how a number of teachers got their inspiration to advance in their careers from the Quran, there was indication that among some Islamic groups females were restricted from taking part in public life, and in effect this impinged on their career advancement. The rules set forth by the Islamic faith for females to observe centres on dress code and restriction from associating with males. Females should observe a particular dress code at all times, in all places and in all circumstances. Women who chose to step out of the female allocated safe zone (the home) to the hostile male world (study and/or work environment) are obliged to observe these rules. To some women this presents a barrier limiting them to work only within Islamic settings, since some work environments may not be in conformity with their prescribed dress code — particularly those wearing a fully covered veil — and they are not willing to compromise their faith. Consequently, this suggests that Muslim females within the teaching profession would mostly be limited to working within Islamic establishments, since they would evade the challenges encountered as a result of their dress code.

The narratives equally revealed that at other extremes, some Islamic groups restrict females from having any contact with males. Therefore, Islamic females from such groups are at a disadvantaged position because although there may be access to all female schools; it is extremely unlikely that colleges or universities will offer same sex education. This suggests that these females will hardly acquire the level of education that is vital for the procurement of higher qualifications that is necessary for their professional development. For those wishing to advance in their careers as lecturers, this implies that they equally have limited opportunities for employment. An interesting finding from the teacher's narratives was the

positive attitude with which they put up with the restrictions they have to observe with regards to dressing modestly. Surprisingly, the teachers did not feel oppressed with the extreme expectations. What is interesting is that the females had no issues with these rules and were quite comfortable observing them. The teachers maintained the tradition of being observant about their faith while participating in the public sphere.

The narratives from the teachers indicate that Islamic culture is not homogenous. Different Islamic groups hold different beliefs and practices. That being said, there appears to be some common features that guide Muslim followers on prayers and the roles of men and women. The women's roles were mainly defined in terms of their responsibility for the family's welfare, especially the nurturing and raising of children. The most shared element across all Muslim groups is the principle that the prime role of the woman is taking care of the home. Though religion was reported as having no adverse effect on the career pathways of female teachers, there was indication on the adverse effect of Islam in relegating women to the background. Islam plays a massive role in defining the roles of women within the Islamic society. The findings reveal that Islam defines femininity in terms of house-keeping and child caring. This is in conformity with Inandi's (2009) study, in which the Turkish society strongly believes that a woman's paramount priorities are motherhood and being a good spouse. This is further confirmed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, former president of Turkey, declaring that Islam rightly defines women's position in society as motherhood. Women are obliged to respect these roles and they feel compelled to respect them since the roles are regarded as a divine requirement. As a result, this reinforces female domesticity as the care and nurture of children including other household responsibilities are observed as women's

responsibilities. This implies that the task of managing family responsibilities will fall heavily on female teachers of Muslim origin compared to other groups of teachers. From this it can be drawn that though culture, to a greater extent, affects women's career development. Religion, therefore, indirectly constitutes a barrier and affects the smooth functioning of women as they struggle to balance both career and home responsibilities.

Culture, appears to be a very important element for those from Islamic ethnic origin, even for those who reside in the Western World and have acquired western education. It can be suggested that though Muslim women working in the western world may have gained emancipation, they are still not liberated enough in the domestic sphere. Culture, therefore, is seen as a tradition that needs to be preserved and passed down to subsequent descendants. This was reflected in the principal's message declaring that the school is committed to bringing up the young girls to become future ambassadors of Islam for the next generation — the principal is of course male. Thus, students are challenged with this vision and with the expectation that Islamic values and principles would not become extinct among females — particularly those in the Western world — but would be preserved and passed down to subsequent generation of females.

The result from the case study confirms what other studies also noted as a major barrier to women's career advancement; childcare responsibilities. This emerged as a major obstacle in the studies of Potek, (2009), Conley and Jenkins' (2011), Sari (2012), and Okonkwo (2013). Teacher's accounts of the difficulties encountered in combining both work and home



responsibilities were similar to explanations of those in Conley and Jenkin's (2011) study. It would be noteworthy to point out that the entrustment of family responsibilities, particularly child care, to women is not only specific within the Muslim faith. It is a general ethnic tradition that women are regarded as responsible for the home. The only difference with the Muslim faith is that it is not just an issue of socialisation, but that it is a religious obligation. Therefore, there is a tendency for Muslim women to bear more of the brunt of taking care of domestic responsibilities. It is obvious that role conflict affects all women, but these role conflicts will affect female Muslim teachers the most. This case study therefore contradicts the assertion that teaching is a pleasant and suitable work for women, particularly as it is assumed that they can work and equally take care of home responsibilities. This may, nonetheless, be a great profession for teachers with no career development prospects. For those with aspirations to take on leadership roles it has proven difficult as they struggle to balance both career and home responsibilities. The findings indicate that Muslim women are involved in a multiplicity of roles and this leads to role conflict because of the different demands from the different roles. This suggests that these multiple roles will have an effect on women's work and private lives. This is particularly difficult for Muslim teachers who want to perform well in both career and family.

The results of the study show that women teachers explained how their gender roles affect their profession mostly in terms of being a mother. The teachers held conservative and traditional views of their gender role. These teachers seem to naturally accept the gender roles assigned to them by society on the one hand, and are also aware of and troubled with the problems that arise from these gender roles on the other hand. The teachers expressed

the effect of their gender in their daily lives. Focus was predominantly on the negative consequences of the gender roles — essentially child care — on their teaching experience; though a majority of them did not consider their gender roles as a matter of concern. It could be suggested that in Muslim communities parenthood impacts more on mothers than fathers because religion entrusts the nurture and care of children to women. Though the dominant discourse identified in this study points to the non-admittance of religion as a barrier to career progression, some of the discussions relating to the roles of females within the Islamic community, however, revealed that some aspects of religion directly and indirectly hinders females from progressing in their careers.

Contrary to expectations, this study did not find religion as a major hindrance to women participating in leadership. As opposed to initial thinking, culture rather than religion emerged as a major impediment to career development for Muslim females. The restrictions set forth by the Muslim faith for women are accepted by women as part of their religious commitment rather than some sort of marginalisation or subordination as it may be interpreted by people of non-Islamic faith. However, as Potek (2009) notes, when women believe that the differences between both genders are a part of the natural order of things they are less likely to challenge how society is organised. Following this line of thinking, this may explain why the females in the present case study were receptive to the roles assigned to their gender by their faith. They were prepared to accept the inequitable roles that favour men over women and are not prepared to challenge the status quo. Hence, one could tentatively conclude that in as much as the teachers did not mention their participation in prayers at Mosque in terms of building their spirituality, they were very keen

to observe religious rules prescribed for females who wish to participate in the public sphere. In other words, they were not critical on developing their spiritual development theologically but were very concerned with their moral state in observing Islamic principles pertaining to females wishing to participate in the labour market. That being said, the teachers however identified very strongly with their religion. Although the individual experiences of the teachers involved in the study could not be explored in more detail, what has been revealed indicates that culture seems to be at the centre of female marginalisation rather than Islamic principles for female Muslim teachers.

In this section, contrary to prevailing claim that religious teachings and practices have no effect on female teachers' career development, I have demonstrated that some Islamic principles do indirectly impinge on their career development. I have argued that though women as a group face challenges in meeting family responsibilities, those of the Islamic faith face even more challenges since Islam specifically entrust the care of children and family to women. These results relate to my research in revealing the struggles women of faith encounter in their professional life; struggles that society tend to ignore because of the assumption that women by nature possess the potentials to deal with them. Conversely, these women are strained both in their personal and professional lives and are left to take on choices that limit their development.

## **Roles of Female Teachers**

Some of the key findings in this study support previous works on the role of female teachers on learner's development. For example, the finding that women act as role models for females is not a new one (Majzub and Rais, 2010; Shein and Chiou, 2011; The World Bank, 2014; and UNICEF, 2014). This case study uncovered the role of teachers as transmitters of values, mentors and role models. The data revealed that students maintained continual contact with their teachers even after leaving the school. This is an indication that the teachers are great role models to the students. Although the findings related to the role model of female teachers to female students is not a completely new phenomenon, nor is it surprising, they however offer additional evidence to the assertion that female teachers play an invaluable role towards the development of the girl child. This is particularly vital for females within the Muslim community whose functioning is guided by strict rules and principles. The participation of Muslim female teachers in the labour market is likely to encourage young girls to pursue an education that will permit them to build a career. The findings revealed that role models are not just for the learners but are significant for teachers as well. The assistant principal was considered as an important influence in terms of career advancement for the teachers. Her leadership competence was highly regarded amongst the teachers. Thus the assistant principal was an important inspirational and motivational figure for the female teachers.

The findings also suggest that the leadership of the school — notably the assistant head, who is female — is significant for the girl's moral and spiritual development. The assistant head's position was highly admired by students. They were keen to find out how she had

attained such a level of authority and yet maintain her status as a practicing Muslim woman. This suggests that the presence of women in leadership roles act as an inspiration to young girls to work hard and also attain a level of power and authority in future. This is in line with UNESCO's report (2006), which maintained that female teachers are instrumental in guiding and supporting girls to progress in their studies as well as in their careers. In addition, Koch (2007) emphasises the necessity of having women in leadership positions and argues that this is instrumental in breaking gender stereotypes in schools and promoting the role model capacity for learners. This suggests the necessity for academic institutions and governments to develop initiatives that will encourage women to stay in the profession and also promote their occupancy of leadership positions.

The results from the study demonstrate that there is more to education than just the transmission of knowledge. The narratives from the female teachers indicated that education has a wider purpose in contributing to the entire development of the learners. Though the development of the learners can be credited to the curriculum laid out by the school, its successful implementation is extremely crucial. Not only were teachers and student's performance rated as excellent, but the behaviour of students was also recorded as excellent by a recent Ofsted report (2013). In contributing to the complete development of students, the area of integrating spirituality into almost every aspect of the student's life was eminent within the present case study. This confirms previous research which emphasises that the preoccupation of faith should be targeted towards the spiritual guidance of learners, including the integration of faith into the curriculum (Livingston and Jun, 2011). The findings from the study suggest that students were offered a broad range of

opportunities to enhance their spiritual development. Though this was not explored in detail, what was glaring from the narratives of the teachers was the commitment of the institution in grooming girls to observe the rules laid out for females by Islam. Even if teachers did not take on these roles, the students were very interested about how they could succeed in life — particularly in terms of building a successful career — without compromising their faith. In this respect, the female teachers played a significant role in the spiritual development of students. However, spiritual development in terms of theological development was hardly discussed in the narratives, as mentioned earlier. It is surprising that although the school is a faith school, little emphasis is placed on enhancing the faith of students theologically. This result did not match my expectation, as my understanding of a faith school is that it is meant to build on the faith of students by enriching their spirits and minds and not just concentrating on their moral development.

Another significant finding was the high number of women teachers in Maths and Sciences. This case study contradicts UNESCO's (2006) claim that a majority of women concentrate on 'soft' subjects and very few take on Maths and Science. In fact a majority of the teachers interviewed were Maths teachers. They did not perform averagely, but rather perform excellently, to the extent of making the Maths Department the best in the whole school with the registration of many A\*s in the GCSE. Indeed, their success was not just internal, but their performance earned them a title in the whole borough. The findings from the study suggest that time may lead to significant changes in women's representation in Maths and Sciences, particularly as the female students appear to be performing well in these

subject areas. Thus, the traditional thinking that associates these subjects to male teachers would gradually be eroded.

In this section I have demonstrated that female teachers play an invaluable role in contributing to children's academic success and also in contributing to their moral and spiritual development. I have argued that the presence of women in senior positions in school is vital for promoting girls' success and their future careers. These points support my research theme in revealing the significant role of female teachers in schools; a role that despite its importance lacks recognition, as many female teachers continue to encounter numerous challenges from both private and work life that necessitates attention.

### **Position of Female Teachers**

The findings from the study lend strong support to the assertion that women outnumber men in teaching — particularly within the lower levels of education — but are underrepresented in leadership and management positions (Celikten, 2010; Sari, 2012). The study revealed that women make up 95 per cent of the teaching staff and 65 per cent of the leadership team. Looking at the figures one could be tempted to think that equality is respected because women make up more than half of the management team. However, note should be taken that almost all teachers are females; just 5 per cent are male. Therefore, the percentage of women in management would have been expected to be higher than the present figures. Also, given that the school is female should warrant more representation of women at leadership levels. The findings, however, revealed otherwise.

The principal of the school is male and all eight foundation governors were exclusively male. Even though religion was found not to prevent women from occupying leadership roles, it is still not clear why all lead positions were occupied by males. Literature review indicated that according to Islamic principles *“those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity”* (Quran cited by Ammah, 2013; pp. 231). Following this assertion, there are doubts if this could justify why all senior lead roles were occupied by men. Masculinity thus appears as a dominant model for leadership within Islam. Ammah (2013) argues that there have been some changes within Islam as women are currently given opportunities to lead. Although women were given such opportunities, Ammah (2013) cautions that this was only partially as women were not allowed to exercise full authority. The result from the present study is in conformity with Ammah’s viewpoint, as women were located within management positions but none were represented in senior lead roles. This suggests that Islam continues to associate leadership to masculinity. It is worth mentioning that the association of leadership to males is a general phenomenon and not specific to the Islamic society only. A number of studies indicate that the belief that men make more successful leaders than women is still widely held by society, despite legal changes and reforms that have taken place within organisations (Acker, 2009; Litmanovitz, 2011; Smith, 2011; Grant Thornton International Business Report; IBR 2013).

Despite the findings indicating that men occupy almost all lead positions within the school, the narratives from the teachers did not suggest that females were marginalised within the institution. There were no indications that males were treated differently from females. School authorities maintain that at recruitment applicants were selected based on their



qualification and professional experience. In addition, even though it is a Muslim school and exclusively for girls, the data shows that teachers of both genders were accorded equal opportunities. Nonetheless, there were indications that there is a tendency to always lean towards females for the sake of the role model capacity for girls. From the findings there is no doubt that females are likely favoured over males as over 95 per cent of the teaching staff are females. Another justification could be associated to the fact that because it is a female-only school, it may tend to attract mostly female staff. However, as noted earlier, in terms of senior leadership there were indications of disparity between males and females. The equal opportunity stand claimed by the teachers and the school authorities is questionable given the disparity that exists between male and females in these positions. Despite these disparities, all discussions points to the claim that issues of gender inequality were not a matter of concern. The predominance of women in teaching and their representation in management positions possibly explain these claims. In addition, this may justify why gender equality policies regarding staff were barely mentioned in the school's gender equality opportunities policies. Only a few statements were made in the document confirming gender inequality within the profession. The statements were merely declaration of intent with the absence of concrete action plans to ensure that the policies were actually implemented. There were no strategies on how to monitor and evaluate the policies. The absence of policies protecting staff from discrimination could even lead to more gender disparity in the occupancy of leadership positions. An analysis of the discussions with a gender lens suggest that gender discrimination may not be necessarily overt and can be found in locations where it is generally regarded as gender responsive.

The findings from the study further confirm the assertion that family responsibilities acts as a barrier to women's career advancement. The narratives revealed that the challenges teachers encountered when trying to negotiate between career and domestic responsibilities is a difficult one. While some teachers took on part-time work others postponed career development until childcare responsibilities lessened. Teachers sacrificed career progression in order to meet the needs of their families. Female senior authorities equally described their struggles regarding the allocation of sufficient time to achieve success in their careers. What becomes significant of the experiences of females in leadership or senior positions is that this has not been achieved without a major personal cost.

While familial responsibilities was a reoccurring theme throughout the data, many of the respondents specifically mentioned child care responsibilities as a major impediment to women taking on extra responsibilities within management and leadership. The fact that women viewed child care responsibilities as placed on them by God further challenges the situation for Muslim women. It would be of no doubt that many who take on extra responsibilities feel the guilt of not performing their God-given responsibilities. To avoid the situation where they will be compelled to compromise their faith, there were indications of reluctance towards promoted posts. This is similar to research which maintains that some women are apprehensive of the consequences they may face as a result of entering a domain that is regarded as a male-preserve. The women are terrified of losing their femininity, including the disapproval and social rejection from society. In order to avoid these consequences, such women will be unwilling to seek lead roles (Gobena, 2014).

Essentially, these accounts show that familial responsibilities constitute a huge challenge to women's career development. This suggests that the position of men and women in a job role is a reflection of their positioning in the home. Even though the teachers admitted that the different positioning of men and women within the home impacted on their careers they still held the conservative views of their gender role. The school authorities equally identified family responsibilities as one of the major barriers to women's development as reflected in the principal's statement; that running a household and caring for children were *"a bigger barrier than faith and gender"*. It was surprising to find that though admitting to this, no action was taken by the school to tackle this concern; particularly as it came across as a major impediment to women's career development.

The results from the findings tie with those of other studies in identifying culture as one of the barriers to women's advancement (Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2005; Allana, Asad and Sherali, 2010; Mestry and Schidt, 2012). There was evidence of some female students trapped in a web of cultural values preventing them from furthering their education. This was common with females from more traditional Muslim backgrounds which forbid females from associating with males. The teachers however declared that as individual they have not faced any cultural impediment to their careers. This is contrary to literature which holds that women from Muslim ethnic origin undergo challenges in their professional lives as a result of cultural rules that prohibit women from interacting in public. A possible justification for the claim pointing to the non-ramification of culture on teacher's careers could be linked to their location within a Western society where religious rules are probably a bit relaxed, permitting females to work and progress in their careers.

A number of studies conducted in various counties maintain that a majority of female teachers were reluctant to seek promotion (Chabaya *et al.* 2009; Smith, 2011; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013; Gobena, 2014). The results from the present study clearly contrast with this assertion as almost all teachers in the study had a desire to progress in their careers. Also, with the exception of two teachers whose reluctance was due to family situation and the desire to be close with the learners, teachers were willing to take on lead roles if these concerns were dealt with. Teachers in this case study used their own initiative to progress in their careers. In addition to classroom teaching, all teachers in the study were engaged in extra responsibilities. Therefore, the career progression of the teachers can be seen as planned because they took charge of their professional pathway. This is contrary to prevailing literature which holds that a majority of female teacher's career paths are often unplanned, because they wait to be encouraged and supported by their colleagues and senior members of staff who have identified their potentials to lead (Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). The reverse rather holds true for this case study as only one teacher's career route was unplanned. It is worth noting that women's choice to hold back their career is not because they were concern with the challenges that accompany leadership positions, but due to the challenges that they face in balancing both career and home responsibilities and also the desire to follow their passion in teaching. This is contrary to some literature which asserts that the underrepresentation of women in leadership is a result of their lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure (Chabaya *et al.* 2009; Steyn and Parsaloi, 2014).

In this section I have demonstrated that women occupy subordinate positions in lead roles compared to their male counterparts. I have argued that the association of leadership to masculinity by Islam is the main contributor to female teachers underrepresentation in leadership positions. I have also argued that this underrepresentation is not mainly as a result of their personal attributes, as generally claimed, but is a consequence of the challenges women face from the domestic sphere as a result of their gender. These results support my research argument because the Islamic religion does not support women to attain higher management and leadership positions. Because of religious teachings and practices, women are obliged to maintain a low profile, denying themselves the right to progress in life for fear of being labelled as deviant.

### **Measures to Promote Female Leadership**

Aligned to the analyses presented by other studies (Aladejana and Aladejana, 2005; Inandi, 2009; Potek, 2009; Mestry and Schmidt, 2012; Rhoads and Gu, 2012; Ammah, 2013; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013), the teachers in the present case study cited familial responsibilities as a major barrier to women's leadership. The principal and assistant principle equally acknowledged the barriers created by the burden of family responsibilities. It was however surprising that despite the gravity of the concern no action was taken by the institution to ameliorate the situation. Resources were rather channelled to areas in which the teachers did not regard as needing major assistance. The teachers narrated various experiences that echoed the necessity for the institutionalisation of mechanisms of support with family responsibilities. Previous research establishes the necessity for educational administrators in creating conducive working environment for teachers to enable them achieve both career

goals and respond to their familial needs. Cinamon and Rich (2005) caution that failure to provide such support may result in teacher burnout, which would eventually lead to teachers' low productivity reflected in their inability to produce the expected results. They also caution, at a more extreme level, that this may lead to a situation where teachers may consider leaving the profession (Cinamon and Rich, 2005). The latter consequences would be devastating given that the teaching profession in England is already suffering from a low supply of teachers. A recent report by The Guardian establishes that 4 in 10 new teachers quit within a year of teaching because of the stress and exhaustion they experience; labelling the teaching profession as "*incompatible with normal life*" (2015). Though this was a general observation, women with additional family responsibilities are more likely prone to leave the profession. In order to prevent continuous loss of teachers and to make the teaching profession more attractive, action is required of the government in creating a suitable working environment allowing teachers to balance both career and social lives.

Closely related to family responsibilities is the concern of teachers' work load. Teacher's 'work load alarm' is not a new phenomenon, but is something that has been identified for a long time as one of the reasons for teachers' decision to leave the teaching profession. According to the studies of Smitters and Robinson (2003) and Woodward (2003), work load was the main reason for teacher's decision to quit the profession. The teachers expressed concerns of the government's overemphasis on supervision and report writing that led to stress and burnout, which interfered with their efficiency. Recent reports continue to point to government initiatives that increase work load for teachers. Teachers complain of exhaustion and stress; as the profession is said to be "*monitored to within an inch of its life*"

(The Guardian, March 2015). The teachers requested that the government should render more value to teachers and to give autonomy to teachers over how they teach. The teacher's narratives in the present case study highlighted various ways in which they felt that teachers could be aided with reduction of work load. Despite the gravity of the issue, and its acknowledgement by school authorities, there were no indications of strategies or intention to institute any measures towards reducing work load. Nevertheless, the authorities' insensitivity explained that the monitoring, supervision and report writing are all government policies which they are compelled to observe. Therefore, this necessitates action by the government to reassess its policies in order to increase teacher's productivity and also to save its teaching force from crumbling.

An interesting finding recorded with the present case study was the robustness of the training and mentoring offered to teachers. Research maintains that mentoring plays a pivotal role in the careers of individuals aspiring for management and leadership positions. Mentors are instrumental in providing career guidance and support by suggesting strategies for career development and making contacts and recommendations that will open many doors for the mentees (Litmanvitz, 2011; Ward and Eddy, 2013). Though the internal training and mentoring facilitated by the school proved valuable for teachers, this was only available to a few who were deemed as possessing leadership potentials. It was not clear from the findings why this was available only to a select few, but making it accessible to all would encourage other teachers who may not have had an initial interest in career development. This suggests that mentoring programmes should be formerly implemented in educational institutions.

The significance of encouragement and support was highlighted as crucial for teachers' career development. The teachers' narratives on the support received through internal mentoring reveal their extreme satisfaction with their career pathway. The head teacher and assistant head were important sources of providing encouragement and support to teachers whom they identified as having the potential and capacity to lead. For a few who did not have an initial plan to take on a leadership role, their involvement in the training prompted them to have an alternative view of themselves and instilled confidence in their ability to lead.

Despite the significance of mentorship to teachers' career development, literature indicates that there is a general lack of mentors, particularly female mentors within a leadership capacity. This is usually associated to the fact that male mentors prefer to work with male mentees since mentoring usually takes place in informal settings. Also, mentors want to avoid the implication of sexual harassment that is often attached to the relationship (Sherman, 2000). Other studies have equally associated the shortage of female mentors to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles (Dicketts, 2014). Against this background, it is eminent that there would be more scarcity of female mentors for Muslim female teachers. The fact that Islam places strict restrictions on females from associating with men makes the situation difficult. This would be challenging, not only for teachers from Islamic groups who adhere to strong traditional values, but also for those in more relaxed less traditional groups since most of the mentoring takes place in informal and closed settings on a one-to-one basis. This suggests that more women should be supported and offered opportunities for leadership roles to increase the number of female mentors.



In this chapter I have demonstrated that Islamic female teachers do not receive support from the institution that could champion their advancement to leadership or higher management positions. This is despite the fact that Islam prescribes a dress code for females; restricts females from associating with males; and defines women's position in society as motherhood — all of which impinges on female teachers' ability to progress in their careers. This supports my research theme that female faith teachers do not receive the same support as males do in pursuing higher management and leadership positions. Faith institutions need to recognise women as potential faith leaders because of the invaluable role of female teachers to children's development both academically, socially and religiously. Female teachers of Islamic faith deserve support, especially from the religious body, to progress in their careers since a majority of the barriers they encounter have their roots from a religious perspective.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter is to outline the final conclusion of the study. The structure of the chapter is comprised of the following sections: synthesis of case studies; general conclusion; implication for practice; limitation and recommendation for further research.

#### **6.1 SYNTHESIS OF CASE STUDIES: DISCUSSION**

In recent years discussions on women and their role to development has become centre stage. In education, the role of female teachers has been widely studied, particularly their role in promoting girls' education (Burn, 2001; Kirk, 2004; UNESCO, 2006). Despite female teachers contribution to the education of learners, there are consistent reports that very few women are found within the management and leadership capacity of most educational institutions (OECD, 1998; Cortina, 2006; Bolton and Muzio, 2008). Even though many studies have reported the importance of the role of female educators, there has been little research reported on the roles of female teachers in faith schools, and on the effectiveness of strategies to promote female leadership in education. The aim of this study is to explore the roles carried out by women in various faiths, and in particular the roles they may take in religious education and faith schools, and to explore strategies implemented by institutions to recognise women as faith educators and potential faith leaders. Within this framework, the nub of this section is to discuss the findings from one-to-one interviews with both Anglican and Muslim school female educators and those at management and leadership levels. This section also focuses on an exploration of associated documentation i.e. Ofsted

reports, school mission statement, and school policy documents. Early interview data collated from respondents confirms the research contained within the literature review. Both studies revealed that female teachers play an incredible role in promoting childrens' academic achievements, their social interaction and most importantly, their religious wellbeing. Also, female respondents from the Anglican school generally did not have career aspirations beyond their current role, which supports reports from previous findings that women are reluctant to seek for career advancement. There was also evidence of religion hindering teachers from career advancement, thus confirming the claim that religion impedes women's career choices. Similarly, both case studies reveal the non-existence of policies and measures instituted that specifically target women to promote leadership development. Another area in support of the research that was generated within the literature review was the confirmation that within the Muslim school men predominate in senior leadership positions. However, some of the findings from the case studies did not support previous studies that form the basis of the literature review. For example, literature indicates that the majority of those in management positions within primary schools are males; the Anglican case study reveals that the head teacher and the deputy are both female. Furthermore, contrary to literature review, which maintains that females lack aspiration to leadership positions, the Muslim case study reveals that a majority of the teachers were positively inclined to seek promotion.

My research sought to explore the extent to which women are supported in pursuing leadership or higher management positions, specifically in relation to the role, position and experiences of female faith teachers in faith schools.

In answering this investigation, I have categorised my findings under the following questions:

- To what extent do religious teachings influence women's decision to occupy leadership positions?
- To what extent are schools masculinised in terms of management and leadership?
- How effective is the role of the female teachers within the schools?
- How effective are the strategies employed by institutions to promote female leadership in schools?

Each of the research questions will be used as a sub-heading followed by the discussion of findings in order to answer the research question. At the end of each section, the responses to the research question will be summarised.

### **6.1.1 To What Extent Do Religious Teachings Influence Women's Decision to Occupy Leadership Positions?**

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate religious teachings and how these influence the positions women occupy in their professional pathway. The responses from the teachers of both case studies reveal that as individuals, religion did not act as a barrier towards their career development. This is contrary to what literature suggested. Grundy, (2013) is of the opinion that within most religions women are precluded from leadership positions as they are considered to be inferior to men. A further argument supporting Grundy's view is that some religious teachings impact negatively on women's abilities to assume positions of authority and responsibility (Miller, 2013). A number of scriptural

teachings have been identified that promote male headship. This includes scriptures such as; *“I do not permit a woman to teach nor to have authority over a man but to be in silence”* (1 Tim. 2.12) ; *“Let your woman keep silent in the Church”* (1 Cor. 14.34); *“men are the protectors and maintainers of women”* (Surah an-Nisa 4:34); *“those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity”* (Hadith — a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad). Miller (2013) is of the opinion that these narratives are likely to encourage women’s silence, especially in the area of power relations. However, such narratives have not been translated into the professional lives of female teachers within both case studies. The findings from both case studies indicate that religion has not negatively impacted upon the career development of female teachers. The teachers expressed the view that teachings in their faith have not held back any of their aspirations in life, or that the role of women in society has changed. Rather, the teachers found their religion to be empowering towards female advancement. This was especially evident with the Muslim female teachers who used examples from the Quran to justify their assertion. Certainly, the teachers believe that barriers to becoming leaders within education do not exist. Some doubts can be raised against their claim considering that the analysis of data from the case studies proved otherwise (to be discussed later).

Currently, changes can be identified in most religious organisations as women have begun challenging some of the teachings of their faith. Women can be seen breaking barriers as the number of women in leadership roles is growing. For example, the Church of England, on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014, gave its final approval for women to be ordained as Bishops. In the same light, the Catholic Church is reported to have offered opportunities to women to serve as

parish leaders, finance directors, director of Catholic charities, diocesan chancellors, and directors of religious education; although with the exception of women being ordained priest. In addition, Pope Francis recently declared that “women were more important than bishops and priests, just as Mary was more important than the disciples” (cited in Cones, 2013, p.8). All of these endeavours go to support claims that the position of women in the church is changing in their favour. It is quite likely that just as a revolution is taking place in the religious bodies, so it is taking a turn in the career lives of women.

In view of the above changes, I will agree with the opinion of female respondents from the case studies that religious teachings against female leadership for the society of today do not influence their decisions to occupy positions of authority, particularly considering that many women are taking the opportunities now available to advance their careers. Women can be seen getting more involved in management and to a certain extent leadership positions, as indicated above. However, it is worth pointing out that there are situations where religious teachings act as a barrier to women taking up positions of authority (to be discussed later).

Nonetheless, the occupancy of leadership positions by females in both education and religious organisation was limited to teachers from the Anglican case study. Teachers from the Muslim case study could be found in leadership positions within the school, but when attention is turned to leadership within their religious faith, the findings revealed that women hardly get involved in prayers at the Mosque since praying is regarded as a male-

preserve; coupled with the fact that Islam restricts the association of females with males in public. Thus, the findings suggest that women within Islam have been empowered in their career lives, but their religious empowerment is still limiting.

One of the objectives of the study was to investigate if a religious factor is considered at recruitment. From the interviews it was found that one's faith actually plays a crucial role at recruitment, considering that both institutions are faith schools; though this was less of an issue for recruitment for classroom teachers. School authorities from both case studies clearly stated that there were two positions that cannot be compromised; that of the head teacher and the deputy head teacher. For the Muslim school, in addition to the head and deputy head, the religious education teacher must also be practising the faith. This is a concern for Muslim female applicants aspiring for a leadership role with a faith institution. The fact that they may not be of the particular faith in question automatically disqualifies them for the position. This implies that for women practising a religion in which the particular faith does not operate a school, or for women who do not have any religion, the idea of becoming part of the leadership team of an institution is limited only to non-faith institutions. It is nevertheless interesting that female teachers were of the strong opinion that their faith does not hold them back from advancing in their careers.

The authorities from both case studies clearly stated that the head teacher, the deputy head, and chair of governors must be practising their faiths. The rule that the head, and sometimes the deputy must be practising a particular faith is a clear example of religion

acting as a barrier to career advancement. This is understandable for the head teacher because she/he has to lead by adhering to the ethos and values of the faith school. This is a task that is for example, difficult for an atheist to implement. Furthermore, within the Anglican case study, concerns were raised about the challenges encountered by applicants aspiring for senior roles. The applicants were required to provide church references, but most found it difficult to meet this religious requirement as they neither belonged to the faith, or they do but are not practising or active within the religious community. The findings revealed that this condition hindered many aspiring for lead roles.

The above examples indicate an aspect of discrimination against teachers where a glass ceiling is placed on their promotion based on a religious requirement. It is true that the same conditions of belonging and practising a particular faith apply to men as well. However, it is clear that women face a double predicament in their pathway to leadership; the reason being that they have to put up with obstacles to leadership positions as a result of their gender (as will be discussed later in this chapter) and also as a result of their faith status. Though the above examples clearly indicate discrimination from a religious perspective, it was interesting to find that the government's equality policy is in support of the sine-qua-non that roles in aided schools; particularly those that provide spiritual leadership, which claim that a certain religious denomination is a tangible requirement for the role. In line with this standpoint, faith schools decision to recruit individuals from their denomination for lead roles and those in spiritual guidance roles (RE teachers) can be considered as non-discriminatory in legal terms. However, the conditions of providing



references stating the activeness of applicants within their religious community still presents a huge challenge towards securing a lead role within the Church of England school.

To sum up the discussion on the question; “to what extent do religious teachings influence women’s decision to occupy leadership positions”; the narratives from the teachers in both case studies indicate clearly that religious teachings do not influence women’s decisions to undertake leadership positions and career development in general. It is worth noting that even though teachers maintain this position, a critical analysis of the data from both case studies reveals evidence of barriers in term of expectations of those in leadership positions to be practising a required faith, and for the Anglican school the requirement of providing church references. Both these requirements influence women’s decisions to apply for or aspire to leadership positions.

### **6.1.2 To What Extent are Schools Masculinised in Terms of Management and Leadership?**

One of the purposes of this study was to determine the position of female teachers in school. Research from a number of studies has demonstrated that women outnumber men in primary teaching, yet women achieve disproportionate power status, with men continually in positions of authority (OECD, 1998; Coleman, 2003; Cortina, 2006; Bolton and Muzio, 2008). For example, Thornton and Bricheno, (2000) reveal that close to 80 per cent of primary teachers in England are female but then up to 50 per cent of those in head teacher positions are male. The findings from both case studies did not confirm the claims that women are underrepresented in leadership positions. Both schools are predominantly

female in terms of staffing, and the management of the schools are equally female. A majority of studies are of the opinion that women are underrepresented in management regimes at all levels of the educational system with men occupying the most senior management and leadership positions (Kirk, 1994; Eagly and Carli, 2007; Acker, 2009; UNESCO and IIEP, 2011). These views are debatable. It can be observed from the Anglican case study that this assertion no longer holds true for primary schools. However, to a certain extent it is evident among women in secondary education, as the Muslim case study revealed that women were a majority within the management team but that all lead roles were occupied by males. This suggests that an increasing disparity in lead roles is recorded as one moves higher up the education level. Recent reports from UNESCO (2011), WomenCount (2013), and the British Council (2014) confirms that women are in a minority at the top of the teaching hierarchy in universities. WomenCount reported in 2013 that only 17% of vice-chancellors were women and this dropped further to 14% in 2014, according to a British Council report. Nonetheless, other studies have indicated that the number of female teachers in position of responsibility is on the increase. This had been noticed way back in the late 90s. A UK parliamentary publication (1998) reveals that women outnumbered men amid new appointments in the primary sector. Similarly, a recent study by the General Teaching Council for Wales affirm that the number of female head teachers has been on an increase for three consecutive years and that women outnumber men in headships positions (GTCW, 2014). It is important to point out that based on these views, even though a rise in the number of women in leadership position has increased, men still dominate. This confirms Holm's (1994) assertion; that though women may occupy leadership roles, this is often subordinate the roles of men. Dicketts (2014) suggest that in the UK women are on a rise with respect to leadership positions, but that only 17 per cent

of boards are chaired by a woman; meanwhile men have two times more representation than women on governing boards. This was confirmed with the Muslim case study, where all eight foundation governors were exclusively males, meanwhile women were mostly represented as non-foundation/representative governors; three females and two males.

Although there are other reasons responsible for women's underrepresentation in management and leadership, the strongest argument from the literature review is that women experience under-representation because of barriers encountered at recruitment and promotion because of their gender (Crawford, Kydd, and Riches, 1997; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). However, results from both case studies suggest otherwise. Findings from the case studies reveal that candidates applying for positions within the school are given equal opportunities and the offer is made based on the best candidate for the position, including academic and professional background and to a lesser extent their religious commitment. The narratives from the authorities of both case studies claimed that both schools are gender sensitive in recruitment of staff to positions of management. However, one is left to wonder that if the claim of equal opportunities is true, why are both schools entirely female in terms of staffing and to some extent in school management? The school authorities of both case studies clearly defended that equal opportunities are accorded to both genders. The predominance of women in teaching and management was commonly used to support the claim that gender equality is respected within the institutions. In analysing policy documents from both institutions, gender equality with regards to staff was barely mentioned. Most of the information on gender equality and equality as a whole mainly concentrated on the learners. Even though the authorities claim that issues of gender equality was not a concern within the institutions, the findings from both case studies reveal

the prevalence of gender inequality was apparent. The Anglican case study revealed the presence of inequalities by gender, age, and religion; and the Muslim case study equally revealed the predominance of males in most lead roles. This demonstrates the existence of gender inequality within the schools. Despite this, the school authorities strongly felt that equal opportunity policies should be gender-blind, including any other policy, and that strategies for career advancement should not specifically target women. They rather felt the need to encourage more men into the profession in order to increase the number of male role models for boys. These views were commonly shared among the school authorities and some teachers. The predominance of women in the profession was used to justify this assumption. However, as discussed, the predominance of women in schools does not necessarily translate into their occupancy of leadership positions, and even if they do, the most senior positions are still held by men.

As noted above, there were other reasons explaining the reason for women's underrepresentation in senior leadership roles. The argument postulated points to the claim that women are presumed to be unsuited for management or leadership positions (Inandi, 2009; Coleman, 2010) and that they are unwilling to take on positions of leadership in schools (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013). These views are, however, debatable. Some of the teachers in both case studies were quite enthusiastic about being in position of leadership, particularly those from the Muslim case study, where almost all teachers expressed their desire to seek promotion. However, some teachers did express their unwillingness to being at the 'top' and did not have career aspirations beyond their current role. Two important explanations were presented in defence of their unwillingness to move up to management and leadership positions. Firstly, their responsibility for young children

and family; and secondly, the vast amount of paper work associated with management positions. This supports and adds to the findings of previous research. It supports claims that a majority of women with young children put aside aspirations to a career in management (Inandi, 2009; Potek, 2009; Ward and Eddy, 2013), while others avoid management positions due to increased paper work (UNESCO, 2011; Conley and Jenkins, 2011; Woodward, 2013). The findings reveal that because of workload, most women, especially those with young children, are less likely to aspire towards management positions. The United Nations Educational Social and Scientific Organisation (2011) reported that due to women's additional roles as wives and mothers, a majority of female teachers are unlikely to pursue career advancement. Even though a majority of studies have investigated how gender (in terms of being male or female) influences leadership in education (Corell, 2001; Ridgeway, 2001; Coleman, 2003; Inandi, 2009; Islahia and Nasreenb, 2011; Rhoads and Gu), little attention has been paid to work load affecting women's ability to take on leadership positions. Most of the researchers generally look at workload and how it affects teacher's job satisfaction and work output (MacMillan, 2001; Chohan and Nazeem, 2011). Research also notes that women with young children often take on part time teaching with lower pay (Moore and Gobi, 1995; Cinamon and Rich, 2005; Palmer *et al*, 2012; Okonkwo, 2013). It is clear that limited knowledge is available in the area of women's workload affecting their leadership development. Likewise, less attention has been paid to workload affecting women's career advancement, particularly in the area of leadership from the perspectives of faith schools. This suggests a follow-up study in this area, particularly as results from the present case studies strongly indicated workload as one of the major obstacles to leadership development. This was common with the Muslim case study since Islam customarily defines a woman's principal role as 'motherhood' and

subsequently the care and nurture of children are seen as the responsibility of women. Because this is regarded as a God-given responsibility, most women feel compelled to take charge of childcare responsibilities since they are apprehensive of compromising their faith. It is worth noting that though literature review holds that women lack the aspiration to seek leadership roles, there were indications of willingness to progress in their career if their concerns were dealt with i.e. if they could get support with childcare and if workloads were reduced. Therefore, based on this evidence, it would be erroneous to claim that women totally lack aspiration; but rather, it can be said they are reluctant or have less aspiration to take on lead roles.

Referring to this study's justification for fewer numbers of women in leadership positions, two possible explanations can be identified. Firstly, some women are reluctant to seek career advancement because they are apprehensive of the responsibilities that accompany promotion (workload). Secondly, women's responsibility towards childcare and other family responsibilities prevents them from undertaking leadership positions. Contrary to what most previous research stipulates, one observation to be made from the case studies is that structural barriers do not prevent women from achieving career advancement and reaching the 'top'. A majority of the female teachers maintained a discourse of individualisation; they were quick to point out personal challenges such as childcare responsibilities and work load as factors hindering their career advancement. The discussion so far has identified issues of gender and also touched on institutional factors such as organisational norms and values that hinder women's career advancement. The Muslim case study revealed that the association of management with leadership was inherent within the institution. However, very limited references were made to gender or institutional factors.

The question to ask here is why the result of the present case studies are different from a majority of previous research undertaken on the topic, especially with the assertion that women are underrepresented in leadership positions within the educational sector? One explanation could be that most of the studies are dated back in the 90's and early 2000. There has been much emphasis in recent years by governments and organisation advocating for gender equality. Recent years have witnessed increasing attention to issues pertaining to women and girls from powerful institutions such as the World Bank; from Private foundations such as Nike Foundation and the Gates Foundation, from International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), WomenKind Worldwide, and from donor agencies such as Spain, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands (Esplen, 2013). It is very likely that the responses from these bodies have had a positive impact on most organisations and institution in offering women the opportunities to operate at management and leadership levels. Another explanation for the increasing number of females in management positions within primary education can be attributed to an increase in female education, with many more girls attaining higher education. According to a recent World Bank (2013) report, women have made considerable progress over the last four decades and currently outnumber men studying in universities. Accordingly, increase in women's labour force participation in Colombia has been attributed to their attainment of higher education (IBR 2013). Consequently, it can be suggested that an increase in the number of women attaining higher education has resulted in a corresponding growth in the number of women in senior leadership roles. Nevertheless, it can be observed that increase in the number of women in senior leadership roles will only be feasible when gender is mainstreamed into organisational programmes, policies and strategies. Failure to mainstream gender into interventions will continue to promote gender-power relationships that lead to systemic

gender based discrimination, with power continually being male-dominated. Benschop and Verloo (2006) suggest that gender mainstreaming will offer an opportunity to tackle gender bias and avoid conditions that promote male hegemony in policy making. The UN (2002) further suggests that gender mainstreaming has to be effected in every capacity; from a personal to the institutional and national levels. This includes changes in relationships and attitudes, changes in institutional frameworks and changes in political structures concerned with decision making.

To sum up this discussion, findings of the data in response to the research question; ‘To what extent are schools masculinised in terms of management and leadership?’ reveal that to a greater extent, at present, women are a majority in the management of primary schools. This is supported with results from recent studies (Koch, 2007; World Bank, 2013) confirming that the gender gap in leadership within primary schools is closing with many more women seen as educational leaders. The findings further reveal that a majority of the management staff are females but men occupy the most senior leadership positions. Therefore, the results from both case studies indicate that gender disparity in lead roles increases as one moves up the educational levels.

### **6.1.3 How Effective is the Role of the Female Teachers within the Schools?**

One of the objectives of this study was to explore the roles of female teachers in faith schools. Results from the case studies reveal the roles of female teachers as role models, facilitators, as regulators of social relations, planners and information providers. This indicates a contribution to the learning enhancement of pupils both academically and



socially. This supports and adds to the findings of Vermunt and Verschaffel, (2000); Wyse (2002); Shein and Chiou (2011); and Zlatkovic et al (2012) who showed similar results for studies on the role of teachers. Current Ofsted reports for both cases studies indicate that the schools are doing well academically, with the status of the Church of England school rated as 'good' and the Muslim school recorded as 'outstanding'. The endorsement of children's progress was not only recorded by Ofsted and acknowledgment by teachers and school authorities, but testimonies on children's progress were confirmed by parents, with many extremely contented with their children's success. Their successes were principally associated to the excellent teaching combined with an outstanding curriculum put in place by both institutions. When asked about the teacher's greatest achievement, those from the Muslim case study felt that it is their contribution towards the attainment of an outstanding status that was extremely significant. Therefore, by virtue that a great majority of the teaching staff are females, it can be claimed that women play a significant role to the progress of learners.

Another common role of the teacher's shared by both case studies was the teacher's role as role models for the learners. According to the social learning theory, human behaviour is passed on mainly through role modelling (Shein and Chiou, 2011). The significance of the teacher's role as a role model is significant in contributing to children's learning by depicting a good image, living by example, being enthusiastic about learning and being honest and sincere (Majzub and Rais, 2010). The teachers from both case studies exercised most of these attributes and were a great source of motivation for the learners. This was of particular importance for the girls at the Muslim school. The girls were able to relate with

the female staff, especially those in lead positions, for inspiration, support and encouragements. The female pupils also observed how to manage the restrictions placed on females by Islam in order to have a successful career without compromising their faith. Female teachers were of great importance as learners had the opportunity to discuss and therefore ease some of their concerns and fears. In addition, the presence of women in leadership positions serves as a great inspiration for girls to have a desire of occupying high ranking positions in their career. Therefore, female teachers are extremely instrumental in contributing to children's learning and also in their social and career lives.

Furthermore, the findings from both case studies demonstrated the development of learners in their totality; covering their educational, social, and religious development. The narratives from the female teachers indicated that education has a wider purpose in contributing to the entire development of learners. The teachers were very influential in building a positive behaviour in learners. For example, in relation to the Muslim case study, Ofsted (2013) reported that in addition to the excellent academic performance by students, their behaviour was equally excellent. Ofsted further reported that one of the distinctive features of the Muslim school was its success in combining the academic progress of students with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Likewise, an Ofsted inspection report (2013) for the Anglican school communicated that pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was a strength of the school. Observing that both case studies are faith schools, it would be assumed that teachers are very instrumental in the faith development of children. The results confirm the aim of the study; that female teachers play an essential role in the academic and also religious lives of children. In

reviewing the importance of faith schools, research maintains that faith schools would not be required if their only concern was to basically train and nurture the minds of learners (Burtonwood, 2003; Clements, 2010; Judge, 2002). Thus, the integration of spirituality into every facet of education has been described as a 'balancing act', believing that faith based institutions — in addition to contributing to children's academic success — should equally contain themselves with integrating faith into the school's curriculum; particularly in order to offer spiritual guidance to learners (Livingston and Jun, 2011). This was observed with the Muslim case study with reports stating that students were provided with an excellent curriculum that is not limited only to academic needs but also provides them with widespread variety of enrichment opportunities. This assists in building a cohesive society where students are aware of their responsibilities, both in school and in the community (Ofsted, 2013). Similarly, the Anglican case study — in a document outlining the 'School Values' — highlighted the need to respect and be appreciative of different faiths. This was achieved by celebrating others faith and encouraging people of other faiths to share beliefs. This was accomplished by worshipping together, which enhance children's understanding of other faiths. The findings from both studies tie with the research of King (2010) and Ofsted (2007) in confirming that faith schools promote student's moral values, inculcates a religious character in students, and also upholds community cohesion and diversity ideals.

The findings from both case studies revealed the extreme passion teachers have for their profession that contributed to learner's success. A number of studies reveal that female teachers are perceived by students to be more effective than male teachers (Lacey et al, 1998; Kuh et al, 2004; NSSE, 2005). Similarly, the Department for Education (DFE) (2011),

reports that schools with higher proportions of male teachers registered poorer behaviours. Other studies argue that gendered influence of teachers might be related to differences in teaching styles (Indira, 1997; Jayaramanna, 2001; Majzub and Rais, 2010) and other demographic factors such as training (trained/untrained) and marital status (married/unmarried) (Sing and Yadagiri, 2000; Kulkarni, 2000; Islahi, 2011). However, it was concluded that effective teachers are those who are passionate and dedicated to their profession and love teaching. Most of the elements that characterise effective teaching can be identified in the participating schools. The teachers were very passionate about their profession. Some of the teachers got very emotional when expressing how they have influence the lives of pupils — reflected in the positive feedback received from parents and also from pupils testimonies years after leaving school.

Though the results indicate that women are role models to girls, the results from the findings uncovered a new phenomenon; where students associate males as being the teachers and females being the teaching assistants. This confirms the assertion that men are stereotyped as being leaders rather than women. The predominance of women in teaching assistants jobs could be linked to the challenges women face in the domestic front, making it difficult for them to take on full-time teaching and not necessary a voluntary personal choice for casual work. Therefore, the design and implementation of policies and actions to support women in reducing the burden posed by family responsibilities will encourage more women to take on full-time teaching. This will be crucial in discarding stereotypical notions of associating women to teaching assistants positions.

To sum up this discussion in response to the research question; ‘How effective is the role of the female teachers within the schools?’, the results from the present study confirms the assertion of previous studies — that female teachers do indeed play a significant role in contributing to learners development. Since both case studies are faith schools, in addition to contributing to learner’s academic progress, the teachers were fundamental in contributing to the moral, social and personal development of pupils, particularly in contributing to the spiritual development of learners; this is crucial in upholding community cohesion and diversity in society.

#### **6.1.4 How Effective are the Strategies Employed by Institutions to Promote Female Leadership in Schools?**

It is argued that involving teachers in on-going professional development is instrumental for promoting teacher quality (Lieberman and Miller, 2001; Fantuzzo, Perlman and Minney, 2012). Similarly, Calabress (2001) argues that this is especially critical for the 70 per cent of the workforce who are females, particularly as this is considered important for enhancing the effectiveness of schools. Even though research has acknowledged the crucial significance of professional development, several studies have identified a number of constraints within the field of educational leadership that impedes women’s career advancement. This includes limited senior female role models, workload, resistance to women’s leadership, dominance of male patterns of leadership, lack of support from senior executives, lack of support from female peers, child care and family responsibilities (Ehrich, 1994; UNESCO, 2006; Eagly and Carli, 2007; UNESCO and IIEP, 2011; Rhoads and Gu, 2012; WomenCount, 2013). Of all these obstacles, only two of them — childcare/family

responsibilities and workload — were mentioned by the respondents of both case studies. This is surprising, as analyses of the data from the findings suggest the presence of dominant patterns of male leadership within the schools, particularly with the Muslim case study where the principal and all eight foundation governors were men. However, the findings reveal that the heads of both schools were very supportive in organising training for teachers. This is contrary to most of the above studies, which maintain that female teachers lack the support from those at the ‘top’ and also from other female colleagues. The training, however, was generic rather than being focused on leadership and did not specifically target women. It is worth mentioning that within the Muslim case study, in addition to theoretical training, teachers were provided with practical training and given extra responsibilities under the supervision of a senior member of staff. However, this was only limited to a few teachers who were ‘deemed’ by the male head teacher as demonstrating leadership potentials.

Some of the measures identified by previous studies to promote women’s career development in education include mentoring and role modelling (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, 2000; Parsaloi and Steyn, 2013), training (workshop, courses and seminars) (INEE 2010; VSO International (2011), networking (Enrich, 1994), and strategies to manage and reduce stress related to task overload (Palmer, Rose, Sanders and Randle, 2012; Smithers and Robinson, 2003; Cinamon and Rich, 2005). Of all these strategies, only one of them — training — was employed by both case studies, and to some extent mentoring for the Muslim case study. This confirms claims that limited strategies are set in place to promote female leadership in schools (Calabress, 2001). It was surprising to find that a majority of the

teachers in both case studies were quite satisfied with the career development opportunities offered, despite their limited availability. Only a few of the teachers' voices echoed the need for help. This suggests that a majority of teachers are unaware of the various career development opportunities for the profession. It is important to consider that just training on its own is insufficient in advancing the careers of teachers. The narratives from the teachers, including the analysis of the data from both case studies, revealed a good number of challenges faced by teachers. This suggests that even though a majority of the teachers expressed satisfaction with the opportunities available to them, there is a need to incorporate other measures, such as those identified by previous researchers. These include; formal mentoring/networking, supervision, leadership training, familial support mechanisms at both structural and family levels, stress management, changes to male-dominance culture, and changes in individual values and attitudes to enhance teachers' career development. If the schools put these additional measures in place, the initiatives will provide a holistic approach, where teachers' career development will be enhanced from various angles. Although training for teachers within both case studies was limited, it was available for all teachers regardless of gender. Thus, training offered in both schools can be described as gender neutral, or better still, gender blind.

There have been several calls by governments, donor agencies, and the UN and its agencies — UNESCO and UNIFEM — for gender equality in education for learners as well as teachers. UNESCO (2012), for example, stress that governments should review existing policies and also design new policies to close the gender gap apparent in employment and promotion of female and male teachers. They pointed out that in spite of the many initiatives to

mainstream gender into teacher training programs and policies, much less has been done to reduce disproportions in schools. In the process of reviewing gender equality policies for the case studies, policies related to gender equality of pupils were explicitly defined, but those related to teachers were hardly mentioned. Even though gender equality policies were limited for the participating case studies, teachers acknowledged that they were not disadvantaged in terms of professional opportunities; but rather claimed that many opportunities are open to women within the profession — justified by the predominance of women within teaching. However, the findings from the case studies reveal that despite women's predominance in the profession, they are still underrepresented in senior leadership roles. The UN (2002) has called for the implementation of complementary strategies to narrow the gender gap prominent within most organisations. These interventions specifically target women who often are the disadvantage group. However, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2010; pg. 54) has warned that any support directed to women's development should not be considered as either 'women's problems' or 'privileges for women', and that men should be included as equal partners as this will support women's experiences and position. There would certainly be a need for studies to continue to explore measures to be implemented for career development. Particular research is needed on those measures that will specifically target female teachers, but also include men. Such research would provide governments and policy makers an on-going assessment of how various educational programmes, policies and strategies impact on teacher's experience and career development. A report by UNESCO (2012) emphasises the need for policies relating to female employment to be informed by research since this will enable the governments to address the concerns of women. The present study is in line with this recommendation as it seeks to investigate measures that



have been set up to facilitate female leadership development. It is hoped that institutions and national educational structures will critically assess their educational programmes, project and policies with a gender lens and promote gender mainstreaming in all their undertakings.

To sum up the section on the research question; 'how effective are the strategies employed by institutions to promote female leadership in schools?', there are two points to be considered. The first point to emphasise is that no policies were instituted by either case study to specifically target female teachers. Secondly, training was the only major initiative put in place to promote career development. This is a real concern to the teachers, as failure to adequately provide measures to promote their careers will only result in widening the gender gap, with women remaining at the lower levels of the educational system.

In conclusion, recent decades have witnessed an increasing number of women in the teaching profession. However, very little research has been conducted on the role of female teacher in faith schools and on the effectiveness of strategies to promote women into leadership positions. The purpose of the present study is, therefore, to explore the roles carried out by women in various faiths, and in particular the roles they may take in religious education and faith schools. The study also explored strategies implemented by institutions to support women in pursuing leadership positions, or acknowledging them as faith educators and potential faith leaders. The findings from the case studies clearly suggest that female teachers are very significant in the academic, moral, social, and most importantly,

the faith development of learners. The outstanding role of teachers, including those of the leadership team, was supported by Ofsted inspection reports. However, there is need for the institutions to step-up the strategies to promote women's career development in order to offer more representation of women in lead roles. This could lead to equitable power relations and close the gender-gap in leadership; also promoting role model phenomena for young people.

The study also examined the role of religion in influencing the career paths of women. Previous studies suggest that religion hinders women's career choices. Teachers from both studies, however, stated that their religion did not negatively impact on their careers. Rather, they found their religion to be empowering. Even though teachers strongly held this view, an analysis of the data revealed that religion impedes teachers' career development. The findings from the Anglican case study revealed the challenges faced by teachers in meeting the religious requirement of providing church references that are essential for securing a leadership position within the school. Likewise, with the Muslim case study, the assigning of child care and family responsibilities to women by Islam presents a challenge for women desiring to undertake a leadership role, as they find it difficult to balance both career and domestic responsibilities. Also, the restrictions placed by Islam on women prescribing a dress code, and the prohibition of females from associating with males, all act as a glass ceiling preventing women from progressing in their careers.

Participating in both case studies maintain that gender equality is considered in every sphere of the institution. Yet this remains only an issue of 'lip service' pending unavailability of an existing document outlining gender equality policy guidelines. The case studies found that because a majority of the staff are female, the management of the schools assumed that gender equality has been effectively managed. The institutions, therefore, may be erroneous because it is making assumptions about the schools as being gender conscious; the findings, however, presented concerns that need to be tackled from a gender standpoint. Therefore, it would be plausible to agree with the United Nations that in order "to achieve gender parity in education in general, and teacher education in particular, countries need policies, programs, and projects that allow the creation of an enabling environment" (UNESCO-IICBA, 2012; p. 8).

## **6.2 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that female teachers receive minimal support to pursue leadership or higher management positions, despite their significant role in the educational domain. The present research and others in the field of education reveals that the classroom is where intellectual, social, cultural and religious life flourishes. Therefore, learners have the opportunities to study and progress in their academics, and also learn how to conduct themselves both at school and in the community. In addition, as learners from faith-based institutions, not only was their spirituality enhanced, but they learned to embrace different faiths which contribute to community cohesion and diversity ideals in society. In terms of academics, the findings presented very interesting results, one of which was female teachers' contribution to challenging gender stereotypes, particularly that stem

subjects are best suited to males. Indeed, the female teachers challenged the orthodox belief that Maths and Science are masculine subjects. Not only were most of the female participants in the study Maths and Science teachers, but the girls from the Muslim case study performed excellently in these subjects and gained both internal and external recognition. This suggests that women are being recognised for excellent contributions to teaching stem subjects, which has traditionally been a male preserve.

For the female teachers, gender does not seem to be an issue in their career lives. The teachers do not seem to recognise the gender order in their lives, especially in their careers. The teacher's role shows patterns of gender stereotypes, especially in the Muslim case study; where women are predominant in classroom teaching roles but totally absent in senior lead roles. This demonstrates aspects of gender stereotypes with female dominance in caring and nurturing roles and male dominance in power and authority roles. Both the case study schools proclaim themselves as providing equal opportunities for both genders. In the case of the Muslim school, there was an inclination towards the employment of females because it catered specifically for girls. However, men still held all the senior roles and the women were at the bottom of educational hierarchy. The gender differentiation in school is a reflection of the gender differentiation that takes place in society. Generally, the status of women in schools puts them in a position where they contribute to reproducing the gender inequalities in society rather than challenging the orthodox gender patterns. This contributes to the marginalisation, oppression and subordination of women; instead of being the agents of change that should be the essence of policies and laws to protect women. Indeed, some women continue to propagate gender inequalities by failing to admit

to them. Thus, women actually work against the treaties and conventions that are instituted to protect and promote them.

Female teachers encounter serious problems as a result of trying to execute family responsibilities and handle a career. Though the results from this study is in line with other research on the experiences of female teachers in other countries, other aspects of the study shed new light on the challenges faced by female faith teachers. In this way, this study is vital in contributing to the development of new approaches towards the implementation of strategies to enhance female teacher's participation and advancement in the profession. The implementation of policies to address issues arising from work and family conflict will be vital in contributing to renewing teachers' ideas, their energy and their commitment to the profession. This will also result in productive output and leave room for teachers to have a social life. Despite the fact that quite a good number of improvements have been achieved in terms of the rights of women in the UK, it is currently observed that in practice this has not been fully reflected in their work and social lives.

The relatively small number of women in senior leadership positions means that women have few role models and mentors. This finding underscores the need for more female representation in lead roles, yet this is unlikely to happen unless significant strategies are put in place by the government, including monitoring mechanisms to check and observe the effectiveness of the strategies. The role model phenomenon was equally observed to be significant for young girls. The importance of the presence of women in lead roles within

schools was reflected in the case studies. Female teachers played role models not just in academies, but also in the social and future career lives of the girls. However, because female teachers predominate in both schools, concerns were raised regarding the limited availability of role models for boys. This concern has also been shared by previous studies. It is no doubt that this has prompted the government to implement measures to increase the number of male teachers in schools. This suggests that what is commonly referred to as the 'feminisation of teaching' is gradually paving way for a new phase towards the 'masculinisation of teaching', particularly given the already male dominance in leadership positions. If the government is actually sincere about achieving gender balance for classroom teachers, it is only fair that gender balance in leadership is equally promoted.

The results of the study reveal the challenges faced by female teachers within the profession. These challenges ranged from personal, family, institutional, to religious factors — all of which impede on teachers family and work life. Although female teachers face all these obstacles, very little is actually put in place to address the real issues and concerns of women. Indeed, training and professional development were strategies employed by both case studies, yet neither of these measures offer help where it is desperately needed — child care and workload. Also, because of the claim to the gender neutrality of the schools, and the description of the schools as meritocratic workplaces, no strategies were developed to specifically target women's career advancement either.

### **6.3 IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The above analysis makes evident the existence of multiple challenges faced by female teachers from faith schools. To an extent, the experiences of the female teachers reflect the common characteristics of the intellectual and professional woman. The results from the present study offer some insight for policy makers, school authorities, employers and teachers that will be of assistance in identifying exactly what support is actually needed. This is not limited to female teachers, but beneficial to all professional women

#### **Soliciting for the Implantation of Gender Equality Policies**

Schools and governments should be interested in setting concrete policies on gender equality since the findings from the case studies reveal the disparity in power relations among the genders in favour of men. The findings equally suggest the presence of inequalities in other areas such as age and religion. It is important to note that in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the gender regimes there is need to understand the way inequality impacts on different groups of people, not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of age, and religious perspectives. This suggests the necessity for equality policies in education to cover all areas that require protection. However, this proposition should not only be limited to the responsibility of schools and the government, but should also be the preoccupation of religious authorities, particularly as the case studies reveal that some of the gender inequality has its roots in religious teachings. A combination of action from all these actors will offer a holistic approach in addressing issues of inequality, especially for teachers in faith schools.

School leaders are of particular importance in soliciting for changes in policies, structures and practices that hinder women from advancing in their careers. For example, the requirement of church references during recruitment for senior posts, the assigning of child care and other domestic responsibilities on women, and the culture of defining leadership as masculine, all hinder women's career advancement. School leaders are well informed of these issues since they have direct contact with teachers and are also responsible for the implementation of policies, programmes or projects. However, despite their significance in the change process, in order to completely address the barriers faced by female teachers change has to come from various fronts, and the agencies involved need to support, encourage and empower women to succeed.

### **Equal Opportunities at Recruitment**

School authorities should create equal conditions in work competition. The case study revealed that some school authorities have prejudices against female teachers who have young children because it is assumed that they will be unable to function properly because of child care responsibilities. Therefore, since promotion comes with lots of responsibilities, females applying for senior leadership roles are often overlooked. Such practices only enhance the psychological burdens of the women and weaken their aspirations for career advancement. Therefore, school authorities must correct their understanding on this issue and offer equal opportunities to both genders that will allow equal competitive conditions for the best person to have the job. The need for specific support mechanisms is imperative.



## **Provision of Female Specific Trainings as well as those Specific to Men (Gendered Trainings)**

The findings from the studies reveal that one of the commonly shared strategies for career development was training. However, some of the training was only available to a few selected teachers. This implies that there is the presence of partiality since training was available only to those deemed as possessing leadership potentials by school authorities. Also, none of the training was geared towards leadership and did not target women specifically. Therefore, institutions of learning should preoccupy themselves in making training available to all, and additional training specific to women should be considered. This would offer women the opportunity to reflect on gender issues from their own viewpoint and then develop their capacities for leadership roles within the profession and community as a whole.

The study revealed that training for headships are usually flooded with males. This suggests that a quota system needs to be put in place by the school leaders during the selection of teachers to attend this specific kind of training. This would then ensure fair representation for both genders. This will certainly increase women's attendance on leadership training programmes and widen their opportunities thereby enabling them to compete for school leadership position.

Experts in training and development emphasise the need to include both genders in any change project in order to achieve maximum results. Therefore, gendered training is essential for a complete success of these interventions. Institutions of learning should

provide gender training not only to female teachers, but to their male counterparts as well. This is vital in addressing their experiences as men and women, and their own different potentials and limitations. It is expected that such an initiative will result in societal transformation that will be reflected in changes to organisational cultures, equitable opportunities for both genders and consequently contribute towards achieving a more equitable representation of both genders in lead roles.

### **Introduction of Formal and Inclusive Mentoring Programmes**

In terms of professional development, the study suggests the need in identifying areas of continual professional development for teachers that specifically target actual concerns. The study highlights the importance that mentoring has in contributing to the development and success of becoming leaders within the profession. The findings from the study revealed that though mentoring was employed to support teachers, this was only available to a select few and was not a measure that was formally instituted. Therefore, school authorities should formally introduce mentoring in schools and make available to all wishing to be part of the mentorship programme. With the support, and under the guidance of the mentors, female teachers would be able to challenge the status-quo and assume a superior rather than a marginalised position in the profession and in the society as a whole. As they move their way into a domain that is considered a male-preserve, this will help to narrow the gender gap and deconstruct the notions of defining leadership as masculine.

In the case of faith schools, particularly denominations or ethnic groups which prohibit the association of females with the opposite gender, mentoring should not only take place with one senior individual in a leadership role. This is because it would mean that the mentors will have to take on more mentees and the output may not be effective. Given the limited number of women in this position, more experienced teachers in middle-management can share their experiences. Also, they can mentor those who have not been long in the profession but who desire to progress in their careers while they may occasionally seek guidance and support from a senior mentor. Alternatively, school authorities may source for mentors for female teachers from other schools who may not necessarily be of the same faith, as the goal is to enhance the professional element in their careers.

### **Familial Support and Stress Management Mechanisms**

It should be noted that the effect of child care responsibilities on women's career has long been established, yet to date women still face child care challenges. Instead of ignoring the challenges women face as a result of not being able to balance career and family responsibilities, because it is considered their private businesses, school authorities and the government should support women to pass through this challenging phase in their lives. There is a real need to put in place good nurseries and day-care centres, preferably at job sites, to reduce the burden of child care responsibilities placed on women. This would be significant in overcoming the difficulty faced by women with young children in combining career and work responsibilities, especially those from backgrounds where child care and domestic responsibilities are assigned to women by religion or culture.

One thing to note is that the UK government has taken some recent measures in supporting parents with child care, especially with the introduction of the new law that offers free funding for two year olds to enrol with child minders and children centres. However, the fact that child care issues still emerged from the accounts of a majority of the teachers as constituting a major barrier to their progress implies that more efforts are required from the government. It can also be suggested that an area that needs much consideration is familial support; for society to discard perceptions they hold in regarding women as primarily responsible for the care and upbringing of children. It would therefore be advantageous to investigate the patterns of patriarchal systems that are found in both the domestic and career lives of female teachers, particularly to identify possible measures of problem solving from these systems.

The promotion of work-life balance and the provision of a healthier work environment is crucial for female teachers who are mostly affected by work and family role conflict. Since organisational managers are greatly responsible for developing recruitment policies, enhancing their understanding of the challenges women face as a result of trying to balance both career and family responsibilities and the benefits of instituting family friendly policies are of vital importance. Because the problems women face as a result of work and family role conflict was widely reported across both case studies, the employment of strategies to promote work-life balance will be important in; reducing burnout and stress, producing greater work output, instilling an aspiration to seek promotion, and increasing teacher's chances in competing for senior roles (because of being able to work full-time and apply more hours of work).

Furthermore, female teachers may require additional support to manage stress arising from work and family role conflict. In line with this, the study also highlighted the need for counselling in the profession for teachers, particularly female teachers who may be struggling with stress and burnout issues. This will help more women to stay within the profession and function properly and perhaps, to an extent, prevent any thoughts of leaving the profession. Even though thoughts of leaving the profession was not revealed in the study, the fact that the teachers expressed the extreme difficulties in trying to balance both career and family responsibilities imply that with time they may have thoughts of changing professions. This could likely transpire among Muslim female teachers since Islam clearly defines a woman's principal role as 'mothering'. In order to avoid compromising their faith by concentrating more on their careers and paying less attention to their God-given responsibilities (child care/family responsibilities), they would be more likely to consider leaving the profession. This will be extremely disadvantageous to the profession as it is already suffering from limited supply of teachers.

### **Changes to Individual Attitudes**

The findings reveal that in as much as institutional, structural and social factors hinders women's career advancement; individual factors, including lack of confidence and teacher's desire to stay within the classroom also contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership. There is need for female teachers to change their mind-set. Female teachers need to overcome their psychological and mental stereotyping so they can have self-confidence and make self-improvement rather than waiting to be acknowledged by colleagues or senior members of staff. Unless women undertake this course, then the

initiatives undertaken to empower women to lead roles will be weakened because change has to start from self.

The findings regarding the influence of religious teachings and practices of female teacher's career reinforce the need to support these teachers in identifying and acknowledging the reality of the constraint perspective of religion on their career advancement. A majority of the teachers in the study refused to acknowledge the negative impact of religion on their careers, meanwhile an analysis of the data did indeed identified some elements of religion impacting on teachers careers. It is only by their acknowledgement that they will gain support in managing the challenges. For example, from the Islamic case study, the teachers need to acknowledge the fact that the allocation of childcare and domestic responsibilities to women by Islam works to the disadvantage of women who aspire towards a career, rather than taking a defensive position and claiming that their religion empowers women. There are certainly some positive aspects with their religious teachings that empower women, but it is important that Muslim female teachers, including all other faith teachers, admit to the challenges posed by religion on their careers. If this is acknowledged by faith teachers it would be the first step in enabling them to confront and challenge the status-quo, and perhaps lead towards promotion and career development.

### **Positive Reflection on Career**

The narratives from the females in management communicated the challenges they face in being effective in their position. The accounts from female teachers indicated how they are wary of taking on a leadership role as a result of the experiences of those in lead roles. This

suggests that women in leadership positions need to talk of the positive encounter with the position rather than dwelling more on the challenges that discourage those teachers aspiring for a lead role, particularly as this may motivate other female teachers to take on leadership roles. In saying that, they should not deny the challenges they experience, but they should share their successes as well. This is, however, highlighted in the Ofsted reports, which indicates that the head teachers are strong leaders.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The narrative approach used in this study was valuable in extracting detailed and complex information on the lived experiences of female faith teachers. Their narratives offered useful insight into deep understanding of the career and personal life of teachers. However, the small sample size limits the generalisation of the study. Nonetheless, as a pioneer study it offers a springboard for the development of further research in this area. More research is needed in understanding the experiences of female teachers within other faith schools. In addition, the study was conducted within one geographical area. More research is needed to capture the experiences of those from other parts of the country. Therefore, any further research on female faith teachers should consider larger scale studies including a larger sample of teachers from a variety of denominations for the establishment of higher degree of generalisation for the study.

The study focused on the teaching career of women. The results from the study may have a wider implication to women in other professions. Therefore, large scale studies will be

significant in comparing longitudinal pattern on the challenges women face in their struggle to ascend to leadership positions. The study revealed that individual, familial and institutional factors influence women's occupancy of lead roles within the profession. These issues may be explored by undertaking further extensive qualitative research.

In conducting further research on female teachers in faith schools, the research should cover a wide and intersectional area including, economic, social, cultural and political issues. In order to achieve gender parity, this necessitates the changing in societal norms and institutional structures as results from the present study which indicated that most of the challenges women faced are propagated by social and institutional factors. In conducting the research, women should be the centre of focus. Unless this is done, it would be extremely challenging to attain the desired status for women's equality in their private, social and professional lives.

A further limitation of the study is that participants for the study were chosen by the head teachers, even though the research framework had specifically requested that the participants should be randomly selected. The possibility of partiality in the selection of participants for the study cannot be ruled out. However, bias is not likely to cause a major problem to the study because all teachers expressed varied experiences and were from different backgrounds. Nonetheless, future research should employ a random selection method to prevent the likelihood of obtaining biased results.



A limitation to the present study is the absence of male teachers in the study. The sample for the study included female teachers only. Due to the absence of male teachers in the study, generalisation of findings is difficult. For example, the claim of equal opportunities could not be fully examined. Future studies should include male and female teachers.

In the research process a lack of related literature on the experiences of women in faith schools was quite visible. Most of the literature was based on the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the UK, not specific to faith schools. Therefore, it is clear that more research needs to be conducted to cover the experiences of women in faith schools, including the challenges they face in their professional lives as well as their daily lives, since the private affects the public. These studies may assist women not only to be emancipated but also to be liberated from the challenges they face within the profession and ensure that they function to full capacity; realising their personal and professional goals.

My study has demonstrated that women receive minimal support to pursue leadership or higher management position. It is my hope that my work has shed new light on the issues of female faith teachers, by establishing the importance of female teachers to the profession, questioning the status-quo and gender stereotypes that impact on women's career from a social, political, cultural and religious perspective, and also suggesting recommendations of strategies to be implemented to promote female leadership. Women's roles in contributing to the multi-level transformations taking place in schools are significant, so is their role in promoting fundamental changes in society as a whole. The design, implementation and careful monitoring and evaluation of the strategies suggested above may contribute to

achieving a more generous and functional representation of women in leadership roles both in education, religious spaces, and community as a whole. In particular, it is hoped that the implementation of these strategies would enhance the status of female faith teachers by closing the gender-gap eminent in the occupancy of leadership positions.

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## **Information Sheet for Participants in Research Studies**

You will be given a copy of this information sheet.

**Title of Project:** The Role, Position and Experience of Female Teachers within Faith Schools.

**This study has been subject to Ethical Review by the Ethical Committee of the University of Central Lancashire.**

### ***Name, Address and Contact Details of Investigator:***

Edith Manyong Tah

School of Education and Social Science

University of Central Lancashire

Preston PR1 2HE

**I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if there is anything that is not clear or you would like more information.**

### **Aim and Objectives of Study**

The aim of this study is to explore the roles carried out by women in various faiths, and in particular the roles they may take in religious education and faith schools, and to examine strategies implemented by institutions to recognise women as faith educators and support aspirations of potential faith leaders.

**The objectives are to:**

- Investigate current interpretations and applications of religious teachings and practices of women and how these influence their personal and professional pathways.
- Explore the role and experience of women within various faiths, particularly the experience of female teachers within faith schools.
- Investigate strategies employed by institutions to recognise women as faith educators.
- Examine mechanisms within schools, organisations and institutions that support and develop female faith leaders.

**It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you choose not to participate it will involve no penalty. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.**

**All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.**

**Consent Form**

**Title of Project:** The Role, Position and Experience of Female Teachers within Faith Schools.

**Name of Researcher:** Edith Manyong Tah

Please Tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I consent to the interview/session being audio-recorded.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

**Name of Participant:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**