

Leadership Styles of Female Educational Leaders: In Search of a Gender Inclusive Leadership Theory

Alfred Henry Makura

*T.L.C., Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, Main Campus, King William's Town
Road, Alice, Private Bag X1314, Alice 5700. South Africa
Telephone: +27 721021538 (Cell), +27 406022700, Fax: +27 (0) 86 620 1054;
E-mail: alfrednyandoro@yahoo.com, amakura@ufh.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT This exploratory case study investigated the perceived leadership styles of Zimbabwean women in primary school governance within the context of extant literature. The specific objective was to establish the female school heads' perceptions of themselves, and their teachers. Another objective was to compare interview data with what literature says about the leadership styles of female educational leaders. Literature was also compared with data from a psychometric instrument. Literature reveals gender differences and similarities in leadership but is not emphatic in describing women's distinct styles. An explicit theory of leadership particularly of females is a far cry. The key question was whether or not these females possessed distinct styles. This study adopted a case study research design. A convenient sample of nine female heads, and forty-five teachers participated. The LBDQ and interview guides were used to collect the data from subordinate teachers and female school heads respectively. The LBDQ results indicated that most female heads displayed task-oriented behaviours. Interviews revealed a relations orientation. The findings further complicate the search for an explicit feminine leadership theory. Implications for educational practice are highlighted.