

Women in Primary Education Principalship in Cyprus: Experiences from Past to Present

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Elena Kyriacou-Savva

School of Education

University of Leicester

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to cast light on the neglected ‘walking phenomenon’ (Morton, 2002) of women’s uneven participation in Cyprus primary school management and to investigate the reasons causing it. More specifically, the research offers insights into women’s experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010; examines whether and to what extent these experiences have changed over the last five decades; and maps the reasons women leaders provide for their disproportionate representation in principalship over this period. Underpinned by the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al., 2007), the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach (narrative inquiry), snowball sampling, semi-structured in-depth narrative interviewing of 23 retired and in-service women principals as well as thematic analysis are adopted.

With regard to women’s experiences of progressing to principalship, the findings suggest that women educators in primary education between 1961 and 2010 had generally been non-leadership oriented; had followed fairly unplanned occupational trajectories; and thus had needed external encouragement to enhance their confidence and set themselves on the pathway to principalship. Participants had been fairly unaware of discriminatory dynamics during the interview for promotion. In terms of women’s experiences of principalship, the outcomes indicate that, despite a growing positive ethos, stereotypical preconceptions identified in the school, community and family contexts regarding women in leadership posts – particularly of younger age – persist. The comparison of women’s experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus between 1961 and 2010 reveals comparable conducive and/or impeding impacts on women’s advancement as well as on their leadership role as such, throughout the period under consideration. A range of reasons for women’s disproportionate representation in primary school principalship are proposed by narrators that fall in three intersected levels coined in this thesis: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers. Some implications for theory, policy and practice are provided and recommendations for future research are proposed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of This Research: A Historical Perspective of Gender Issues in Cyprus

While there is a significant corpus of international scholarly literature specifically focusing on women's subordinate status in society and on the causes of their disproportionate representation in educational leadership in particular (Blackmore, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993, 2006; Al-Khalifa, 1992; Ouston, 1993; Ozga, 1993; Evetts, 1994; Bush, 1995; Hall, 1996, 1999; Coleman, 2001, 2002, 2009; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Moreau et al., 2007; McLay, 2008; Reynolds, 2008), the attempt to review the relevant local literature revealed in the most acute way the scarcity of pertinent discourse and research in Cyprus, mainly in the past. Ironically, the most important – in my view – academic source identified, specifically focusing on examining the position of Cypriot girls/women in society and education diachronically, is a book entitled “The History of girls’ education in Cyprus” written by a man (Persianis, 1998). The particular research provides evidence that the status of girls/women in Cyprus had been influenced by analogous socio-cultural and religious norms and followed similar pathways as those of women in other traditional cultures discussed later in Chapter 2.

According to Persianis (1998), the Cypriot society of 19th and first half of 20th centuries had been predominantly patriarchal with women viewed as physically and mentally subordinate to men and therefore economically and socially dependent on them. Women were stereotypically typecasted and confined to their roles as good mothers, wives and housekeepers and, to this end, they were socialised accordingly. The fact that patriarchy dominated – particularly in rural/agricultural areas – was displayed in various ways. For

instance, girls/women were commonly physically and mentally oppressed by fathers, brothers and/or husbands. It was imperative for a woman to retain virginity until marriage to avoid 'traumatising' the family's honour. The advice given to young women by parents and relatives that it was "better to damage their eye instead of their name (dignity)" is illustrative. Naming girls-only schools as 'virginity-schools' (parthenagogia) is also characteristic of the importance placed on virginity. Early marriage was very common practice always initiated by the man who was obliged to request permission from the woman's parents – particularly her father – to marry her. Arranged marriages without the bride's consent were customary. The fact that in the Cypriot dialect the word 'human being' (anthropos) ended up meaning only the 'man' (adropos) is an additional strong indication of deeply rooted patriarchal structures in this country.

Women's inferior position was underpinned by Christian orthodox values defining women as moral, totally dedicated, nurturing, submissive to their husbands and ready to make sacrifices for their families, resembling the holy figure of Mary, the Mother of God. At that time, religion was closely related to education and many schools were established and financially supported by the Church. It thus comes as no surprise that gender disparity and stereotypes had a negative effect on girls' enrolment in education, especially in the secondary sector. After the age of eight or nine, parents were unwilling to send their daughters to coeducational schools away from home – possibly in another large village/town – where the teacher would probably be a man (Talbot and Cape, 1914). Moreover, economic constraints led parents to 'invest' in boys' education instead of that of girls who would eventually get married and leave their jobs. After all, girls, especially the older ones, were 'needed' in the big families of the time for raising their siblings and helping their mothers with everyday household chores. For all these reasons and possibly more, up until the 1930s the percentage of illiterate women

was far higher than that of men (Persianis, 1998). Gender stereotypes had not only influenced girls' participation in education but also shaped the content of the curriculum in girls-only-schools ('virginity schools') the main aim of which was to render girls obedient, humble, respectful, good orthodox Christians and silent 'ladies'. The only occupation considered 'suitable' for those females who would complete their studies in secondary education successfully was that of teacher.

Conventional views about women's inferior position in Cypriot society started to improve in the middle of 20th century due to urbanization, the development of transport, communication and technology and the expansion of artisanship and industry that created new positions for women to work outside the house. The First and Second World Wars; the liberation struggle of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (E.O.K.A) against British colonisation (1878-1960) that started in 1955 and finished in 1959 leading to independence in 1960; and the war against Turkish invasion in 1974 and the disaster that followed, forced women to undertake different roles in society and enter the labour market in higher rates. The influence of European ideologies, Enlightenment, Humanism, Democratic Liberalism, Socialism and Communism also played significant part in advancing the status of Cypriot women.

It is essential to note that feminism has never been formally developed in Cyprus. Among the reasons provided by Persianis (1989) is the dearth of enough educated women due to the absence of higher education on the island in the end of 19th and early 20th centuries when the feminist movement began and during the 1960s and '70s when it flourished. Even if feminist ideology appears to have influenced – at least to some extent – the views and behaviour of certain educated women on the island, the conservatism of the small Cypriot society and of women themselves did not allow its expansion.

Despite the slow movement towards the development of a ‘gender-equalisation ethos’ during the second half of the 20th century it was not until 1960 when Cyprus gained its independence from British colonisation that gender equality was legally established. Until then, women in the field of education – and possibly in other fields as well – were unevenly treated by colonialist administration. In particular, women teachers’ salary was lower than men’s and it was compulsory for them to retire at the age of 55 while men retired at 60. What is most striking is that women were dismissed after marriage and pregnancy and were re-employed on temporary basis after their child was born beginning from 1954 (Panayidou, 2002).

Since independence in 1960, the Cypriot government has subscribed to various international conventions for gender equality with the United Nations, the European Council and the European Union (EU) – of which it has been a member since May 2004 – that have empowered Cypriot women’s status, especially in the fields of work and education (Solomi, 2003a, 2003b). In 1994, the National Mechanism for Women’s Rights was created by the Ministerial Council in order to promote gender equality and women’s rights. In 2003, the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory was established also aiming at promoting gender equity. The importance given to gender issues in the contemporary scholarly discourse is demonstrated by the recent inauguration of the Research Centre for Gender Studies and the ‘UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment’ at the University of Cyprus.

However, despite such cheering initiatives and the huge strides made towards equalisation underpinned by legislation, there is still a long way until gender disparity is completely uprooted. According to Solomi (2003a), the *de jure* entrenchment of gender equality in all

aspects of life that has been established by the Cypriot constitution in 1960 has not yet led to the de facto gender equality in private and public life. The society remains largely patriarchal in its structure and customs and as a result, stereotypical perceptions and attitudes for male and female roles persist and the decision making still mainly rests in the hands of men (Panayidou, 2002; Solomi, 2003a, 2003b). In other words, similarly to Greece (Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis, 2002; Kyriakoussis and Saiti, 2006; Kaparou and Bush, 2007) and UK (Coleman, 2009), there appears to be a gap between the legal framework that ensures equality and the reality.

It seems that Singleton's (1993:165) assertion that "jobs whilst not legally labelled 'for men' or 'for women' are still viewed by many people as just that" is valid for Cyprus. The professions of pre-primary, primary and secondary school teacher, nurse, secretary or clerk in the public or private sectors, among others, are still largely traditionally perceived by both genders as 'feminine' whereas manual/technical, 'high profile' and 'demanding' jobs are 'masculine' domains. To this end, the majority of female students in higher education in Cyprus and abroad tend to concentrate in the departments of Education, Humanities, Law and Fine Arts while male students in the departments of Economics, Business Studies, Medicine, IT, Engineering and Technology (Vryonides, 2007) mirroring their equivalents in England (Coleman, 2011). Clearly, the theoretically 'free choice' of study and profession in Cyprus is in reality gender-determined and socially imposed.

Social expectations in relation to gender also appear to define women's and men's hierarchical position in the country. In particular, even though women's participation in the labour market is currently among the highest in the EU, their representation in the upper echelons of public and political life is poor, with the percentage being among the lowest

between EU members (Kyriakidou, 2010; Solomonidou-Drousiotou, 2010; Kaza, 2011). According to the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory, as of May 2009, women were underrepresented in Parliament (14.4%), business (21%), administrative posts (18%) and local government (19%) (Cyprus News Agency, 2009). As of April 2011, there were two women and nine men in the Ministerial Council, two women and four men representing Cyprus in the European Parliament and no woman had become president yet after fifty years of independence. For the parliamentary elections held in May 2011 there were merely 63 women out of 278 candidates, approximately 50% less than those participating in the elections in 2006 (113 women candidates) (Anon, 2011). Only six women finally managed to enter the Parliament.

Echoing the situation in UK (Coleman, 2011), in the labour market and particularly in the private sector, gaps in the salaries favouring men persist (Pilavaki, 2004, 2009; Stylianou, 2011) with percentages remaining way above those in the EU (Pilavaki, 2009; Vrahimis et al., 2009; Kyriakidou, 2010). As the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance noted, in Europe women earn on average 17% whereas in Cyprus 22% less than men (Charalambous, 2010). This occurs contrary to legislation and although statistics show that Cypriot women currently outnumber men in higher education and frequently outperform them academically (Vryonides, 2007; Spinthourakis et al., 2008). Unfortunately, complaints and accusations by women in private sector that they have been dismissed from their jobs due to pregnancy continue to be reported to the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Anon, 2010). Additionally, numerous cases of violence against women in the family and sexual harassment in the workplace are still recorded by the National Mechanism for Women's Rights as stated by the Minister of Justice and Public Order (Cyprus News Agency, 2011).

The action plan undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Culture since September 2010 aiming at combating stereotypes and infusing gender equalisation in the perceptions of students and teachers at all sectors (Savva, 2010) is definitely a positive step towards the right direction. It is a significant step towards altering the socio-cultural structure and stereotypical preconceptions. The fact that women are currently educated to the highest level to the same degree as men provides another promising message for changing the status quo in the future. The development of adequate infrastructure and policies to facilitate women to reconcile their private/family and public lives is another step towards equality that should urgently become the focus of attention of policy makers as indicated by several pilot studies conducted by the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory (2007).

As suggested in this Subsection, it appears that in the Cypriot society gender has diachronically impacted on the distribution of power and authority in the private, professional, economic and political arenas. Put plainly, it seems that gender has historically signalled different roles for men and women regarding every facet of life. To quote Vryonides (2007: 95-96), in Cyprus “boys and girls have traditionally been socialised to fit gendered expectations leading men and women to different social positions that have sustained and reproduced gender inequalities”. Although these expectations and inequalities evolved over time, women “still lag behind men in most areas of social life” (ibid:96). It is against this contextual background in combination with my gendered personal/professional experiences as a teacher/acting head that this thesis is developed, seeking to provide explanations for the diachronically disproportionate participation of Cypriot women in primary school management.

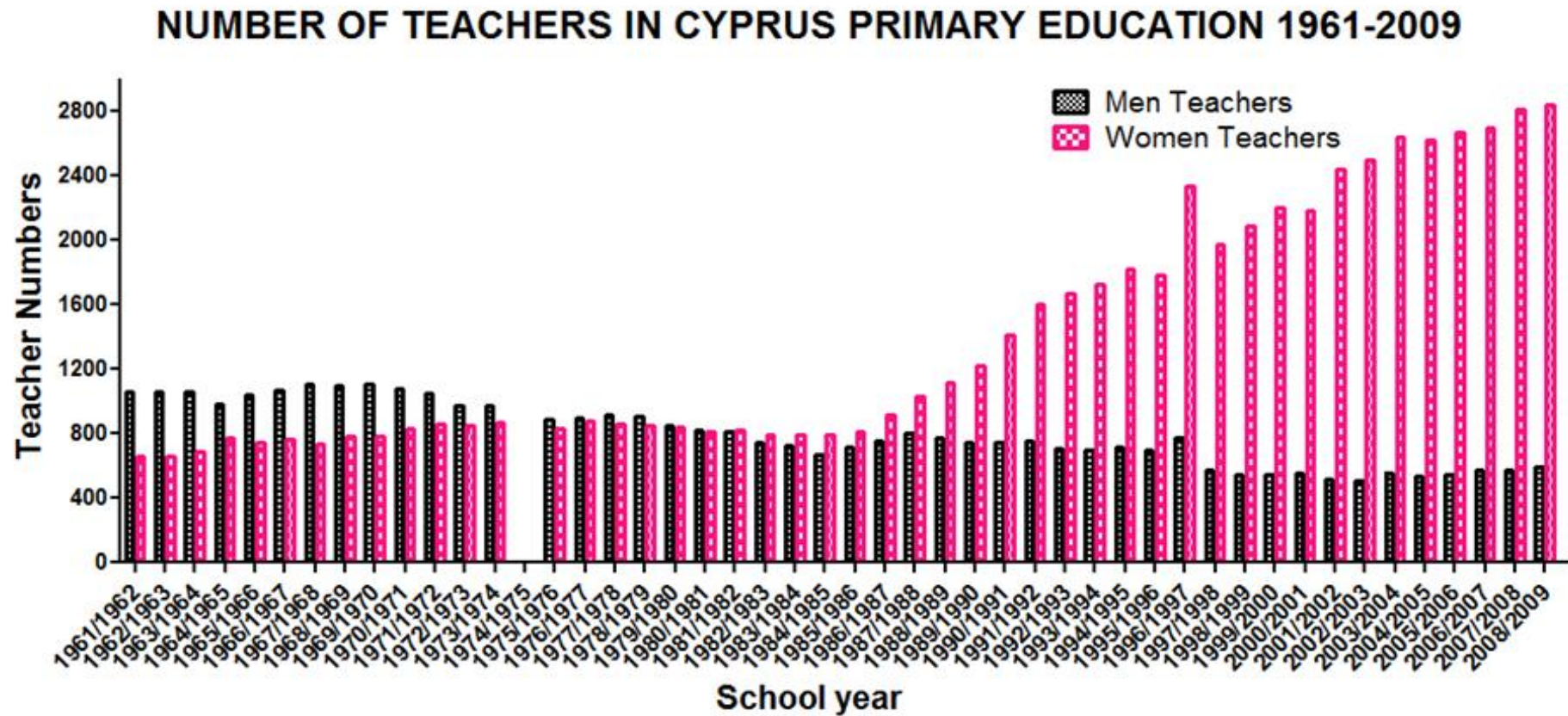
1.2. The Rationale: The statistical picture as a starting point for research

As in most other countries (Davies, 1990; Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft, 2006), there appears to be a disparity in the number of women teachers and those assuming headship in Cyprus. According to Pashiardis (2002), although women constitute the majority of teaching personnel in primary and secondary sectors on the island, only 20-25% of leadership positions are held by them. The diachronic figures for the public primary sector obtained from the Ministry of Finance, which are presented in the following tables, reinforce this statement. Table 1 (p.9) shows the numerical breakdown of men and women teachers in Cyprus primary education between 1961 and 2009 (see also Appendix 1) (Ministry of Finance, 2010).

As indicated in Table 1 (p.9), the number of men teachers in primary education is steadily declining whereas the number of women follows the opposite direction. Since the school year 1981/1982 women outnumber their male colleagues and they heavily dominate the sector during the last two decades.

There are two main reasons for women's increased inroad in primary education compared to men. Firstly, each academic year between 1959 and 1983 the Ministerial Council in consultation with the Minister of Education determined the numbers of women and men students to be enrolled in the Pedagogical Academy to become teachers. Each year's decision was based on forecasts regarding the personnel demands in primary education for the forthcoming school years (Maratheftis, 1992).

Table 1: The number of teachers



Source: Ministry of Finance, 2010¹

¹ In 1974/1975 no research was carried out due to the Turkish invasion in the island.

This occurred irrespective of women's and men's performance in the exams for entry. Even if a woman candidate outperformed a man in exams, she could still be denied enrolment because, as the numbers 'imposed', a man 'should' take the place. Drawing from Table 1 (p.9), it is evident that between 1961/1962 and 1980/1981, the enrolment of more men was 'favoured'. In 1983 a woman candidate who was rejected although she outperformed male candidates who were finally enrolled in the Academy, referred to the Supreme Court against this practice leading to the abolishment of the unfair coda system (Persianis, 1998; Maratheftis and Ioannidou-Koutselini, 2000) in which positions were allocated proportionally. From then onwards, women were entering the Pedagogical Academy at a higher rate as they outperformed men in exams. In 1992 the University of Cyprus was established with the Pedagogical Academy becoming part of it and renamed as 'Department of Education' (Maratheftis and Ioannidou-Koutselini, 2000). Introductory examinations held throughout the country in June were and still are the only way to enter any department including the Department of Education.

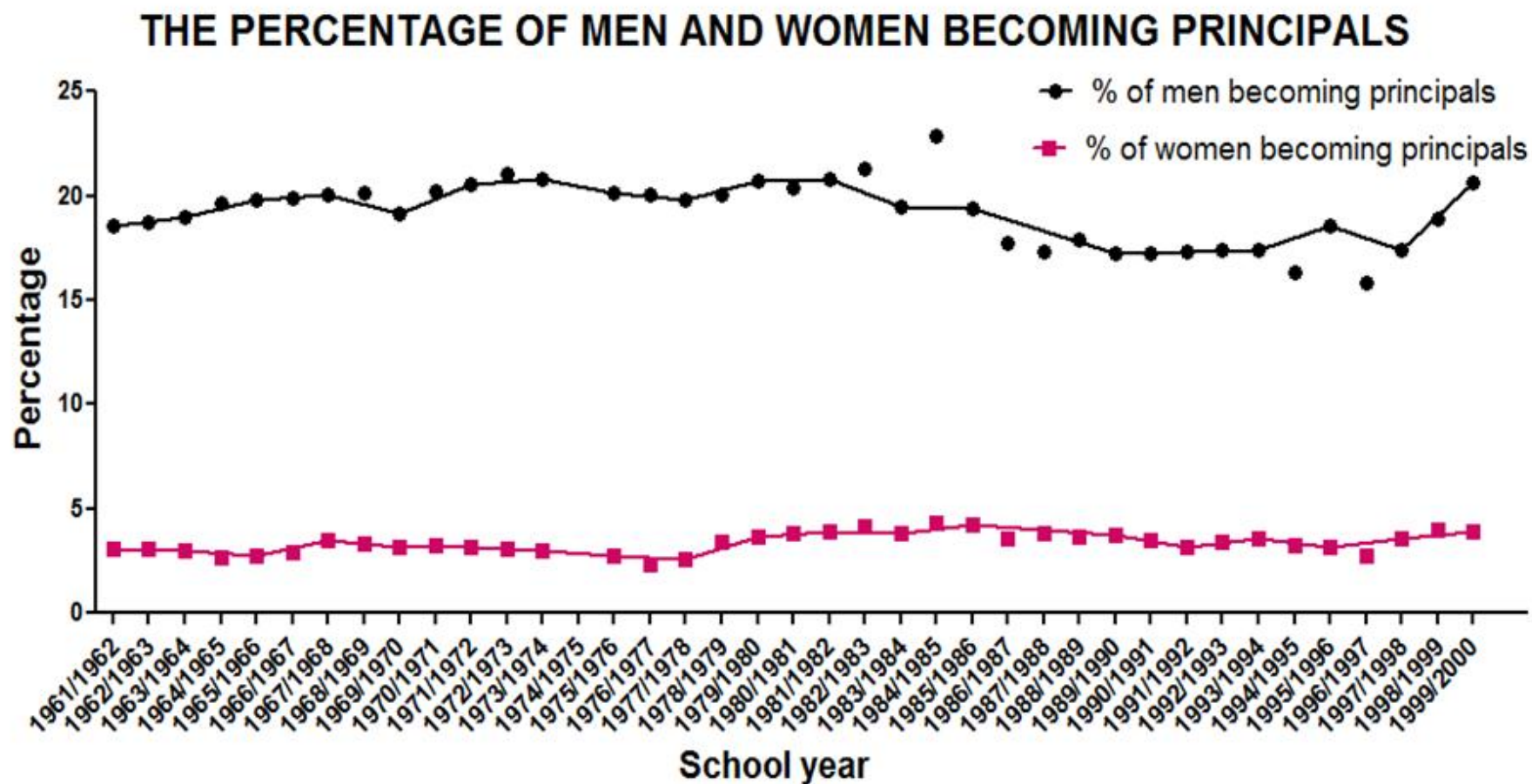
This leads to the second reason for women's and men's numerical disparity. More specifically, it appears that the stereotypical presumptions regarding the suitability of the teaching profession for women discussed earlier are partly responsible for Cypriot women candidates' and their parents' preference for this traditionally 'female occupation'. As a result, there are more women candidates than men for the Departments of Education in Cyprus and Greece from where Cypriot teachers are mainly derived. Women's performance in the exams also appears to be higher than their male co-candidates. These reasons in combination with men's reduced interest to enter a 'feminine' and 'low-profile' profession has led to the skyrocketing numbers of women in primary school workforce.

With regard to principalship, if men and women were proportionally represented, it could be expected that the percentage of women principals would have been slightly lower than men's during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and certainly overwhelmingly higher than that of men over the last two decades. This would have been a logical inference based on the preceding quantitative data. Nonetheless, this is far from being the case. Diachronically, the distribution of women in primary school principalship does not reflect their numerical representation in the larger teaching population. To provide a clearer picture of the situation, Table 2 (p.12) demonstrates the percentage of men and women becoming principals from 1961 to 2000 (see also Appendix 1) (Ministry of Finance, 2010).

The percentages in Table 2 (p.12) are quite illuminating. Evidently, an average of 20% of men assumed principalship in Cypriot primary education between 1961 and 2000. The percentage of women becoming principals is much lower. A mere average of 4% of women teachers became principals with the pattern remaining invariable even during the 1990s when a rapid increase in the numbers of women teachers took place.

It is essential to note that, according to information derived from the Statistical Service, the numbers of principals and assistant principals are merged beginning from the school year 2000/2001 following EU guidelines. This is reflected in Table 2 (p.12). To attain the exact numbers of principals and assistant principals between 2000 and 2011, an official request was made to the Educational Service Commission and the data provided are presented in Table 3 (p. 13).

Table 2: Gender representation in Principalship



Source: Ministry of Finance, 2010

Table 3: Number of men and women progressing to leadership posts (2000 - 2011)

SCHOOL YEAR	MEN						WOMEN					
	Assistant Principals	%	Principals	%	Total	%	Assistant Principals	%	Principals	%	Total	%
2000/2001	159	35%	186	66%	345	47%	295	65%	95	34%	390	53%
2001/2002	196	36%	181	60%	377	45%	345	64%	123	40%	468	55%
2002/2003	201	37%	146	50%	347	42%	341	63%	148	50%	489	58%
2003/2004	191	35%	133	44%	324	38%	352	65%	167	56%	519	62%
2004/2005	193	32%	119	40%	312	35%	405	68%	180	60%	585	65%
2005/2006	180	30%	119	39%	299	33%	416	70%	185	61%	601	67%
2006/2007	167	27%	111	36%	278	30%	452	73%	198	64%	650	70%
2007/2008	155	25%	114	37%	269	29%	476	75%	196	63%	672	71%
2008/2009	144	22%	116	37%	260	27%	506	78%	199	63%	705	73%
2009/2010	136	21%	119	38%	255	27%	511	79%	194	62%	705	73%
2010/2011	122	19%	123	39%	245	25%	526	81%	192	61%	718	75%

Source: Educational Service Commission, 2010

A primary observation derived from the data depicted in Table 3 (p. 13) is that, although women's representation in principalship has steadily increased resulting in them outnumbering men in this post since 2002/2003, women are still not present in proportion to their number in teaching. Secondly, women seem to concentrate in great numbers in the 'pastoral role' of assistant principal and somehow 'lose their way' to principalship. This is not the case for men most of whom seem to perceive assistant headship as the first step towards principalship to which they escalate in higher and positively disproportionate ratio compared to women.

The decision to embark on research dealing with women's past and present experiences of primary school principalship had been stimulated by the statistical picture presented above which, as Kaparou and Bush (2007) properly commented, is usually the starting point for discussing gender and educational leadership. Evidently, as the numbers indicate, women's disproportionate representation is 'a walking phenomenon' (Morton, 2002) in Cyprus, an indicator that "things don't work properly" (Al-Khalifa, 1992:95) in the distribution of management between genders. For unspecified reasons due to lack of relevant local research women in primary education seem to have been disadvantaged across the decades, even if they currently numerically dominate the sector.

It should be emphasised that whilst the issue of women's low/disproportionate participation in educational management and the barriers to their advancement has long been studied in the UK (Ouston, 1993; Ozga, 1993; Evetts, 1994; Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2001), USA (Shakeshaft, 1989), Canada (Reynolds, 2008), Australia (Blackmore, 1993) and New Zealand (Fitzgerald, 2006), scant discourse has taken place in Cyprus. Drawing from Solomi (2003a) the parameter of gender is not considered a significant aspect of educational policy needing

special attention and study by the Cypriot government. For headteachers' promotions in particular, the lack of gender consideration can be attributed to the fact that, according to the article 35/1969/2007 of the Public Educational Service Commission legislation (Educational Service Commission, 2010), access to headship in all public sectors is open to all qualified assistant heads irrespective of gender, provided of course that they have completed at least two years in the assistant head's post. However, this is not supported by the numerical evidence previously presented. The evidence also appears to falsify the argument offered in the Educational Service Commission Annual Report (Educational Service Commission, 2010) claiming that there is no gender discrimination in promotions. To quote Pashiardis (1998a:118) it appears that "gender does count in Cyprus" not only in education but also in society in general. The figures derived from the field of education reinforce Panayidou's (2002) and Solomi's (2003b) arguments that gender inequality persists in Cypriot society despite the existence of relevant legislation.

Against the background offered by the forgoing statistical data and the literature reviewed, which will be critically debated in Chapter 2, the underlying aim of this research is to provide a lens to examine women principals' experiences of progressing to primary school principalship and functioning as leaders spanning the last five decades. The diachronic disproportion documented above and the absence of relevant local research seeking to explain it stimulated the project that intended to cast light on this 'walking phenomenon' (Morton, 2002) and investigate the reasons behind it.

1.3. Research Purpose and Significance

The enquiry's purpose underpinning the research design is threefold: a) to illuminate women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010, b) to examine whether and to what extent these experiences have changed over the last five decades and c) to map the reasons women leaders provide for their disproportionate representation over this period. It is essential to note that, as the precise research questions were developed informed by the literature review and formed part of the thesis conceptual framework, which will both be critically debated in Chapter 2, these questions will be provided and justified at the end of that particular Chapter.

The significance of this research primarily lies in the fact that it attempts to deal with a long lasting paradox. No literature that I have been able to locate in the Cypriot setting specifically looked into and documented women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship or attempted to clarify why females have continuously been disadvantaged in escalating the educational hierarchy in the primary sector. In this respect, drawing from women leaders' first hand experiences, this enquiry is an important enterprise to develop a more theorized explanation for women's uneven partaking in Cypriot primary school management and possibly beyond.

At the practical level, this thesis may be employed as an instrument for raising Cypriot women teachers', assistant heads' and heads (both retired and in post) consciousness about the unequal treatment they have historically been exposed to and hopefully spur the awareness of those women educators who are still in post that they should 'take the bull by the horns' and raise their career prospects themselves. Most importantly, this research seeks

to offer food for thought to Cypriot practitioners, researchers and policy makers about the reasons affecting women's advancement in primary school management with the prospect of paving the way for activating modifications that could ease women's movement to principalship.

This research can also make a methodological contribution in the investigation of gender issues in the Cypriot locale in the future. More specifically, the use of in depth interviews encouraging narration of personal experiences is an alternative way to investigate the under-researched area of women in educational leadership on the island. Quantitative methodological frameworks have mainly been used in the scarce research about girls/women in education that has been carried out in the Cypriot setting to date. I argue that a qualitative design may offer deeper insights into such multifaceted and complicated phenomena.

In terms of the international scholarly discourse, as this is an initial endeavour to investigate the topic in the particular context, it will essentially put forward the overlooked Cypriot perspective on the issue, with all the similarities and/or variances that this may bring to the existing corpus of literature in the field. By taking place in the Cypriot context, the study aims at responding to Oplatka's (2006) plea for more research investigating women leaders' experiences in developing countries. Additionally, bearing in mind that, apart from Thornton and Bricheno's (2000) research in England, studies in other countries examine the particular topic at the secondary and higher education levels, this research will add to the ignored area of women's unequal representation in primary school principalship. The interconnected levels of barriers explaining women's uneven advancement to high ranking positions propounded in this research can be adjusted and engaged in other socio-cultural/educational

milieus when seeking to give insights into women's disproportionate representation in educational management in those settings.

1.4. Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 critically debates the concepts and terms that will constitute the theoretical 'backbone' of this thesis. It starts off with providing a brief reflective historical and international outlook of gender issues aiming at setting the scene for women's deeply established unequal status intra- and inter-culturally. Beginning from the position of women in ancient Classical Greece, the Roman Empire and a number of Christian, Muslim or Chinese cultures; turning to the feminist movements of late 19th and early 20th centuries in the West; and finishing with women's persevering uneven status in the present-day developed, developing and/or underdeveloped world; Section 1 of the Literature Review Chapter seeks to explain and justify the longstanding conventional assumptions about women's inferiority that have essentially negatively affected their participation in education generally and in educational leadership particularly, around the globe.

Women's disproportionate involvement not only in educational leadership research and theory but most importantly in management as such, within the international context becomes the focus of attention of the second part of Chapter 2. Premised on an extensive review of the relevant literature in conjunction with my personal/professional experience as primary school teacher and acting head in Cyprus and England for almost a decade, I draw from and extend the work of Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002) and Cubillo and Brown (2003) providing my reasoning for what I call women's 'majority underrepresentation' in educational leadership. To be specific, I develop and debate three intersected levels of

barriers as the factors lying behind and contributing to women's unequal progress and participation in educational management. These are: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers (Gender role socialisation and stereotyping), b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers (Mentoring/sponsorship and promotions) and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers (Role conflict and self-esteem/confidence). I argue that the socio-cultural barriers identified at the Macro level are essentially the springboard from which the institutional and the personal/psychological barriers recognised at the Meso and the Micro levels respectively, stem. The institutional barriers at the Meso level can also contribute to the personal/psychological barriers at the Micro level. It is worth noting that the three levels of barriers mentioned above appear to converge with the societal, institutional and personal factors acknowledged by Smith (2011a, 2011b) as affecting women's occupational choices. The conceptual framework, informed by the literature reviewed and the enquiry's purpose and questions, is detailed in the final part of this Chapter.

The methodological framework of this research is presented in Chapter 3, which offers detailed discussion and justification of the philosophical/paradigmatic assumptions that underpin the methodological choices as well as a comprehensive report on the pilot and the main research that generated the research findings. Having Cohen et al.'s (2007) 'fitness for purpose' as a guiding principle, the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach (narrative inquiry), snowball sampling, semi-structured in-depth interviewing encouraging narration of personal experiences and thematic analysis are selected to better serve the research objectives and questions. Issues of validity, reliability, trustworthiness, ethics and the researcher's role are also debated in this Chapter.

Chapter 4 presents, discusses and analyses the rich crop of findings of this enquiry. Following the sequence of the research questions, the Chapter is divided into several Sections and Subsections representing the key themes that emerged from the overwhelming amount of qualitative data. Specifically, it analyses women's experiences of progressing to principalship including their unplanned careers; the external conducive and/or impeding influences on their occupational trajectories and the interview process. Women's experiences of principalship specifically focusing on their relationships with people within their school, community and personal contexts are also analysed. A comparison and analysis of women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship between 1961 and 2010 are also offered. Finally, the Chapter presents and analyses the reasons participants in this research provided for Cypriot women's disproportionate participation in primary school leadership between 1961 and 2010.

Ultimately, Chapter 5 draws this thesis to a close by pulling together the main findings in relation to the questions it set out to answer. It also considers the limitations, strengths and contribution of this research. Additionally, it sketches the thesis' implications and offers recommendations for forthcoming research as well as developments in policy and practice that may enhance women's participation in Cypriot primary school leadership.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Aiming to provide theoretical substance to the thesis objectives and questions, this Chapter focuses on critically reviewing the extant literature on the issue under investigation. Section 2.2 provides an examination of gender issues from a historical, global perspective. Section 2.3 begins with a discussion of women's position in educational research and theory and then moves on to debate women's disproportionate representation in educational administration and the reasons behind it within the international context. The thesis' conceptual framework, shaped in the light of the literature reviewed and the enquiry's purpose and questions is presented and explained in Section 2.4. A summary of the Chapter is offered in the final Section.

2.2. Gender Issues: A Historical, Global Perspective

The status of women in society in general and education in particular, has long been an area of discussion. Debates can be traced as far back as Athens' Golden Age (5th century BC) and its prominent philosophers Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and Xenophon. In Plato's landmark text 'The Republic', which was written around 375 BC, and has been widely acknowledged as the keystone of Western philosophy, part VI is devoted to 'Women and the Family'. In this chapter, among other issues, we read:

Socrates ... starts by considering the position of women in society. His argument is in principle a simple one. He asks whether difference of sex is, in itself, a proper basis for differentiation of occupation and social function, and answers that it is not. The only difference between men and women is one of physical function – one begets, the

other bears children. Apart from that, both can and both should follow the same range of occupations and perform the same functions (though men will, on the whole, perform them better); they should receive the same education to enable them to do so. In this way society will get the best value from both.

(Plato, [375 BC] 2007: 157)

Reading this extract, a person cannot help but realising how diachronic these words are. In only few sentences, Socrates, Plato's teacher, summarises contradicting perceptions and arguments of centuries that remain timely relevant and unresolved. More specifically, despite the revolutionary for the time recognition that sex/biological differences should not generate socio-professional disparities and that men and women should be similarly educated to benefit society, the underlying argument persists: "*...men will, on the whole, perform ... better*".

The perception, disguised or undisguised, that men were/are 'naturally superior' to women in most functions of social/public life has formed the basic 'justification' for Greek – and other – women's exclusion from civic sphere and their restriction within the limited boundaries of home, childrearing and domestic responsibilities. This view was amply expressed by Xenophon, Socrates student, in 'Economicus' ([362 BC] 2007:161) wherein he defended the gendered segregation of work providing it a divine dimension, predicating that:

For [God] made the man's body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns; and therefore imposed on him the outdoor tasks. To the woman, since he has made her body less capable of such endurance, I take it that God has assigned the indoor tasks... [Her] duty will be to remain indoors.

Taking this argument a step further, Aristotle – another important figure of philosophical thinking in the ancient world and Plato's student – bluntly defined women as 'mutilated

males' who are physically, mentally and socially inferior to men (Peradotto and Sullivan, 1984). For Aristotle, every newborn girl was nothing but a boy that 'went wrong' (vonThadden, 2002). As such, females 'should' remain under the surveillance and control of fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands and sons at all stages in their lives. Aristotle's arguments could be characterised as rather presumptuous albeit with, unfortunately, wide effect. Men and women may indeed be biologically different; however, this should not be taken to entail an inferior/superior relationship between them justified in the name of nature and/or God.

Classical Greece introduced to the world the regime of democracy, the most important in my view political system for social justice, and this needs to be acknowledged. However, in relation to women's status, the Greek city-states of the time were actually not democratic. Denying women citizens socio-political rights and most importantly the right to vote, in a way constituted the 'statutory establishment' of women's inferior position in Athenian society of the classical era. In essence, as LeGates (2001) succinctly indicated, the 'democratic' city-states were in fact a men's club and when Aristotle defined human beings as 'political animals' he actually meant males, not humans generally including females.

Since men had not only monopolised philosophy and politics but also language (LeGates, 2001), women's lower status was also infused in Greek literature. In Homer's *Odyssey*, women were stolen, exchanged, given as prizes or sold as slaves (Peradotto and Sullivan, 1984). Additionally, retaining their morality was imperative. Penelope, as an 'excellent' spouse honouring the moral principles of the time, remained faithful to her heroic husband Odysseus during his long lasting return from Troy. On the other hand, Odysseus' fidelity was lost when passing from Kirki, Kalypso and Nafsika on his journey back to Ithaka and his wife. In other words, while society expected Penelope to be loyal to Odysseus under any

circumstances, Odysseus, as a man, was 'permitted' to create extramarital relationships and was never accused of adultery. His heroic aspect was the one highlighted and his infidelity rather strengthened his fame instead of traumatising it.

Turning to the Roman Empire, women also appear to have had a rather silent, inferior and ornamental role, leaving men to play leadership roles in the family (Massey, 1988) and beyond. As vonThadden (2002) noted, 'pater familias' was the absolute owner of private property, part of which were wives and daughters. His pride was, above all, his sons. Girls were trained for their role within the household to which they were confined. Men had the authority for both home and state.

The only 'bright' exception in the ancient world that needs to be acknowledged in its own right was Egypt. According to vonThadden (2002), Egyptian women were married by love not by arrangement from their fathers. After their husband's death and until their children became adults they could deal with inheritance issues independently, without being legally advised. Being represented in the court by a man was unnecessary. Furthermore, they were able to assume minor posts in their villages although this rarely happened. They had the right to sit in the market and sell their merchandise while men were at home knitting! Unfortunately, Egypt was the golden exception to the rule.

Similar patterns to Classical Greece and Roman Empire have been recorded in traditionally conservative, patriarchal and religious-centred Christian cultures such as the Pacific Island (Strachan, 2009) or African nations (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009); Muslim cultures such as Pakistan (Shah, 2009), Bangladesh (Sperandio, 2009) and Turkey (Celikten, 2005, 2009); and Chinese cultures such as Hong Kong (Ho, 2009) and China (Qiang et al., 2009), where

women have long been identified as homemakers and caregivers, not leaders. Drawing from Kagoda and Sperandio (2009), the first girls' schools, established in Uganda in early 1900s, aimed at perpetuating gender role segregation. Their target was "to prepare girls to be future wives of kings and chiefs and other influential people in government, to join their husbands in their role as leaders of the new religious faith [catholic]" (ibid:51). As only daughters of tribal chiefs were enrolled in those first schools, it becomes clear that apart from gendered the system was also elitist. Even if girls gained education beyond the basic, "they were still expected to undertake domestic work in the home for their husbands and children" (ibid:51), not administrative tasks.

Concerns for women's status and gender equity had 'formally' become central via the feminist movement, which was developed in the West – Europe and North America – in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (LeGates, 2001). A definition of feminism provided by LeGates (2001:7) described it "as an organised movement for women's rights and interests". As such, it primarily aimed at supporting equal legislative and political rights for women and men. At the end of the 1970s, women's lower status in society and gender relations became a focus and the struggle for women's emancipation began. It should be emphasized that feminist theory is not simply focusing on women themselves, but mainly on social/patriarchal structures and norms, which are considered the critical source of women's oppression (Adler et al., 1993). The basic goal of feminism, characterised by LeGates (2001:ix) as a diachronically fluid, diverse and shifting social movement across cultures – probably the most important of our time – had been to "challenge patriarchal control whether in thought or in action". This explains why when referring to 'gender', feminists mainly emphasise the socio-cultural content of the term and not its natural/biological dimension.

Despite great efforts of more than a century, the portrait of gender equality remains unfinished. The much-offered view that the ‘woman issue’ has been ‘taken care of’ by the movements of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the West, is far from representing reality (Sobehart, 2009). Unfortunately, instead of moving forward, backward steps have been documented by the Gender Equity Index in Australia in 2006, which recorded a regression in women’s position in Australian society compared to the previous decade, a pattern identical to that of the United States (Blackmore, 2009). As Charles Dougherty (2009: xi) properly put it, “the impact of ... gender imbalance enforced in earlier centuries is still evident” even in developed countries such as the United States from which feminist movement stemmed. In a country where women gained the right to vote in 1920, they remain disproportionately represented in elected federal and state government positions and no woman has become president yet. It appears that long established patriarchal perceptions are proving much more difficult to attack on the practical rather than the theoretical level.

Although an increasing number of women have entered the labour market worldwide, the stereotypes of identifying women with the private sphere and men with the public have not yet been abolished (Coleman, 2011). Rather, women are currently caught between two worlds. While being professionals, they are still stereotypically considered by themselves and others as having the major responsibility for home and family, mirroring women in Uganda back in the 1900s. Echoing Coleman’s (2009:19) words it seems “particularly difficult to shake the established norms that equate women with the home and the supportive role and men with careers”.

Just as “political and cultural invisibility, intellectual restrictions, sexual vulnerability, and economic exploitation, all justified in the name of nature and/or God, shaped women’s lives”

(LeGates, 2001: 23) in the past, it appears that they continue to be influential even today not only in developed but most visibly in underdeveloped and developing countries. In various so-called 'Third World' societies, women still have limited or no access to education compared to men, especially at the secondary and higher levels (Bandiho, 2009; Strachan, 2009). In Pakistan, according to Shah (1986:79), "if economic constraints force a choice, the female child will be the one chosen to stay out of education" whereas in Uganda, up until the 1960s, "parents were unwilling to pay even small school fees to educate girls" (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009:51). These practices resonate with Strachan's (2009) findings suggesting that, currently, in Pacific Island Nations, if families are unable to pay school fees for enrolling their children in secondary education, then it is the girls who will be chosen to drop out of school, not boys. As Strachan pointed out, this action is again culturally embedded. Boys' education is highly valued whereas girls can 'live without' and concentrate on their domestic duties, offering services to homemaking and caretaking of younger siblings. Albeit, echoing Socrate's argument back in 375 BC, Strachan (2009:105) justly asserted that "both males and females need to be valued equally in all aspects of their lives, including education", his statement appears to be remote even from contemporary reality. Clearly, it is safe to assert that even today women are condemned to a disadvantageous position compared to their male counterparts, because they are denied the opportunity to acquire the academic qualifications and credentials that are necessary to boost their intellectual and professional rise to leadership ranks in education and beyond. The progress over the last 2,500 years, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries does not seem to be promising. It seems that men are not willing to share part of their privilege.

What is most worrisome and unacceptable is the fact that in various underdeveloped and developing parts of the world women are still considered property of their fathers and

husbands and it is endemic to be physically abused by men (Strachan et al., 2010) in order to maintain the patriarchal structures and the 'socio-cultural order'. Similarly to Classical Greece and Roman Empire, it is still legally a common practice for women to have no say in their marriage, divorce, children's custody – especially boys' – inheritance or monetary issues (vonThadden, 2002; Sperandio, 2009). In ancient Greece and Rome girls were selected among their 'too many' female siblings and were left to die by their fathers (vonThadden, 2002) whereas in the Arab world of the early 7th century, it was a custom for girls to be buried alive at birth (Shah, 1998). Practices such as these may sound outdated. Unfortunately, they are not. According to vonThadden (2002), evidence from Third World countries suggests that girls are still left to die more easily than boys because they are 'not needed'. As the same author articulated, this occurs despite the fact that exposing to death or murdering children is currently forbidden almost everywhere in the world. Even when these kinds of practices are not employed, feelings of discontent for the birth of a girl are often still expressed. Shah (1998:79) is particularly revealing on this issue:

In ... India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in families of particular socio-economic backgrounds, sympathies are offered at the birth of a female child to the 'unhappy family'. The miserable mother is blamed for bringing the unwanted child into the world and if the number of female offsprings increases with no male child to brighten the house, the unlucky mother can get divorced.

Evidently, from the ancient world to the present time; from Europe and United States to Australia, New Zealand, Asia and Africa; from the conservative, patriarchal and religious-centred countries to the more liberal and democratic; from developed to underdeveloped and developing nations; and to a lesser or greater extent; gender dualities existed for generations and continue to exist, rendering them perennial. As LeGates (2001:8) appropriately asserted, "women experience their oppression differently in different times, places and social

situations”. Regardless of women’s struggles and the release of numerous declarations and policies for human rights and gender equality it appears that societies follow different patterns of change and this is reflected in the rate and degree of progress achieved on gender issues. Even if recent research has documented that gratifying changes and improvements have taken place and still occur around the globe enforced by coercion acts, total equality has not yet been accomplished (Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis, 2002; Talesra, 2002; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Bandiho, 2009; Blackmore, 2009; Cerlikten, 2009; Coleman, 2009, 2011; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009; Phedlha, 2009; Quiang, 2009; Sperandio, 2009).

Grounded on this complex diachronic intra- and inter-cultural background, what I have tried to put forward in this Section is far from simply a historical overview of gender issues. The effort was rather to highlight the position that the causes of gender inequality appear to be mainly embedded in socio-cultural norms that have provided fertile ground to breed gender disparities over time, within and across the borders. Undoubtedly, when dynamically interwoven, this range of parameters may determine not only women’s conceptualisation about themselves but also the way others perceive them and act towards them as what De Beauvoir (1953) would call ‘the second sex’. How gender discrepancies influenced and continue to affect women’s upward mobility in senior posts and their participation in educational leadership worldwide is debated next.

2.3. Women in Educational Administration: International Context

2.3.1. Educational Leadership Research and Theory

Drawing from Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009:22), “the relationship of gender and leadership has almost always been studied within the political context of organisational and societal

inequalities”. During the ’80s and ’90s, studies by feminist scholars in the field of education confirmed and underlined men’s diachronic dominance in social science research where the male perspective was highlighted whereas women’s voice was excluded (Shakeshaft, 1989; Adler et al., 1993; Ouston, 1993). To quote Blackmore (2009:73), “leadership research had been by men on men in leadership, producing dominant notions of particular forms of masculinity as the leadership norm – being rational, unemotional and objective”.

Women’s absence from academic journals – either as authors or as the research subjects – was also documented by Hall (1993) in her review of research in UK between 1980 and 1993. What is strikingly remarkable was the necessity for women authors in the past to employ male names to be able to enter the publishing world (Grady and Bertram, 2009). Against this background, feminists and other women scholars attempted to step forth, making themselves visible as researchers/authors and placing women at the heart of their enquiries, providing them with a platform from which to be heard. As more women gradually moved into school administration, studies concentrated not only on examining women’s leadership styles and/or career prospects and obstacles but also on developing policies to increase their participation in management and facilitate their managerial role.

Nonetheless, a look at management literature confirms that the major part of educational administration theory systematically overlooked women (Hall, 1993) either on the erroneous presumption that all administrators are men or that management is gender-free (Adler et al., 1993) or gender neutral (Blackmore, 1989). Gender issues and the ‘feminine’ aspect of leadership have been either included with passing reference or have been totally omitted. As Hall (1993:24) asserted, “in most cases a plea for additional research is made, but gender

continues to be treated as a separate issue rather than a powerful tool for restructuring conceptualisations of school life and leadership”.

Back in 1989 Charol Shakeshaft criticised this ignorance arguing that females’ experiences should be incorporated in management research and theory, as these are different from males’. She pointed out that research on men is inappropriate for generalisation to women’s experience. Research findings by Adler et al. (1993) corroborated this opinion. As Shah (2009:128) asserted, as “educational leadership is conceptualised and experienced differently across the gender divide”, ignoring the professional experiences of women in the mainstream literature “may result in theoretical misconstructions”. Along the same lines, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009:21) suggested that “the notion of leadership can be expanded by building on women’s experience of leadership”. It could be claimed that women’s ‘echoing silence’ and exclusion from educational administration theory served the perpetuation of gendered inferior/superior roles inculcated in society with men being the ‘norm’ and women striving to stand up to the male prototype in order to be considered ‘successful leaders’. Despite current growing acknowledgment, that the female perspective should be researched in its own right and acquire focal position in leadership research/theory, “women’s scholarship remains on the periphery to the central position of men’s scholarship” even today (Strachan et al., 2010:65). Regardless of steps forward being made, gender inequity in educational leadership persists.

2.3.2. Participation in Management

Studies on women in educational leadership have followed various thematic strands with three, I argue, being dominant. The first investigates women’s participation in educational

administration and possible reasons inhibiting their career trajectories. The second examines the leadership styles of women and men exploring whether they possess similar/dissimilar traits leading them to manage schools similarly/differently and which the optimum management style is for school effectiveness. The third and more recent strand focuses on illuminating the lives and careers of (successful) women administrators. It is in the first group of studies that this thesis falls, sharing the efforts of other researchers (Blackmore, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2001), to portray and provide explanations for women's disproportionate representation in educational administration, with particular focus on the unexplored Cyprus setting.

The underrepresentation of women in the upper echelons of school management has become the focus of attention of theory and research in the field of educational administration in the past few decades (Fitzgerald, 2006). Research has consistently highlighted the global character of the phenomenon affecting women educators across the continents (Sobehart, 2009). What is noteworthy, is that women's observed absence from high-ranking educational posts occurs although they constitute the majority of the teaching workforce (see Blackmore, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1993, 2006; Al-Khalifa, 1992; Ouston, 1993; Ozga, 1993; Evetts, 1994; Bush, 1995; Hall, 1996, 1999; Coleman, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2011; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Moreau et al., 2007; McLay, 2008; Reynolds, 2008; Smith, 2011a, 2011b) in most countries, whatever the level of development (Davies, 1990; Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft, 2006). The paradox is evident not only in the secondary and higher education sectors but even in the primary sector, which is typically heavily dominated by women (Thornton, 1999; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Gaskell and Mullen, 2006).

In seeking to explain the antecedents of what I define as women's 'majority underrepresentation' in educational administration, prominent researchers such as Blackmore (1989), Shakeshaft (1989), Hall (1996) and Coleman (2001), among others, have identified and classified the causes in various ways reflecting different perspectives on the issue (Ozga, 1993). Across the decades, the causes have been described as 'overt and covert barriers' (Coleman, 2001, 2009) or 'internal and external barriers' (Blackmore, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989; Hall, 1996) to women's career development. The term 'glass ceiling' has become the most representative metaphor comprising the whole range of invisible hindrances which women come across on their way to the top.

2.3.3. Levels of Barriers

As already mentioned, there are several schools of thought around the factors halting women's advancement and these, deservedly, need to be acknowledged. However, the extensive study of the relevant literature in conjunction with my professional experience as primary school teacher in Cyprus for seven years and teacher/acting head in Greek Schools in England for one and a half years, have led me to argue that the reasons for the unequal participation of women in managerial posts can be divided in three interrelated levels:

- a) The 'Macro' level: Socio-cultural barriers (Gender role socialisation and stereotyping)
- b) The 'Meso' level: Institutional barriers (Mentoring/sponsorship and promotions)
- c) The 'Micro' level: Personal/Psychological barriers (Role conflict and self-esteem/confidence)

The classification endorsed has been tailored and extended from the work of Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002) and Cubillo and Brown (2003) and is explicitly discussed next. It is essential to note that these levels constitute the core of my thesis' conceptual framework, which is presented and explained in Section 2.4. They appear to converge with the three spheres of influence to women's career decisions identified by Smith (2011a, 2011b), namely societal, institutional and personal factors.

2.3.3.1. Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers

Culture is an abstraction, yet the forces that are created in social and organisational situations deriving from culture are powerful. If we don't understand the operation of these forces, we become victim to them. Cultural forces are powerful because they operate outside of our awareness. We need to understand them not only because of their power but also because they help to explain many of our puzzling and frustrating experiences in social and organisational life. Most importantly, understanding cultural forces enables us to understand ourselves better.

(Schein, 2010: 7)

On the premise that the paradoxes for women aspiring to "being professionally educated and to leading in an educational profession" are most regularly created by culture (Dana, 2009:67), then it becomes highly significant to explain how socio-cultural particularities may constrain women's career progress. In what follows, the domino of diverse gendered socialisation, attributes and roles, education and academic credentials/qualifications, roles across/within professions and upward mobility to leadership – all with particular reference to education – is put into play.

When referring to socio-cultural barriers in this thesis, I mean those related to *gender role socialisation* and *stereotyping*, which, as Rarieya (2005) noted, largely account for gender

inequality in educational leadership. According to Pounder and Coleman (2002), the socialisation theory proposes that, from birth onwards, males and females are socialised differently and subsequently develop and internalise different values and characteristics as they grow older. The expectation is that, among other qualities, women will ‘ordinarily’ become caring and relationship oriented and men assertive, controlling and competitive (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Based on this socially constructed division of gender qualities, men and women are commonly expected to undertake different roles in society, compatible with their ‘gendered identity’. In Strachan et al.’s (2010:68) words, men and women “... learn and practise a set of scripts within their feminine and masculine roles as part of their socialisation”. Consequently, stereotyped perceptions emerge by women themselves and others asserting that they are “‘naturally’ suited to the primary [yet ‘subordinate’] roles of mothers and wives” (Court, 1997) whereas men are suitable for the ‘superior’ roles of breadwinners and leaders (Coleman, 2011). According to Pounder and Coleman (2002:125),

from a female perspective, the downside of this process is that the view of women as nurturing may lead to a justification of women holding supportive roles, leaving men typically to play leadership roles.

In effect, this is indeed a common phenomenon transcending time and cultures as suggested in the historical, global discussion of gender issues provided earlier.

Picture 1: Women's incongruity with leadership roles



Source: feministatsea.wordpress.com²

The way “gender is constructed impacts significantly on how women experience (or do not experience) leadership” (Strachan et al., 2010:69). More specifically, to be able to fulfil the ‘predetermined prophesy’ set for them without them, it is frequently ‘mandatory’ for males and females to follow different educational pathways. As was previously documented, in certain parts of the world, boys tend to scale the intellectual ladder more easily than girls who often face insurmountable socio-cultural barriers negating them the opportunity to make even a single educational step (Rarieya, 2005; Oplatka, 2006; Bandiho, 2009; Shah, 2009; Strachan, 2009). As Strachan (2009:103) underlined, “accessing education can be a struggle for girls” in Melanesia while, according to Rarieya (2005), in Pakistan, the lack of an equitable education system has resulted in 80% of women being illiterate compared to 45% of men. The vital question that thus arises is how girls/women living in these or similar contexts can access educational leadership – or in fact any kind of leadership – in the future,

² <http://feministatsea.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/i-just-bumped-my-head-on-the-glass-ceiling/>

if they are not even offered the opportunity to access education and obtain the required knowledge in the first place?

It should also be emphasised that the long established practice followed in many South Asian countries “of confining girls to the home has resulted in teaching being overwhelmingly male-dominated” (Sperandio, 2009:144). In a similar vein, Strachan et al. (2010:67) pointed out that “teaching in developing counties is not a feminised profession and women are the minority in the teaching workforce”. An overview of research in Tanzania (Bandiho, 2009), Uganda (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009), South Africa (Phedla, 2009), Pakistan (Rarieya, 2005; Shah, 2009) and Melanesia (Strachan et al., 2010) supports this opinion. This comes in sharp contrast with teaching internationally – particularly in the West – which, as already mentioned, is numerically dominated by women. The lack of female role models can make the situation even more difficult for girls/women, not only for entering education but also for progressing within it. Perhaps one way to facilitate females’ access to education was/is the establishment of ‘girls only’ schools, a practice employed in many developing, religious-centred countries (Rarieya, 2005; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009; Shah, 2009). However, seen from a different angle, I argue that a potential dark-side of dividing schools by gender is that this may fuel and exacerbate gender segregation in educational settings.

Another parameter that may encumber girls’ educational development and subsequently their career ascent in traditionally patriarchal societies is early marriage. This may sound odd in the so-called developed world. In these societies though, it is a way of living. Taking Pakistan as an example, Rarieya (2005) pinpointed that it is common for girls to drop out of school to get married, as this is perceived to be more significant for them than being educated. Marriage in Pakistan is an “important social institution” (ibid:94) and a woman’s place in the

particular society is highly dependent on whether she gets married or not. Subsequently, as Rarieya's research documented, girls in adolescence habitually leave school temporarily to get married and have children. Having temporal educational breaks is the best possible scenario with the worst – and unfortunately more usual – being leaving school and any academic/professional ambitions permanently. Studies by Cubillo and Brown (2003) and Rarieya (2005) revealed that unless girls/women are fortunate enough to have supportive parents, particularly fathers, who value education and are not afraid that their daughters' 'marriageability' will be adversely affected by education, they cannot develop to their fullest promise. The husbands' and extended families' support is also immensely significant if they are to successfully continue their intellectual/career journeys (Rarieya, 2005). Additionally, in certain South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, being born in a family "with high socioeconomic status and adopting 'Western' attitudes" (Sperandio, 2009:144) provides good chances to girls of being educated to the highest level and thereby follow a somewhat 'unconventional' personal/occupational trail.

On the basis that girls frequently acquire minimal academic qualifications compared to boys, they are subsequently led to enter dissimilar professional worlds. While high-paid, high-profile occupations are commonly 'destined' for the intellectually qualified and socially powerful men, low/er-paid, low/er-prestige professions 'call for' less qualified/unqualified and socially weak women workers. And even if women finally 'make it' to the top of the intellectual ladder, entering similar occupations as their male equivalents, the impact of gender role socialisation and stereotyping may persist in two significant ways. Firstly, women may choose to remain silent within the workplace or question their own authority and ability as opposed to male superiority with which they have been brought up (Talesra, 2002; Rarieya, 2005; Strachan et al., 2010). Secondly, they are regularly expected by themselves

and others to hold different and/or pastoral/subservient roles within their professional environments, as their womanly nature ‘commands’ (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

The latter is particularly true for women in education worldwide for whom research has repetitively marked involvement in supportive roles “rather than in straight line management jobs which lead to senior posts” (Ouston, 1993:8). As a result, they remain less trained and prepared for headship. It is thus safe to assert that their upward mobility to formal leadership is negatively affected by their female identity and the cluster of stereotypical connotations that gender comes with. Not surprisingly, “the higher the level of decision making, voice and power, the lower the number of women occupying those positions” (Dana; 2009:70).

Concentrating on primary education in particular, which is the focus of this thesis, evidence from a national study in England and Wales by Thornton and Bricheno (2000:188), suggested that, even in this women-dominated educational sector, “men tend to achieve well, acquiring a highly disproportionate number of senior posts” and obtaining higher salaries than women do. As the researchers noted, this phenomenon has been observed in other countries as well, for example the Nordic countries and the USA. Thornton and Bricheno’s enquiry demonstrated not only a correlation between gender and senior position but also a relationship between gender and curriculum subject as well as gender and students’ age. More specifically, the study indicated that men tend to teach the ‘high profile’ subjects of maths, technology and science while women teach humanities and art-based subjects. In addition, it seems that the persisting stereotypical duality of women-as-caring and men-as-professionals in a way ‘boosts’ men to teach older students leaving women to teach pupils of younger age. Comparable findings for gender imbalance in the distribution of promoted posts and subjects taught have been recorded in UK by Moreau et al. (2007). Coleman’s (2009:15)

research in England also suggested that, unlike women in secondary education, men in the primary sector, although few, “are widely welcomed as headteachers” and as their numbers progressively decrease, they “are much in demand”. A logical inference stemming from the forgoing evidence is that, even in this ‘female occupation’, being male is an advantage and power in its various forms appears to lie in the hands of men. Hence, I argue that these unequal gendered power relations in the relatively under-researched level of primary education call for further investigation and they should be seriously taken into account by western governments, for example in the UK (Thornton, 1999; Moreau et al., 2007), when undertaking policy initiatives for recruiting more men in this particular sector.

Since teaching has customarily been considered an ‘appropriate job’ for women (Cubillo and Brown, 2003), gendered labour is evident not only within but also between sectors (Moreau et al., 2007). It has been observed that women dominate pre-primary and primary education, which is perceived to be a continuation of family structures, motherhood and childrearing/childcaring (Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis, 2002). Early years and primary teaching are ‘suitable’ but of overall lower status (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000) and less rewarded (Moreau et al., 2007) professional grounds for women. The higher status/pay and ‘academically demanding’ secondary and tertiary/higher education sectors are men’s preserve, especially at senior levels. Resisting the women-as-caring and men-as-professionals typecasting, I draw attention to Acker’s (1995) position who wisely stressed that teaching should not be viewed solely as a ‘caring profession’, which is ‘suitable’ for women, particularly in its lower sectors. It should also be treated as a regular job with all its difficulties and schools should be seen as ordinary workplaces for teachers regardless of gender.

Stereotypical assumptions could also be considered accountable for posting women in New Zealand in “small rural ... and low-decile schools, which bring with them special challenges” and require long hours of hard work whereas “urban schools [which] are the larger schools ... are dominated by male principals (Strachan, 2009:102). As Strachan noted, as the headteachers’ salary depends on the number of students enrolled in each school, it becomes clear that men get higher salaries than women, intensifying gender inequality. Women leaders’ concentration in schools and universities that are “more difficult to staff and less resourced” compared to institutions that are “more selective [and] elite”, was also reported by Blackmore (2009:77) in Australia. That women “earn on average less than men ... at all levels and in all education phases” was also identified in a study by Moreau et al. (2007:238) in UK, with researchers ascribing the inequity to “women taking responsibilities in smaller schools, where similar work attracts less financial reward [and] to men being more likely to be offered financial incentives”.

Turning to traditional societies such as Uganda, the fact that girls-only schools can be managed either by women or men heads, whereas mixed/coeducational and chiefly boys-only schools are men principals’ preserve (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009), could logically be perceived as another indication of gender stereotyping in management. Although, I am sceptical about the employment of quota systems to increase women’s participation in educational administration, the affirmative action taken up in Uganda requiring both a female and a male manager for each coeducational school needs to be acknowledged as a first step towards equality in such a conservative context. Perhaps the next step could be offering women the opportunity to be the sole administrators of these schools in their own right, provided of course that they possess all the necessary qualifications and based on merit.

The socio-cultural barriers are “often strongly influenced by religious customs and beliefs, which women, positioned by circumstances, are obliged to accept” (Cubillo and Brown, 2003:281). This view is echoed in Rarieya’s (2005:89) assertion that “idiosyncratic interpretations of Islam [in Pakistan] have ... aggravated gender disparities and are hampering reform initiatives aimed at adapting education to meet the changing social needs” of people in her country. In the same vein, Shah (2009:132-133) emphasised that:

the Islamic philosophy of education or the Quranic teachings may not be gender discriminatory, but the discourses that have been produced in articulation with multiple social, economic, political and cultural factors in different Muslim societies and legitimized in the name of religion are often gendered.

An analogous profile regarding the strong impact of Christianity on Melanesian women leaders has been identified by Strachan et al. (2010). According to these researchers, “the religious discourse that places men as leaders in both the public and private domains is powerful” (ibid:70) and greatly influences the way these women exercise their leadership role. This is where the so-called ‘servant leadership’ comes into play. Servant leadership is “characterised by service to others, submission, humility and truthfulness and fits with women’s stereotypical roles.... It is also less likely to threaten men” (Strachan, 2009:104). On the one hand, this ‘model’ of leadership can be seen as somewhat ‘liberating’, offering Melanesian women the chance to get involved in leadership roles, employing management approaches that are attuned to their gendered, Christian identity/role. On the other hand, though, it “continues to position women as subordinates and does nothing to challenge the inequalities in attitudes, systems and social structures” (Strachan et al., 2010:71).

Acknowledging women’s dismissal from religious dialogue and interpretation as a major factor exacerbating socio-cultural barriers for women, Grady and Bertram (2009:157)

properly proposed that religions' role globally and their impact on women's leadership needs to be further examined:

The religions of the world and their influence on customs and practices are significant forces in the access women have to leadership positions. Religious groups often determine access to positions of power, access to education, freedom of movement, and freedom of dress and have an impact on the status of women. ... Because religion is deeply embedded in culture, this factor and its impact may need to be brought to a more prominent place in the discourse.

Apart from religion, aspects of race and ethnicity (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Chisholm, 2001; Coleman, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2003, 2006; Moreau et al., 2007; Lumby, 2009; White, 2010); age and professional experience (Lumby, 2009); personality and/or philosophical/political perceptions; socio-economic status (Lumby, 2009); political agendas; and/or even sexual orientation and/or disability may also interfere furthering and intensifying women's discrimination in progressing to and/or exercising leadership. Thereby, their role cannot be ruled out. This multiplicity of potential influences has led me to caution against using blanket assumptions placing all women educators in a homogenous group presuming that they experience gender inequity in the same way over time, within and across societies and cultures.

As this chapter outlined, the socio-cultural obstacles burdening women's advancement to leadership are particularly evident in underdeveloped/developing and conservative countries/societies where patriarchy and religion dominate (Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Rarieya, 2005; Oplatka, 2006; Shah, 2009; Strachan et al., 2010). Culture in these settings "raises barriers for women's aspirations simply because of the attitudes, learned behaviours and routine practices that are practiced and reinforced" (Dana, 2009:69). Challenging well-

rooted social conventions in societies where gender roles are tightly culturally prescribed appears to be difficult. An illustrative example of the profound impact that socio-cultural norms may have in these contexts was offered by Strachan (2009). As she pointed out, even though the New Zealand Human Rights Commission in 2007 acknowledged the significance of girls'/women's education for the reduction of poverty and the socio-economic progress of the developing area of Melanesia, it seems that stereotypes are so well embedded in these societies that keep them from moving forward.

This is not to suggest that the status quo in the so-called 'liberal' and 'developed' countries is markedly different. For instance, albeit legal frameworks and policies for gender equality in all walks of life – and education in particular – have been released in UK since the 1970s contributing to a more equitable society for women, it seems that a lot more needs to be done in order to totally abolish stereotyping that generally identifies leadership with men (Coleman, 2009). A similar pattern has been recorded in Greece by Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002), Kyriakoussis and Saiti (2006) and Kaparou and Bush (2007). Arguably, the legislation on its own cannot make miracles. As Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis succinctly highlighted, since hidden discrimination and preferences continue, substantial equality cannot be achieved.

To this end, I argue that Nemerowicz and Rosi's (1997) advice that the early socialisation of both genders in various leadership roles may help boys feel more comfortable with the idea of women as leaders in the future, is wholesome. Extending this line of argument, I would elaborate that, via this process, girls could be benefited as well, because they would be provided the opportunity to get involved in leadership roles that can prepare them for formal leadership posts in the future.

Picture 2: Switching roles



Source: CartoonStock.com³

Additionally, the current trend in organisations favouring a more ‘feminised’ mode of leading (Reay and Ball, 2000) appears to be a golden chance for women to take advantage of their socially acquired ‘feminine’ qualities in order to effectively challenge and break through stereotypes. As Rarieya (2005:88) optimistically advocated, “though gender roles may be culturally defined, they can be challenged and reshaped”.

2.3.3.2. Meso level: Institutional barriers

On the basis that “schools mirror the society that they serve” (Sherman, 2000:134) the socio-cultural constraints, namely gender role socialisation and stereotyping, are unavoidably reflected in the educational system, leading to multiple institutional barriers to women’s

³http://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoonview.asp?start=7&search=main&catref=jfa0116&MA_Artist=&MA_Category=&ANDkeyword=glass+ceiling&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword=

career aspirations. In Al-Khalifa's words (1992:97), "schools as organisations restate and rework social understandings of male dominance and female dependence and of gender roles" and thereby "reproduce patriarchal relationships" (Adler et al., 1993:56). Quite simply, just like in society, women educators experience the impact of asymmetrical power relations (Cubillo and Brown, 2003) in the school context since they are often faced with prejudice (Kaparou and Bush, 2007) and devaluation (Shakeshaft, 1993, 2006; Gaskell and Mullen, 2006). As previously discussed, they are considered more suitable to fill subordinate and pastoral roles compared to their male colleagues who are a priori perceived more able to assume leadership posts (Young, 1992; Gray, 1993; Ouston, 1993; Coleman, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2006). These stereotyped perceptions are evident in several studies (Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Rarieya, 2005; Shakeshaft, 2006) showing that women educators are less likely to receive adequate institutional support in their attempt to ascend the hierarchy.

In particular, within the workplace, there appears to be insufficient formal or informal mentoring and sponsorship for women to prepare for leadership (Sherman, 2000; McLay, 2008; Rarieya, 2005) although this is of great importance for them (Sherman, 2000; Coleman, 2002, 2009, 2011; Gold, 1996; Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). This is largely due to the "old boys' network" and its constant power to select and exclude (McLay, 2008). Since the majority of mentors are most likely to be men heads and/or senior staff, it is inevitable that they will interact with and groom younger men for promotion (Coleman, 2002) seen as "junior versions of themselves" (Sherman, 2000:141) instead of women. Arguably, the professional marginalisation of "troubling women" who may challenge the "dominant masculinities and modes of management" (Blackmore, 1999:3) ensures the continuity of male dominance in the workplace.

Picture 3: Intruding into the "old boys' network"



Source: CartoonStock.com⁴

In addition, inter-gender mentor/mentee, appraiser/appraisee relationships can become problematic and unhelpful for women in two significant ways. First, based on stereotypical assumptions, men can be overprotective and reluctant to provide negative feedback to female appraisees or they may not identify with them, resulting in failure to add to their progress (Hall, 1993). Second, these kinds of relationships can be conventionally misinterpreted and this often makes both participants more cautious and less open to each other rendering the mentoring/sponsorship interaction dysfunctional (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). This is predominantly evident in the case of developing countries such as Uganda (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009) where women's involvement in inter-gender informal/formal networking is culturally restricted by the entrenched hegemonic patriarchal structures that rigidly cast male and female interaction as 'inappropriate'. Fortunately, it seems that positive developments do occur in recent years as suggested by Rarieya's (2005) and Strachan et al.'s (2010) enquiries

⁴http://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoonview.asp?start=4&search=main&catref=jcon2242&MA_Artist=&MA_Category=&ANDkeyword=glass+ceiling&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword=

in Pakistan and Melanesia respectively indicating that men heads may and do foster women's advancement to leadership.

The establishment of women-only networks could be "recommended as a way of promoting women in leadership" (Coleman, 2009:17). According to Al-Khalifa (1992:104), "single-sex training for women has tremendous potential for empowering women and encouraging women to be confident about the validity of their experience and ideas about their own needs and their approaches to management". As the same author and Coleman (2011) elaborated, when participating/working within these groups women can be supported, renewed and stimulated for development. However, similarly to the creation and function of girls-only schools, I wonder whether the formation of such networks may indeed combat gender segregation in institutional settings or essentially perpetuate its existence. After all, the reality of work calls for men and women to work together. Hence, the aim should rather be to deconstruct the 'old-boys networks' and opt for mixed-sex groups grounded on equality instead of setting up women-only networks.

With regard to *promotions*, it seems that Al-Khalifa's assertion back in 1992 that the promotion processes do not 'work properly' for women continues to apply today. Research has confirmed that women are often discriminated against in promotions in both the developed and the developing countries (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Coleman, 2002, 2009; Kyriakousis and Saiti, 2006; Sperandio, 2009; Strachan, 2009). This occurs even when candidates of both genders are equal in all other factors (Reynolds, 2008) or women are more experienced and better qualified than men (Strachan, 2009).

Thus, it is safe to assert that their discrimination is gender biased and it could be attributed to four main factors impinging on their selection. Primarily, inequity may stem from the lack of women on interview panels acting as gatekeepers during interviews (Coleman, 2002, 2009; Kyriakousis and Saiti, 2006). Secondly, bias may originate from the erroneous, subjective and stereotyped presumptions of male (and female) selectors that men are ‘naturally’ better suited to school management (Coleman, 2001, 2002; Shakeshaft, 2006; Strachan, 2009) and that the family responsibilities of married women may keep them from being committed and carrying out their excessive professional duties as heads effectively (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Coleman, 2002, 2009, 2011; Wexler-Eckman, 2004; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Reynolds, 2008). The ensuing statements by women participants in Coleman’s (2009: 15) survey in England in 2004 are characteristic. For example, one of her informants claimed: “I overheard governors talking at an interview saying that I could not get the job as they needed a man on the staff! I didn’t get the job.”

Picture 4: Women as 'outsiders' in the interview



Source: CartoonStock.com⁵

⁵http://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoonview.asp?start=2&search=main&catref=ksmn955&MA_Artist=&MA_Category=&ANDkeyword=glass+ceiling&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword=

Constant comments regarding my role and how it sits with being a mother of four young children – implication is I’ m not doing a good job either as mother or head teacher.

(Coleman, 2009:14)

Interestingly, even those men who may “not conform to the hegemonic masculinist attitude” (Coleman, 2009:15) commonly expected by ‘authentic’ leaders and who undertake household/childrearing responsibilities can face discriminatory attitudes in interviews as the same survey revealed. An indicative example follows:

I missed an interview for head of department due to the birth of my second daughter; the interview was rearranged but one of the panel made a comment that I wasn’t needed at the birth.

(Coleman, 2009:15)

Ironically, stereotypical assumptions that unmarried and especially childless women might be somewhat unprepared to handle children because they lack the experience of motherhood often form the third reason negatively impinging on their selection (Coleman, 2009). The fourth factor, which can adversely affect women’s promotion relates to the conventional beliefs of male (and female) members on interview panels that women should hold supportive roles to their partners’/husbands’ careers, which ‘should’ be prioritized. Asking women candidates in Coleman’s 2004 survey “how their husbands might feel” if they got the promotion (Coleman, 2009:14) is illustrative.

It needs to be emphasized that, particularly in the primary sector, gender inequality in promotions can be further disturbed by so-called ‘positive discrimination’ (Moreau et al., 2007). More specifically, as suggested from the study of Thornton and Bricheno (2000), in primary education, men, who are a minority, are often favoured and more easily promoted in

order to attain a balance in the numbers of women and men heads recruited. If this is indeed the case, then it constitutes overt discrimination against women.

From the foregoing discussion, it could be claimed that men are in the ‘correct place’ when applying for headship, whereas women are challenging the norm (Coleman, 2002). Women are what Blackmore (1999) and Coleman (2009, 2011) described as ‘outsiders in leadership’. The slow rise in the numbers of women leaders, which is currently observed (Coleman, 2009; Smith, 2011a, 2011b) appears to imply that there is a movement towards a more equal participation of women in educational administration. However, as Reynolds (2008) pointed out, the idea that women’s discrimination has been eliminated based on what the numbers indicate, is too simplistic. As can be inferred from the preceding discussion, stereotyped perceptions about women’s and men’s roles in the workplace continue and “...one can hardly claim to hear glass ceilings shattering around us” (Cubillo and Brown, 2003:280). It is remarkable how Socrates’ arguments coming from deep in history continue to be pertinent and can describe the way women are treated even in the current era:

There is therefore no administrative occupation which is peculiar to woman as woman or man as man; natural capacities are similarly distributed in each sex, and it is natural for women to take part in all occupations as well as men, *though in all women will be the weaker partners* [author’s emphasis].

(Plato, [375 BC] 2007: 165)

They [women] must play their part in war and in all other duties of a Guardian, which will be their sole occupation; *only as they are the weaker sex, we [men] must give them a lighter share of these duties than men* [author’s emphasis]

(Plato, [375 BC] 2007: 167)

2.3.3.3. *Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers*

Several studies have identified women's personal reluctance to put themselves forward for promotion (Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis, 2002; Kyriakousis and Saiti, 2006; Kaparou and Bush, 2007). This might be attributed to the pressure and stress caused by *role conflict* (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Coleman, 2002, 2009, 2011; Moreau et al., 2007; Blackmore, 2009; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; White, 2010). According to Wexler-Eckman (2004:368), "role conflict occurs as individuals attempt to balance their family and home roles with their professional roles".

There is evidence to suggest that the conflict is greater for women than men. Research in the USA, UK, the rest of Europe and elsewhere has revealed that usually women assume the main responsibility for every domestic task, childraring and care of other dependants, for example elderly/ailing parents/relatives (Coleman, 2001). As a corollary, stress and guilt are caused in women's effort to combine effectively their family and domestic responsibilities on the one hand, and the excessive professional demands of headship on the other (Adler et al., 1993; Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Chisholm, 2001; Coleman, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2011). Between the 'two jobs' (Singleton, 1993) of career and family, women often choose to prioritise the latter (Kyriakousis and Saiti, 2006; Kaparou and Bush, 2007). Hence, they either delay their professional ascent (Wexler-Eckman, 2004; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Coleman, 2002, 2009) becoming what Young (1992) termed 'late bloomers' or put an end to their career aspirations (Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). In so doing, they avoid the work overload (Ouston, 1993) caused by the 'competing urgencies, (Young, 1992) of their private and public lives. This is not to deny that some men do experience role conflict analogous to that of women. However, as Coleman's (2009)

studies in England in 1996 and 2004 indicated, compared to women, these men are fewer, albeit increasing in numbers.

Prioritizing family/home over work often negatively affects women teachers' further education and their enrolment in Master's/doctorate degrees that is often prerequisite for assuming headship (Pashiardis, 1998b). This does not seem to be the case for men for whom, as they are less likely to experience intensive role conflict, it is clearly easier to acquire those extra qualifications early on in their careers and as a result to ascend the institutional hierarchy and obtain their first principalship sooner than their female contemporaries.

Women's attempt to eliminate conflict and become leaders can be further encumbered if, for whatever reason, there is a lack of support from partners/husbands and extended family (Young, 1992; Hall, 1996; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Coleman, 2011); if there is competition with partners/husbands in a dual career family (Evetts, 1994); or if the partner's/husband's occupational opportunities/demands take precedence forcing the geographical relocation of the family and/or leading women to postpone/modify their own professional development (Evetts, 1994). Additionally, the fact that women take career breaks to have a family is another factor putting them in a disadvantageous position compared to their male colleagues (Evetts, 1994; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Moreau et al., 2007; McLay, 2008; Coleman, 2009, 2011).

Picture 5: Unfavourable career breaks



Source: CartoonStock.com⁶

As a means of ‘escaping’ conflict, a good number of women in the West often choose to stay single or get divorced/separated; remain childless, have children early or postpone having children until their career is well established or have only one child; and employ childminders (Ouston, 1993; Coleman, 2002, 2011) and housekeepers.

Significant obstacles associated with role conflict that may impede women’s plans for seeking promotion in traditionally patriarchal and religious-centred contexts such as Pakistan are moral/ethical dilemmas entrenched in culture (Rarieya, 2005; Shah, 2009). In these settings, a woman cannot neglect and/or leave her family/household behind and travel/move

⁶http://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoonview.asp?start=5&search=main&catref=lfo0002&MA_Artist=&MA_Category=&ANDkeyword=Glass+ceiling&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword=

to other areas for the sake of her career. If she does, then her honour and most importantly her family's honour can be jeopardised and this cannot be accepted. The following extracts from women leaders in Shah's and Rarieya's studies are indicative:

You cannot travel alone or meet male colleagues alone. If you are a woman, you would be immediately labelled as immoral.

(Shah, 2009:137)

I am planning to give up principalship. Government is transferring me to another town, and my husband and in-laws don't agree with the move. It will affect children also. My father in-law is old and I have to look after him as well. The in-laws and even other relatives will criticize that I am after career and do not care for family responsibilities. Family comes first – how can I choose to continue?

(Shah, 2009:134)

I think this is in our culture. In our society we have to go according to our family. If my husband says 'No, we have to do this' I have to listen to him or give up my job.

(Rarieya, 2005: 95)

Likewise, traditional moral ethics in China assigning women the roles of good mothers, wives, children's carers and providers of support to husbands may impel Chinese women to sacrifice their career pursuit for their spouse and children (Qiang et al., 2009).

Although researchers such as Young (1992), Ozga (1993), Grogan (1996), Ribbins (1997) and Coleman (2001, 2002) have justly indicated that being a parent and managing the household is an advantage from which women – and men – may benefit to prepare for school administration, it seems that, especially for women, the disadvantage of role conflict prevails. The leader's post may become less attractive for women who are not willing to turn into 'superwomen' (Wexler-Eckman, 2004) to be successful in both tasks and/or who cannot

confront rigidly defined socio-cultural/familial structures. Arguably, the role in the family often appears to be of greater and fundamental importance for female educators around the world, diminishing their desire for seeking promotion. In a utopian society, Socrates' daring and unrealistic proposition that "if men and women are to live the same lives, the family must be abolished" (Plato, [375 BC] 2007:167) could facilitate women to disencumber themselves of role conflict. Extending this idealistic assertion, I argue for a rather more 'realistic' one recommending that if equal division of labour and 'role normalization' is to be achieved for women, then it is the patriarchal contexture of societies and stereotypes that need to be modified.

Apart from role conflict, the micro level is also related with women's lack of *self-esteem* and *confidence* (Ouston, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1993; Gold, 1996; Talesra, 2002; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009) to undertake managerial responsibilities. To adopt Al-Khalifa's (1992:99) words, "there is self-doubt among women about their suitability and preparedness for management". Arguably, these feelings are again rooted in gender role socialisation and stereotyping identifying management with men (Ozga, 1993). More specifically, although the male image of administration is currently challenged by theories celebrating a more 'feminised' leadership style, the image and practice of educational management remains predominantly masculine (Reay and Ball, 2000; Elliott and Stead, 2008; Coleman, 2011). Hence, it is safe to assert that women are in a way trapped between contradictory perceptions about how a woman in an administrative position ought to act (Ouston, 1993; Hall, 1993). More than men, women leaders are expected to adhere to their 'gender characteristics' by being collaborative, nurturing and supportive. At the same time, though, it is expected that they will conform to the model of the 'authentic leader' (Reay and Ball, 2000), traditionally identified with men, by being formal, directive and evaluative. To

quote Eagly and Johannessen-Schmidt (2001:786), “conforming to their gender role can produce failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce failure to meet the requirements of their gender role”. The mismatch between their socially constructed gender qualities and those commonly associated with management undermines women educators’ self-esteem and confidence leading some of them to believe they are unsuitable for senior posts (Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009).

As a means of coping with contradictions and ‘managing responses’ towards them, once in post, women often either project their ‘female’ identity/traits or underplay and make them disappear accordingly (Lumby, 2009). Adopting a ‘servant leadership’ approach depicted as ‘appropriate’ for women and ‘less threatening’ to male hegemony (Strachan et al., 2010) is in a sense another way to handle challenges in patriarchal settings. Arguably, twisting between these lines could on the positive side be somewhat liberating for women while on the negative, could essentially constitute an additional source of pressure and a setback to their self-esteem and confidence because they

... have to deal with, and act out, a number of contradictory and competing tendencies due to the conjunction of a gendered socialization which prepares women for relative powerlessness and a current occupational location invested with power.

(Reay and Ball, 2000:146)

The contemporary tendency to insert managerial/entrepreneurial structures from the business world in educational administration as a vehicle for promoting school effectiveness can further hinder women leaders’ role and perceptions of self-worth. More specifically, as increasing attention is given to “measured outcomes rather than organisational processes” and to “monitoring of work ... speedy decision-making ... corporate culture and responsiveness

to the customer”, typically linked with male leadership approaches, instead of “democratic decision-making, consultation and participation” (Reay and Ball, 2000:148) conventionally associated with women’s ways of leading, then it becomes clear that women administrators’ position can be further disadvantaged.

Beliefs and feelings of unsuitability are frequently reinforced by two additional parameters. First and foremost, there is dearth of female role models in leadership (Hall, 1996; Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Rayieya, 2005; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Coleman, 2011). Second, women themselves appear to be greatly self-critical regarding their academic/professional adequacy and potential (Ozga, 1993; Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2002, 2011). Based on her research findings, Coleman (2002:30) observed that “women are more likely to expect to have the majority of qualities required for a job whereas men are confident about applying with only some of the qualifications and experience required.” Previous empirical evidence from a research by Thornton and Bricheno (2000) in the female-dominated field of primary education in England and Wales corroborated this disparity in beliefs among genders. While 80% of women holding lowest qualifications maintained that they would definitely not seek promotion, merely 50% of men with the same credentials ruled out promotion. One possible explanation drawn from Ouston (1993) would be that women seem to believe that their career development ‘should’ be founded on merit and hard work, not self-promotion and politics, practices often employed by their male colleagues. In a way, women ‘romantically’ believe that their worth will somehow be recognised by others and their promotion will come as a reward. Hence, they often do not “initiate career changes, but respond to those that become available” (Ouston, 1993:7). Arguably, via following somewhat ‘passive’ and unplanned career trajectories, they keep themselves bounded, leaving the doors open for men, who, driven by cultural expectations and demands appear to be more ‘leadership oriented’, to pass

and chase their career ambitions and thus acquire administrative posts at an earlier stage. Interestingly, as Ouston (1993:9) noted, even when they finally do assume headship, “able women consider themselves to be average and are not good at promoting themselves or their achievements”.

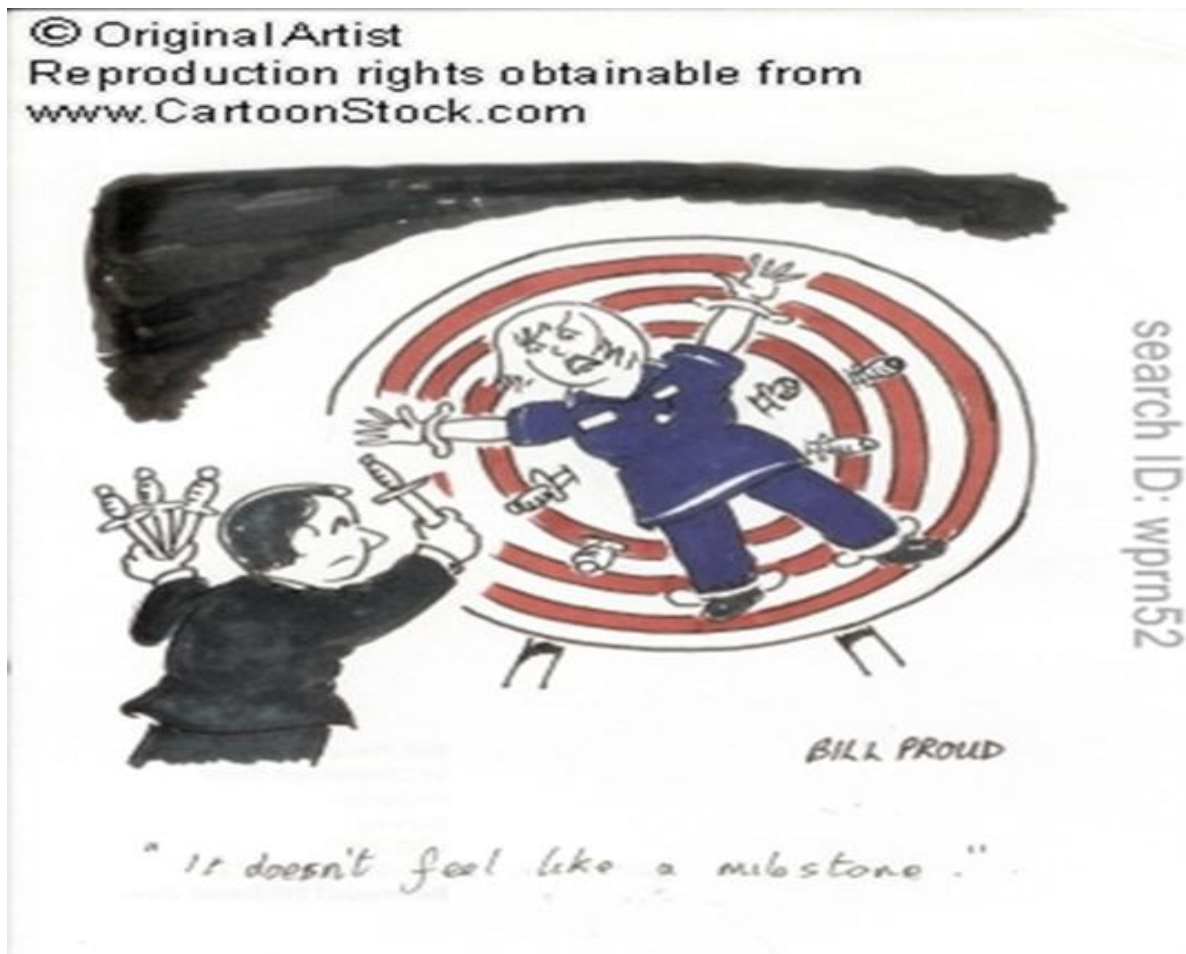
At this point, two optimistic perspectives regarding women’s self-confidence, leadership aspirations and competence need to be acknowledged. One comes from United States and a review by Shakeshaft et al. (2007, cited in Grogan et al., 2009) suggesting that compared to the mid-1980s, “women no longer lack confidence in their abilities and they aspire to most administrative positions”. The other regards China (Quiang et al., 2009:97) pinpointing that in this country “women in the domain of education generally think highly of their own competence”. Even so, it could be claimed that these women’s confidence and willingness does not seem to guarantee a managerial post since the phenomenon of women’s disproportionate participation in leadership in both countries persists. As the discussion in this section attempted to put forward, the effect of an amalgam of deterrents on their career development could be provided as one possible explanation to the paradox. This cluster of barriers seems to have stronger impact on these – and possibly other – women’s professional progress than their own eagerness for advancement.

Thirdly, since women are frequently viewed as ‘outsiders in leadership’, once in post, they often receive more intense critique about their leading capabilities compared to their male counterparts (Hall, 1996; Reay and Ball, 2000; Coleman, 2002, 2009, 2011; Reynolds, 2008). Research by Celikten (2009) and Coleman (2009) indicated that stereotyped perceptions of women’s leadership ‘unsuitability’ may come from parents – particularly fathers – other professionals, governors, male support staff, other male heads and men/women teachers. In

conservative patriarchal societies in particular, female principals are likely to face strong resistance especially from male teachers who find it difficult/impossible to ‘obey’ women because they have been socialised to believe they cannot be managed by them (Rarieya, 2005; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Strachan, 2009). Interestingly, analogous forms of discomfort with, questioning of and/or resentment for women leaders’ authority have been recorded by Hall (1996) and Coleman (2002) in the more ‘liberal’ context of UK and by Ducklin and Ozga (2007) in Scotland. In any case, it seems that the words of a male teacher quoted by Al-Khalifa (1992:101) who bluntly stated: “it grates on me to have a woman in position of authority over me” can sufficiently describe men’s perceptions about women’s leadership efficiency over time and across cultures. In its worst display, male resistance/resentment can take the form of sexist verbal and/or physical harassment/violence against female teachers and principals (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009; Rarieya, 2005; Strachan, 2009; Strachan et al., 2010). Paradoxically, even women teachers may doubt/oppose the leadership capabilities of women leaders, preferring men as heads (Hall, 1996; Coleman, 2002; Celikten, 2005).

Against this background, women managers “need to ‘win over’ their community before they are accepted” (Coleman, 2009:15). They have “to be better at all the job requirements of a principal and ... exceed expectations” (Celikten, 2009:172). Even so, their gender continues to ‘chase’ them and their acceptability as leaders cannot be guaranteed. As suggested in this section, they can be targeted by multiple stakeholders at multiple levels, including even the way they dress (Adler et al., 1993; Coleman, 2001)! Undoubtedly, this may put extra demands on them and their work.

Picture 6: Women leaders as targets



Source: CartoonStock.com⁷

Under these conditions and not surprisingly, women can be intrinsically de-motivated to opt for headship. In Smith's (2011a, 2011b) words, they frequently choose to 'opt out', not pursuing school administrative posts. It is often unappealing for many women educators to enter a post dominated by men and male culture where they are likely to be rigorously challenged and have to prove themselves by adopting a 'masculine behaviour' to be accepted and appreciated as leaders (Shakeshaft, 1989; Rarieya, 2005; McLay, 2008; Coleman, 2011). Perhaps this largely explains why a good number of women prefer to stay in the classroom

⁷ <http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/m/milestone.asp>

from which greater satisfaction is derived (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Ouston, 1993; Blackmore, 1999; Reynolds, 2008); why they tend to assume “middle management positions where the managerial demands are fewer” (Strachan, 2009:102; see also Oplatka and Tamir, 2009); and why they make limited or no effort to apply for advancement (Shakeshaft, 1993; Coleman, 2001; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009) to a ‘visible’ and extremely demanding leadership post, which may leave them exposed and vulnerable.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

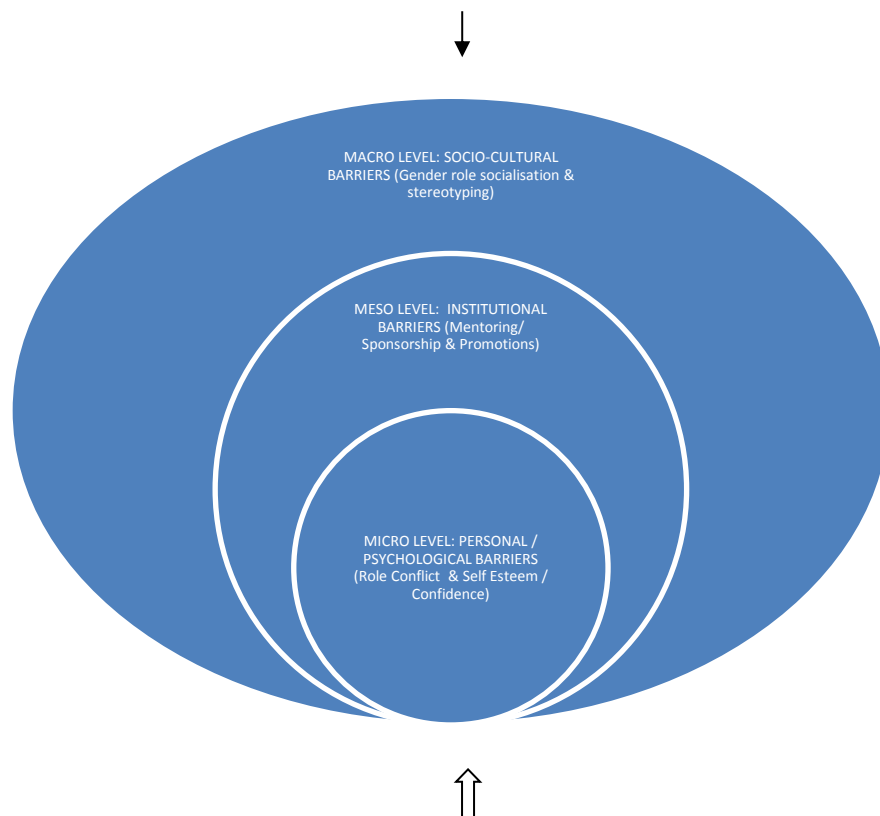
Drawing from the literature reviewed, an amalgam of interrelated factors may pose barriers to women’s progress to headship. Considering that there are no uniform glass ceilings between and within societies and cultures (Cubillo and Brown, 2003) and that “educational leadership is a situated concept” (Shah, 2009:128), this research sets out to trace which are the specific underlying causes of women’s disproportionate representation in the particularity of the under-researched Cyprus primary education context. The research’s conceptual framework presented next was shaped in the light of the literature previously discussed and was guided by the enquiry’s purpose and questions. To be specific, as already established, the aim of this thesis is to provide insights into women’s experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010; to examine whether and to what extent these experiences have changed over the last five decades; and to map the reasons women leaders provide for their disproportionate representation over this period. The four research questions underpinning this thesis are:

- How did women teachers experience progressing to primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010?

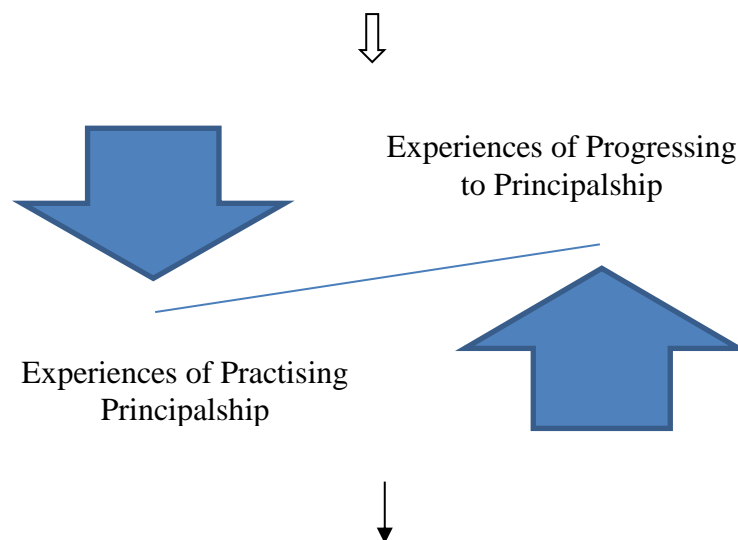
- How did women leaders experience primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010?
- To what extent do women's experiences of progressing to primary school principalship and experiencing principalship differ over the last five decades?
- How did women explain their disproportionate representation in primary school management over this period (e.g. socio-cultural barriers, institutional barriers, personal/psychological barriers)?

As the subsequent framework indicates, women's disproportionate representation in the Cypriot primary education principalship over the last five decades is investigated in relation to the three interconnected levels of barriers debated in Subsection 2.3.3. More specifically, the diagram overleaf shows cultural barriers (gender role socialisation and stereotyping) acknowledged at the Macro level are the apex and the springboard from which the institutional barriers (mentoring shows the levels of barriers as embedded within each other. It indicates that the socio- /sponsorship and promotions) and the personal psychological barriers (role conflict and self-esteem and confidence) identified at the Meso and the Micro level respectively, stem. It also shows that the institutional barriers that are traced at the Meso level can also contribute to the personal/psychological barriers identified at the Micro level. As the diagram also shows, women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in the specific milieu between 1961 and 2010 are examined to identify commonalities and differences in the obstacles and/or enabling influences faced by them when progressing to and experiencing principalship. The aim is to inform theory, policy and practice about the reasons that have diachronically contributed to women educators' uneven recruitment in this particular sector and context.

Women's disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary education principalship



Women who accessed primary school principalship from 1961 to 2010



Contribution to theory, policy and practice

2.5. Summary

This Chapter has attempted to offer a critical review of the relevant literature that provided the project's theoretical and conceptual framework. It primarily sought to establish the field of gender issues historically as well as intra- and inter-culturally. The point I hope I have highlighted through the brief overtime review of gender inequalities within and across the borders is that these inequalities formed the ground on which gender disparities in educational leadership have been entrenched. As Rarieya (2005) noted, via “recognising and understanding the structural roots of gender inequalities may help to create equality in access to leadership positions in education” (Rarieya, 2005:88).

Three interrelated levels of barriers to women's advancement to principalship have been identified that constitute the central part of the research's conceptual framework: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers. The experiences of Cypriot women primary school principals from 1961 to 2010 are examined in relation to these levels aiming to explain these women's disproportionate representation in educational administration over the last five decades. Which of these factors or possibly others have had a diachronic influence on women's movement within the ranks of primary education leadership in Cyprus? The findings generated from the enquiry are presented in Chapter 4. The research methodology is unfolded in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

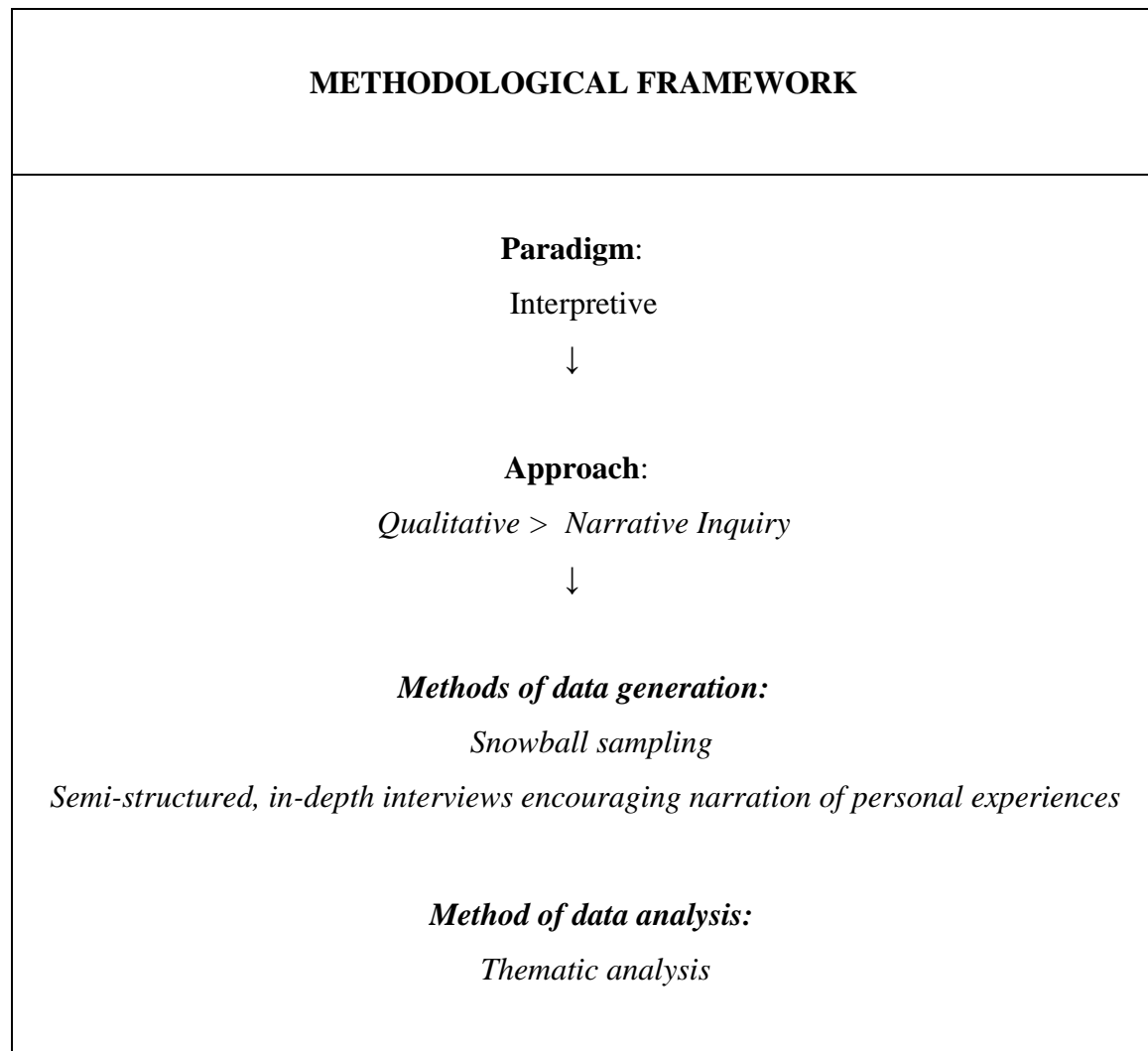
3.1. Introduction

According to Kothari (2004:8), in research methodology “...we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them”. In a similar vein, Shah (1998:160) explained that “methodology is concerned both with detailed research methods through which data is collected and the philosophical underpinnings upon which the collection and analysis of data are based”. It is these steps for selecting the methods and conducting the research along with the philosophy/rationale underpinning them, which this Chapter aims to provide. For ease of reading, the Chapter is divided in three Sections. It begins with an explanation and justification for the theoretical choices, namely the choice of paradigm, approach and methods of data generation and analysis in Section 3.2. Section 3.3 provides a discussion of the research design and implementation. This includes an account on the pilot study and pilot-guided reflections and alterations as well as a report on the main research. Issues of validity, reliability, trustworthiness, ethics and the researcher’s role are also included in this Section. The main issues presented in the Chapter are summarized in the final Section.

3.2. Theoretical Choices

The critical review of the relevant literature regarding the main paradigms, approaches and methods of data collection/generation and analysis employed in educational research informed my methodological decisions. These are summarised in the framework presented in Table 4 (p.67) and then they are explained and justified.

Table 4: Methodological Framework



3.2.1. Paradigms and approaches in educational research

Before critically discussing the main paradigms and approaches employed in educational research, it is primarily necessary not only to define the terms ‘educational research’, ‘paradigm’, ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’, but also to clarify how these notions are connected. According to Bassey (1999:39), *educational research* is a “critical inquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action”. In their attempt to make sense of information and convert it into data, those involved in

conducting educational research – similarly to other researchers – “draw implicitly or explicitly upon a set of beliefs or epistemological assumptions called paradigms” (Morrison, 2007:19).

Paradigm was defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as a basic belief system or worldview that guides researchers’ decisions. It was also explained by Bassey (1999: 42) as:

a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers, which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions.

Put plainly, there is a kind of common philosophical position among researchers adhering to a particular paradigm about what is the nature of the world, which is the individual’s place in it, what constitutes ‘normal’ research and how this research should be carried out in order to gain knowledge of the world. As Grogan and Simmons (2007:38) indicated, a research paradigm encompasses three elements: “an ontological perspective, an epistemological perspective and methodological approaches that are most often associated with the paradigm”. It is to these issues that the Subsection now turns.

The philosophical positions underpinning each paradigm are influenced by diverse ontological and epistemological assumptions (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). More specifically, the relationship between what we see and how we may comprehend it, namely the *epistemology* and that which constitutes reality, namely the *ontology* (McKenzie, 1997), is conceptualised differently among different paradigms, the most common division being between positivism and interpretivism.

On the one end, the epistemological position of *positivism* is that the world is external, amenable to objective observation and governed by natural laws. For positivists there is one objective truth (Sale et al., 2002; Grogan and Simmons, 2007). There is a reality ‘out there’ (Bassey, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) ready to be objectively investigated and apprehended by independent (Usher, 1996; Sale et al., 2002) and value-free researchers (Bryman, 2004; Usher, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) who employ scientific methodologies to investigate phenomena and draw generalizable conclusions (Bell, 2008). On the other end, the epistemological position of *interpretivism* is that truth is relative and constantly changing since “realities are constructed by the perceiver” (Grogan and Simmons, 2007:38). Ontology is subjective and continuously assembled by the actors who form and represent reality. For interpretivists “there is no knowledge that is value neutral” (ibid:38). Human beings are active elements of the world carrying their own values and perceptions based on which they shape and interpret phenomena (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

It could be claimed that the distinct attributes of positivism and interpretivism presented above reinforce the view that there is a discrete nature, a sharp and antithetical division between them. Arguably, they appear to be ‘in war’ (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). This distinction largely explains why each paradigm is most often associated with diverse methodological approaches (Grogan and Simmons, 2007). More specifically, drawing from Cohen et al. (2007), the ontological and epistemological stance adopted by researchers, namely whether they fall in the positivist or interpretivist tradition, may affect, implicitly or explicitly, the approaches and methodologies employed for their work. Thus, according to these researchers, it is not uncommon for positivists to embark on quantitative research using positivist strategies such as experimental designs or surveys and research methods such as questionnaires, tests, structured interviews or observations and statistical analysis.

Alternatively, interpretivists are more likely to engage in qualitative research employing interpretivist strategies such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative inquiry or case study and research methods such as semi-structured or unstructured interviews, participant or direct observation and content/theme or discourse analysis.

Although certain methods may indeed sit more comfortably with the use of either positivist or interpretivist approaches, this is not always the case. As Morrison (2007:21-22) pointed out, “the educational community includes researchers who ... may not perceive, or indeed value, the need for a specific distinctiveness in paradigmatic approaches to research activities”. Among them are Hammersley (1992), Woods (1992), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Pring (2000) who emphasized that part of the dichotomy between positivist/quantitative and interpretivist/qualitative methodologies has been overdrawn and exaggerated. In fact, as Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) asserted, “both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm”. In a similar vein, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998:5) called for ‘paradigm relativism’, which frees researchers to employ “whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach works for the particular research problem under study”.

Researchers following this line of thinking often choose to draw on both by employing ‘mix-and-match’ approaches, namely methods and methodologies associated with both paradigms (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Morrison, 2007) to carry out their studies effectively. They appear to depart from the view that it is the ‘fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2007) or the ‘appropriateness to task’ (Pring, 2000) which should determine the choice of methods. In other words, if a method primarily serves the research questions (Lieblich et al., 1998; Pring, 2000; Silverman, 2005) as well as the purpose of a particular

project (Jones, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Bell, 2008; Creswell, 2009), then it is appropriate, irrespective of whether it falls in the positivist or interpretivist tradition. As Bell (2008:8) justly put it, “the approach adopted and the methods of data collection [and analysis] selected will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of information required” and these, I argue, should be the main criteria for selecting them. Based on these assumptions, the paradigm and approach selected for the thesis are defended next.

3.2.2. Paradigm and approach in the thesis: Interpretive Paradigm and Narrative Inquiry

Having reviewed the key features and principles of positivism and interpretivism and following Cohen et al.’s (2007) advice that the ‘fitness for purpose’ should be the guiding principle for designing and conducting any kind of research, I decided that this enquiry should be positioned in the realms of *interpretive paradigm* and a *qualitative approach* such as the *narrative inquiry* (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The specific choices were underpinned by two significant parameters. First, they were influenced by the nature of the research purpose and questions, which called for the adoption of the particular paradigm and approach. To answer ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions, an interpretive/qualitative/in-depth framework instead of a positivist/quantitative one was required. Second, the choices were affected by my philosophical stance regarding the issue under investigation suggesting that the interpretive paradigm was better suited to the study because it

strives to view situations through the eyes of participants, to catch their intentionality and their interpretations of frequently complex situations, their meaning systems and the dynamics of the interaction as it unfolds

(Cohen et al., 2007:384).

I believed that in order to offer understandings and explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Pring, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2009) to women's disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary school management over the last five decades women's own lived experiences (Elliot, 2005) who have been directly involved and affected by the situation should be documented and interpreted. In this way, the multiple reasons accounting for this diachronic phenomenon might be identified.

Although, I was well aware that the employment of this paradigm and approach would not allow for statistical generalisations within and beyond the Cypriot context – as is the case for positivist/quantitative paradigm and approaches – it would enable a multifaceted phenomenon such as the one under consideration to be examined in depth (Lieblich et al., 1998; Bassey, 1999). Taking into account the lack of any pertinent research in Cyprus, an in-depth investigation was demanded. This paradigm and approach could offer a wealthier and more detailed image of the issue in the particular socio-cultural setting and within the specific historical timeframe of the last five decades. Furthermore, they could permit 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1999) to other Cypriot women primary school leaders with the same or similar experiences over this period.

As this was a research done by a woman focusing on women educators' leadership experiences and aiming at explaining their disproportionate representation in educational administration, it might logically be perceived as a 'women's study' or 'feminist'. This research was feminist in two significant ways. First, it was potentially transformative, aiming to change the status quo of women's uneven participation in educational management in the Cypriot primary sector. Second, it used a methodology that is based on the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and participants, which implies a more egalitarian

researcher-participant relationship. Apart from a feminist framework, the research was also situated within a broader social justice framework. I argue that women's disproportionate representation in school principalship is not only a 'feminist' issue but it is also an issue of social injustice and democratic deficit based on gender. As Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002:9) justly put it,

[i]n an era that calls for greater participation of all parts of society in social and political developments, in an era that has demonstrated that observed democratic deficits create tensions, the ... exclusion of majorities from decision-making mechanisms and positions is clearly not acceptable.

3.2.3. Methods of data collection/generation and analysis in educational research

To enable the selection of the most suitable methods for this research, it was essential to critically review, evaluate and have thorough understanding of the basic features of methods employed in educational research that fall in both quantitative and qualitative camps. My thoughts on this particular issue are reflected in this Subsection.

3.2.3.1. Data collection/generation

Selecting and constructing the research's sampling frame actually signifies the commencement of data collection/generation. With regard to quantitative strategies such as experimental designs and surveys, there is a need for large, representative, randomly selected (probability) samples and high response rate to allow researchers to carry out effective comparative statistical analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This may permit generalisation,

one of the basic tenets of this form of enquiry (Silverman, 2005; Morrison, 2007). Arguably, this is a disadvantage of quantitative research, because it may become difficult to obtain large samples on limited time and budgets (Bryman, 2004). Furthermore, a high response rate cannot always be achieved (ibid). This is not the case for qualitative approaches such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative inquiry or case study where small, purposive (non-probability) samples are usually engaged (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denscombe, 2007). Yet these samples are subject to other kinds of criticisms related to their representativeness and their ability to provide reliable, valid and generalisable outcomes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Drawing from Cohen et al. (2007), probability samples include simple random, systematic, stratified, cluster, stage and multi-phase sampling whereas non-probability samples comprise convenience, quota, dimensional, purposive and snowball sampling. Each of these techniques carries with it its own features and scope, which are not detailed here due to space limitations. However, as already explained – and this is what I intensively want to put forward – researchers should select those that best fit their research context, questions and objectives. It was based on this principle that all the methods for this research were chosen, an issue that is further discussed in Subsection 3.2.4.

After identifying *who* will provide the information required, it is also essential to specify *how* exactly this information will be collected/generated. Constructing quantitative and qualitative data collection/generation instruments is somewhat different. For quantitative studies, it is necessary to devise tools such as questionnaires, tests, structured interviews and observations able to compare variables and yield measurable/numeric data. These tools need careful designing in advance, if they are to produce valid and reliable outcomes because they are

usually ‘one offs’, not offering the possibility for repetition and/or amendments once the process of data collection is under way (Bryman, 2004; Denscombe, 2007). Moreover, if they are appropriately devised from the outset, then the researcher is allowed “speedy collation and analysis” of the pre-coded data (Denscombe, 2007:170). Conversely, qualitative methods such as semi-structured or unstructured interviews, participant or direct observation and documentary analysis are amenable to revision as the data generation proceeds. To quote Creswell (2003:181), in qualitative research, “the data collection process might change as doors open and close for data collection, and the inquirer learns the best sites at which to learn about the central phenomenon of interest”. This is not to suggest that cautious pre-planning is unnecessary. I am simply stressing that qualitative methods are more flexible (Bryman, 2004), offering the advantage for modification simultaneously with data generation. Nonetheless, this is one of the reasons why qualitative instruments can become extremely time-consuming and labour intensive (Miles and Huberman, 1994) throughout the course of the research. In this respect, their employment could be considered a disadvantage.

What is distinctive about qualitative techniques is their possibility to provide in-depth investigation of phenomena offering a wealthier and more detailed image of social life (Taylor et al., 1995). They focus on meaning making, interpretation and illumination (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). They seek to provide understandings and explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Pring, 2000; Creswell, 2009). Alternatively, quantitative methods provide the so-called ‘thin data’, namely they seek to objectively document general trends and they do not penetrate deeper meanings and understandings. Unlike qualitative methods, they are not interested in the ‘outliers’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denscombe, 2007), the individual circumstances, experiences, constraints, beliefs and views (Morrison, 2007). Thereby, they are often understandably accused of depersonalisation and alienation (Cohen et al., 2007)

from “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10) with which qualitative methods are dealing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2009).

3.2.3.2. *Data Analysis*

As previously mentioned, one of the basic ‘technical’ advantages of quantitative techniques, is that data analysis can be conducted fairly easily and quickly “because the categories for analysing the data have been worked out in advance, hence data analysis is rapid” (Cohen et al., 2007:355). The process is further accommodated by a plethora of computer software packages particularly designed for analysing numeric/statistical data (Denscombe, 2007). Conversely, the analysis of qualitative evidence is not so straightforward since the categories and themes are not predetermined but they emerge during and mainly after the data generation is completed. As Creswell (2009:184) articulated, qualitative data analysis “is an ongoing process involving continual reflection... throughout the study” and it cannot be rigidly distinguished from data generation as in quantitative enquiry. Added to this distinctiveness, is the time absorbing and laborious process (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of analysing the huge amount of unstructured textual material derived from interviews or observations (Bryman, 2004).

Furthermore, unlike quantitative data analysis, there are no set rules about the way qualitative analysis is to be carried out (ibid). Although, various software packages such as NVivo have been developed to manage qualitative material more ‘scientifically’, the question often remains whether the excerpts chosen by qualitative researchers give the real dimensions of phenomena and whether justice has been done to what the participants really wanted to

communicate (Silverman, 2005; Mason, 2002). Hence, qualitative analytic methods are often challenged on the basis that they are “fundamentally interpretive” (Creswell, 2003:182) and thus, for some, entail subjectivity and bias to a greater extent (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

However, these criticisms may also – to some extent – be applicable to quantitative modes of analysis since the employment of ‘purely scientific methods’ is not a panacea. A priori determined and controlled variables and settings that are stripped from reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994), a big sample and a high response rate, cannot ad hoc render the research findings representative, reliable, valid and generalisable. Because, as Wolfe (1992) usefully noted, it is essential to constantly bear in mind that even quantitative data may be miscoded, mislabelled, mislinked and mislaid if scrupulous data management plans are not followed. Moreover, summative measurements should not be taken as trustworthy or unbiased at face value, particularly in social sciences where humans and human interactions are involved. Adding together similar variables that may in fact carry different underlying meanings and present them as figures instead of comparing them and unearthing the uniqueness of individual cases – as in qualitative research – needs to be faced with caution. In any case, numbers employed in quantitative or even – to some extent – in qualitative research should be seen as heuristic and not as statement of truth (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is not the numbers themselves, but their meaning that matters. After all, as Usher (1996), Gummesson (2003) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) advocated, every research process, either quantitative or qualitative, carries with it an interpretive/hermeneutic aspect.

3.2.4. Methods of data generation and analysis in the thesis

The foregoing overview of research methods renders Denscombe's (2007:3) assertion relevant:

... the social researcher is faced with a variety of options and alternatives and has to make strategic decisions about which to choose... Each choice brings with it a set of advantages and disadvantages. Gains in one direction will bring with them losses in another, and the social researcher has to live with this. ... The crucial thing for good research is that the choices are reasonable and that they are made explicit as part of any research report.

With this in mind, the selection of data generation and analytic methods was made in the light of the critical evaluation of methods presented in the previous Subsection and was in alignment with the choice of paradigm and approach. Knowing that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' (Silverman, 2005), 'best' or 'worse' (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007), 'perfect' or 'useless' (Denscombe, 2007) methods, only suitable and fitting ones, *snowball sampling*, *semi-structured in-depth narrative interviewing* and *thematic analysis* emerged as appropriate vehicles for generating and analysing the inquiry's material. The outcomes of the pilot study discussed later in this Chapter confirmed that these tools were appropriate to the research task (Pring, 2000). They were what Denscombe (2007) called the best 'horses for courses' and Watling and James (2007) the 'optimum choices' for the project's scenario. They could serve the purpose (Jones, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Bell, 2008; Creswell, 2009) and questions (Lieblich et al., 1998; Pring: 2000; Silverman, 2005) of the particular enquiry, providing "the data ... require[d] to produce a complete piece of research" (Bell, 2008:115). Details of how exactly these methods were implemented in the pilot and the main research are provided in Section 3.3. I will now explain and justify the selection of each method separately.

3.2.4.1. *Snowball sampling*

Snowballing is a non-probability sampling frame (Denscombe, 2007) in which “researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested” (Cohen et al., 2007:116). Apart from participating in the study, these individuals are used as informants identifying other potential participants who qualify for inclusion in the study.

Snowballing was chosen for pragmatic and theoretical reasons. First, because, although Cyprus is a small island and I am an insider (primary school teacher), gaining access to women principals of various ages across the country presented some difficulty. Personal details of women heads, particularly of retired ones, were not accessible. My attempt to attain such details from the Pancyprian Organisation of Greek Teachers (POED) had been unsuccessful as these are confidential. This explains why the possibility of employing purposive sampling instead of snowballing was abandoned early on. Since I could not have a complete picture about the age, residence and/or year of promotion of women heads across the country spanning the last fifty years, it was impossible to ‘hand pick’ those who were “likely to produce the most valuable data” (Denscombe, 2007:17) for this research. Second, snowballing was preferred because if “the multiplier effect of one person nominating two or more others” was used, then the accumulation of participants’ numbers would have been quite rapid (ibid:18). This was crucial for this enquiry given the narrow timeframe for conducting the field-work and completing the thesis. Third, snowballing would offer the opportunity to “approach each new person, having been, in a sense sponsored by the person who had named” (ibid:18) me. This could enhance my credibility as a researcher and consequently facilitate gaining access to unknown participants. Finally, this sampling frame would give me the flexibility to ‘adjust’ the sample to the research’s needs while the process

of fieldwork was in progress. To be specific, I could possibly add new perspectives on the data already collected by asking interviewees to propose participants who met “certain criteria for choice, certain conditions related to the research project and certain characteristics such as age [and place of] residence” (ibid:18), marital status, number and age of children and/or year of promotion to principalship.

Overall, snowballing could help in accessing women headteachers – especially those unknown to me – who possessed the experience and knowledge (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) required to provide thorough investigation of the phenomenon under study and thus fulfil the research purpose and answer the research questions (Warren, 2001; Bryman, 2004; Bell, 2008). The attempt was to search for women who served as heads between 1960, when Cyprus gained independence, and 2010, when the fieldwork was carried out, in order to attain a diachronic perspective. Furthermore, the effort was to spread the sample evenly in the five districts of the island to get an overall picture of the situation throughout the country and provide the possibility for comparisons between areas/districts. The initial target was to interview a total of twenty women heads, four from each district, two retired and two currently in-service.

I believed that, in a small geographical context such as the Cypriot, where there is what Shah (1989) would call a ‘talking culture tradition’ the employment of snowballing could be functional. Based on preliminary contacts with former colleagues (primary school teachers, assistant principals and principals) during the pilot and prior to the field work, I was confident that the target of twenty participants, evenly distributed across the country, could be achieved. Even in the most negative scenario, I would be very close to my initial plans. Fortunately, the participants’ correspondence to the research either by nominating and/or

contacting new informants or by being willing to take part in the interviews exceeded my expectations during the main research details of which are offered in Section 3.3.

3.2.4.2. *Semi-structured narrative interviews*

Denscombe (2007:175) maintained that the nature of opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences “means that they need to be explored in depth and in detail rather than simply reported in a word or two”. Narrative interviewing of a relatively small sample (around twenty informants) could enable probing examination of women principals’ experiences resulting “in unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from experiments, questionnaires or observations” (Lieblich et al., 1998:9). As Bruner (1990) suggested, in recent years narrative inquiry has been valued as an important epistemological instrument for understanding human experience. Thody (1997) also underlined that stories are valuable data sources for educational management research. Particularly for my research focus, the literature reviewed revealed several studies, which employed narratives for unearthing women’s experiences such as a study by Cubillo and Brown (2003) investigating women’s experiences of aspiring to educational leadership in nine countries and by Rarieya (2005) examining the experiences of women headteachers in Pakistan.

It was expected that this method would provide the participants/narrators the opportunity to be the protagonists with a voice of their own, who could freely express their emotions, thoughts and interpretations (Chase, 2005) about the most significant positive and/or negative incidents they encountered in seeking senior appointment and working as leaders. The plan was to record their testimonies (Gready, 2008) and “uncover some of the stories ‘behind’ the

statistics about women's disproportionately low representation in educational administration" (Young, 1992:150) in Cyprus primary schools.

As the pilot illustrated, the adoption of semi-structured in-depth interviewing encouraging narration of personal experiences was better suited to the project rather than an unstructured format primarily because I began the enquiry having "a fairly clear focus, rather than a very general notion of wanting to do research on a topic" (Bryman, 2004:323) and aiming for the focus to emerge. Via semi-structured interviewing, the particular issues I was interested in could be addressed. Moreover, a semi-structured frame would offer the advantage of maintaining the research focus in the interview while simultaneously providing a great deal of latitude (Bryman, 2004; Bell, 2008) not only to the respondents in how to reply but also to me, as a researcher, in how, when and what to ask.

3.2.4.3. *Thematic analysis*

According to Riessman (1993, 2008) and Elliot (2005), there is no standard approach or set of procedures for analysing narrative information. In fact, to quote Mishler (1995: 88), there is a "state of near anarchy in the field". This is why I again selected the data analysis method based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen et al., 2007). From the various ways of narrative analysis that proliferated in recent years (Elliot, 2005; Phoenix, 2008), focusing on and analysing the content of narratives (Mishler, 1995; Riesman, 2008) thematically best suited the aims of the project. To this end, Riesman's (2008) and Creswell's (2009) steps for thematic analysis were adapted and followed. These are detailed in Subsection 3.3.2.3. In the same Subsection, the reasons for employing manual data processing instead of electronic are also explained.

3.3. Research design and implementation

Having situated the research in terms of its paradigm, approach and methods of data generation and analysis this Section deals with detailing the project's design and implementation. As Morrison (2007:29) noted, "a careful and coherent research design that is fit for research purpose is critical". Via explicitly presenting my 'modus operandi', I attempt to offer readers the opportunity to assess the rigour of this enquiry.

It is essential to note that the plan's feasibility was tested via a pilot study (Seidman, 1998) that took place in December 2009. As a miniature of and prelude to the main research, the pilot was undoubtedly an invaluable and informing experience. It was a landmark in my research journey, conducing to the methodological robustness of this enquiry. It allowed me to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the research design in greater depth providing the opportunity to refine it before my official entry into the field. It also contributed to the enhancement of my competence as a relatively inexperienced researcher in planning, conducting interviews and analysing qualitative data. Therefore, I find it essential to discuss the pilot study that led to reflections and alterations in the main research first and then move on to detail the main research.

3.3.1. Pilot study

The significance of piloting was emphasized by numerous researchers (Forgasz and Kaur, 1997; Lackey and Wingate, 1998; Kezar, 2000; Sampson, 2004) who engaged in pilot studies to enhance their research methodology. As Sampson (2004:383) emphasized, pilots may

contribute not only in refining research tools such as interview schedules and questionnaires, but also

in foreshadowing research problems and questions, in highlighting gaps and wastage in data collection and in considering broader and highly significant issues such as research validity, ethics [and] representation ...

As she suggested, a pilot helps to find the way through the ‘waves’ of the research field, just as someone navigates the ocean’s waves.

Based on my experience of piloting, I would liken this process to a compass in the hands of the researcher, which, if appropriately used, can steer the enquiry towards the right direction. For me, this preliminary immersion in the research terrain constituted the first step of a big and challenging journey, able to pay off in the long run. Bearing in mind that, according to a Greek proverb, “the beginning is half of the whole”, then, clearly, this first step was crucial.

In the quest to test the appropriateness of the methodological choices discussed earlier in Subsection 3.2.4, I devised a draft interview schedule, which I believed would be suitable for investigating the research questions and objectives, implemented it to generate information, and transcribed and analysed the emergent data.

Five focal targets were set for the pilot:

a) Examine the efficiency of interview questions in generating information relevant to the research purpose and questions.

- b) Explore the possibility that other themes, equally pertinent to and significant for the subject under research, were omitted from the interview agenda.
- c) Investigate the timeframe needed for completing an interview and transcribing and analysing the evidence yielded since a semi-structured, in-depth, narrative framework would be employed.
- d) Make initial reflections on categories and themes via transcribing and analysing the generated data.
- e) Enhance my research skills in planning, conducting interviews and analysing qualitative material.

In what follows, a detailed report on how the pilot was accomplished is presented divided in three phases: a) Research tool design, b) Implementation and c) Data analysis.

3.3.1.1. Research tool design

In the absence of any similar previous research in the country, the questions of the pilot interview schedule were developed primarily from personal and professional experience as a woman primary school teacher living and working in the Cypriot socio-cultural and educational setting. Additionally, they were informed by extensive literature based knowledge of women's socio-cultural, educational and professional position internationally and locally.

The schedule consisted of mostly open-ended questions divided in six parts (Appendix 2). The first three focused on specific periods of the informants' career: a) when they decided to assume principalship, b) when they attended the interview for promotion and c) when working as principals. I shaped the first question of each part in an open-ended and narrative-pointed way to initiate stories (Wengraf, 2001). Apart from these key questions, I also included some sub-questions, which I intended to use as prompts in case the participants had difficulty in narrating.

In the fourth part, I primarily invited women principals to explain their diachronically disproportionate representation in Cypriot primary school management (Ministry of Finance, 2010). Then, I requested them to advise other women aspiring to principalship and make recommendations to policy makers for women's recruitment in primary school administration.

Part five included closed questions related to their personal and professional details. These would contextualise their stories (Bryman, 2004) and at a later stage offer the possibility for comparisons between informants. I intentionally placed these questions towards the end because if I started-off with them, that could establish the dynamic of the interview. Respondents could get the message that I searched for one-word answers and they would possibly follow this line of answering. I wanted to point out from the outset that I was interested in and prepared to listen to their stories.

The final part invited interviewees to add whatever they felt was important but was not covered by the interview plan and/or to elaborate further on previous information. My thanks for their time and collaboration were also included. Moreover, to examine the feasibility of

snowballing, a note on the schedule was reminding me to ask for new potential informants after the recorder was turned off.

I planned to undertake two pilot interviews with women primary school principals. The interviewees' selection was influenced by the criterion of suitability and the principle of 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen et al., 2007). To be specific, they both appeared to possess the knowledge and experience required (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) to provide in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study and fulfil the purpose (Warren, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007; Bell, 2008) of the pilot. They belonged to the group of informants I intended to include in the main research. One assumed principalship in 2007 and was still in post and the other was promoted in 1997 and retired in 2000. Second, I intentionally wanted the first interview to be conducted in a friendly environment with a former colleague (Warren, 2001; Rubin and Rubin, 2005) and the second with a person I was not related to but I could approach via a relative acting as gatekeeper. This would give me an idea of how gaining access and building rapport in both cases could be like. Finally, due to time limitations, these informants were chosen because they lived in my district and thus getting in touch and conducting the pilot interviews would be easier.

3.3.1.2. Implementation

Having designed the pilot instrument and selected the sample, I contacted informants to attain their informed consent (Pring, 2000; Warren, 2001; Silverman, 2005; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2007; Bell, 2008; van Deventer, 2009). As the first participant was known to me, I called her myself, whereas the second was approached by my relative before I called her. During the contacts, I clarified that the interview would be conducted on a pilot basis. I

also informed them about the research purpose and the interview's duration, I affirmed anonymity and confidentiality and explained the use of the digital recorder.

After attaining their consent, which was not very difficult, the interviews were arranged according to the informants' preference and convenience. Both interviews took place at their residences late in the afternoon at an interval of ten days between them in December 2009. Prior to the commencement of each, I sought to build rapport with interviewees (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2007) by engaging in short, informal conversations. I found this necessary not only for the second interview in which the interviewee was unknown to me, but even for the first one, since I wanted to move smoothly from the informal style of friendly conversation to the more 'formal' mode of the interview. I reminded the interviewees that it was a pilot study and that I would like to have their feedback at the end of it. I also reassured them about anonymity and confidentiality.

I generally adhered to the interview schedule using a card as an 'aide-memoire' (Nias, 2003). While I initially set out to ask the three broad questions inviting the respondents to freely narrate their experiences (Chase, 2005), I soon realised that it was necessary to use the sub-questions as well to boost their narration. The first interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes and the second one hour and seventeen minutes.

At the end of each interview, I thanked participants for their valuable time and input (Denscombe, 2007; Creswell, 2009). When the recorder was turned off, I asked them to reflect upon the interview and point out any ambiguities, omissions or unnecessary elements and say how they generally experienced the process (Sampson, 2004). Overall, their comments were positive and encouraging and they did not raise any new themes/issues.

Furthermore, I politely requested them to propose new potential informants. They both provided relevant details and expressed their willingness to help with gaining access. On returning to my residence, shortly after each interview ended, I informed my research diary with my impressions (Lieblich et al., 1998), reflections and other fieldwork observations (Silverman, 2005). The diary was kept throughout the research wherein valuable information such as schedules, ideas, observations, hopes and worries (ibid) were recorded. In this way, the research's organisation and progress was facilitated (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

3.3.1.3. Data analysis

In seeking to test the intended data analysis technique (Lackey and Wingate, 1998), Riessman's (2008) and Creswell's (2009) guidelines for analysing qualitative/narrative data were adapted and followed as these were those to be employed in the main research. I fully transcribed both interviews, read through to identify themes, compared themes across interviews, formed, and labelled categories and themes. The analysis was carried out manually. It is worth noting that, at this stage, the table (Appendix 3), which was employed for systematically processing the data in the main research, had not yet been devised.

Five major categories emerged: a) Aspiring to principalship, b) Promotion process, c) Experiences of principalship, d) Reasons for women's disproportionate representation, e) Change. Various themes falling in each of the five categories were identified. As these were the initial product of preliminary analysis (Silverman, 2005) of the relatively limited data generated from the pilot, it was expected that they would probably be further extended and/or modified in the main research and indeed, they were. In any case, though, they provided an initial sense of prospective categories and themes.

3.3.1.4. The methodology revisited: Pilot-guided reflections and alterations

There were several issues stemming from the pilot that triggered intensive reflection and in some cases alterations. These related not only to the research methodology as such, but also to me as a researcher. The presentation of methodology and pilot findings at the conference ‘Constructing rigorous and influential educational research’ as well as at the study school that were held at the University of Leicester on June 30th and July 3rd 2010 respectively, provided valuable feedback. Peers’ and supervisors’ comments led to further considerations and revision of the envisioned project.

As already mentioned elsewhere, one of the pilot’s major benefits was that it allowed me to reconsider the design of the main study, which I had originally conceived as an unstructured narrative research. I realised that a semi-structured interviewing format encouraging narration of personal experiences was actually better suited to the project for two reasons. First because I had a quite clear research focus (Bryman, 2004). Second, because this framework could enable concentration on the research issue while concurrently offering leeway (Bryman, 2004; Bell, 2008) to me as a researcher in how, when and what to ask and to the respondents in how to reply. To accommodate the interview’s semi-structured format, the sub-questions in the draft interview schedule remained in the final version (Appendix 2).

A second development was the re-wording of certain questions that appeared to be somewhat unclear. More specifically, while the parameter of gender is basic to the research topic, it was not stressed enough, particularly in the first three key questions. To increase understanding, these questions were revised by adding the phrases ‘as a woman’, ‘as a woman candidate principal’ and ‘as a woman principal’ respectively (Appendix 2). To accommodate data

analysis the titles of the first four sections of the interview guide were also re-worded (Appendix 2).

In retrospect, I realised that informants' understanding about the research focus could also be increased if I let them read through the interview schedule before the interview (Adler et al., 1993). Similarly, I should let them go through the features provided by the Ministry of Finance (2010) and the Educational Service Commission (2010) (see Table 1, p.9; Table 2, p.12; Table 3, p.13 and Appendix 1) documenting the diachronically disproportionate representation of women in primary school management before asking them to explain the phenomenon. Therefore, I decided to incorporate these amendments in the main research.

Overall, the trial interviews did not reveal the necessity for adding or omitting themes and questions. Based on informants' comments and after going through and analysing the transcripts, I concluded that the revised interview schedule fitted the research purpose and was able to provide answers to the research questions.

Apart from these amendments, in the course of the pilot work, I had the opportunity to experience various aspects of conducting a qualitative study and qualitative interviewing in particular for which I was alert in the main research. Among the most important issues were:

- a) The significance of gatekeepers in gaining access to unknown participants, particularly for this study in which snowballing was to be employed (Warren, 2001).
- b) The need to build rapport and create a relaxed conversational atmosphere with interviewees, both known and unknown to the researcher, because the interview

process may be stressful in both cases. However, when put at ease, interviewees may see the researcher as confessor or psychotherapist and share intimate thoughts and/or information. This raises ethical issues. I needed to use these cautiously and thoughtfully (Johnson, 2001; Wenger, 2001) having taken the informants' consent.

- c) The usefulness of audio-recording in accommodating the conversation's flow, in retaining the details of language and paralinguistic information and in facilitating the analysis (Bryman, 2004). Nonetheless, its use may negatively affect the information disclosed by interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) "who become self-conscious or alarmed at the prospect of their words being preserved" (Bryman, 2004:330).
- d) The interviewees' fatigue and health/memory problems that may affect narration. As a researcher, I would have to handle these with empathy and caution either by interrupting the interview for break(s) or by ending it and arranging a follow up (Wenger, 2001).
- e) The time-consuming nature of in-depth interviewing and qualitative data transcription and analysis. Regarding transcription in particular, it was observed that approximately two hours were needed for fully transcribing just about twelve minutes of an audio-taped interview. To address these difficulties, the research timeframe should be closely followed and transcription should begin concurrently with data generation.
- f) The problems/limitations of translating interviews. The effort to transcribe the first pilot interview verbatim while simultaneously translating from an amalgam of Modern Greek and Cypriot dialect to English proved to be extremely laborious.

Translation added to the already time absorbing nature of full transcription. Moreover, “the problematic nature of ‘translations’ across cultures” (Shah, 1998:190) was revealed in the most acute way. Shah’s (ibid:190) assertion that “even similar concepts carry different connotations in differing cultures”, was definitely applicable to this research. Transferring the exact meaning of certain words and/or phrases from one linguistic setting to the other was extremely difficult. It was a complex task, impossible but necessary (Derrida, 1985). The fact that I am not bilingual augmented the complexity of the situation. This is why I decided to ask from a bilingual uncle (Greek and English), to review the extracts I translated for this thesis. In so doing, I attempted to ‘minimize’ the limitations of translation and hopefully ‘lower’ the risk of misrepresenting the exact meaning of words and/or phrases.

- g) The realisation that conducting qualitative interviews is not an easy task. I comprehended that, in practice, it is much more than ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Mason, 2002; Ribbins, 2007) and thus, it is not enough for the researcher to ‘do his/her homework’ and expect that the interview will flow without contingencies. Every interview is unique and the researcher must be prepared to adapt quickly (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) to “the complex nature of interaction” (Denscombe, 2007:174) during it. As Mason (2002:74) properly advocated – and this is what I experienced – “a high degree of intellectual and social skill is required” to simultaneously actively listen to the informant, remember what he/she already said as well as what the interviewer/researcher already asked and also observe for verbal and/or non-verbal signs on which to prompt and/or probe further. All these, while trying to be unobtrusive and neutral.

- h) The role of the qualitative interviewer/researcher who, being an active participant in the generation, analysis and interpretation of information pragmatically renders his/her influence to the enquiry inevitable. Thus, I realised that I needed to be transparent not only for the way I carried out the research, but also for the way my personal/professional identity and background (Johnson, 2001; Reinharz and Chase, 2001; Elliot, 2005) might unintentionally affect the research process and outcomes. This initial experience as a qualitative researcher helped me realise that adopting a reflective and self-critical stance throughout the enquiry (Elliot, 2005) was extremely significant. This is why keeping a research diary was invaluable. All the lessons learnt from the pilot were recorded there, and as a compass navigated my way in the challenging waves of the main enquiry's field.

3.3.2. Main research

The main research consisted of three broad and to some extent overlapping stages. These were:

- a) Pre field work stage: Gaining access
- b) Field work stage: Data generation
- c) Post field work stage: Data analysis and interpretation

The first two stages took place between August and November 2010. The third stage commenced during the same period but its main part was gradually completed between January and August 2011. In what follows, how all three phases were carried out is explicitly discussed.

3.3.2.1. Pre field work stage: Gaining access

As snowballing was employed, gaining access to principals was not completed during this first stage, but continued during the second stage as well since new participants gave access to new informants. Once I was introduced to potential interviewees, I contacted them myself via telephone to attain their informed consent (Pring, 2000; Warren, 2001; Silverman, 2005; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Denscombe, 2007; Busher and James, 2007; Bell, 2008; van Deventer, 2009).

During the contacts, I orally briefed them on the research purpose and the benefits of their involvement and provided any other information requested (Busher and James, 2007; van Deventer, 2009). I informed them that, due to the research's nature, each interview would last between one and two hours and that, if necessary, other meetings would be scheduled to complete it. Drawing from Elliot (2005:32), this "gave them a sense of how much detail to provide." I assured them that anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved by allocating pseudonyms to persons and places in the final report and by providing them access to their transcripts to review, comment on and correct and be entitled to withdraw any time they wished (Lieblich et al., 1998; van Deventer, 2009). I also explained the use of the digital recorder that was primarily necessary for accommodating the conversation's flow, for retaining the accuracy of the information yielded and at a later stage for facilitating the analysis (Bell, 2008). A note including the above-mentioned issues was kept in front of me during the calls to be confident that these were raised and clarified from the outset, saving me from 'unpleasant surprises' later on (Bell, 2008). On the day of the interview, participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 4) before the commencement of the interview.

As mentioned elsewhere, the informants' willingness to either nominate and/or contact new interviewees or to participate in the research was more than expected. This occurred even with interviewees I was not acquainted with. In my view, there were five main incentives for this correspondence. Primarily, the focus/nature of the research, which opted for illuminating women heads' lived personal/professional experiences, appeared to catch their interest. Elderly/retired women heads in particular saw this as an opportunity to put across knowledge and experience of decades.

The fact that their input was to be anonymous and confidential was the second reason, which added to their willingness to participate and share personal information. Comments such as: "As this will be anonymous as we said, I will tell you..." were common among interviewees. If anonymity and confidentiality were not assured, then participants might have refused to take part in the research. Of course, their comments reinforced my concern to preserve anonymity and confidentiality to avoid 'betraying' their trust. The issues of anonymity and confidentiality are further discussed later in Subsection 3.3.2.3.

A third factor was the appreciation of higher education that still exists in Cyprus, especially among educated groups of the population. To be specific, both elderly/retired and younger/in service heads appeared to highly value the fact that they would participate in an EdD research project and 'help' a young colleague who was involved in this kind of enquiry. I would say that, at one end of the spectrum, senior women rather saw me as their daughter or mentee and wanted to assist my studies. The appellations 'my daughter' or 'my love' employed by many of them are indicative of this 'relationship'. At the other end, heads of younger age rather viewed me as a friend sharing a similar educational/professional background. As some of them had completed or were still enrolled in Master's and/or PdD degrees, they seemed to

understand and appreciate my work. They wanted to contribute to this research just as others had contributed to theirs.

Fourthly, being an ‘insider outside’ enabled gaining access and building rapport with them more easily. To be specific, I was an ‘insider’ because I was a woman teacher and mother sharing the same socio-cultural, educational, professional and linguistic background with interviewees. At the same time, though, I was an ‘outsider’ because I was a relatively younger teacher, with comparatively fewer years of service, not holding a managerial position in Cyprus primary education yet. In my view, my ‘outsider’ identity somehow ‘freed’ respondents to take part in the study and share personal experiences more easily as they were not feeling ‘threatened’ by my status in the professional hierarchy. Arguably, if the researcher were a woman or a man assistant head or head, then, gaining access, building rapport and generating findings might have been different. Access, rapport and outcomes could have also been different if the researcher was a man ‘insider’ (teacher) or ‘outsider’ (not teacher) or a person, either man or woman, not of the same socio-cultural, educational, professional and/or linguistic background as the participants.

Ultimately, acting as an organised, professional researcher and treating interviewees with respect throughout the research process had been crucial for them in constructing a rather ‘positive’ image of me as a researcher and for wanting to participate and help me further. Good impressions and good word of mouth played an important role in this case.

After attaining informants’ consent, the interviews were arranged according to their preference and convenience (Bell, 2008). It should be noted that the distances across the island are not long and I travelled to the venues proposed by participants myself. In this way,

any disturbance of their personal lives and plans was minimized and their contribution to the study was facilitated. A total of twenty one interviews were carried out during the main research. Nineteen took place at informants' residences, one at a principal's workplace and one at a cafeteria.

That the majority of interviews were undertaken at heads' residences had a rather positive impact on interviewer/interviewee power relations, 'balancing' the research equilibrium. The "sense of equality between participants is particularly important in narrative inquiry" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990:4). While I had 'the power of the researcher' carrying theoretical knowledge about the research topic, participants had 'the power of being in their private sphere' having empirical knowledge on the issue. Providing the informants space to be the protagonists and voice their stories as "experts of their experience" (Banister, 1999:8) reinforced their status during the interview. The privacy of their home was an 'appropriate place' for this kind of narration.

The sample was spread evenly in the five districts of the island, namely Ammochostos (named as Protaras and Ayia Napa in Appendix 5), Larnaca, Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos (see Appendix 5). Four principals from each district participated, two retired and two currently in post. The only exception was Nicosia where five heads were interviewed, two retired and three in service. There were two main reasons for 'straying' from initial plans. The first was that three instead of two principals currently in post expressed their willingness to take part in the research and therefore, I decided to offer them all the chance to contribute to the study. Second, as all three represented a cohort of women who assumed principalship at a younger age (around forty), they could possibly offer a different perspective to the research. The appointment of heads in their forties is a recent phenomenon in the Cypriot

primary education sector where most heads, either male or female, are commonly appointed in their fifties (Educational Service Commission, 2010), “after having served for about 25 years in the classroom” (Pashiardis, 1998:117).

It is essential to note that, after transcribing and analysing the two pilot interviews, I decided to include them in the main research as well because they both provided interesting views on the research focus. One interviewee in particular shared an experience that was not mentioned by others in the main research, and which could add to the debate. To this end, I contacted the two principals who took part in the pilot to attain their consent. They both agreed and this resulted in a total of twenty three headteachers participating in the research.

The sample ranged in age from 41 to 83 years. Five principals were aged between 41-43, six between 57-59, three between 60-69, seven between 70-78 and two between 80-83 years. Three assumed principalship between 1961-1962, one at the end of the 1970s, two between 1981-1989, five between 1991-1999 and twelve between 2000-2010. Twenty two were married long before assuming headship and one had never been married. At the time of promotion, two did not have children, two had only one child, thirteen had two, three had three and three had four children. The majority of children were adults or in secondary/higher education when informants assumed headship. Overall, the sample differed in age, years of service, year of promotion, location of residence and work and number and age of children. However, it was a homogenous group in terms of religion, race and ethnicity, professional and socio-economic status. All the participants were Greek-Cypriots, Christian Orthodox, middle-upper class women who enjoyed the social recognition and the economic benefits that school principalship offers in the Cypriot locale. Details of participants’ profile are appended (Appendix 6).

3.3.2.2. *Field work stage: Data Generation*

Prior to discussing the steps followed in this stage, it is important to explain why I prefer using the term ‘data generation’ instead of the more conventional ‘data collection’. I am of the opinion that in social, qualitative research data does not exist independently of the researcher, amenable to ‘objective’ collection, as suggested by positivism. It is rather the result of the interaction between researcher and participants (Gummesson, 2003). This is particularly relevant to this enquiry where narratives were employed. According to Chase (2005:657), “a narrative is a joint production of narrator and listener”. As the same researcher and Elliot (2005) articulated, narratives are generated and constructed on the spot, during the interview, instead of being collected as pre-existing facts.

I was well aware that “the quality of responses [could] considerably depend” not only upon “‘getting in’ or gaining access” but also upon “‘getting on’ with the respondents or achieving social access” (Shah, 2004:559). It was crucial to ‘get on’ well with them right from the start and then constantly negotiate access throughout the interview process. Thus, before commencing the interviews, I opted for building rapport with interviewees (Creswell, 2003; Denscombe, 2007) by engaging in short, informal, friendly conversations (Johnson, 2001).

Based on the pilot, I allowed participants to read through the interview schedule before the interview (Adler et al., 1993) to increase their understanding. Opponents to this practice could claim that this somehow ‘set the scene’ and ‘guided’ interviewees’ answers. However, from my point of view, this action had a rather positive effect because it facilitated informants to stay concentrated on the research’s aim, focusing on narrating relevant experiences/stories instead of simply viewing the research as a broad gender study. The research purpose was to shed light on specific aspects of their experiences as women aspiring

to and experiencing principalship and to give them the opportunity to offer their explanations about women's diachronically uneven representation in primary school principalship.

As noted earlier in this Chapter, the interview guide consisted of mostly open-ended and narrative-pointed questions to initiate stories (Riesman, 1993; Wengraf, 2001) (Appendix 2). Its use “ensure[d] that at some point in the interview we covered the ground I was interested in” (Nias, 2003:133). Of course, it was not “slavishly followed” (Bryman, 2004:321). When necessary, I departed from it by changing the order or even the wording of questions and by prompting further based on the informants' accounts (Johnson, 2001; Bryman, 2004).

Considering that narrators were ‘the main actors’ and I had a ‘supportive role’, I “orient[ed] to the particularity of [their] story and voice” (Chase, 2005:661). Knowing that my questions and interruptions could shape their narratives (Cortazzi, 1993), it was crucial to avoid asking leading questions while at the same time being a good and attentive listener (Elliot, 2005; Riesman, 2008). Hence, the use of a small digital recorder was useful because it was difficult “to create a relaxed conversational atmosphere and ... to maintain as much eye-contact as possible” (Nias, 2003:135) while simultaneously writing contemporaneous notes (Elliot, 2005). Besides, without audio recording, there was the possibility of valuable information being missed, not only language/verbal, but most importantly paralanguage/non-verbal information such as intonation, pauses and/or laughter (Elliot, 2005; Squire, 2008), which, in narrative research, is highly significant for conveying meaning (Chase, 2005). Thus, all the interviews were audio-recorded with informants' permission. It is worth noting that, if audio-recording was denied, I was prepared to keep hand-written notes. In that case, supplementary notes would follow immediately after the interview was finished. As all the interviews were to be fully transcribed and knowing the excessive time demands of this process (Bryman,

2004; Ribbins, 2007; Bell, 2008), transcriptions commenced as soon as each interview was completed.

Although informants were allowed as much time as they required to recount their personal stories, caution was taken not to put excessive demands on them in terms of time and pressure to provide more narratives. The duration of the longest interview was around one hour and forty minutes and of the shortest, around thirty minutes. Most interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. In only one case, there was a need to interrupt the interview and continue at another day due to a pre-booked appointment the interviewee had with her dentist.

At the end of each interview, I thanked them for their time and input (Denscombe, 2007; Creswell, 2009) and asked them to suggest new prospective participants. I informed them that, when the interviews were transcribed, I would contact them again for respondent validation. To this end, as soon as each transcription was completed, I sent it to the relevant participant by post to read through and make comments and/or corrections (Busher and James, 2007). Few days later, I called to have the 'final consent' to use the transcript for this research. No amendments of the transcripts were suggested and they all provided their consent to employ them.

Shortly after each interview ended, reflections followed about it and notes regarding the setting or various other impressions (Lieblich et al., 1998) were entered in my research diary (Rubin and Rubin, 2005; Bell, 2008; Riesman, 2008).

3.3.2.3. Post field work stage: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Early data analysis (Silverman, 2005) commenced concurrently with data generation since transcription and preliminary interpretations began at that stage. However, the main part of data analysis was carried out once all the interviews were completed between January and August 2011. Analysis consisted of two main parts: a) data processing and b) interpretation. Having Riessman's (2008) and Creswell's (2009) frameworks for analysing qualitative/narrative data as a useful basis, the two stages were carried out as follows.

To begin with, the audio-taped interviews were organized and prepared for analysis by being transcribed verbatim. Bryman's (2004:330) warning that "transcription ... results in a daunting pile of paper" was definitely applicable to my research. The full transcription of the 23 interviews resulted in a total of 593 pages. The longest interview transcript consisted of 38 and the shortest of 12 pages. To ensure accuracy, all the transcripts were proofread via listening to each audio-taped interview while simultaneously comparing the transcription.

At this point, it is essential to explain why data processing was done manually instead of electronically. While I originally planned to employ NVivo software package to facilitate data processing, this decision was finally abandoned for two main reasons related to the nature of the data and to my role as a qualitative/narrative researcher. First, as soon as the data analysis in the main research began, I realized that narratives could not be completely removed from the interview context as this could jeopardize their meaning. Since the negotiation of meaning in narrative research is continuous (Andrews et al., 2008), I found it imperative not to completely de-contextualize stories because this could in turn negatively affect interpretation. In Denscombe's (2007:313) words:

the context is an integral part of the qualitative data, and the context refers to both events surrounding the production of the data, and events and words that precede and follow the actual extracted pieces of data that are used to form the units for analysis.

If the interview transcripts were entirely abandoned and the focus was directed solely to the fragmented codes and categories entered in NVivo, then there was the danger of garbling the real meaning of these codes and categories.

Second, as a qualitative/narrative researcher, I considered it imperative to ‘keep in touch’ with data during all the stages of data analysis and interpretation. I felt that, using a software package as a medium would somehow ‘interrupt’ my ‘constant dialogue’ with the data and ‘intrude’ to my effort to thoroughly comprehend inter-relationships between categories/themes, make interpretations and generate theory.

Manual data processing began after respondent validation. All the transcripts were printed out and attached in a thick volume. Then, each transcript was perused several times to obtain a general sense of the content, reflect on its overall meaning and identify key patterns and themes (Silverman, 2005; Gudmundsdottir, 2006; Elliott and Stead, 2008). The various themes identified were marked using highlighters of different colours – one for each theme (Creswell, 2003). This second step echoes Chase’s (2005) view who articulated that narrative researchers should rather listen to the voices within each narrative first instead of locating themes across interviews. The goal was to achieve ‘reduction’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of the excessive amount of information yielded in this kind of research only to the most relevant by initially ‘hearing’ (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) and then by comparing and contrasting the evidence (Silverman, 2005). Same/similar themes across interviews were marked with same colours. This offered consistency and facilitated the analysis. Helpful

marginal notes were also written on the right hand side of the interview transcript, next to each theme. Afterwards, the highlighted themes were organized into categories by research question (Cohen et al., 2005) and labelled with a relevant term/code. During the development of categories and themes, Cyprus' contextual particularities were taken into account. The extracted themes were entered in relevant tables. A total of four tables attached in volumes, were produced, one for each research question. On each table, interviewees' pseudonyms were written vertically and themes' titles were written horizontally. Interview extracts in interviewees exact words were inscribed in the corresponding cells (Basil, 2003) (Appendix 3). "This provided an anatomic framework of the data permitting instantaneous inter-interviewee and intra-interviewee comparisons and contrasts" (ibid:147). This display, namely the "organised, compressed assembly of information ... permit[ted] conclusion drawing and action" (Miles and Huberman, 1994:11). It helped me have an overall picture of and order in the categories and themes and enabled the writing of the 'Findings and Discussion' Chapter.

The next step included interpretation of the emerging categories and themes. Based on Riesman's (1993:61) useful remark that "individuals' narratives are situated in particular interactions but also in social, cultural and institutional discourses, which must be brought to bear to interpret them", interpretation was underpinned by the specificity of the Cypriot setting where the research was undertaken. Categories and themes were interpreted within the wider socio-cultural, historical and educational context of Cyprus. This is not to imply that my intention was to interpret the research evidence for the readers "refus[ing] to allow it to speak, ambiguously, for itself" (Riesman, 1993:32). To enable the readers make alternative interpretations (ibid) and reach their own conclusions, a plethora of extensive interview extracts is offered in Chapter 4 where findings are presented, discussed and analysed.

Ultimately, reflections on how the categories and themes would be represented in the final report were made. To be specific, the research's nature, pointed towards the necessity to amalgamate presentation, description and analysis of the evidence. Thereby, I decided that four main Sections stemming from the four research questions would make up the Chapter of presentation, discussion and analysis of findings. Each Section would be divided in Subsections according to the emergent categories and themes. This is how Chapter 4 of this thesis is constructed. While writing the particular Chapter, I was going back and re-perused the transcripts to re-contextualize interview segments and thus ensure that they were used accurately. In so doing, I tried to safeguard their integrity.

This Section would have been incomplete if the way pseudonyms were assigned was not made explicit. As the time of promotion is key for helping the reader contextualise women leaders' experiences chronologically, I found it useful to attach the year of promotion to interviewees' pseudonyms. Whether principals were retired or in service at the time of the field work, was also considered another useful detail for enabling the reader to situate informants professionally. Thus, the initial 'S', means that the principal is currently still in service. For example, Zoe (2007-S) means that the interviewee's pseudonym is Zoe, she was promoted as head in 2007 and she is still currently in service. Melina (1997-2000) means that the interviewee's pseudonym is Melina, she assumed headship in 1997 and retired in 2000. As mentioned elsewhere, interviewees' pseudonyms and other details are summarized in Appendix 6.

Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were extremely significant in this research because interviewees are people living and working in a relatively small socio-professional context such as the Cypriot. In this context, people are more or less acquainted and the 'talking

culture tradition' (Shah, 1998) contributes to a rather 'easy dissemination' of information. The fact that I was an insider researching colleagues' experiences, made me feel doubly anxious and responsible for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. Adopting Shah's (1998:166) words, "I certainly did not look forward to hearing complaints from my colleagues on breach of trust, on my return" from educational leave. Also, I did not wish to encumber the way to other researchers (Busher and James, 2007; van Deventer, 2009) by 'betraying' participants' trust in any way. In this respect, respondent validation and constant dialogue with interviewees while writing the 'Presentation, Discussion and Analysis of Findings' Chapter and 'disguise' of their identity in this thesis were critical.

3.3.2.4. Validity, Reliability, Trustworthiness, Ethics and the Researcher's Role

According to Cohen et al. (2007:171), the stages of naturalistic inquiry "are shot through with a range of issues that will affect the research". These issues may jeopardise the validity and reliability of research and/or affect its ethical dimension. The researcher's role in safeguarding the enquiry's integrity is vital.

Validity is "the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Hammersley, 1990:57). *Reliability* "refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (Hammersley, 1992:67). As suggested by Silverman (2005), validity and reliability are relevant to any kind of credible research. However, as Miles and Huberman (1994:2) usefully remarked, in qualitative inquiry the methods used need to be valid and reliable "in qualitative terms." This idea is in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) and Bassey's (1999) assertions that when referring to qualitative inquiry, it is better to speak

of *trustworthiness* instead of validity and reliability, conventionally related with positivist/quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In a similar vein, Mishler (1990) coined the concept of trustworthiness for evaluating narrative research and Riesman (1993, 2008) proposed persuasiveness and plausibility, correspondence, coherence and pragmatic use as ways of approaching validation in narrative work. Along the same lines, Shah (2004:563) advocated that “qualitative/interpretive research gains validity from the depth of understanding and insight that it makes available.” Discussion in this Chapter and Chapter 4 relates to how this study sought to achieve this depth of understanding and insight.

In the quest to enhance what I would call the ‘*qualitative validity*’ of this inquiry, Silverman’s (2005) guidelines appeared to be helpful. To begin with, the evidence was subjected to every possible scrutiny before jumping to easy conclusions. This is what Silverman defined as ‘the refutability principle’. More specifically, each interview transcript was read through several times in order to contextualise the meaning of data as well as of each emergent theme as provided by interviewees. Then, the constant comparative method was used, meaning that the data and themes generated from each interview were constantly tested in comparison with previous and following findings across interviews. Arguably, this provided what I would call ‘triangulation’ of the information generated through informants’ accounts. My personal/professional experience as a woman primary school teacher in Cyprus for seven years and teacher/acting head in Greek schools in England for one and a half years, added to this ‘triangulation’. Moreover, the data were treated comprehensively, namely all the cases were incorporated in the analysis, including those which contradicted the majority view. Finally, it was crucial to use appropriate tabulations of data. This is why appropriate tables (Appendix 3), one for each research question, were devised to systematically manage the

evidence. The employment of tables was a useful tool and “a major avenue to valid qualitative analysis” (Miles and Huberman, 1994:11).

Apart from Silverman’s suggestions, listening carefully to participants during the interviews (Squire, 2008), returning to them for respondent validation (Busher and James, 2007) and being in constant dialogue with them while writing the thesis, were other significant ways I used for validating the research outcomes. In any event, it was vital not to distort the participants’ personal stories and to do justice to what they really wanted to communicate. In this respect, re-perusing the transcripts to re-contextualise interview extracts while writing the ‘Presentation, Discussion and Analysis’ Chapter in particular, was also significant.

Critics of this research could doubt its validity claiming that men’s viewpoint should also be included. However, choosing to focus on women’s experiences in this research was a conscious decision. As has repeatedly been explained, the scope of this enquiry was to examine the topic from women’s perspective casting light on their first hand experiences of ascending the hierarchy and working as leaders and mapping their explanations for women’s diachronically disproportionate representation in primary school management. I do not endorse the opinion that women’s perspectives should be ‘triangulated’ with men’s to ‘validate’ findings because “the distinct world of women ... exists not by comparison to the male educational leaders’ reality, but stands as an independent and equal one” (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009:217). Why should men’s standpoint be used as a yardstick against which women’s experience is measured? To make a possibly ‘daring’ comparison, it would then be like investigating the experiences of black people and ‘should’ include white people’s experiences as well to ‘triangulate’ and ‘validate’ the findings. This is not to suggest that researching men heads’ opinions is unnecessary. I am simply suggesting that it is not

‘mandatory’ to include both women’s and men’s views in a single study. Men’s viewpoint on the particular issue may become the focus of another research project. In fact, this kind of project is in my plans in the near future.

This research may also be attacked on the basis that the trustworthiness of principals’ accounts cannot be ensured. In her book ‘Narrative analysis’, Riesman (1993:22) offered a quote from Personal Narratives Group (1989a:261) that adequately echoes my perspective on the issue:

When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* [original emphasis] revealing truths. These truths don’t reveal the past “as it really was”, aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences... Unlike the Truth in the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them.

I argue that there are many different versions of subjective ‘truths’ and even if narrators in this research might have glossed-over aspects of their narration, I am confident about the authenticity of their accounts. Each narrator put forward her own ‘authentic truth’ as experienced by her and this is essentially what this research has sought to record. The trustworthiness of each interviewee’s account can be cross-examined against the other narratives and as argued by Thody (1997:332):

when stories are presented as a group, each should show if the others sound trustworthy. The existence of a group of stories offers a possible test of credibility. A further test arises from audience reaction. These stories are being presented to fellow

professionals. Do the stories sound trustworthy? Do they accord with readers' experience?

Returning to the enquiry's '*qualitative reliability*', this was increased in two ways, again based on Silverman's (2005) suggestions. First, it was incumbent to transparently document the procedures I followed for data generation and particularly for data analysis. These have been explicitly discussed throughout Subsection 3.3.2. Second, it was imperative to demonstrate that the categories and themes, which emerged from data analysis, have been used consistently. Using the tables (Appendix 3) contributed to systematic organisation and consistency of the evidence.

By following Silverman's (2005) validity and reliability frameworks, coupled with the establishment of fully informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, respect for participants' privacy and their right to learn the research outcomes and avoidance of excessive pressure in gaining access and eliciting personal narratives, I sought to safeguard the enquiry's integrity and trustworthiness and subsequently reinforce its *ethical* aspect (Busher and James, 2007). Because as Busher and James (2007:114) rigorously stressed, "research that is untrustworthy is unethical because it is of no benefit in developing a society's knowledge base and wastes the resources of researchers and other participants". Additionally, as these researchers emphasized, the generalizability of findings also depends on whether research has been carried out in an ethical manner.

The adoption of a reflexive and self-critical approach throughout the enquiry (Elliot, 2005) was immensely critical in constructing a trustworthy and ethical qualitative/narrative research. According to Morrison (2007:32) *reflexivity* is "the process by which researchers come to understand how they are positioned in relation to the knowledge they are producing."

It “indicate[s] an awareness of the identity, or self, of the researcher within the research process” (Elliot, 2005:153). I acknowledge that being an active participant in the generation, analysis and interpretation of narratives, pragmatically my influence could not be ruled out and I inevitably could not become ‘a fly on the wall’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). My personal/professional identity and background, namely my gender, my age, the fact that I am a mother, a primary school teacher and potential headteacher, my knowledge, values and beliefs about the issue or even my outlook might have unintentionally affected the research process and/or outcomes at any stage and in countless ways. In Shah’s (1998:158) words,

how they [interviewees] might have constructed me as a researcher in view of their knowledge of me, cannot be denied to have affected their responses. Also, my understanding and interpretation of their responses cannot be viewed as disembedded from my prior knowledge and experience.

Understanding and interpreting information through the lens of the socio-professional insider was inescapable. While on the positive side, being an insider may have facilitated meaning making and insight, the argument that this closeness could ‘blunt’ my criticality (Haw, 1998) “to the familiar and taken for granted phenomena” (Shah, 2004:556) cannot be denied. In this respect, keeping a reflexive diary wherein possible influences and/or ‘threats’ were recorded, was necessary and invaluable.

In addition, throughout this Chapter, I sought to be transparent (Rubin and Rubin, 2005) explicit, honest and accountable (Furlong and Oancea, 2005; Oancea and Furlong, 2007) regarding my theoretical and methodological decisions and the way I carried out this research. I also acknowledged my positioning in the enquiry (Cortazzi, 1993). In so doing, I aimed at rendering this research ‘peer-reviewable’ (Furlong and Oancea, 2005; Oancea and Furlong, 2007) , providing readers the opportunity to make their own judgements about its

trustworthiness and to establish for themselves the extent to which it has been undertaken in an ethical way.

3.4. Summary

The main aim of this Chapter was to debate the research methodology. The methodology was theoretically located in Section 3.2, where the choice of paradigm, approach and data generation and analytic methods was explained and justified. Guided by the principle of ‘fitness for purpose’ (Cohen et al., 2007), the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach such as the narrative inquiry, snowball sampling, semi-structured in-depth interviewing encouraging narration of personal experiences and thematic analysis better suited the research’s purpose and questions. The appropriateness of these choices was confirmed during the pilot. A report on the pilot study as well as the reflexions and alterations that stemmed from it were included in Section 3.3 followed by a report on the main research. Issues of validity, reliability, trustworthiness, ethics and the researcher’s role were also discussed in this Section. The research findings are presented, discussed and analysed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The main objective of this Chapter is to present, discuss and analyse the evidence in a logical and consistent way. The data presented are firstly described (Saunders et al., 2007). My intention regarding the data analysis is to show that the phenomenon under consideration “is empirically the case” (Merton, 1995:380). Then, the evidence is critically discussed and explained to highlight the importance of the data for theory and practice and to establish a strong link to the existing body of knowledge. Attention is given to presenting meaningful extracts, capturing the essence of informants’ experience and knowledge (ibid). While references to relevant literature are made, narrators’ voices dominate the Chapter.

As established in the introductory Chapter of this thesis, the enquiry’s purpose was to illuminate women’s experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010; to examine whether and to what extent these experiences have changed over the last five decades; and to record the reasons women leaders offer for their disproportionate representation in leadership posts over this period. It has been emphasized that the research questions addressed in this thesis, which have been provided at the end of the Literature Review Chapter, were aligned to these research aims, and, along with them, guided the research design, data generation and analysis. The themes for data analysis as presented in this Chapter are drawn from the research questions.

Section 4.2 analyses women’s experiences of progressing to principalship and is divided in three major themes entitled: a) ‘Unplanned career trajectories’, b) ‘External influences on

career trajectories’ and c) ‘Promotion process: facing the interview panel’. Section 4.3 sheds light on women’s experiences of principalship specifically focusing on their: a) School context and their relations with teacher colleagues, assistant heads, other principals, superintendents and students, b) Community context and their interactions with parents, stakeholders and other professionals; and c) Family context and their relationships with family and relatives. A comparison of women’s diachronic experiences of progressing to and experiencing principalship between 1961 and 2010 is attempted in Section 4.4. Section 4.5 looks into the spectrum of reasons narrators provided for women’s uneven partaking in primary school principalship spanning the last five decades. These are divided in three major intersected themes: a) the ‘Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers’ consisting of the subthemes of ‘Gender role socialisation’ and ‘Stereotyping’, b) the ‘Meso level: Institutional barriers’, which includes the subthemes of ‘Mentoring and Sponsorship’ and ‘Promotions’ and c) the ‘Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers’ comprising the subthemes of ‘Role conflict’, ‘Transfer after promotion’, ‘Women’s inferior/supportive position in couples’ and ‘Self-esteem and confidence’. A synopsis of the Chapter is offered in the final Section.

It is essential to underline that the terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ as well as ‘managerial posts’ and ‘leadership posts’ are used interchangeably in this thesis. These are different terms used for principalship in this research context.

4.2. Women teachers’ experiences of progressing to primary school principalship in Cyprus between 1961 and 2010

As previously mentioned, with regard to the first research question, women’s unplanned career trajectories; various enabling and/or deterring influences that positively and/or

negatively affected their upward mobility in senior posts; and their experiences of the interview process were the key themes that emanated from participants' accounts. It is to these issues that this Subsection turns.

4.2.1. Unplanned Career Trajectories

The vast majority of women heads in this enquiry appear to have assumed principalship fairly willingly, having no serious hesitations to become heads when their time for promotion had arrived. However, a theme that kept coming up from the interviews is that most of them had actually been non-leadership oriented and had followed rather unplanned career trajectories. The lack of strong identification with leadership and of a specific career plan was evident in the majority of interviews, even among women who had become heads recently, at a relatively younger age, around their forties, and/or who were possessors of extra academic qualifications such as Master's degrees and doctorates. The following assertion by 43-year-old Niki (2006-S) is indicative:

I think I hadn't given it [leadership] much thought. Since ... I had the qualifications, namely the Master's and the doctorate, when I was going to apply for assistant headship I didn't think about it. That is, I didn't have a plan nor did I want anything specific.

In support of her argument regarding the lack of career planning and ambition, Niki noted that when enrolling in Master's and doctorate degrees, her intention was not to use them as promotion tools. Her aim was rather to develop her teaching skills:

For some people it was self-evident that I did my studies [Master's and doctorate] to be promoted while on the contrary I didn't. I never did my studies to be promoted. I

want to make this clear. I did my studies because I wanted to learn more regarding my domain. This was my scope.

A similar pattern was identified in the case of 42-year-old Sofia (2009-S) who also seemed not to have followed a specific career map although she also possessed a Master's and a doctorate. Sofia denied characterising herself as an ambitious and leadership oriented person claiming that she ended up being headteacher because of her personality that is always looking for change: "I think it has to do with my personality ... I want changes in what I'm doing ... It's my character. I don't look towards the end so much. I always concentrate on the procedure."

Other narrators characterised ascending the hierarchy simply as normal progression in their career. It was not something they planned or pursued. For example, Margarita (2004-S) saw it as "continuation of [her] work" while Christiana (2009-S) described it as:

... normal route, normal progression of my service. After completing the thirteenth year [in service] I was allowed to apply for assistant headship and after completing the years required [in that post], I applied for principalship ... It was normal progression.

In a similar vein, Niki (2006-S) asserted:

... why did I make an application? There was no particular reason. I considered it normal progression ... I remember very well that it [leadership] didn't bother me at all... It was in the thirteenth year that you are allowed to apply for assistant headship and when I completed the year, I applied. Without realising very well where exactly I was going to get involved; that is, the issue of management.

These women's non-identification with leadership and their unplanned careers could be traced back to the patriarchal contexture of Cypriot society that has long identified leadership

with men (Persianis, 1998). It seems that gender role socialisation had led these women to downplay the prospect of promotion and subsequently follow unplanned career strategies. As a Cypriot female secondary school headteacher in Pashiardis and Ribbins's (2003:31) study commented, "we have a very male dominated society ... Until recently women did not dare aspire to these positions." Apparently, this view had adversely influenced the career intentions of most participants in this research.

To give more perspective, another possible explanation could be that narrators in this study denied playing the 'promotion game' (Coleman, 2011; Smith, 2011b) believing that their career development 'should' be founded on merit and hard work, not self-promotion and politics, practices often employed by their male colleagues (Ouston, 1993). Underpinned by the conservatism of Cypriot patriarchal socio-cultural locale and by the highly centralised Cypriot public educational system women principals 'romantically' believed that their worth would be recognised by others and their promotion would come as a reward. Hence – as detailed later in this Subsection – they did not "initiate career changes, but respond[ed] to those that bec[ame] available" (Ouston, 1993:7). Arguably, via following somewhat 'passive' and unplanned career pathways, they kept themselves bounded, leaving doors open for men, to chase their career ambitions and thus acquire leadership posts at the earliest available opportunity.

The long established traditional structure of Cypriot society that assigns the roles of breadwinners and leaders to men and restricts women within the boundaries of home and family, could explain why the vast majority of interviewees appeared to have needed gradual building up of their confidence and experience in leadership posts before feeling adequately ready to opt for leadership. Interestingly, this was the case even for younger women who

managed to acquire higher academic qualifications such as Master's degrees and doctorates. For example, even if 43-year-old Niki (2006-S) did hold such degrees, it was only after she got involved in the role of acting head while an assistant head that she got interested in becoming principal. Similarly, Marina (2009-S) also appeared to have become interested in principalship after she was promoted as assistant head:

I was promoted [as assistant head] during my sixteenth year of service ... Then, I started 'chasing' things myself, to be interested. I knew that after two years [in the assistant head's post] I was allowed to apply for principalship but with the qualifications I had, that was improbable. Then, the idea was born in my mind that it wouldn't have been bad to start a Master's degree ... and as soon as the Open University of Cyprus was established I was among the first applicants. I was accepted, did my Master's and immediately 'cashed' it within two months and became head.

Likewise, Kyriaki (2004-S) became interested in leadership after her twentieth year in service when her male principal assigned managerial responsibilities to staff and this process raised Kyriaki's confidence and interest in leadership:

... after twenty years in service, I got involved [in management] without wanting it, due to school's circumstances. I was undertaking managerial duties without having managerial position. Thus, I somehow liked the situation ... My principal was excellent ... He was deliberately involving us in everything. I got involved in leadership in this way. The fact that he was excellent both as a person and as a principal made me love this [management] ... Then, ok, I think going for principalship was normal progression.

Alexia (1994-1999) shared an analogous experience:

I wasn't after promotion but I wasn't afraid [to be promoted] because in certain schools where I worked as assistant head, principals provided me the opportunity to undertake many responsibilities ...

Arguably, these women had needed ‘hands on’ experiences of leadership to raise their confidence for seeking promotion to principalship. They had needed to get practically involved in management to be confident that they would make it in that particular post. As previously hinted, they could not see themselves as leaders from the outset because, due to their gender role socialisation, they had not been provided the opportunity to undertake leadership roles early on, certainly not to the extent their male counterparts had. However, when they were offered the opportunity to get involved in leadership, they realised they could cope with the challenge. This suggests that, if higher numbers of women are to pursue managerial positions, it seems necessary for them to get involved and ‘trained’ in leadership early on and throughout their careers.

As women leaders in this enquiry had not experienced leadership roles to the same extent men had throughout their lives, it comes as no surprise that they did not strongly exert their ‘personal agency’ (Coleman, 2011; Smith, 2011) in shaping their professional journeys. It appears that their careers were rather shaped by factors ‘external to themselves’ and less ‘self-defined’ (Smith, 2011). Most participants seemed to have had the role of ‘protégée’ instead of ‘planner’ (ibid). They did not strive for managerial positions – definitely not from the outset – but it was rather the positions that ‘chased’ them with the assistance of colleagues, headteachers and superintendents. Gold’s (1996) indication that women can simply ‘drift’ into management was applicable for most principals in this research. They appear to have been at the ‘right place’ the ‘right time’ (Moreau et al., 2007; Coleman, 2011) and this enhanced their professional accession. Among them, Loukia (1961-1995), Theodora (1962-1990) and Kornelia (1961-1988) in particular, assumed headship right after independence, quite unexpectedly and at a very early stage in their careers, boosted by their superintendents and/or the Ministry of Education. Being at ‘the right place’ the ‘right time’

also comes out in Athina's (1989-1994) case who had to take over principalship in the middle of the school year because the principal became superintendent, and in Alexia's (1994-1999) experience who also got on the pathway to principalship fairly 'accidentally':

When the principal was transferred, they proposed me... to take over school management as an acting head. I served for three years. Thus, when ... it was announced to us that there were vacancies for principals and those who wanted to apply they should, I applied and was promoted.

Against this background, an important theme that emerged from women's narratives is the support and encouragement they received from others, particularly superiors when their time for promotion had arrived. This is a theme, which will be further discussed in the next Subsection when detailing the external enabling influences women had when aspiring to principalship. The ensuing example drawn from Eva's (1999-S) narrative unveils the non-leadership orientation of women who finally assumed headship not because they planned to but because they were encouraged at 'the right time' by their superintendents and principals:

For my age, I was promoted a bit early. I wasn't expecting it. Thus, I didn't have time to think about it very much ... Other people convinced me that I should go to the interview [for promotion]. I went believing that I wasn't going to be promoted and I was ... I used to say: "Me? Become a head?" ... But then, when the time had come, without realising it, I found myself being principal ... I went with the flow of the time and was influenced by the encouragement of my superintendents [and] principals: "Go, go, go." Honestly speaking, when I went [to the interview for promotion] it was just to make them a favour ... and I was promoted.

Taken together, the preceding excerpts appear to indicate that becoming a head had not been 'the goal' of most participants' professional lives. This finding is reinforced by Mangarita's (2004-S) claim that "promotion had never been an end in itself" for her and by Athina's

(1989-1994) assertion that she “never felt assuming principalship was an obsession or it was the only goal.” Alexia’s and Marina’s interview segments that follow, point towards these women’s preference to be good teachers instead of good leaders. Arguably, this preference – entrenched in gender role socialisation – could essentially explain why many women did not consider assuming a leadership post as ‘the ultimate goal’ in their career. Alexia (1994-1999) maintained: “I was more interested in doing my job well at school ... I didn’t aim to promotions and things like that ... I didn’t set this kind of targets ...”. Marina (2009-S) also remarked:

... I wasn’t even looking [for promotion] ... My goal was to do well in my job ... I wasn’t thinking that “Ha! You know, I’m nearing promotion or I’ll have this opportunity”. This thought wasn’t even in my mind.

Devoting themselves to teaching was a theme cutting across women’s narratives. The following extracts from Niki’s, Kyriaki’s and Irene’s interviews are illustrative of women’s inclination for classroom work:

... I was concentrated on the pedagogic aspect ... I was extremely classroom oriented. I was obsessed about classroom work, about methods and these issues. This is why my doctorate was about cooperative learning; about the use of technology by children. It was this domain I was interested in.

(Niki, 2006-S)

... during my first years [in service] I was saying that I would never claim a managerial position. I liked the classroom and indeed, until today I think the joy of teaching, the joy of teacher’s work is in the classroom. Even now, when I go into a classroom I feel that I’m a teacher and I enjoy it.

(Kyriaki, 2004-S)

...sometimes I think to myself...: “Did you want this position or do you prefer teaching?” and I answer to myself again that I prefer teaching.

(Irene, 2010-S)

These views could logically again be attributed to the patriarchal form of Cypriot socio-cultural milieu within which women have long been inculcated to the roles of good homemakers, wives and mothers (Persianis, 1998). Cypriot women have also long been perceived as ‘suitable’ for primary school teaching (ibid) not managing. It could be claimed that Alexia, Marina, Niki, Kyriaki and Irene had strongly internalised stereotypical expectations about their roles as women (Court, 1997; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Pounder and Coleman, 2002; Strachan et al., 2010) in the particular socio-professional context preferring to act as educative/nurturing rather than managerial figures for children in their schools. It seems that, even as principals, the ‘natural space’ for them continued to be the classroom, not the principal’s office.

When asked if men perceived classroom work and assuming principalship in the same way a woman does, Irene (2010-S) was adamant:

Of course not! No, my friend Andreas [pseudonym] – we became assistant heads together – was arisen when he became principal and left the classroom [laughter]. He didn’t want the classroom. And many others I know; they don’t want to organise celebrations; they don’t want the classroom; they want to manage. I don’t know, maybe they like that better [laughter]. I like being near children more.

Irene’s opinion brings forth the divergence in Cypriot women and men educators’ career orientation. While women prefer to concentrate on the pedagogic, men focus on the managerial aspect of education. Once more, this deviation mirrors the difference in

socialisation that takes place in the Cypriot setting with women being ‘expected’ to become ‘motherly/nurturing’ and men ‘managerial’ figures. Irene’s viewpoint echoes the assertion of a woman in Kagoda and Sperandio’s (2009) research suggesting that men and women teachers in Uganda have different career choices. This view also appears to resonate with evidence from Adler et al.’s (1993) study as well as Thornton and Bricheno’s (2000) research in primary education in England and Wales that corroborated the disparity in career intentions between genders. As already mentioned, the explanation for this difference in the Cypriot context should be sought in the way Cypriot women and men are socialised that leads to women’s preference for teaching instead of leading, whilst for men is the other way around.

Concentrating on classroom work could elucidate why many of these women appear to have had less awareness of career promotion opportunities compared to men colleagues. As a result, planning their way up the promotion ladder had become problematic. Marina’s (2009-S) example presented below can adequately demonstrate this point:

... one day, while discussing with some colleagues and we had seen our scores [from superintendents], one man colleague says to me – because men are looking a lot into these things, the issue of promotion ... is a dream of life – “Do you know that if you apply you’re going to be in this rank [for promotion]?” And I laughed because I thought it was very funny. But the way he estimated things and because I trusted him a lot regarding these issues, he found that I would be ranked high [on the promotional list]. I was thinking... He told me: “If you don’t apply I’ll do it for you” and indeed, he helped me apply. I ended up being 45th [on the list] and they were going to promote 40 as assistant heads. I was promoted in the sixteenth year of my service.

Whilst Marina seemed ‘lucky’ enough to be informed about promotion opportunities by a male colleague, perhaps other ‘classroom oriented’ women had not enjoyed this kind of

‘fortune’. This also highlights that, women themselves should take interest and make effort to seek information about their career prospects.

Nonetheless, a few participants did mention their aspirations for leadership roles, which suggested an interesting variation:

I have always been thinking that I wanted to reach the principal’s post. I’m also thinking about the superintendent’s post ... I want to get to it. I think I’m an ambitious person [laughing].

(Irene, 2010-S)

Clearly, Irene is leadership oriented and her narrative appears to suggest a specific career map leading to leadership posts. Another example came from Zoe (2007-S) who appeared to be equally ambitious but had some problems in becoming principal:

I think that when I decided [to seek promotion] I was very mature. Things had gone too far. I was feeling I was old enough and could claim this post earlier. But some unfair scores [from superintendents] led things to that point ... When my time had come and I had the score that allowed me, I claimed the position ... I could become [head] ten years back ... I insist on this ... I wasn’t afraid of the responsibility ... Thus, I never felt I should stay at the assistant head’s post.

Serious health issues delayed the ambitions and plans of two other interviewees; Anastasia’s (2000-2003) and Fani’s (2005-2010).

These narratives point towards a different and optimistic attitude towards career planning and leadership on behalf of some women educators in Cypriot primary sector. Arguably, even if women are ascribed certain roles in the Cypriot milieu, there is always the possibility to break away from what socialisation and/or stereotypes ‘command’. Such examples could be taken

as an indication that women can and sometimes do envisage themselves as leaders. Strong personal traits can play pivotal role in allowing women to improve their position and in progressing to leadership even in a patriarchal society such as the Cypriot.

Despite such examples though, as previously established, the vast majority of women leaders in this enquiry were not career ambitious or leadership oriented, and followed unstructured professional trails. The pattern identified in Coleman's (2001:86) research suggesting that, "younger headteachers and those who do not carry the full stereotype of domesticity, are those who are more likely to be confident in their career planning" did not powerfully emerge in this enquiry. It seems that the traditionally male-controlled organisation of Cypriot culture continues to be strongly influential leading many women – young and old – to believe they are unsuitable for leadership positions even in a sector where they constitute the majority. The way gender role socialisation takes place in the Cypriot locale and stereotypical assumptions about women appear to lead them to internalise the perception that they are more suitable for teaching instead of leading. This is consistent with the findings of research relating to women in other countries (Al-Khalifa, 1992; Ouston, 1993; Blackmore, 1999; Thornton and Bricheno, 2000; Reynolds, 2008; Smith, 2011b). Thereby, as evidenced in this Subsection, Cypriot women teachers in primary education seem to have needed gradual building up of their experience and confidence in leadership positions before feeling amply prepared to become heads.

4.2.2. External influences on career trajectories

In the quest to examine possible external barriers and/or enabling factors related to gender when aspiring to principalship, narrators were prompted to share their experiences from

interacting with teacher colleagues, headteachers, superintendents, family and relatives at that particular stage in their careers. Their experiences with these groups of people are presented next divided in two parts: a) Enabling influences and b) Deterring influences.

4.2.2.1. Enabling influences

As briefly discussed in the preceding Subsection, in most cases, *superintendents* and *headteachers* to a greater, and *teacher colleagues* to a lesser extent acted as catalysts for these women's progression up the ladder of promotion. This occurred either when these stakeholders responded to women's aspirations positively or – most importantly – when they directly offered support, mentoring and sponsorship to prospective women heads.

Most narrators claimed that they had not observed any negative gendered attitude from *teacher colleagues* – either men or women – when aspiring to principalship. In fact, in some cases, colleagues urged women educators to go for headship. Kyriaki (2004-S) said: “My colleagues were pushing me to attend the interview for promotion ... Everybody was telling me: “Go. You must go.” That is, they encouraged me to go for it.” Katerina (2003-S) also remarked:

I didn't have any negative experiences because I was fortunate to have colleagues who were saying that I should go. The position suited me. I'm blowing my own trumpet now but the position suited me. This is what my colleagues were saying ... There wasn't any negative reaction ...

Bearing in mind that most women principals in this enquiry had been non-leadership oriented and had pursued unspecific career maps, it becomes clear that colleagues' fairly positive and

supportive attitude had played a crucial role in impelling these women to begin and continue their drive to promotion.

Various explanations could be provided for teacher colleagues' overall positive stance. First, in the centralised Cypriot educational system all promotions in public sectors are conducted by the Educational Service Commission. As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, promotions have long been mainly based on candidates' seniority, academic qualifications and overall performance during the interview for promotion along with the superintendents' evaluation of candidates' performance in the classroom. As seniority is primarily taken into account, when most of these women were at the stage of promotion, it was 'their turn' to be promoted. Presumably, this 'turn ethos' and the centralised and standardised way of promotion process, minimized overt negative reactions and contributed to colleagues' fairly positive attitude towards them. As Fani (2005-S) stated, "I didn't observe there was any issue ... I had many years in service and high scores." Antigoni (1979-1993) also noted: "I don't think they faced me negatively because I had [many] years in service. It was somehow my turn...". Along the same lines, Eliana (2008-S) highlighted:

In our occupation, I think this is positive. Colleagues may have rivalries but they don't show them. I think when someone is senior they see it positively ... Because there is a list and there are criteria, I think colleagues respect.

Arguably, it seems that participants in this research had identified a positive aspect of the otherwise anachronistic promotional system in Cypriot public education. Based on their experiences, it seems that the 'turn ethos' and the specific promotional criteria have contributed in 'de-emphasizing' the parameter of gender – at least overtly – when these

women were aspiring to educational leadership, leading colleagues to see their prospective promotion overall positively.

Another reason that could be offered for teacher colleagues' fairly positive attitude towards aspiring women educators could be the increased inroad of women in Cyprus primary education that has led to them outnumbering men since 1981/1982 and heavily dominating the sector during the last two decades (see Table 1, p.9) (Ministry of Finance, 2010). Although women are still not principals in proportion to their number in teaching, they have outnumbered men in the principal's post since 2002/2003 (see Table 3, p. 13) (Educational Service Commission, 2010). To quote Fani (2005-2010), "people have accepted it. They see women in managerial posts for so many years now that they don't make a distinction [between men and women] ... Forget it. It's over."

Fani's assertion appears to indicate that it is the currently augmented participation of women in leadership posts in Cypriot primary education that has led to their acceptance as leaders and thus contributed into minimizing negative reactions towards them when aspiring to principalship. However, Theodora's (1962-1990), Loukia's (1961-1995) and Kornelia's (1961-1988) positive first hand experiences of ascending the promotion ladder coming from the 1960s and 1970s appear to weaken Fani's argument. It seems that it is rather the long established standardised criteria employed for promotions, which have previously been detailed, that could essentially explain colleagues' fairly egalitarian behaviour towards women aspirants throughout the timeframe under investigation including the 1960s and 1970s when women constituted the minority in both the teaching and leading workforce.

Moreover, the fact that teaching – particularly in primary sector – has long been perceived an appropriate (Evetts, 1994; Blackmore, 1999; Cubillo and Brown, 2003) and ‘decent’ occupation for educated Cypriot women (Persianis, 1998), could also explicate colleagues’ fairly equal and respectful attitude towards them throughout the period under consideration, namely between 1961 and 2010. Anastasia’s (2000-2003) personal example, can usefully demonstrate the ‘respect ethos’ towards Cypriot women teachers in primary education:

They [colleagues] were saying that I deserved to go and become [head]. And they urged me ... [with] phone calls or they were paying visits themselves: “You must go. No way, you deserve it ... you are doing such a good job, you have the abilities, it’s a shame ...”. I was very much respected ...

The centralised promotion system in public education and the ‘turn ethos’ stemming from it as well as the overall ‘respect ethos’ for women teachers in primary sector discussed above can elucidate why – apart from teacher colleagues – most *headteachers* and *superintendents* also supported and boosted women educators to assume principalship. In some cases, *superintendents* directly asked women to apply and were even sending them application forms to fill in. For example, Alexia (1994-1999) remembered that the superintendent repeatedly asked her “why [she hadn’t] applied for promotion” while, in Stefania’s (1991-1994) case, the superintendent was sending her application forms enquiring why she hadn’t applied. Athina (1989-1994) also recalled:

I hadn’t applied and, when applications from others were submitted, my superintendent was wondering ... “Why I hadn’t applied?” I remember he phoned and asked me: “Why? What makes you uninterested for the post?” It [promotion] really didn’t bother me ... But he made me interested ... “Being your superintendent, I ask you to apply. Don’t neglect it.”

Apart from superintendents, many *headteachers* also seem to have supported and sponsored women to become heads. Here is what Alexia (1994-1999) shared:

... I don't want to blow my own trumpet but ... I always remember that, in their evaluation forms, two of my heads wrote: "I recommend her promotion." ... It wasn't only the superintendent who recognised my worth.

As established in Subsection 4.2.1, since women in this research appear to have been non-leadership oriented, it comes as no surprise that in most cases headteachers and/or superintendents were actually those who convinced women to start thinking about and finally seek promotion to senior posts. Fani (2005-2010) recalled: "... the superintendent ... his grandchildren were in my class ... He insisted together with the headteacher ... They finally convinced me to apply ...". Kyriaki (2004-S) also recounted:

He [principal] pushed me very much to become assistant head ... He says to me: "You'll go and say that you do it for my sake." I went, became assistant head and then things got under way ... His role was very important ...

It is interesting to highlight that most principals and superintendents who boosted women to become heads in one way or the other, were men. Sofia's (2009-S) example is characteristic:

When I was assistant head, my principal was a man and I admit that he helped me enormously ... without me opting for it, or understanding that he was assisting me when he was ... After observing my work during the first three months he told me: "Listen, I believe you deserve to get a double score in your second evaluation." ... I wasn't even aware that this existed really. He told me: "I'll ask from your superintendent to give you thirty seven because I believe you deserve to be promoted." ... This is what boosted me to promotion. Thus, in fact, it's a man that helped me get the promotion [smiling].

According to the data, apart from Sofia, most women had positive experiences with supportive male heads and/or superintendents when aspiring to principalship. The centralised and standardised promotional process and the ‘turn ethos’ along with the general ‘respect ethos’ towards Cypriot women educators in primary sector detailed previously in this Subsection could explicate the overall supportive and often boosting attitude of male superiors. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that few dissonant examples suggesting obstinate stereotypical presumptions about women as leaders were singled out by some narrators and these are critically discussed in the next Subsection.

Despite some negative examples, the fact that those who directly fostered and boosted participants in this research to become heads were mainly male superintendents and headteachers is worth noting. Interestingly, the outcomes of this research appear somewhat to disagree with previous research findings. For example, asymmetrical power relations (Cubillo and Brown, 2003), prejudice (Kaparou and Bush, 2007) and women’s devaluation (Shakeshaft, 1993, 2006; Gaskell and Mullen, 2006) were not revealed to the extent suggested in other studies (see Moreau et al., 2007). The vast majority of participants in this enquiry did not seem to be perceived as ‘troubling’ (Blackmore, 1999) nor were they limited to subordinate and pastoral roles within their institutions (Young, 1992; Gray, 1993; Ouston, 1993; Coleman, 2001, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2006; Moreau et al., 2007) by teacher colleagues, headteachers and/or superintendents but instead; they were encouraged to undertake managerial duties. The vast majority of interviewees received adequate institutional support in their attempt to ascend the hierarchy. Unlike previous findings by Sherman (2000), Rarieya (2005), Moreau et al. (2007) and McLay (2008), women were generally sufficiently mentored and sponsored to prepare for leadership. Interestingly, the ‘old boys’ network’ with its constant power to select and exclude (McLay, 2008) appeared to be fairly ‘dysfunctional’

in Cypriot primary education setting even during '60s and '70s when men constituted the majority of teaching personnel. Unlike other studies (see Moreau et al., 2007), it is also interesting that, despite the traditionally patriarchal structure of Cypriot society, only minor problems were mentioned regarding inter-gender collegial relationships in general and mentor/mentee, appraiser/appraisee relationships in particular. This was the case even for women who worked and were promoted in the 1960s and the 1970s when stereotypical assumptions about gendered relationships still had greater effect on women's and men's interactions

These outcomes could be explained in three ways. First, despite the cluster of negative aspects that a highly centralised educational system such as the Cypriot may have, arguably its particularity seems to have generally facilitated women aspiring to leadership positions. More specifically, as already explained, the fact that all promotions are conducted centrally by the Educational Service Commission based on fixed criteria seems to have diminished gender based discrimination, at least in its overt form.

Secondly, the fact that Cyprus is a small country within which people are more or less acquainted with each other, could also be perceived as responsible for the fairly egalitarian attitude towards aspiring women educators. After all, as repeatedly mentioned in this thesis, women educators, particularly of the primary sector, have long been perceived to be a respectable section of the Cypriot population.

Finally, as mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter, stereotypical views about women's inferior position in Cypriot society started to improve around the middle of the 20th century due to urbanisation, the development of transport, communication and technology and the

expansion of artisanship and industry that created new positions for women to work outside the home. Moreover, the First and Second World Wars; the liberation struggle of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (E.O.K.A) against British colonisation (1878-1960) that started in 1955 and finished in 1959 leading to independence in 1960; and the war against Turkish invasion in 1974 and the disaster that followed, forced women to undertake different roles in society and enter the labour market in higher rates. Additionally, the influence of European ideologies, Enlightenment, humanism, democratic liberalism, socialism and communism also played significant part in advancing the status of Cypriot women. These developments could be perceived as liable for the fairly egalitarian attitude towards women educators. It appears that participants in this research were ‘fortunate’ to enter the teaching profession and assume principalship after the turning point of ’50s at a time when, according to Persianis (1989), the status of Cypriot women started to improve. Maybe this ‘historical coincidence’ in combination with the perception that teaching is suitable for women, facilitated their professional journeys. The experiences of women educators/leaders in the primary sector before the 1950s might have been different but no relevant local research focusing on that period was found to enable safer conclusions.

It seems that the socio-historical developments of the middle of the 20th century positively influenced familial structures as well, rendering them somewhat more ‘democratic’. This change was evident in this research in the way *families* supported women leadership aspirants. A common pattern stemming from the data was that, apart from teacher colleagues, headteachers and superintendents, principals’ families also overall supported their career ambitions. Feelings of happiness (Theodora, 1962-1990; Eleftheria, 1981-1997; Stella, 1991-2000; Christiana, 2009-S), enthusiasm (Kornelia, 1961-1988) and the phrase “you deserve it” (Kyriaki, 2004-S) were typically mentioned by interviewees when referring to their family’s

and/or relatives' reactions. The encouragement on behalf of women's families is reflected in the ensuing examples:

... I was pushed and encouraged by my family ... I was hesitant ... to go [for promotion] ... My family was always positive for my trajectory in the school, my timetable and the extra time I spent ... I didn't have any problem.

(Eva, 1999-S)

My family encouraged me ... "Since you had been working for so many years, now it's moral satisfaction for you. Why not to try? You're knowledgeable. You're doing such a good job." ... I had the support from all the family.

(Anastasia, 2000-2003)

Their stance was encouraging because, I think they knew I had the strength to become head ... Mum should become head. Wife-teacher should become head ... They ... reinforced me in what I wanted. They weren't in any way discouraging.

(Zoe, 2007-S)

We thought about it [promotion] at home and [they said]: "Since you're allowed and since your superintendent urges you, why not [to seek promotion]?" ... They never reacted negatively. They always left it to my own preference. My family was encouraging and never played negative role in any of my decisions regarding my professional development or my contribution and function in the school or in the community.

(Athina, 1989-1994)

I'm single ... With 'family' I mean the parents ... They were facing ... my development ... very positively. They supported and encouraged me ... The issue of "where are you going to get involved? ..." was never raised.

(Niki, 2006-S)

In a patriarchal society such as the Cypriot, the supportive stance of husbands in particular appears to have been critical in these women's career development. In Christiana's (2009-S) case, this support was constant throughout her teaching service:

If I didn't have my husband's support ... while doing the Master's or while preparing for the school to be competent teacher ... maybe I wouldn't have given so much emphasis to my professional ... activities. This could result in me not being excellent, not having high scores and the Master's in order to claim the position. But he supported me ... He wasn't a suspending factor ... he supported me with his attitude at home and with his contribution to the family.

Katerina (2003-S) stressed that her spouse was "pushing [her]" to seek promotion. Stella's (1991-2000) husband was encouraging and supportive even if she would have to be transferred away from home to work for a while immediately after promotion. She said: "Everybody encouraged me; first of all, my husband. Although I would be transferred away from M. [pseudonym of town] to work for a while, he was always my supporter."

Margarita's (2003-S) spouse was willing to even move with her in case she was promoted and transferred to another area:

My family faced it very positively. My children reinforced me and my husband said: "Go, because it suits you. You deserve it and if it's necessary to move to some remote place we'll go and rent [a house] and I'll travel." That is, I found help, support and psychological reinforcement from my family, particularly from my husband.

Eva's and Alexia's husbands even encouraged them to go abroad and do a Master's and doctorate respectively to increase their potential for promotion to principalship. Eva (1999-S) remembered: "When my older daughter went to the university ... my husband told me: "Go with her and do a Master's". It was just when I was promoted as assistant head ...". Alexia

(1994-1999) also recalled: “He [husband] went abroad to do his doctorate. This idea wasn’t in my mind ... My husband was telling me: “But, why didn’t you go as well? You should go...””.

Arguably, it seems that the turning point of the 1950s with its socio-historical developments discussed earlier in this Subsection contributed to these women’s overall positive experiences with family and relatives. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that sporadic incidences of unsupportive behaviour from family and relatives were mentioned by narrators, suggesting that patriarchal structures founded deep in history have not yet been totally uprooted. These incidences are detailed in the next Subsection.

In sum, the narrators’ overall positive experiences with teacher colleagues, headteachers, superintendents and family canvassed in this Subsection, which had been decisive for their professional development, appear to resonate with equivalents in Coleman’s surveys in mid-’90s and 2004 (Coleman, 2009:17) who “recognised family, colleagues and primarily their own headteacher as encouraging and supporting them.” Likewise, fathers, husbands, male relatives and/or colleagues were mentioned as major supporters by women leaders in the traditionally patriarchal Pakistani society (Rarieya, 2005). Women headteachers in McLay and Brown’s (2001) study had also been encouraged to apply for headship by peers and headteachers. All these cases – albeit coming from different parts of the world – seem to highlight the key role which male stakeholders in particular had often played in females’ occupational progression.

However, with regard to this research in particular, it is essential to bear in mind that the generally positive experiences detailed in this Subsection belong to Cypriot women educators

who managed to attain principalship. Perhaps the experiences of women who did not assume leadership positions were different as were the experiences of women in other sectors. After all, the phenomenon of women's disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary education spanning the last five decades, indicates that for a huge proportion of female teaching population in primary sector the pathway to leadership had not been laid out with rose leaves. Further insights into the reasons accounting for this inequality will be provided in subsequent parts of this Chapter beginning from the following Subsection.

4.2.2.2. Deterring influences

As hinted in the preceding Subsection, despite the overall enabling influences from teacher colleagues, headteachers, superintendents and family that seemed to have facilitated the narrators' career ascent, a few deterring attitudes were also reported. These attitudes related to women aspirants' age and gender.

More specifically, age appears to have constituted a rather negative parameter for younger women aspirants. Niki (2006-S) recalled: "I was feeling that ... being young was preoccupying them [colleagues] ... As I was promoted very young, this came out much more strongly compared to gender." In a similar vein, Christiana (2009-S) asserted:

Colleagues concentrate more on the age someone claims a position ... Maybe the fact that I was young and was claiming the post was a point that some older colleagues didn't see positively. But regarding gender, I never felt them saying: "Ha! She's a woman, why is she claiming it [principalship]?" or that there is prejudice based on gender. The fact that some ... younger people – because they acquired qualifications and had high scores – were claiming this post, somehow wasn't accepted ... from some teachers who were older and still hadn't managed to claim headship.

Interestingly, these women's experiences seem to suggest that sometimes age could play more significant role in people's 'sceptical' attitude towards women aspiring to leadership compared to gender. One possible reason for this phenomenon could be the long established 'turn ethos' in promotions explained in the previous Subsection. More specifically, it seems that the women participants who had opted for principalship around their forties were viewed with suspicion from senior colleagues because they would bypass them in promotions. Although, Niki and Christiana denied that gender also played a role in this, a logical question that may arise from this finding is whether colleagues' suspicious attitude would have also been displayed if young aspirants were men instead of women. My status as a socio-professional insider puts me in a position to claim that young women aspirants are faced with more prejudice compared to their male equivalents. This occurs because usually these young women have small children to whom they are stereotypically expected to devote themselves instead of seeking career advancement. Young women's primary role is still to raise their family. The situation is different for young men who are not expected to undertake major part in childrearing and thus – as 'breadwinners' – they are 'justifiable' to seek promotion.

Unlike Niki and Christiana, other narrators did mention gendered attitudes towards women – young and senior – who aspired to leadership posts, reinforcing my position that gender grounded prejudiced behaviours towards women prospective leaders persist. Here is what Eliana (2008-S) shared:

... a woman colleague who was aspiring to principalship told me ... that, when talking to a man colleague, he told her: " ... a man is different"; meaning that a man safeguards authority.

Eliana's example appears to indicate that even if women's status in the Cypriot socio-cultural setting and education in particular has improved beginning from the 1950s, traditional perceptions suggesting that men are more suitable for educational leadership compared to women still exist and can cloud women's career prospects. The ensuing examples provided by Irene (2010-S) support this argument. More specifically, Irene narrated two incidences of differential treatment from men headteachers when she was assistant head:

... I felt discriminated when I was assistant head ... There was a man teacher in exactly the same age I was ... who hadn't become assistant head ... When the principal wanted to discuss or decide for something he would go to him! ... *I* [Irene's emphasis] was the assistant head. It was as if I was non-existent in the school. This hurt me a lot! ... I had another headteacher ... who believed that men are extremely good and much more capable and he showed this to me in various ways ... I was struggling, I put all my effort. I was assistant head together with another man ... Mr. Costas [pseudonym] was his God. He was his right hand in everything. I was struggling, I was doing all I could ... to make him understand that I was good assistant head as well ... I was doing twice as much work compared to Costas ... Colleagues were telling me: "But, you are doing the work for him ... !" ... But you cannot imagine how hard I struggled. I worked doubly hard compared to Costas.

Irene's twofold example indicates that the long established stereotypical perception, which unfortunately is still deeply founded in some people's minds – particularly men's – suggesting that men make better leaders or men and leadership/decision making are congruent, has not yet been completely eradicated. This kind of persisting perceptions can frequently trigger discrimination against women and pose barriers to their advancement. Fortunately, Irene appeared to be strong enough to overcome prejudiced attitudes towards her. As the disproportionate numbers of women primary school principals suggest though, it seems that a great number of other women did not possess the necessary aptitude and personal traits to do the same.

Another example suggesting discrimination of women by men superintendents in the evaluation of their performance in the class was provided by Alexia (1994-1999):

Superintendents always boosted men teachers more ... in the past ... instead of women ... From the first years I started working ... beginning from the 1960s and maybe after 1970s as well. Because those promoted were always men ... [High] scores were given to men teachers. Us, women teachers, were thinking we would stay bounded ... Although, we didn't claim [equal scores], this existed ... Later on, women slowly started to be promoted, at least at the assistant head's post. But, we [women] were very late compared to those [women] who become assistant heads or heads now ...

Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that data from principals of the 1960s and 1970s, shows that Theodora (1962-1990), Loukia (1961-1995) and Kornelia (1961-1988) became heads at three different districts of the island at a very early stage in their careers and due to high evaluation scores from men superintendents, thus negating gender discrimination from male superintendents. Moreover, no other interviewee reported differential treatment based on gender when aspiring to principalship on behalf of superintendents that could support Alexia's argument.

However, discrimination based on gender in evaluation scores imposed by the Regional Education Office and not from superintendents was reported by Zoe (2007-S):

When I was working with my husband and they [Regional Education Office] should give us a total performance score, they said: "Ha! We're not going to give both the same score. The man must get higher score." Although I was working [hard] [smile] as well! As a result, higher score was given to my husband ... The superintendent insisted but from the Regional Education Office they said: "Not both, to one of them". Anyway, this is how things were ... Of course, the husband was chosen! [loud laughter]; the man of the house [laughter]!

Zoe's experience appears to point towards gendered cultural patterns underpinning evaluations that can lead to promotions. Despite the huge developments in socio-cultural structures explained in the previous Subsection, it seems that traditionally patriarchal perceptions assigning the roles of breadwinners and leaders to men and of family and domestic duties to women can still influence decisions about advancement to leadership posts.

Similar perceptions could be taken as responsible for the sceptical and/or sometimes negative reactions of family members when participants were aspiring to principalship. For example, work overload and role conflict because of studying for the interview for promotion was the reason why Eliana's (2008-S) husband and daughter openly expressed their objections to her seeking promotion:

My husband was deterring me from attending the interview for promotion simply because it was tiring. To go for promotion you need to study a lot ... My husband was discouraging me. My daughter had objections because when I went three times [to the interview] for assistant head and four for head, I was studying a lot ... I had my daughter shouting ... : "Mum, you don't cook, you don't do the housework, nothing. All you do is studying." ... At that time, my son was away for his studies ... He could have told me the same.

Eliana's experience points towards obstinate pigeonholed perceptions about women's role. According to her family, her main responsibility was to take care of her family and home, not to pursue a managerial post.

Unfortunately, even if sparse, taken together the examples discussed in this Subsection, appear to indicate a perseverance of gender stereotyping in the Cypriot socio-cultural locale.

This occurs despite the huge strides towards gender equality discussed in the previous Subsection that have taken place during the last five decades.

It could be claimed that, for the participants in this research, the barriers they encountered in their careers had not discouraged them from seeking promotion once they got on the pathway to leadership. Arguably, these women carried personal traits strong enough to help them combat adverse influences and/or attitudes towards them. As detailed later in this Chapter, it seems that this was not the case for other women who did not seek and/or assume a leadership post.

4.2.3. Promotion process: Facing the interview panel

Before unfolding women educators' experiences of the interview for promotion, it is worth mentioning that all interviews in pre-primary, primary and secondary public education sectors in Cyprus are carried out by the Educational Service Commission. This consists of five members, usually Doctors related to the field of education. The Commission is appointed by the Ministerial Council every six years (Educational Service Commission, 2010) with the process being in place since 1961.

The current committee was appointed in November 2010, a few days after the fieldwork for this research was completed. It is important to note that there is no woman among its current members. Bearing in mind that there were two women in the committee of 2004-2010 and one in the committee of 1998-2004, there is definitely a regression in women's participation in decision making regarding promotions. Before 1998, only men participated in the committee. For the sake of discussion, it is interesting to mention that Christiana, Irene,

Sofia, Niki, Marina, Zoe, Margarita, Kyriaki, Fani and Eliana were appointed as heads between 2004-2010 when there were two women on the interview panel; Eva, Katerina and Anastasia between 1998-2004 when there was one; and Melina, Stella, Alexia, Athina, Eleftheria, Loukia, Antigoni, Stefania, Theodora and Kornelia when there was no woman on the panel.

Except for Sofia's (2010-S) experience, overall, principals denied being treated differently or feeling discriminated against by the interview panel because of their gender. They also denied that the committee viewed them more strictly when applying for headship compared to when applying for the assistant head's post. They stressed that the two interviews differed only in the content of the questions asked. While in the interview for assistant principalship, questions related to their future duties and possible problems they might face at that particular post, questions for becoming head were more advanced revolving around issues of educational management and school rules. Those who had a Master's, doctorate or other higher qualification, for example Niki, Irene, Christiana, Sofia, Marina and Stella, were also asked about their studies. It could be assumed that the standardised way of the interview process in both cases did not allow for engagement in overt gender based differential treatment of women candidates.

However, as mentioned above, Sofia's (2010-S) two experiences appear to contrast with those of others, suggesting sexist attitudes and/or discrimination during the interview for promotion. Here is the first example she narrated:

The woman in the committee asked me a question related to gender ...: "While you are a woman and you have three children how can you manage? I see here [Sofia's

details] that you participated in the team that wrote this book or the other etc. You are involved in many issues. How can you manage?”

Paradoxically, it was the woman member of the committee who raised the issue of gender and women's role conflict. Sofia's experience resonates with that of a female participant in Hall's (1996:59) research who was frequently openly asked by other women how could she “bring up [her] children and have a career at the same time”. Perhaps the idea that women's role conflict may prevent them from being effective principals, was not only at the back of that particular woman's mind, but also covertly underpinned the decisions of male members of the committee responsible for promoting them, leading them to leave married women with children out of promotions.

Sofia's second experience follows:

With regard to the other committee [the committee had changed in the meantime], I dare to suspect that if I was a man I would have been promoted earlier. Let me explain ... I went five times to become head ... Every time, once I entered the room, they kept telling me: “Ha! You were born in '68. You started coming here [for promotion] very young. You began your career very early ...” Then, they were asking me questions and I think they didn't even pay attention to what I was saying because ... as I was doing a course in management, logically [small sigh], I was able to respond to questions related to management. I went five times to become head ... I had both men and women co-candidates but I observed that [small sigh] ... it took me more time than men to be promoted although they had the same or less qualifications than me ... I was younger than they were, but the years of service were the same ... The only case of a man who was promoted the fifth time just like me was someone who had a confrontation with the committee for personal reasons.

Two main observations can emerge from Sofia's second example. First, the committee seemed to show an inclination for promoting men instead of women candidates even when

they were equal in all other factors (Reynolds, 2008) or women were more experienced and better qualified than men (Strachan, 2009). Sofia's experience appears to imply that the perception that men make better leaders simply because they are men, could influence the committee's decisions.

Second, it appears that due to the 'turn ethos', age could often play a more important role compared to gender during the interview for promotion with senior candidates preferred. That age was often taken into account more than gender in promotions was also proposed by Christiana and Zoe. Christiana's (2009-S) assertion presented below reminds Lumby's (2009:33) argument suggesting that youth is "...assumed to be less competent than the more aged and experienced":

Maybe they questioned being young a bit; whether you are able to make it at that particular post ... I somehow felt this. Perhaps they were sceptical about this factor. When I claimed the position for the first time, they promoted those who were older, although ... we all had the same score and qualifications. Clearly, there was prejudice favouring senior people.

Zoe's (2007-S) comment that "age was surely taken into account by the committee; if candidates were older or were about to retire, I think this was a way to leave some people out [of promotions]", also appears to suggest that the long established 'turn ethos' discussed earlier in this Chapter influences the way promotions are carried out. Research specifically focusing on comparing candidate and promoted educators' gender and age could shed more light on whether young age equally negatively affects the promotion of both women and men.

Apart from age, it is also well known in Cyprus that candidates may be left out because they happen to belong to certain political parties (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003; Thody et al.,

2007) and/or are not related to the ‘right’ people who can act as gatekeepers for their promotion. The interference of parties and of the Pancyprian Organisation of Greek Teachers (POED) in promotions as well as the favouritism (Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2006) towards friends/acquaintants/relatives that still exists in the small Cypriot context were mentioned more than a few times by interviewees in this research. For example Sofia (2009-S), Eliana (2008-S), Niki (2006-S), Margarita (2004-S), Kyriaki (2004-S), Alexia (1994-1999) Stefania (1991-1992), Athina (1989-1994), Antigoni (1979-1993) and Kornelia (1961-1988) proposed these interpositions as a major discriminating factor in promotions, which nonetheless, as interviewees pointed out, is not related to gender. Turning to the international context, the tendency to give jobs to relatives was also recorded in the context of Solomon Islands (Akao, 2007) while political manipulation of selection procedures was also identified in Greece (Polydorides and Zambeta, 1997; Kyriakoussis and Saiti, 2006).

In the quest to examine whether ‘positive discrimination’ (Moreau et al., 2007) can enter the picture of promotions in primary sector – of which women candidates are unaware – I considered it useful to approach the committee and ask for their opinion. The two women members of the Educational Service Commission between 2004 and 2010 willingly accepted to be interviewed individually few days before the end of their service. When asked if gender played a role in the committee’s decisions, one of them remarked:

No, it didn’t play a role except from some minor cases in primary education when, because there are very few men, we sometimes could say: “Let’s promote the man to have a man as well”. Provided that they [a man and a woman candidate] were equal.

The committee’s member bluntly denied that this constituted covert discrimination against women. In a similar vein, the other woman member of the committee asserted:

I need to be honest that sometimes we were sceptical whether men should also be promoted. This wasn't done on purpose in order to discriminate against women ... Between two equal candidates, even us women [members of the committee] could favour the man. Why? Because we see the problems faced by children in primary schools ... In few cases we thought it would have been good to ... have a balance in promotions between men and women, yet not against anyone.

Evidently, the fact that “gender ... influence[s] decision making if all other factors are equal” (Reynolds, 2008:4), was applicable to Cypriot primary education sector. Although not directly admitting it, as members of the Educational Service Commission, these women participated in ‘positive discrimination’ (Moreau et al., 2007) against women. These findings seem to resonate with the outcomes of Thornton and Bricheno’s (2000) research suggesting that men, who are a minority in primary education, are frequently favoured and more easily promoted to attain a balance in the numbers of women and men heads recruited. It seems that, similarly to England (Coleman, 2009), gender is an advantage for men in Cypriot primary sector. To quote Coleman (2009:15), “[a]s the proportion of male teachers in primary schools is steadily decreasing, the men who are in the sector are much in demand”, not only as teachers, but most importantly as heads.

In sum, despite most women’s claims that they have not been discriminated against in promotions, it appears that the interview process is not completely immune from gender grounded discrepancies. The presumption that men are ‘naturally’ better suited to school management (Coleman, 2001, 2002; Strachan, 2009) and that the family responsibilities of young married women may keep them from being committed and carrying out the demanding professional duties as heads effectively (Coleman, 2002, 2009, 2011; Wexler-Eckman, 2004; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Reynolds, 2008) came out in Sofia’s experiences of the interview process. Additionally, as the two women members of the committee between 2004 and 2010

admitted, ‘positive discrimination’ (Moreau et al., 2007) favouring men and leaving women candidates out of promotions is a practice often employed by the Educational Service Commission. This constitutes covert discrimination against women. As the vast majority – if not all – of women educators are unaware of such practices, it is logical to believe that the standardised interview process is an objectively equalising procedure during which gender is not taken into account. Unfortunately, as the outcomes discussed in this Subsection indicated, this is far from being the case. Most women candidates leave the interview having the impression that they have been treated equally but the discussions between the members of the interview panel that take place after these women exit the room and the ‘positive discrimination’ that is often employed, remain unknown to them. Arguably, the persisting stereotypical perceptions underpinning the decisions of the interview panel along with ‘positive discrimination’ could be partly accountable for women’s diachronically disproportionate elevation in the upper floors of the Cypriot primary sector. This issue will be further discussed in Subsection 4.5.2.2.

4.3. Women leaders’ experiences of primary school principalship in Cyprus between 1961 and 2010

Despite the indications suggesting that the vast majority of women leaders in this research had not faced insurmountable unconcealed obstacles when aspiring to leadership, certain experiences of principalship narrated by interviewees appear to confirm that prejudice and stereotypical assumptions about women in managerial positions in the Cypriot educational context do march on. As Kyriaki (2004-S) adequately put it, “... gender inequality has not yet been totally eliminated” in the particular setting. Examples of stereotypical preconceptions and/or behaviour on behalf of teachers, assistant heads, other principals, superintendents and

students; parents, stakeholders and other professionals; as well as family and relatives once these women became heads, appear to converge with research elsewhere, which pinpointed that women frequently receive more intense critique regarding their leading capabilities compared to their male equivalents (Hall, 1996; Reay and Ball, 2000; Coleman, 2002, 2009; Reynolds, 2008; Celikten, 2009; Coleman, 2009). It seems that “gender [is] a factor complicating still further the myriad expectations of [women] in the [principal’s] role” (Hall, 1996:67).

4.3.1. School context: Teacher colleagues, assistant heads, other principals, superintendents and students

Even if the vast majority of women in this enquiry shared positive experiences with teacher colleagues when aspiring to principalship, interestingly, a number of them repeatedly remarked the uncooperativeness they observed in women colleague’s relationships and interactions with them once they became heads. That women teachers were often more critical of women in managerial positions compared to men, comes out in Margarita’s (2004-S) narrative:

All the women colleagues there [school] discuss and say: “Will she be able to control this school?” Because it’s a big school, we have our problems and they want to see how I’m going to manage it.

The previous extract resonates with research by Hall (1996), Coleman (2002) and Celikten (2005, 2009) suggesting that even women may doubt the leadership capabilities of women leaders preferring men as heads. That young age is an aspect intensifying women colleagues’

negative perceptions about women in leadership posts is evident in the subsequent excerpt from Margarita's (2004-S) interview:

There is great rivalry towards young women heads from women colleagues who are of the same or older age and hadn't become heads yet ... They don't accept them ... I see women heads in their forties who are targeted ... Compared to older women heads, these women are being questioned and stigmatised more. They are also questioned because they are women. ... They accept senior women heads more easily even if they have less academic qualifications and question younger heads with Master's degrees and doctorates! I want to highlight the stance of women colleagues most. They are very negative about young women heads!

A threefold reasoning for the negative attitude of female colleagues towards women heads – particularly of younger age – canvassed in the previous examples could be debated. Arguably, the reason for the often 'hostile' approach is an amalgam of deeply rooted stereotypical perceptions about the 'appropriate' role of Cypriot women, which is in the family – particularly if women heads have young children – along with jealousy and the fear of being 'left out' of the train for promotion because younger or women of the same age bypassed them. It appears that the long established 'turn ethos' also underpinned these negative perceptions.

It is interesting to note that this kind of severe opposition to female authority by women colleagues was not reported when prospective women heads were aspiring to principalship. It seems that at that stage, women colleagues 'oppressed' their feelings 'hoping' that women aspirants – particularly of younger age – would not finally make it to the top of hierarchy. However, it appears that, once these women assumed principalship, Pandora's box was opened with women's 'true', prejudiced and stereotyped feelings about women in leadership posts coming out.

Against this background, interestingly, a number of narrators expressed the view that compared to women, men colleagues were often more respectful and cooperative with women principals. Margarita's (2004-S) example is characteristic:

Before I became head I believed I would have more problems with men colleagues because there is a prejudice that they don't appreciate and take women seriously. So, I had a concern about how men colleagues would face me. However, the fact is I never had a problem with men colleagues. With women colleagues I might have had to try and solve a problem, but never with men. Men show great respect to women heads. I feel that, particularly younger but older people [men] as well, love and appreciate me...

Likewise, Sofia (2009-S) commented: "When I try to be very democratic, I see that a higher percentage of men than women are closer to me and more willing to assist and get involved."

Anastasia (200-2003) shared another comparable experience:

I may say that men colleagues could understand me better than women. Let me give you an example. When I became head and was posted to G [name of the school], I was the head of upper primary school [4th, 5th, 6th forms]. The head of lower primary school [1st, 2nd, 3rd forms] was a man who was perceived to be a difficult person and somewhat capricious ... I have to say that we had *wonderful* [Anastasia's emphasis] time together. You wouldn't believe it ... He was coming to see me, to smile, to chat, to discuss about the school ... The fact that he was a man didn't matter. I had very good time. There wasn't any problem.

It could be claimed that "men show great respect to women heads" (Margarita, 2004-S) because – as already mentioned elsewhere – female professionals in this particular sector have long been perceived a respectable section of the Cypriot population. Nonetheless, unfortunately, it seems that prejudice and stereotypes about women in leadership posts related to both gender and age are not solely restricted to women colleagues' mind-sets. Despite some women leaders' positive experiences with men colleagues provided above,

examples of men's incommoding attitudes towards other women heads were also reported.

Loukia's (1961-1995) negative experience with a male colleague is presented next:

My gender had an influence in the occasion when ... I wanted to be transferred to an upper co-educational primary school (4th, 5th, 6th forms) ... The male principal of that particular school was promoted as superintendent and I expressed my interest to fill his position. The specific ex-headteacher/superintendent had objections ... for my transfer claiming that ... men teachers "would not accept me" as their head. Thus, another man was transferred and I remained at lower primary schools for many years before being posted to a co-educational school in 1985...

Two main observations can stem from this. First, that women had long been stereotypically perceived incapable of managing children of older age (4th, 5th, 6th forms) in co-educational schools and second that they would not be accepted as managers of male teachers in this type of schools. Thus, women were 'suitable' solely for managing lower, single-sex schools. This was surely a discriminatory attitude towards women heads emanating from predetermined conventional gender segregating perceptions about women and men. Although, someone might expect that perceptions such as these would be more obvious in the past, this is far from being the case. Zoe's (2007-S) highly negative experience with a male assistant head suggesting persisting stereotypical assumptions about women leaders coming from the past decade is revealing:

Things were bad when there was a man colleague in my age ... who hadn't accepted my promotion. He was my colleague at the University. Unfortunately, he believed he was still living in a 'male dominated' society. It really was difficult for me then ... It's the worst thing to have a man colleague who is of a different attitude and hasn't accepted you or he feels bitter because a woman was promoted instead of him.

When prompted to offer examples, Zoe explained:

For instance, he used to come to work ... without even saying “*good morning*” [Zoe’s emphasis]! He would go to his office and study to become head [laughter]. Whenever I was asking for his help, he used to say: “Other people have the responsibility for this.” During the first year the work overload was immense because I had to organise the school from the scratch. He never asked: “Do you need any help? Is there anything that has to be done today?” No, I didn’t have his assistance. I had to work for long hours to cope and this was stressing me ... He frequently used to question what I was saying claiming that I lied, stand up being angry and shouting ...

It seems that the ‘turn ethos’ in promotions does not only adversely affect women’s but also men’s interactions with women heads. Furthermore, the stereotypical, culturally prescribed presumption that a woman cannot make a better manager than a man, is still deeply rooted in some men. Due to the way they have been socialised, some men still consider it ‘unacceptable’ to have a woman in a position of authority over them:

When I was assistant head, there was a man teacher colleague who devalued women. When someone, including myself, was asking him to do something, he would tell her: “Oh! My God! I’m scared ... Now that you told me this I’ll do it.” [laughter]. He wanted to show: “I’m not afraid; I’m not startled, I don’t listen to what you’re saying”. Not even the headteacher. There was a woman headteacher at the school and he wouldn’t accept her telling him anything either ... Of course, this was because of gender and [the perception]: “Am I going to have a woman ordering me about ...?”

(Irene, 2010-S)

Unfortunately, drawing from Irene’s second experience that follows, this stereotyped perception is instilled in the minds of younger men as well:

I had a colleague who was young but he had a woman complex. That is, when I was assistant head, he couldn’t accept me telling him anything ... He would find something to answer back, he would do the opposite from what I told him ... Or, if he had a problem – I was assistant head [and] there was a man assistant head as well – he

would go to the man. He told me this once: “Is it possible for men to communicate with women?”

A similar experience was shared by Kyriaki (2004-S):

Recently, that is, three years back, I had a male teacher colleague who believed it was insulting for him to have a woman head. This occurred although he was much younger than me. If we were of the same age, someone could say: “Ok, he is justifiable ... to feel like this. He belongs to a generation which was raised in this way.” But he was around forty. He wasn’t that old. But still he couldn’t accept having a woman head. His previous woman head had the same feeling. Thus, gender inequality hasn’t yet been totally eliminated.

When asked to offer examples, Kyriaki said:

Look, I don’t have anything specific to say ... It was a feeling I had ... either based on his facial expressions or sometimes based on his words ... and implicit comments ... I was feeling he faced me in a particular way for this reason.

Kyriaki’s comment echoes the words of a female principal in Sherman’s (2000:135) research who stated that men “won’t come right out and tell you that they think you can’t do the job, but you can see it in their expressions and hear it in their tone of voice.”

This type of subtle doubts about female leaders’ abilities – this time on behalf of superintendents – were also suggested by Irene (2010-S):

I think superintendents face you differently as well ... due to gender ... I think they’re somewhat more concerned about you; whether you’ll be able to manage the school. Thus, of course you have to prove yourself. You have to prove you can do whatever a man can do easily as well even if you’re doing a better job.

Zoe's, Irene's and Kyriaki's experiences presented above bring to mind the situation in other conservative patriarchal societies where women leaders are likely to face resistance from male colleagues who find it difficult/impossible to 'obey' women as they have been socialised to believe that they cannot be managed by them (Rarieya, 2005; Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009; Kaparou and Bush, 2007; Strachan, 2009). They also resonate with research by Hall (1996), Coleman (2002) and Ducklin and Ozga (2007) in the more 'liberal' contexts of UK and Scotland respectively, which recorded analogous forms of discomfort with, questioning of and/or resentment for women leaders' authority. The words of a male teacher quoted by Al-Khalifa (1992:101) who bluntly stated: "it grates me to have a woman in position of authority over me", also come to mind. As Kaparou and Bush (2007:235) justly put it, "such unequal treatment constitutes indirect [covert] discrimination in practice."

Arguably, viewing such incommoding behaviours on behalf of women and men colleagues towards women heads, some female educators were often intrinsically discouraged to put themselves forward for promotion. A number of women did not feel strong enough to face the opposition that a managerial post may bring. This could partly explain the disproportionate representation of women in Cypriot primary school management over the last five decades, an issue that will be further discussed in Subsection 4.5.3.4.

A promising message for the future comes from women leaders' experiences with students. More specifically, according to interviewees, contrary to some colleagues, being young and female was generally viewed positively by students. Here is what Christiana (2009-S) asserted:

I don't feel that children behave differently because they see a woman headteacher.
Based on discussions I had with parents I may say that students were particularly

happy because they had a woman and especially a young woman as their principal. Because I could understand them more, we were organising more child-centred activities ... I was out in the yard, I was involved in their activities and perhaps they didn't have this before, with other principals. Perhaps this occurred because the previous heads were men or people of older age who couldn't go out with them, dance and play games. The fact that I was involved in their activities impressed the students.

Minor problems with disciplining older male students and playing football were reported by Sofia and Kyriaki respectively. In Sofia's case, a group of undisciplined students appeared to 'underestimate' her 'non-aggressive' style of management. Her narration appears to suggest stereotypical attitudes towards women's ability to discipline older boys by employing non-confrontational strategies. Her experience seems to be similar to those of participants in Hall's (1996), Sherman's (2000) and Celikten's (2009) studies who also had difficulty to convince others about the effectiveness of their relationship-oriented and 'kind' mode of leading:

With regard to students, because I was mainly facing them calmly, there was a group of students last year who weren't afraid. They needed someone to raise his/her voice or shout. That part was undertaken by a man assistant head...

(Sofia, 2009-S)

Stereotypical preconceptions identifying men principals with sports and thus rendering them preferable by male students were mentioned by Kyriaki (2004-S):

Sometimes students of the fifth/sixth forms prefer a man. However, I believe it's not because they underestimate women. It's just that ... especially boys are in a period of their life when they want a male prototype. They identify a man teacher with football while they consider women somewhat irrelevant with it. Thus, since women aren't interested in football, they assume they'll not let them play. However, generally, I don't think they [students] feel that a woman teacher or headteacher cannot do what a man can do.

Fortunately, these minor incidences seem to disagree with previous research findings in the developing world where women leaders often experience extreme resentment from some male students leading to violence (Warsal, 2009; Strachan et al., 2010). Of course, it is important to underscore that this piece of research focused on Cypriot primary sector which, as already mentioned elsewhere, has long been perceived an appropriate occupational domain for women (Persianis, 1989). In the particular sector the relationship between female teachers/headteachers and students, customarily represented that of mother and children. Arguably, this relationship minimized highly negative and oppositional attitude towards women leaders on behalf of students. Maybe the situation in secondary or tertiary sectors was different.

4.3.2. Community context: Parents, stakeholders and other professionals

As suggested from interviewees' narratives, most of their experiences with parents, stakeholders and other professionals while in principalship were generally positive. One of the reasons for this overall positive stance was identified by Eliana (2008-S):

Now there are many women heads and thus they're not impressed ... People's attitude has changed ... Twenty years back you [woman head] could have a problem but not now ... In the teaching profession, perhaps because women heads have long been posted, people are used to it.

Taking Eliana's argument a step further, it could be claimed that the longstanding perception in Cyprus suggesting that women and primary education are congruent (Persianis, 1998), might also explain the overall positive stance of people outside the profession not only during

the last two decades as indicated by Eliana, but throughout the period under study, namely over the last five decades.

However, as was the case for colleagues, it seems that stereotypical preconceptions and/or attitudes towards women heads from parents, other professionals and/or stakeholders are not completely surmounted. The subsequent examples recounted by Irene, Zoe, Margarita, Nina and Kyriaki indicate that deeply rooted negative presumptions about the capability of females in managerial posts have not ceased to exist, particularly at rural areas of Cyprus. It is remarkable how identical the experiences of these women leaders coming from four different districts of the island and spanning the last two decades are. It is also amazing how similar these examples are with previous research findings in Cypriot secondary education by Pashiardis and Ribbins (2003). Listen to these principals:

When I was acting head, I had a feeling that the local administrator believed he couldn't communicate with me because I was a woman. I had a feeling he didn't trust me ...

(Irene, 2010-S)

When I was promoted, I was transferred to a village ... I found great people there. The local administrator was willing to assist ... his wife ... the local education authority ... Everything was running smoothly. Around Christmas, the local administrator came [to the school] to discuss some issues, we had a coffee and while talking he said: "My principal, I'll make a confession. When I saw in the newspaper that they are transferring a woman to our school – a school with 200 students, with a special education unit and an all-day school – I was thinking: "We had men and didn't manage; they're going to post a woman, is she going to make it?" When I came and saw you were petit I was thinking: "Oh, my God, she is going to be stressed. The previous male head was husky and didn't make it, how is she going to make it?" But now I think you can manage like two males..." I stayed there for three years and, at every opportunity, he used to say: "I feel guilty because I thought it would have been

difficult for our school to progress simply because I heard that a woman headteacher was posted.” It was an overturn.

(Margarita, 2004-S)

At first, the local administrator was somewhat unwilling to provide the necessary funding for the school ... This occurred because there was a misunderstanding with another woman principal about monetary issues ... I told him: “Listen, whenever I ask for money for the school, you give it to me. I’ll keep a detailed record about everything and hand it over to you. When you realise there is even a cent missing, come and complain. Be patient until Christmas and make an inspection ...” When we got to know each other better, he then let me handle monetary issues without any problem [loud laughter] ... He didn’t even make an inspection....

(Nina, 1991-1992)

When I was transferred to A. [village’s name], the president of the parents’ committee told me that the villagers were saying: “Ha! Is a woman head posted to our village?” [They said so] Because at the other two schools the principals were men. That particular person said that, now they [villagers] observed my style of management, they realised that gender is irrelevant ... This was the attitude at that particular village but, according to the president, in the end, they realised I was dynamic...

(Zoe, 2007-S)

Sometimes the parents’ committee faces you differently if you’re a woman. That is, when I was transferred to a rural school immediately after promotion ... they asked to be sent another person before I even went there. I learnt this later, when I won their trust and they confessed this to me ... [At first] they thought: “She’s a woman, she’s old as well [and] she will not be enthusiastic to work”... I think this continues to be the attitude of people in Cyprus ... However, this doesn’t happen to a great extent. That is, you may find only few people in rural areas who think like this. The vast majority of people accept [women heads] now.

(Kyriaki, 2004-S)

Despite Kyriaki’s fairly optimistic final standpoint offered above, it seems that prejudice against women’s capacity to be successful leaders is not limited to rural parts of the island

and/or relatively uneducated villagers and stakeholders. An extremely poignant experience with a highly educated female member of parents' committee and ex-colleague that stigmatised her career was vividly narrated by Niki (2006-S):

When I was transferred to B. [name of the school], there was a former colleague whose children were attending that particular school ... She was specialised in inclusive education ... Few days before the beginning of my service as principal ... she would deliver a lecture ... and I went to listen to her ... I was so happy because I heard that her children attended my school ... I was so pleased to inform her that I was transferred to that particular school. When the lecture was over, she was happy to see me and I said: "Let me tell you the news ... I'll be the new headteacher of B." What can I say? It was as if I told her something extremely bad. Her expression changed and she began shouting ... "They sent *you* [Niki's emphasis] to manage men? They sent *you*?" I said: "Why? What's the problem?" "*Are you serious? ... The head of primary education doesn't know what he's doing. Is he sending a woman to manage men?*" [Niki's emphasis]. I honestly felt the need to burst into tears ... I thought she would have been enthusiastic to hear that a young head, willing to work hard was transferred to that school to make developments. After all, she already knew me and how I worked.

Niki's story unveils in the most acute way two main issues: a) that patriarchal structures and gender stereotypes are so deeply rooted in the Cypriot society (Persianis, 1998), that even well-educated people in urban areas are still socialised to believe that women and management are incongruent; and b) that even women may doubt the ability of their female counterparts to adequately carry out their leadership role, an issue that has already been discussed in Subsection 4.3.1.

The preceding quotes from Irene's, Zoe's, Margarita's, Nina's, Kyriaki's and Niki's interviews bring to mind Shah's (1998:81) assertion that "women are stereotyped negatively as leaders and managers, and are often pre-judged as failures." To quote Spender (1987:134):

[M]en are assumed to possess any necessary competence, until such time as they demonstrate otherwise, but women need most positively to establish the fact of their competence before this will be recognised.

In other words, Cypriot women headteachers were frequently ‘put to the test’ (Coleman 2002:90) and “need[ed] to ‘win over’ their community before they [were] accepted” (Coleman, 2009:15) as successful leaders. They had “to be better at all the job requirements of a principal and ... exceed expectations” (Celikten, 2009:172; see also Coleman, 2011) and this could add to the already overwhelming demands of principalship. As will be further debated in Subsection 4.5.3.4, being aware of this demanding situation, not surprisingly, many women teachers preferred to avoid the pressure of having to prove themselves when becoming heads. As a result, they chose not to seek promotion.

That young age was a factor intensifying people’s prejudice against women leaders, has already been uncovered in previous parts of this Chapter. Questioning of women leaders’ capability to manage in combination with youth comes out in Marina’s, Christiana’s and Niki’s experiences of headship. In Marina’s (2009-S) case, it seems that she had to ‘prove herself’ to parents not only as a woman head, but most importantly, as a young woman head:

... At the first assembly, I was very confident and cool. I was dressed like a young lady, wearing a short dress. Parents realised I was very young and kept staring at me. But the way I talked to them won them over. I heard later that they said that they were expecting a low-profile woman head ... But when they saw me being cool and talking fluently at the assembly and they observed the way I handled various issues, they were immediately talking in a positive way in the village about me.

Likewise, Christiana (2009-S) also referred to parents’ surprise when realising that the person managing the school is a woman, and particularly a young woman head:

Sometimes parents come to school and ask to see the headmaster ... they say: “Who is the headmaster?” This is why I’m saying that maybe they question the fact that I’m a woman head. When they hear that “the headmistress is Mrs Christiana” [laughing] and they see that I’m young, they say: “Ha! Are you the principal?” This phrase implies a questioning. Now, I cannot distinguish whether this questioning has to do with gender or age or a combination of the two. These kinds of incidences do happen, yes.

Young age and her ability to make it at the principal’s post also raised people’s scepticism in Niki’s (2006-S) case:

Both as assistant head and head, everybody was facing me somewhat curiously mainly because of my age ... Even when I was transferred to a village, it was age that preoccupied them [villagers] most when they saw me. They were wondering whether I could make it because I was so young.

At a different part of her interview, Niki graphically narrated a relatively hilarious incident with a male professional related to both gender and age:

When you’re a woman, workers or others who come to school face you somewhat differently although without making any comments. However, ... if they see a sixty or fifty year old lady, it’s somewhat normal because they got used to this model of women heads ... In my case, it was a combination of gender and age. I remember we ordered printer cartridges ... According to the procedure, the head has to sign when he/she receives them. I was the head of lower primary school [1st, 2nd, 3rd forms]. The upper primary school [4th, 5th, 5th forms] was in the same yard and its principal was a man. I ordered the cartridges but never received them ... At the end of the day I called: ... “Mr. Giorgos, [pseudonym] what happened to the cartridges I ordered?” “Mrs. Niki I delivered them.” “But who did you deliver them to since I haven’t signed?” “I delivered them to the other headteacher who is a *man* [Niki’s emphasis]!” [laughter] He told me this phrase: “who is a man”. I said: “Are you serious Mr. Giorgos? Is he the one who ordered them?” “Why do you behave like this? I gave them to him because he’s a man ... Didn’t he bring them to you? No problem, go and get them.” I

said: “No, he didn’t bring them to me and what you did is serious.” He couldn’t understand why I was bothered.

Ironically, it appears that women leaders of senior age, who are nearing retirement, are also sometimes faced with prejudice by male stakeholders. Katerina’s (2003-S) experience with the male Head of Technical Services is indicative:

I had a confrontation with [small sigh] the head of technical services. I believe he faced me as a woman and most importantly as a woman who is about to retire ... We planted the school’s garden and they [technical services] wanted to destroy it to construct a parking. I strongly opposed to this ... The parents’ committee in cooperation with me sent letters to members of the Parliament. He [head of technical services] called me and asked: “You turned Cyprus upside down for a garden?” I said: “Look, why shouldn’t I do so? Its trees that are going to be destroyed” ... He said: “Why bother? You only have a year left and you still torture yourself?”

As implied by Marina’s, Christiana’s, Niki’s and Katerina’s experiences, it seems that due to gender and age women leaders’ ability to lead and make ‘right’ decisions is sometimes questioned and undervalued by parents, other professionals and/or stakeholders, particularly males. Their stance implies persisting prejudiced perceptions about women’s capabilities as leaders in the Cypriot milieu.

To conclude with, the antecedent discussion and the whole range of examples provided by interviewees in this Subsection appear to indicate that, regardless of developments, in the eyes of people outside education, the ‘ideal’ image of Cypriot school administrators often continues to be masculine and leadership is still largely stereotypically identified with men (Ozga, 1993). Hall’s (1996:63) assertion that “like the Man in the Moon, the expectation in schools is still that the person in charge will be a man” seems to be relevant in the Cypriot context even today.

4.3.3. Family context: Family and Relatives

Although family and relatives were generally supportive not only when narrators were aspiring to but also when they finally assumed headship, incidences of stereotypical attitudes towards them while in principalship were also testified. For example, Katerina and Marina faced comments regarding their professional timetable and its influence on their family obligations by their husbands. Katerina (2003-S) said: “At first, there was no reaction. Now, only my husband sometimes asks: “Aren’t you suppose to finish at five past one?”. Marina (2009-S) also stated: “I return home from school a bit late and my husband is complaining. He says that when I was a teacher we were having lunch all together as a family. Now I’m the last one who returns home.” These quotes indicate a continuation of predetermined roles for women in Cypriot families. Even when leaders in their professional ground, women are still expected not to neglect their family obligations. Lunch time continues to be a ‘sacred’ moment for the family, and the servant figure of the woman has to ‘be there’ to carry out her role as ‘good and devoted’ mother and wife.

The perception that, even when principals, Cypriot women’s primary role is in their family also comes out in Irene’s (2010-S) experience with relatives who commented on her promotion and compulsory transfer to a distant village:

I remember the words of a woman relative: “Irene, you have your house and your child. How will you be able to travel that far? Think about it.” ... Other people told me the same directly or indirectly ...: “Now your child, house and husband need you.” I’m sure that if my husband became head, they would have told him: “Well done my friend!” [laughter] ...

Irene's final comment is once again illustrative of the deviant assumptions about the 'appropriate' roles men and women should have within the Cypriot family. While women – particularly younger ones with children – are primarily expected to undertake their motherly, domestic and marital duties, men are conventionally expected to devote themselves to their profession and it is 'natural' for them to climb up the hierarchy and attain a managerial position.

That men are frequently still stereotypically perceived by others, and most importantly by themselves, as 'heads' of the family and main breadwinners comes out in Marina's (2009-S) example:

My husband doesn't express himself but I think he doesn't like me being principal very much [loud laughter] ... Because he thinks people say: "Ha! Marina is working and gets all that money" ... whereas he wants to show that he's the breadwinner; that he's the one who is always offering ... He always had this [belief] that: "I offer a lot to my family ... Look what a nice house I built ...". Men have these [issues].

At a different part of her interview, Marina also noted:

When I was teacher, he [husband] liked coming to school, attending celebrations and helping with everything. He doesn't do this now [laughter]. He doesn't want to be "the headmistress' husband".

Marina's experience unveils the need of many Cypriot men to continue having the role of 'pater familias' with women still holding 'inferior' position in the family. It seems that traditionally patriarchal structures still have strong holds in Cyprus with some Cypriot men believing that it is derogatory for them to have an inferior professional position compared to their wives.

To summarise the outcomes discussed in this Section, it seems that, even in the ‘female sector’ of primary education, women leaders did and still do face biased attitudes from people in their schools, communities and familial environments and they have to prove themselves to be accepted as successful leaders. Thus, as mentioned elsewhere in this Section, it is not surprising that many women educators do not wish to attain principalship and confront the difficulties this particular post could bring with it as well as the stereotypical connotations their gender comes with. These issues will be further debated in Section 4.5.

4.4. Comparing women’s experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus over five decades

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 provided insights into women leaders’ experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship spanning the past five decades. This Section aims at comparing these experiences and unveiling the extent to which women educators’ relationship with leadership in Cypriot primary sector has changed if at all, between 1961 and 2010.

Paradoxically, while someone might expect that women who became heads in the 1960s and perhaps 1970s would have more difficulties and barriers to ascend the hierarchy due to their numerical minority status in the teaching population (see Table 1, p.9 and Appendix 1) along with strongly held traditional and stereotypical assumptions about women’s role in the Cypriot society that were more conspicuous in those decades, this did not seem to be the case. Surprisingly, research outcomes appear to suggest that women educators in primary education between 1961 and 2010 rather formed a fairly homogenous cohort of the Cypriot

population facing comparable enabling and/or deterring influences when aspiring to principalship.

More specifically, for reasons explained in Subsection 4.2.1, the vast majority of participants throughout the period under consideration were not career-ambitious, not leadership oriented and followed unplanned career trajectories. They also needed gradual building up of their experience and confidence in leadership positions before feeling adequately ready to assume principalship. The vast majority of them finally became heads not because it was their ‘ultimate goal’ but because they happened to be at ‘the right place the right time’ (Moreau et al., 2007) and/or they were externally encouraged by teacher colleagues, headteachers, superintendents and family to seek promotion. Interestingly enough, most women leaders were boosted and/or supported by men colleagues, headteachers and/or superintendents to opt for principalship.

As far as the promotion process is concerned, although most narrators denied being discriminated against based on gender during the interview for promotion, Sofia’s experience as well as the assertions of the two women members of the interview panel did not seem to confirm their arguments. More specifically, Sofia’s experience suggested prejudiced preconceptions regarding women’s incongruity with leadership and/or their inability to effectively balance their domestic/motherly role with their leadership role, which frequently underpinned the decisions of members on the interview panel. Additionally, ‘positive discrimination’ favouring the few men candidates in promotions in the primary sector was indirectly admitted by the two women members of the committee.

With regard to women's experiences of principalship, it seems that conventional suppositions about women in leadership posts are a persisting phenomenon throughout the period under consideration, namely between 1961 and 2010. Various examples of prejudiced presumptions and behaviour on the part of teachers, assistant heads, other principals, superintendents and students; parents, stakeholders and other professionals; and family and/or relatives narrated by interviewees are indicative of the diachronic questioning and criticism Cypriot women frequently face once they assume principalship. Drawing from the narratives, the necessity to prove their worth before they are totally and unconditionally accepted as successful leaders; and the requirement to balance role conflict, appear to have been a continuous struggle for Cypriot women educators.

Two main reasons behind the uniformity of the sample that covers the past five decades can be proposed. First and foremost, the socio-historical developments that took place around the 1950s, which contributed to the improvement of the status of Cypriot women, seem to have further reinforced the already overall positive stance of others towards women primary school teachers (Persianis, 1998) extending it to leadership aspirants as well. Nonetheless, despite these developments and the affirmative actions for gender equality that have been subscribed by the Cypriot government since independence in 1960 (Solomi, 2003a, 2003b), it appears that the patriarchal contexture of Cypriot society assigning certain roles to males and females frequently continues to negatively influence the professional development of female educators and their leadership role as such. Gender role socialisation and stereotypes might have been more apparent in the past, but as this study suggested, they often continue to have significant impact on women's progress to primary school leadership.

Second, it is essential to bear in mind that participants in this inquiry were women who finally made it to the top of hierarchy. Drawing from their experiences, apart from having comparable external reinforcement to become heads, they appeared to possess or had developed personal traits that helped them overcome the barriers and as a corollary they got on the way to and assumed principalship.

4.5. Why are women disproportionately represented in primary school management between 1961 and 2010?

When asked to explain women's disproportionate representation in primary school management over the last five decades, participants in this research provided a wide range of reasons that seem to fall in the three interrelated levels of barriers debated in Chapter 2. These are: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers.

4.5.1. Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers

That gender role socialisation and stereotyping were among the parameters which adversely affected Cypriot women educators' career ascent, has already been hinted at in Section 4.2 when discussing participants' personal experiences of progressing to leadership in the primary sector. Evidently, based on the discussion in this Subsection, the fact that narrators themselves also straightforwardly provided these parameters as crucial in deterring many women educators' career ascent, reinforces and 'confirms' those former findings. I argue that these factors acted as the igniter of all other institutional and personal/psychological impediments to these women's development.

4.5.1.1. Gender role socialisation

According to Gronn (1999), early processes and experiences are crucial in forming future leaders. Irene's (2010-S) words presented below seem to adequately set the scene for the way early gender role socialisation takes place in the Cypriot context leading many women to feel unsuitable for managerial positions in the future:

The difference between genders begins early. From two years old women know they're weaker ... Based on social perceptions ... a woman believes: "I'm not capable." Thus, how is she going to undertake managerial responsibilities when she grows up and accept she'll make it? ... At some point, she internalises the perception she's incapable.

Apart from Irene, other narrators also proposed gender role socialisation as a significant factor that may inhibit women's progress to headship. For example, Niki (2006-S) highlighted:

Some women were raised in such a way as to believe they cannot make it in a managerial post. It's ... the way Cypriot society functions ... Men were nurtured in the opposite way in the particular setting.

Along the same lines, the longstanding patriarchal structure of Cypriot society identifying leadership with men was proposed by Margarita (2004-S) as having profound effect on females' socialisation and as a corollary on their leadership orientation:

Perhaps stereotypes about women's inferiority are deeply rooted in some people. Since childhood we knew the principal in secondary school was a man; in the Pedagogical Academy a man; in the school we worked [as teachers] men; when we were children [in primary education] our heads were men. Thus, some women feel that

claiming principalship is an extremely daring step. Perhaps it's something we carry inside.

Family's role in inculcating and directing women to 'appropriate' and 'female-friendly' professions and certainly not to leadership posts was emphasized by Christiana (2009-S) through her personal experience:

The way women are nurtured in Cyprus doesn't promote the perception they can also become managers in certain domains ... We guide our daughters or women generally to follow professions that aren't so demanding to be able to respond effectively to their domestic duties as well ... Of course, nowadays, the situation might have somewhat changed but ... if you take into consideration the managerial positions in other domains, for example hotel management, companies etc, it continues to exist. You won't find many women in managerial posts there.

Under these conditions and not surprisingly, compared to women, Cypriot men colleagues appear to be more leadership oriented because they were nurtured in such a way as to be managers. Here is what Irene (2010-S) graphically stated regarding the issue:

Men learnt to manage. It's like managing the household. I have a man colleague ... who knows even what his wife will buy when she goes shopping. When they [men] assume leadership they're in their 'natural space'. They learnt to command ... to always be on top.

Against this background, it is often 'insulting' for Cypriot men to hold an 'inferior' professional post compared to women. Margarita's (2004-S) assertion on the issue is illustrative:

Almost all men apply for promotion in primary school principalship. Even the most incapable man feels socio-culturally obliged to become head. This perception exists in

the profession ... Men feel superior. They are confident they'll make it at the principal's post. They aren't as concerned as women ... Women say: "I'll fight and win [promotion]." Men say: "I'll seek promotion because I'm capable." Men feel it's a job that suits them and are more confident compared to women.

Taking Margarita's comment into account and drawing from Kaparou and Bush (2007:228-229), it seems that the social perception which does not "'condemn' a woman if she does not hold a senior position in education, contrary to a man [who] will be deemed as a failed educator if he gets to his retirement holding the rank of a teacher", is applicable for Cypriot primary education. It is socio-culturally 'imposed' that men – even if completely incapable – 'ought to' reach a managerial post. This is not the case for women who – even if capable – they will not be deemed unsuccessful if they do not manage to acquire an analogous position. Arguably, on the one end, these socio-cultural expectations can be somewhat 'liberating' for women who do not 'have to' acquire a managerial post and 'pressuring' for men who have to stand up to society's expectations by attaining a leadership post. On the other end, these perceptions foment gender inequalities via making men more leadership oriented and ready to opt for leadership in the earliest available opportunity while rendering women non leadership oriented and intrinsically demotivated to claim principalship.

4.5.1.2. Stereotyping

According to interviewees, based on gender role socialisation, stereotyped presumptions regarding women's 'inferior' position in the Cypriot setting are socio-culturally developed and internalised not only by others, but most importantly, by women themselves. This gendered stereotyping was proposed by many narrators as another significant reason barring women educators in primary education from becoming heads. For example, Kornelia's

(1961-1988) statement presented below adequately explains how women educators often internalise stereotyped assumptions about them as leaders and thus do not seek promotion to senior posts themselves:

Some women might have been dynamic but ... society didn't accept it. Society's pigeonholed opinion was: "It's different to have a man head rather than a woman." ... Many women teachers had internalised what society believed about them.

Prejudice and stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities was proposed by Loukia (1961-1995) as a reason for posting women heads in single sex schools (virgin-schools) and/or co-educational lower primary schools during the 1960s and 1970s:

Women's capabilities as heads were questioned. Up until 1972, no woman head was posted in co-educational upper primary schools [4th, 5th, 6th forms] ... Only in co-educational lower primary schools [1st, 2nd, 3rd forms] there were few women heads! There was this prejudice.

Regarding women heads' representation in the managerial positions of co-educational schools, Stefania (1991-1992) also noted that "when schools became co-educational, it was men who had priority for principalship in those schools, particularly at the upper level [4th, 5th, 6th forms]." Arguably, this was a discriminating attitude towards women teachers who, being restricted in certain types of educational institutions (single-sex or lower co-educational schools), they were not provided the opportunity to exhibit and develop their leadership abilities to their fullest potential. Additionally, this seclusion reinforced the vicious circle of stereotyping, stimulating even further the already existing segregating perceptions about women's and men's leadership capabilities. As men were posted in upper primary co-educational schools, people considered them more capable leaders compared to women who

could only manage lower primary co-educational schools and most importantly, single-sex schools.

Apart from the long established traditionally patriarchal contexture of Cypriot society that fuelled gender stereotypes, it appears that gendered policies imposed by the British colonial government before independence in 1960 (Persianis, 1998), also stirred up gender stereotyping. Such policies were proposed by some narrators as an additional significant factor impeding or even terminating women's career development. For example, Zoe (2007-S) noted that "women were forced to stop working after marriage [by British colonial government] ... Stereotypes ... played a role". Stefania (1991-1992) also referred to British colonial government's stereotypical attitude towards Cypriot women educators through her personal experience:

Once women were married, British colonial government was dismissing them ... As soon as I gave birth to my daughter in 1957, my service was interrupted and I was re-employed on a temporary basis ... In this way, you didn't have hopes for promotion ... and you began from the scratch. A major inspection was then carried out for us by five superintendents ... There were extra requirements from us. It was as if we changed as teachers ... and 'un-learned' how to teach ... Many years passed by ... All my classmates, even those who weren't so capable, became heads while I was losing everything ... because I gave birth!

Against this highly discriminating background, women educators of the 1950s and early 1960s had to make a fairly 'painful' decision about their lives and careers. They should either choose to get married and 'accept' that their career development would be delayed or terminated, or they should remain single in order to continue their career journeys unobtrusively. As women were socio-culturally 'expected' to primarily get married and have

a family, it becomes clear that the vast majority of them sacrificed their professional development for their personal lives. Here is what Kornelia and Athina shared:

... Getting married and having children was a serious reason why many women couldn't seek promotion ... To be able to become heads, some women remained single.

(Kornelia, 1961-1988)

Before independence in 1960 few women teachers remained old maids to avoid dismissal, re-employment on a temporary basis and loss of their years in service ... Their goal was primarily career while creating a family came second. This is why there were some women heads who were old maids. This was huge anachronism ...

(Athina, 1989-1994)

Similar practices have been recorded in Uganda during pre-independence period by Kagoda and Sperandio (2009). Likewise to Cyprus, in that particular setting, female teachers were also dismissed when they became pregnant and remained single to be able to assume headship.

According to Christiana (2009-S), stereotypical assumptions about women's 'appropriate' roles in Cypriot society in general and their adequacy for managerial positions in education in particular, are not restricted to the 1950s and 1960s but continue until the current era. In her words, "although, some prejudice and stereotypes about women are somewhat overcome, we cannot claim they are totally surmounted in our field even today."

To conclude with, gender stereotyping rooted in culture and underpinned by British colonial government policies before 1960 (Persianis, 1998) was proposed by narrators as a significant factor impeding women's career development in the pre- and post-independence period. It

seems that stereotypical presumptions about women continued to inhibit female educators' career development throughout the period under study, getting up to the current era.

4.5.2. Meso level: Institutional barriers

Although, as established in Section 4.2 most narrators' personal experiences of mentoring, sponsorship and promotions were positive overall, possible institutional barriers were proposed by them to explain women's disproportionate representation in leadership posts over the past fifty years.

4.5.2.1. Mentoring and Sponsorship

Regarding mentoring and sponsorship, here is what Kyriaki (2004-S) remarked:

One of the reasons some women assistant heads didn't progress to principalship ... was that they were never provided the opportunity to actually get involved and undertake managerial duties, which could prepare them for becoming heads.

Bearing in mind that, as established in Subsection 4.2.1, the vast majority of participants in this enquiry have needed gradual building up of their confidence and experience in leadership posts before feeling sufficiently prepared to opt for the principal's position, it becomes clear that Kyriaki's proposition for explaining women's disproportionate representation in Cypriot primary education is logical and appropriate. Those women who did not actually 'taste' managerial responsibilities – not even while at the assistant head's post – appear to have been unprepared and chose to keep away from principalship.

Interestingly, another institutional deterrent to women's career development proposed by some narrators was the interference of the 'male-dominated' managerial team of the Pancyprian Organisation of Greek Teachers (POED) not only in in-service training that could lead to a principalship but also in the interviews for promotion. Before presenting and analysing the excerpts taken from women leaders' interviews, it is worth noting that throughout the period under study, the vast majority of elected members in the managerial team of POED, which was established in 1953, were men. The reasons for this phenomenon range from the longstanding identification of men with management, to women's role conflict as professionals, mothers and wives, which impeded them from seeking election in the managerial team of POED. Here is what Kornelia, Marina and Eliana stated regarding POED's fairly 'disturbing' role:

Unfortunately, it's a fact that men took advantage of POED to rise up the hierarchy and still do POED frequently interferes in promotions.

(Kornelia, 1961-1988)

POED was primarily informed about in-service training that could lead to a principalship. As POED is mainly constituted of men, it was them who benefitted [from this training]. For some years this was going on while we [women] weren't even aware.

(Marina, 2009-S)

The managerial team of POED always interferes in promotions. Few years back, Greece offered twenty scholarships a year to Cypriot teachers. Surprisingly, those who got the scholarships were male members of POED. When POED announced that people would be 'randomly' selected, surprisingly it was again those men in POED and their wives who were 'chosen' ... Those participating in in-service training could become heads earlier than the others.

(Eliana, 2008-S)

This was an interesting finding because POED is supposed to be an organisation the scope of which – among others – is to upgrade the level of all primary school teachers’ training and to promote and safeguard their professional interests⁸. Nonetheless, as the forgoing extracts from Kornelia’s Marina’s and Eliana’s interviews suggested, POED is far from being an organisation that promotes the interests of all its members. Being a teacher myself, I was surprised to hear narrators in this research straightforwardly pinpointing the managerial team of POED as impeding women’s advancement to leadership. It seems that POED has continuously formed a strong male network and power base, which has been able to encumber women’s career progression.

This argument was reinforced by Niki’s (2006-S) personal experience when seeking promotion. She claimed facing extremely negative attitude from male members of POED because she was the first woman in Cyprus promoted to a senior post at a very young age:

I had extremely negative experiences with male members of POED who saw my promotion – particularly as assistant head – very negatively because I was the first woman who became assistant head at my thirteenth year in service. Additionally ... I was the first who had the highest score among all teachers ... “Why give such a high score to a woman teacher?” I experienced jealousy ... I heard many [negative] comments regarding my promotions because I was the first [with such a high score] and so young. I still hear these, mainly from male members of POED, because I’m about to apply for the superintendent’s post.

It could be claimed that male members of POED saw Niki’s escalation to a senior post as a ‘threat’ to their ‘domination’. Arguably, they realised that a new pathway to leadership would be opened for women, particularly of younger age. They felt threatened and unprepared to share their long established ‘privilege’ with a woman and particularly a young woman

⁸ <http://www.poed.com.cy>

educator who managed to climb up the promotion ladder so early in her career. If she managed to do it, then other women could do the same, shaking men's authority in leadership posts in primary education. If women managed to make their way up to senior posts so young, then they could slowly enter the managerial team of POED – the 'male preserve' – as well. Arguably, for them, Niki was and still is a 'trouble' because she challenges 'dominant masculinities' (Blackmore, 1999:3). Perhaps via 'fighting' hers as well as other women's promotion to senior posts in primary education, male members of POED attempt to ensure the continuity of their 'supremacy' in the field of primary education.

As POED's interference appears to have been a 'common secret' for women in Cyprus primary sector, it is surprising why women have not reacted to this unfairness. One possible explanation could be that socio-cultural gendered stereotypes are so deeply rooted in the minds of women that make them feel weak and prevent them from confronting and reacting against the lingering status quo of male domination. If the situation is to be altered, women should 'take the bull by the horns' and claim what they deserve.

4.5.2.2. *Promotions*

Albeit when describing their personal experiences of the interview for promotion, the vast majority of participants claimed that the committee was not discriminatory against them, some participants – Sofia, Kornelia, Stefania and Alexia – pinpointed the commission as possibly responsible for not promoting women. Here is what Sofia (2009- S) stated:

The leader's role has long been identified with men ... Maybe the perception is that a man candidate, even if completely incapable, will make it better ... Perhaps these perceptions are in the minds of the members of the committee responsible for

promoting us. Additionally, until very recently [twelve years back] ... there wasn't any woman in the committee.

It is worth reminding that Sofia was the only narrator who reported unfair treatment towards her on behalf of the committee. Her experience was detailed in Subsection 4.2.3. The committee's tendency to promote men instead of women because the former are stereotypically assumed more 'suitable' for management was also pinpointed by Kornelia (1961-1988) who said that "maybe the committee doesn't trust women in managerial posts and promotes men ... Perhaps they prefer men instead of women for this reason ..."

Apart from the committee's prejudiced perceptions suggesting that men can be better leaders, biased concepts suggesting that women's role conflict can inhibit them from being effective headteachers were offered by Stefania and Alexia as other potential reasons for the committee's discriminatory attitude towards women candidates:

After independence, when women weren't dismissed by the British colonial government any more, the committee's perception was: "She'll give birth; she'll have a child and other difficulties..." Thus, there was discrimination.

(Stefania, 1991-1992)

It's not women who aren't interested. Perhaps it's the Educational Service Commission which isn't promoting them ... In the past there were more men heads ... Why? ... The perception was that presumably a woman teacher would have household responsibilities and couldn't be effective head.

(Alexia, 1994-1999)

Once again, these narrators' opinions appear to suggest persisting socio-cultural stereotypes about the incongruity of women and leadership in the Cypriot milieu. As informants pointed

out, this prejudice could be perceived responsible for the committee's often unfair treatment of women candidates in promotions.

The way gender role socialisation takes place in the Cypriot setting that leads men and women to develop different characteristics as they grow older was offered by Sofia (2010-S) as another reason for men's promotion in higher numbers compared to women. More specifically, she claimed that the way interviews were – and still are – carried out was tailored to the characteristics possessed by men and this puts them in an advantageous position compared to their female counterparts. She stated: “Usually men are better in talking and oral skills ... The way promotions are carried out is very wrong ... Maybe this process favours male characteristics ...”

Sofia also referred to women's fear of confronting the committee's often ‘cruel’ attitude as an additional possible barrier to women's advancement:

When I went to the interview for assistant head in 2003, the specific committee's philosophy was to put pressure on candidates, both women and men, to see how they react in difficult situations. In some cases, the way they faced candidates could be perceived insulting. Maybe this was a reason why many women didn't dare to attend ... They were afraid the committee would make them cry ...

There appears to be a gendered assumption that men are ‘naturally’ better able to cope with the demands of the interview while women are not. Sofia's claim appears to be reinforced by Marina's (2009-S) assertion that “compared to men, many women are so stressed and they show it during the interview. Thus, the committee decides they're incapable [to be promoted].”

Based on Sofia's and Marina's arguments, it appears that, once again, gender role socialisation could negatively influence women's progress to leadership posts. Due to the way they have been brought up, men appear to the committee to be more comfortable and confident to confront the difficulties of the interview procedure while women seem unprepared to face the challenge. According to the participants, this disparity could be responsible for the disproportionate number of women promoted in senior posts in primary education. Unless women are socialised in such a way as to feel confident and prepared to face the challenge of an interview process equally well as men or the interview process becomes more 'women-friendly', the situation will remain unaltered.

Apart from socialisation, women's incompetence during the interview for promotion was also attributed by Sofia (2009-S) to Cypriot women's devotion to their traditional role within the family. She asserted: "Perhaps ... the housekeeper's role didn't allow a group of women to acquire the necessary aptitude and subsequently they aren't competent during the interview." According to Sofia, this perception prevents many women from seeking and acquiring extra academic qualifications that could broaden their horizons and render them capable of performing equally well as men during the interview. As men are usually unencumbered with excessive family responsibilities, they have more opportunities to increase their qualifications and subsequently be in a better position to effectively manage the interview process.

Sofia provided another interesting reason for women's disproportionate representation in primary school principalship related to the interview: "Because men serve the army for two years [they enter teaching two years after women colleagues of the same age], perhaps the committee believes they owe them a promotion". Sofia's opinion seems to point out 'positive discrimination' favouring men. Although the two women members of Educational Service

Commission suggested ‘positive discrimination’ due to the scarcity of male teachers and heads in primary education sector and they had not referred to ‘positive discrimination’ because of men’s compulsory military service, Sofia’s speculation could be characterised as logical. Perhaps the committee covertly and informally favoured men in promotions to make it up to them for the two years they ‘sacrificed’ to serve their country. Research specifically focusing on this particular issue could enable safer conclusions.

To conclude with, the reasons suggested by narrators indicate that the promotion process, which passed as being democratic, frequently disempowers rather than enables Cypriot women teachers’ career ascent. This has already been hinted at in the discussion of narrators’ personal experiences of promotion process in Subsection 4.2.3. Drawing from interviewees’ suggestions, the persisting stereotypical perceptions that frequently underpin the decisions of the interview panel; women’s and men’s ability and/or inability to cope during the interview process; and ‘positive discrimination’ due to men’s service in the army could be partly liable for women’s unequal representation in Cyprus primary sector over the past five decades.

4.5.3. Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers

The personal/psychological barriers to women’s upward mobility to principalship, which were proposed by participants in this research, were role conflict, transfer after promotion, women’s inferior/supportive position in couples and low self-esteem and confidence. These barriers are debated next.

4.5.3.1. Role conflict

Echoing their equivalents in other countries (Al-Khalifa: 1992; Adler et al., 1993; Thornton and Bricheno: 2000; Coleman: 2002, 2009, 2011; Moreau et al., 2007; Blackmore, 2009; Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; White, 2010; Smith, 2011b) many narrators proposed role conflict as a severe constraint and a major factor that renders Cypriot women educators intrinsically demotivated to claim headship:

Women's denial to rise up the hierarchy is due to the fact that they have family responsibilities. Most of them retire early or want to remain assistant heads to avoid having extra responsibilities added to those of the family.

(Kyriaki, 2004-S)

Eliana's (2008-S) example coming from the 1970s, can adequately express the pressure caused from role conflict during that period:

In the past, people used to have many children. A woman colleague told me: "When I returned home from work at night [they finished work late in the past], I had to do the laundry until eleven o'clock in the evening." It was really hard. Women like this one didn't have anyone, such as mothers or grandmothers to look after their children. Thus, they weren't interested for promotions. They were only satisfied to work as teachers.

Kornelia (1961-1988) also noted that "in the 1960s and 1970s there weren't any nurseries or caretakers to leave children and seek promotion as is the case today ...". Despite the present-day 'luxuries' of nurseries and caretakers suggested by Kornelia, the persistence of women's role conflict until the current decade comes out in Niki's (2006-S) example. She describes the heavy burden experienced by many contemporary women that averts them from seeking promotion:

... some women may themselves not want to undertake managerial responsibilities because they have families and small children ... Compared to the assistant head's post, the responsibility at the headteacher's post is huge ... As some women have increased family responsibilities, they don't want to become heads ... I observed that women assistant heads who work with me never apply for principalship! ... They say: "Responsibilities are huge." Watching how hard I work, they're discouraged ... I advise them to go for it, not having me as an example, because I don't have a family ...

The excessive demands of headship and the extent of role conflict for modern women at that particular post are graphically illustrated in Zoe's (2007-S) example who remarked: "I believe having a husband who is also a head is positive. Because, due to the time I spend for school, if he wasn't I think he would divorce me [loud laughter]!"

In an attempt to cope with the strains exerted on them due to role conflict, a good number of Cypriot women postpone their career development until their children are grown up. As Loukia (1961-1995) noted, "women become interested for career when their children ... aren't totally dependent on them." Fani (2005-2010) also remarked:

... We sought promotion at an age when we didn't have family responsibilities ... For a woman who has two or three small children things are difficult ... Now that younger people are promoted ... there are difficulties.

As Sofia (2009-S) usefully explained, the reasons for Cypriot women's preference to devote themselves to their family and thus either delay or terminate their career aspirations are embedded in gender role socialisation:

Many women educators didn't manage to escape their role as housekeepers ... due to the way they have been brought up. They feel so obliged towards their children that they don't want to preoccupy themselves with management.

That Cypriot women feel socio-culturally constrained to devote themselves to their family also comes out in Eliana's (2008-S) assertion that "women themselves don't claim principalship because they always put family first ..." and in Loukia's (1961-1995) sincere belief that "Cypriot women don't sacrifice their family for career ...".

This devotion to the family is deeply founded in the conservative patriarchal organisation of Cypriot society. Even if women's status has been improved since the middle of the 20th century, their contribution within the family remains crucial and role conflict is perennial. Listen to Christiana (2009-S):

It's the pressure women have from their role as mothers, housekeepers and wives ...
Even today, a woman who wants to become head continues to be almost totally responsible for the household, namely cooking, housekeeping and children's raising.

Evidently, even if a woman wants to assume headship, the way she will manage to balance her familial/domestic and professional responsibilities is a complicated puzzle. It is worth noting that few years after independence paid maternity leave was officially provided for three months, a practice which is still in place. At the end of the maternity leave, women in the Cypriot public sector are unhampered to return to work and continue their service normally. However, despite these favourable circumstances and the assistance for childrearing and housekeeping offered from extended family – as is the case for Pakistani (Shah, 2009) and Melanesian women (Akao, 2008; Warsal, 2009) – the excessive obligations of mother, wife and housekeeper are still present for Cypriot women educators. Similarly to Greece (Kyriakousis and Saiti, 2006:8), "family responsibilities are a top priority in women's considerations" in Cyprus. Subsequently, Cypriot women often need to act as 'pragmatists' (Smith, 2011) adjusting their professional to their personal lives and thus delaying or even

rejecting promotion. As the discussion in this Subsection suggested, between career and family, in the vast majority of cases, Cypriot women choose the latter.

Selecting to devote themselves to their traditional role within the family frequently hinders Cypriot women educators from acquiring extra academic qualifications, which are prerequisite for becoming heads. Marina's (2009-S) words can usefully illustrate this point: "Many women don't even do a Master's degree because they believe their role is in the house with their family. This 'deducts credits' from their career progress".

Alexia's, Antigoni's and Loukia's personal experiences that follow reveal in the most acute way the personal dilemmas women face in case they want to extend their academic credentials by doing a Master's degree and/or doctorate:

My husband went abroad to do a doctorate. The idea of a doctorate wasn't in my mind ... but my husband was urging me. We made a registration ... but in the end, I didn't go ... I didn't want to leave my family.

(Alexia, 1994-1999)

I didn't accompany my husband in England to do a Master's because, as a woman, I had to be with my children. This was the reason. We couldn't both of us go abroad and leave two children to the grandmother ...

(Antigoni, 1979-1993)

I believe women don't sacrifice their family for career ... Family is above all. This is why I did my doctorate when my children were old.

(Loukia, 1961-1995)

Evidently, for these women family again came first. As extra academic qualifications constitute one of the four criteria accounting for promotions, it becomes clear that those

women who chose or were ‘forced’ to choose not to do a Master’s degree and/or a doctorate because their family responsibilities were prioritised, were in an unfavourable position compared to their male equivalents. Fani’s (2005-2010) experience provides a snapshot of the situation twenty five years ago:

The causes for women’s disproportionate representation begin early ... Many men and very few women of my generation had a Master’s... The majority of those few women were married to teachers ... The conditions allowed them to do a Master’s degree together with their husbands ... Having a Master’s, boosted men up the promotion ladder ... This occurred fifteen or twenty years back ... As higher diplomas were few, those who held them distinguished from the rest ... They had something the rest didn’t have. They were getting higher evaluation scores because they were considered more qualified ... Those of my generation who became superintendents were those who had a Master’s degree ... There wasn’t a university in Cyprus then. You had to go abroad. This was a major difficulty. When you have a family, it’s not easy to leave it ... Those couples that could make arrangements and go together were blessed. Women in particular, couldn’t leave their husband or children to go abroad and do a Master’s ... It wasn’t that easy ... Distance learning didn’t exist then ... For men it was easy. Many left their family ... for one or two years.

Unfortunately, the persistence of this picture to date, even if somewhat altered, was revealed through Christiana’s (2009-S) thoughts:

I think a man wouldn’t think of employing a housekeeper ... to be able to do a Master’s degree and claim principalship. For a woman to be able to rise up the hierarchy by doing a Master’s or by being excellent educator, even in our occupation, it’s necessary to share out her roles in the house ... If the husband has a career as well, things are difficult ... Even when the husband offers domestic assistance, it still isn’t enough in case a woman decides to do a Master’s ... or attend seminars. She still needs domestic help either from her mother or a housekeeper ... We haven’t yet reached a point in Cyprus when household responsibilities are equally shared by women and men.

Along the same lines, the discrepancy in women's and men's opportunities for further education and subsequently career advancement can sufficiently be explained in Sofia's (2009-S) words. She claimed that due to the way Cypriot society is structured, men have more opportunities to acquire secondary training and advanced degrees that can lead to a principalship:

Men have more opportunities ... According to the Cypriot way of living, after finishing work, the majority of men won't actually share household responsibilities. Therefore, they have time to concentrate on studying for an interview or do a Master's degree.

This reinforces the argument provided earlier in this Subsection suggesting that Cypriot women "... have to choose between having a family and a career, while... men can have both" (Moreau et al., 2007:243). In case these women decide to follow men's trail, Fu Jun's (1995) words cited by Coleman (2002:150) can adequately illustrate the difference: "Women and men are like two athletes running on the same track. But the men run free while the women balance children in one hand and kitchenware in the other." Unfortunately, it seems that the particular task is frequently unmanageable by women. The load of familial and/or domestic responsibilities is often unmanageable keeping many women away from seeking further education and subsequently promotion. That Cypriot society still has a long way to go until gendered roles cease to exist, is obvious. The necessity to develop appropriate women-friendly infrastructures to help women unhamper themselves from this burden is apparent and it is essential to become the focus of attention of government's policy makers.

4.5.3.2. *Transfer after promotion*

Having to be transferred away from their place of residence for two years once they are promoted, is a significant parameter adding to role conflict that intrinsically ‘forces’ many women to deny headship. For example, Antigoni (1979-1993) stated:

... many women don’t want to become heads to avoid being transferred away from their residence and family. I have a friend who ... told me: “I won’t go to the interview. I prefer to stay at a school next to my home, not be forced to travel.” ... I think this is the main reason that makes some women uninterested for promotion ...

Similar experiences were shared by Eliana, Irene, Loukia and Katerina:

I know some ladies who say: “No, I don’t want to be promoted. I want to remain teacher or assistant head to continue working close to my residence and avoid being transferred.”

(Eliana, 2008-S)

Many of my friends who were assistant heads clearly stated: “I’m not going to seek promotion because I don’t want to be transferred ...”

(Irene, 2010-S)

I have some specific cases in mind that say: “If I’m promoted, I’ll be transferred away from my place of residence. I don’t sacrifice being close to my residence ... for being promoted and possibly transferred to another district ...”

(Loukia, 1961- 1995)

I think knowing that you’re going to be transferred after promotion ... is the main reason that hinders many women assistant heads to become heads. This huge move makes them to avoid it ...

(Katerina, 2003-S)

Since – as indicated earlier – putting their family first is a basic characteristic of Cypriot women, it is not surprising that they often reject headship and subsequent transfer. Here is what Kyriaki and Sofia said:

Many women teachers didn't become heads because they were saying: "What if they send me to K. [name of faraway place]. What am I going to do? Destroy my family?" ... They prefer to remain assistant heads instead of having to travel far away from their family daily.

Kyriaki (2004-S)

I know others who ... don't want to be transferred away from their place of residence for two years ... They say: "I'm not interested for that post. I prefer to be working close to my residence ..." This is again related to family responsibilities

(Sofia, 2009-S)

Younger women with small children in particular appear to have more difficulties to work away from their family. According to Loukia (1961-1995), "promotion means transfer. It means that if a woman has small children, she prefers to stay with them...". Sofia (2009-S) shared her personal experience:

I have a neighbour two years older than me [around forty] who is about to finish her Master's and is fully qualified but she says: "If I become head, I'll have to be posted in P. [name of district away from her place of residence]. My children are small. I have a child in the 1st form. I don't want to." Obviously, family comes first...

The fear of transfer to other areas/districts, particularly rural ones, was also identified by Ugandan women (Kagoda and Sperandio, 2009) as a significant deterrent to applying for headship. However, in that particular setting, among other reasons, women avoid promotion and transfer to rural parts of the country due to their underdevelopment and the lack of basic

facilities that are necessary for having a good living standard. This is not the case for Cyprus. As Cyprus is a small island, its rural areas, even if remote, are not underdeveloped nor are they vastly different from suburban/urban parts of the country. Interestingly, the reason women do not want to be transferred to those areas is distance in combination with family responsibilities. More specifically, there is a culture in Cyprus suggesting that one-hour traveling within the country is a long journey! It is worth noting that the longest distance someone would have to travel to go from one end of the country to the other, is approximately two hours. This is a journey Cypriots are unwilling to do regularly and certainly not on a daily basis.

Drawing from interviewees' narratives, younger women with small children find long-distance daily travelling problematic because it causes difficulties to effectively respond to their familial duties. On the other end, women of older age (in their fifties) who may have health problems, find day-to-day journeys extremely tiring and often harmful for their health. As Katerina (2003-S) put it, women nearing retirement aren't so 'flexible' and they do not want to disturb and/or pressure themselves:

If someone becomes head at a somewhat older age, it's difficult to be transferred to a faraway place. I have a colleague ... who will retire in about five years. She was promoted and transferred to D. [name of faraway district]. I understand she resents this ... It's easier if you're young. You're much more flexible.

In a similar vein, Fani (2004-S) stated that "if someone has one or two years until retirement, she may say: "Why would I be posted away from my place of residence? Why would I pressure myself?" It is worth noting that apart from their resentment for day-to-day long distance travelling, women of senior age are also not totally immune from role conflict. Even if they do not have small children, socio-cultural expectations still force them to undertake

the main part of housekeeping; act as child-minders for their grandchildren; and/or take care of elderly and/or ailing parents/parents in law. Thus, it is not surprising that they want to continue working close to their residence. Subsequently, they often reject promotion or postpone it until the final year of their service. Seeking promotion just before retirement will provide them better pension while simultaneously will reduce the timeframe of pressure they will have to undertake when transferred. Furthermore, via being promoted during the final year, they hope to get away with transfer. Here is what Alexia (1994-1999) shared:

Taking into account my district where there are remote villages, some women avoided promotion because they would then have to be posted somewhere far away from their residence ... I know women who either didn't opt for principalship or they sought it the last year before retirement ... to have better pension and avoid being transferred away.

It is interesting to highlight that, until very recently, the conservative structure of Cypriot society prevented women from even learning how to drive! Many women educators in their fifties fall in this cohort of women. The following extracts are revealing:

... many women teachers of my generation didn't even know how to drive ... I started driving before I got married but most women of my age who got married ... especially those married to teachers, didn't ... An elderly lady who was assistant head, didn't know how to drive and didn't become head ...

(Fani, 2005-S)

... Some women of my age [fifties] or even younger still don't drive and this is a suspending factor [for seeking promotion].

(Eva, 1999-S)

A friend of mine who has many years left until retirement and doesn't drive told me: "I'm not sure I want to become head."... Her husband is disabled ... If she becomes head she'll have to find someone to drive her to and from work.

(Katerina, 2003-S)

Even if they finally managed to overcome their 'feminine' role socialisation and socio-cultural stereotypes and learnt how to drive, some women were still afraid of driving for long distance or during the evening. Margarita's, Fani's and Katerina's experiences are illustrative:

Some women are afraid of driving to go to school or meetings in the afternoon or celebrations at night. They somehow feel it's beyond their strength and incompatible with their character ... Thus, they don't seek promotion.

(Margarita, 2004-S)

In case women learnt how to drive at an older age, they were driving within their town, for short distance. This deterred them from seeking promotion.

(Fani, 2005-S)

I had a friend who retired early this year ... Although she's driving, she's still afraid to travel long distances. She was working somewhere near her residence as acting head of a very small school and she said: "This is enough. I won't continue further."

(Katerina, 2003-S)

Evidently, as promotion means transfer, being unaware or fearful of driving prevented many women from seeking promotion. Unfortunately, according to Sofia (2009-S), the fact that many women didn't drive, seemed to have negatively affected the perceptions of members of the committee responsible for promoting them as well. She argued: "until very recently, the committee used to avoid promoting and sending women to remote places because they couldn't drive."

Arguably, once again the vicious circle of gender stereotyping and women's discrimination comes into play. To be specific, as Cypriot women have long been perceived inferior and dependent on men, they were considered by others as well as themselves as incapable to even handle a vehicle. After all, learning how to drive would be the first step for women's independence from men and a chance for them to leave the limited boundaries of home and enter the civic sphere. The inculcation in women's minds that driving is not for them, would ensure the continuation of male hegemony. Unfortunately, this seemingly insignificant inequality had a detrimental effect not only on women's self-esteem and confidence to put themselves forward for promotion, but also on the perceptions of people responsible for promoting them. Ironically, the society contributed to women's fear of driving and then 'punished' them for not knowing how to drive via leaving them out of promotions!

4.5.3.3. *Women's inferior/supportive position in couples*

Gender role socialisation debated earlier in Subsection 4.5.1.1 can be perceived as responsible for some women's fairly 'inferior' position in relation to their husbands' in the family. Some women felt somewhat 'dependent on' or 'tied to' their husbands and found it 'improper' to attain a managerial professional position while their husbands had not. This was particularly evident in the case of couples of teachers. According to Niki (2006-S), "it's a matter of relationships in their family, namely, they [women] cannot be 'above' their husbands ...". Eva (1999-S) shared her personal experience:

Often, the family's structure doesn't allow it ... Particularly in the past; in cases of couples of teachers women didn't seek promotion to avoid making their spouses feel inferior towards them. This was a very serious reason. Many women were waiting for

their husbands to become heads first and then either seek promotion themselves or not claim it at all ... About ten years ago I know a lady who said: “I’ won’t seek promotion.” Even though she was better teacher compared to her husband and more qualified, she didn’t claim the position. She said: “I want my husband to become head. I don’t have any ambition to become head.”

Another revealing example was offered by Irene (2010-S):

In 2001 I was posted to a school in T. [name of district] where the principal was working with his wife who was assistant head. She could have become principal as well. I and a friend of mine asked her: “But why don’t you seek promotion like Mr. Marios [pseudonym]?” She said: “Ladies, I think it’s correct to leave the career for men.” This was her answer! She didn’t become head.

That women’s career – particularly of those married to teachers – was ‘bound up with’ their husbands’ also characteristically comes out through Antigoni’s (1979-1993) personal experience:

Before my husband became superintendent, I never thought of seeking promotion [to principalship]. Perhaps I realised that if both of us were heads, we probably wouldn’t be at the same school or town/village ... Based on family tradition, we couldn’t do this.

Although, Antigoni finally overcame her personal boundaries and assumed principalship after her spouse became superintendent, many women chose not to do the same. It seems that, for a number of Cypriot female educators it was impossible to break through their gender role socialisation and socio-cultural customs and develop in their own right. The example offered by Anastasia (2000-2003) is illustrative:

I had a colleague ... who retired at the age of fifty five because her husband – who was head – also retired. She didn't want to become principal and continue working while her husband had retired. She didn't even become assistant head.

These outcomes appear to converge with Ozga's (1993) research, which also revealed the secondary/supportive role women often hold to their partners'/husbands' career. With regard to the Cypriot milieu, it seems difficult to shake deeply founded patriarchal perceptions. Unfortunately, frequently male hegemony still marches on, and many women find it 'improper' and/or extremely challenging to confront and alter the status quo.

4.5.3.4. Self-esteem and confidence

Many narrators claimed that Cypriot women educators often lack self-esteem and confidence to undertake the huge burden of managerial responsibilities. This psychological unpreparedness is again entrenched in socialisation and stereotyping. As Christiana (2009-S) eloquently put it, "sometimes there is lack of daring. The fact that women don't dare [to seek promotion] is related to stereotypes rooted in society. This is contiguous with social stereotypes."

As leadership in Cyprus has long been stereotypically related to men, women educators seem to have been afraid to face the challenge of being compared to the male prototype of 'effective' leader. They were and still are fearful of confronting the intensive criticism women often face in that particular post (Hall: 1996; Reay and Ball: 2000; Coleman: 2002, 2009; Reynolds: 2008). This criticism leads to self-doubt about their adequacy and preparedness for management (Al-Khalifa, 1992) rendering many female Cypriot primary school teachers and assistant heads unwilling to opt for principalship. Margarita's (2004-S)

example is demonstrative of many women's socio-culturally constructed apprehension to face the difficulties a public post would bring:

Many women are afraid of the relationships with society, namely the parents' committee, the local education authority or difficult parents. They feel they aren't ready to face difficulties ... Women, even if capable, feel they're somewhat inferior ... and unprepared. They feel they may not make it.

Due to gender role socialisation, many Cypriot women feel unprepared to assume a leadership post where they would have to manage others. Marina's (2009-S) proposition is indicative:

One reason is perhaps that they [women] don't like to manage ... I know many women who say: "I don't like it. I prefer to be in the classroom, do my lesson and it's enough." ... Sometimes we [women] are afraid of others; the way they'll face us. How am I going to point out things to others, command, lead them or be their manager? Some women are scared of this.

Arguably, women's 'dislike' for management as suggested by Marina, is not something women carry since birth but is socio-culturally assembled through their socialisation. They learned to 'resent' management, which is compatible with male attributes. They learned to exhibit more 'nurturing' traits that are attuned to their female identity. Thus, it comes as no surprise that they frequently feel more confident to concentrate on teaching instead of managing.

Cypriot women educators' undermined confidence to undertake managerial duties was unearthed in other interviewees' experiences as well:

... there is a great number of women who don't want to become heads ... They're afraid of the responsibility. I believe they inwardly believe they cannot be leaders; they cannot manage a school. Often they don't even want to admit it to themselves. Those who do admit it, say: "I don't want responsibilities. I don't want to manage a whole school."

(Irene, 2010-S)

I believe most women were afraid to undertake managerial responsibilities...

(Kornelia, 1961-1988)

Some were saying: "I don't want to undertake extra responsibilities. I'll retire as assistant head." ... They were somewhat fearful of responsibilities.

(Melina, 1997-2000)

Many women don't feel strong to undertake leadership responsibilities ... Many women I advised to apply for principalship said: "I prefer to stay as I am even if I don't get a bigger salary. I'm fine ..." They don't want to make waves.

(Loukia, 1961-1995)

According to Kyriaki (2004-S) although the fear of facing the task of principalship appeared to be greater for women of the previous generation, it continues to negatively affect the career development of contemporary women as well:

The previous generation had this fear in a greater extent. [They used to say] "I'll remain assistant head and it's enough." I have a woman colleague a year younger than me [in her late fifties] who says: "It's enough for me ... I don't want the responsibilities you have. I don't want to proceed further." Even if a greater number of younger women seek promotion nowadays, I think there still is a long way to go until they feel adequately confident to assume principalship.

Sofia's (2009-S) example regarding a young woman colleague reinforces Kyriaki's opinion about younger women's fear of management:

An assistant head in her forties who's my friend and doesn't want to become head ... believes the principal's post is more demanding. She doesn't want to add more stress. She says: "The assistant head's post is more lax. I don't have responsibility for whatever happens. Someone else will undertake it ..."

In sum, the forgoing discussion has suggested that, for a range of personal/psychological reasons, a great number of female educators in Cypriot primary education sector from across the period under study perceived themselves as incongruent with management. This perception inculcated and instilled in them via their socialisation led many women to willingly choose to 'opt out' (Smith, 2011a, 2011b), not pursuing school leadership posts. This may partly explain women's disproportionate representation in Cypriot primary school principalship over the past five decades.

4.6. Summary

The main aim of this Chapter was to present, discuss and analyse the research outcomes. As women's narratives indicated, despite individual differences, female primary school educators between 1961 and 2010 constituted a fairly homogenous group of the Cypriot population experiencing comparable deterring and/or enabling stimuli when aspiring to leadership.

To be specific, throughout the period under consideration, the vast majority of women leaders appeared to have pursued unstructured careers and were not career-ambitious and leadership oriented. Gradual augmentation of their experience and confidence in leadership roles was necessary for them in order to be sufficiently ready to finally opt for principalship. Most of them did not see assuming headship as the 'ultimate goal' of their career and they eventually

became heads because they happened to be at ‘the right place the right time’ (Moreau et al., 2007) and/or they were externally boosted by teacher colleagues, headteachers, superintendents – particularly males – and family to seek advancement. Even if most of them claimed that the interview for promotion was a gender neutral process, the experiences of one narrator as well as of the women on the interview panel suggested prejudiced preconceptions and ‘positive discrimination’ that favour men in promotions. Women’s experiences of principalship indicated persevering stereotypical suppositions about women’s mismatch with leadership throughout the period investigated in this thesis, namely between 1961 and 2010. Apparently, Cypriot women primary school leaders have to primarily prove themselves and then be accepted as competent and effective leaders. Narrators’ explanations for women’s disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary school management over the past five decades fall in three interconnected levels: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers. The conclusions stemming from the presentation, discussion and analysis of findings are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

Having presented, discussed and analysed the research findings in Chapter 4, this Chapter draws this thesis to a close by reflectively assembling and recapitulating the conclusions. It starts off with summarising the conceptual and methodological frameworks employed for this thesis in Section 5.2. Then, it goes on to revisit and highlight the main research outcomes indicating how the research questions have been addressed in Section 5.3. The limitations, strengths and contribution of this enquiry are considered in Section 5.4 whereas its implications and recommendations for future research, policy and practice are sketched in Section 5.5.

5.2. Synopsis of Conceptual and Methodological Frameworks

As has been emphasized throughout this thesis, despite the huge corpus of international research and literature on the topic, women's unequal participation in educational management – particularly in the primary sector – has been a fairly unexplored area in the Cypriot setting. The paradox of the diachronically uneven representation of Cypriot women primary educators in leadership posts documented in statistics (Educational Service Commission, 2010; Ministry of Finance, 2010) (see Table 1, p.9; Table 2, p.12; Table 3, p.13 and Appendix 1) and the absence of pertinent local research seeking to explain it spurred this project that sought to cast light on this 'walking phenomenon' (Morton, 2002) and to investigate the factors causing it.

More specifically, the aim of this piece of enquiry was threefold. First, it has attempted to illuminate women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010. Second, it aimed at examining whether and to what extent these experiences have changed over the last five decades. Lastly, it also sought to unveil the reasons behind women's disproportionate representation in leadership in the particular sector over this period.

Four research questions were set:

- How did women teachers experience progressing to primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010?
- How did women leaders experience primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010?
- To what extent do women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship differ over the last five decades?
- How do women explain their disproportionate representation in primary school principalship over this period (e.g. socio-cultural barriers, institutional barriers, personal/psychological barriers)?

The thesis' conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 was formed in the light of the overwhelming international and scant regional literature on gender and educational leadership, and was guided by the enquiry's purpose and questions. Predicated on the assumptions that there are multifaceted interconnected factors that may hinder women's development to the upper echelons of educational management; that there are no uniform glass ceilings between and within societies and cultures (Gubillo and Brown, 2003); and that "educational leadership is a situated concept" (Shah, 2009: 128), this research had set out to

identify the specific underlying causes for women's uneven partaking in leadership in the particularity of Cypriot primary education context over the last five decades. These reasons were pursued in the three interconnected levels of barriers debated in Chapter 2, namely: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/psychological barriers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these levels of barriers were tailored and extended from the work of Athanasoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002) and Cubillo and Brown (2003). Via comparing women leaders' diachronic experiences, the ultimate goal was not only to inform theory, policy and practice about the obstacles female teachers may encounter when ascending the hierarchy in Cypriot primary sector – beginning from Cypriot independence in 1960 – but also to provide recommendations for potential reforms in order to enhance Cypriot women educators' involvement in primary school management.

The methodological strategy employed in this thesis was comprehensively discussed in Chapter 3, wherein I referred to the theoretical (ontological and epistemological) and methodological choices, and extensively explained the philosophy/rational underpinning them. With regard to the research paradigm and approach in particular, it was clear that in order to answer the 'why' and 'how' research questions, an interpretive/qualitative/in-depth paradigmatic framework and a qualitative approach such as the narrative inquiry were required. In alignment with the choice of paradigm and approach and knowing that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' (Silverman, 2005), 'best' or 'worse' (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007), 'perfect' or 'useless' (Denscombe, 2007) methods, only suitable and fitting ones, snowball sampling, semi-structured in-depth narrative interviewing and thematic analysis emerged as the most appropriate means for generating and analysing the data. After presenting and justifying the methodological framework, the process of the pilot research and the pilot

guided reflections and alterations that followed as well as the course of the main research were extensively discussed in the remainder of Chapter 3. The Chapter ended with a critical reflection on issues of validity, reliability, trustworthiness, ethics and the researcher's role.

The data was analysed thematically in Chapter 4. A plethora of extracts from women's stories were reproduced verbatim in order to vividly document what the participants wanted to voice and communicate. The evidence was firstly described and then critically discussed and explained to highlight its importance for theory and practice, and to establish a strong link to the existing body of knowledge.

5.3. Main Research Outcomes

The research questions posed in the beginning of this research generated rich data that unveiled the complexity of factors underpinning women's access to Cyprus primary school principalship and their experiences of principalship as such. The findings are briefly summed up next.

The first research question aimed at illuminating women teachers' experiences of progressing to primary school principalship between 1961 and 2010. The underlying target was to unearth the elements that positively and/or negatively influenced women's advancement to leadership in the particular sector. It aimed to explore the barriers and/or enabling parameters, if any, that these women had come across on their way to the top of hierarchy beginning from Cypriot independence in 1960 until 2010 when this research was carried out.

A key theme transcending women's narratives that formed an impeding factor to their promotion was the non-leadership orientation of their careers and the unplanned character of their professional trajectories. Due to the patriarchal organisation of Cypriot society that associates leadership with men (Persianis, 1998); and because of the highly centralised character of the Cypriot educational system within which all promotions in the public primary (and secondary) sector are carried out centrally following specific criteria – with seniority being predominant – the vast majority of narrators (young/senior, newly/previously appointed as heads, holders/non holders of extra academic qualifications) did not seem to identify with leadership and subsequently had not formed a specific career map leading to a principalship. Consequently, external encouragement from others, particularly male colleagues, headteachers, superintendents and husbands was pivotal in engaging these women in leadership responsibilities and thereby in raising their confidence and aptitude for principalship. This was the second important theme that came out of interviewees' stories.

Despite the generally positive and supportive stance of colleagues, headteachers, superintendents, family and relatives to participants' advancement, some incidences of anachronistic stereotypical attitudes towards them, which were related to both gender and age, were reported. It appears that the pigeonholed perception about females' incongruity with leadership and men's suitability for management often still permeates general perceptions – particularly males' – and frequently determines their prejudiced attitude towards women aspirants. Although the participating women had managed to become heads, however, it seems that for a huge proportion of female teachers these influences had been catalytic in their decision to keep away from leadership. This emerged as the third significant outcome of this research.

Covert discrimination during the interview for promotion was the final theme related to the first research question, which was generated from the data. Persevering conventional assumptions underpinning the decisions of the interview panel along with ‘positive discrimination’ favouring men for principalship in primary education appear to have been partly accountable for women’s unequal representation in this sector over the period under consideration.

The second research question aimed at providing insights into women leaders’ experiences of primary school principalship between 1961 and 2010. Which difficulties and/or assisting dynamics, if any, specifically related to their gender, these women had encountered as heads that complicated and/or empowered their work?

Despite a growing positive ethos regarding women in leadership positions within a) the school context (teacher colleagues, assistant heads, other principals, superintendents, students), b) the community context (parents, stakeholders and other professionals) and c) the family context (family and relatives); the findings of this project appear to resonate with research elsewhere, which pinpointed that, once in post, women – particularly of younger age – frequently conventionally receive more intense critique regarding their leading capabilities compared to their male counterparts (Hall, 1996; Reay and Ball, 2000; Coleman, 2002,2009; Reynolds, 2008; Celikten, 2009). Having to prove their worth before they can be accepted as effective leaders in combination with excessive role conflict while in principalship rendered many female educators intrinsically demotivated to put themselves forward for promotion. This was another significant outcome that may also explain women’s disproportionate involvement in Cypriot primary school management throughout the timeframe examined in this thesis.

The third research question investigated whether women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus have changed if at all, over the past five decades. Does the increased inroad of women in principalship that resulted in them outnumbering men in this post since 2002/2003 (Educational Service Commission, 2010) – even if women heads are still not present in proportion to their number in teaching – imply a shift in the constraints and/or enabling factors influencing their advancement? Did women of the previous decades perceive more obstacles to become heads and/or work as leaders compared to those of the last decade as the numbers provided by the Educational Service Commission (2010) appear to denote?

The overtime review of women's experiences underlined that, despite individual differences, female educators in primary education between 1961 and 2010 constituted a fairly homogenous group facing comparable enabling and/or impeding influences when aspiring to principalship and working as leaders. Drawing from women's narratives, it appears that the current rise in women's participation in primary school management cannot be attributed to an elimination of barriers to their advancement. It is rather the 'side effect' of women's numerical domination in primary education that has resulted in the advancement of more women in principalship. As established earlier in this Section, as far as women's experiences of principalship are concerned, conventional assumptions about women in leadership positions constitute an enduring phenomenon spanning the five decades under consideration.

The fourth research question sought to record the reasons for the disproportionate representation of women in Cypriot primary school management between 1961 and 2010 as acknowledged by women leaders themselves. How did women who had been or were still directly involved in primary school leadership and who had experienced different levels of

hierarchy explain females' unequal participation in management over the five decades under study? Some of the factors had been hinted at when presenting, discussing and analysing narrators' personal experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship (research questions 1 and 2) while participants' directly stated opinions and explanations triggered by the fourth research question complemented those findings.

The reasons the research participants provided for females' uneven partaking in primary school leadership can be categorised in three intersected levels of barriers identified in this thesis, namely: a) the Macro level: Socio-cultural barriers, b) the Meso level: Institutional barriers and c) the Micro level: Personal/Psychological barriers. The socio-cultural barriers identified at the Macro level include gender role socialisation and stereotyping. With regard to gender role socialisation, the narrators claimed that there appears to be a connection between the patriarchal way Cypriot women have been socialised and the way they faced leadership and the prospect to take it on. Being nurtured as 'subordinates' in their familial spheres can explain why many women teachers ended up feeling unable to see themselves as leaders in their professional grounds when they became adults. As far as stereotyping is concerned, narrators argued that many Cypriot women teachers had internalised the enduring pigeonholed image of women's 'inferiority' in the Cypriot setting. Therefore, even if dynamic, they often felt as potentially 'incompetent' leaders and they were discouraged from seeking promotion.

The institutional barriers acknowledged at the Meso level embrace mentoring/sponsorship and promotions. The participants claimed that many women teachers had not received sufficient mentoring/sponsorship within their institutions that could help them raise their confidence, prepare for and claim principalship. The interference of the male dominated

Pancyprian Organisation of Greek Teachers (POED), not only in in-service training that could lead to a principalship but also in the interviews for promotion that favoured male teachers was also proposed as a constraint to women's advancement. Regarding promotions in particular, some narrators pinpointed the Educational Service Commission as possibly responsible for not promoting women as much as men due to obstinate stereotypical preconceptions. Others argued that the way interviews were carried out was tailored to the characteristics men candidates had developed through their gender role socialisation such as oral skills and confidence and this put them in advantageous position compared to their female co-candidates during the interview. Women's incompetence during the interview could also be ascribed to their devotion to their traditional role within the family that restricted them from seeking further education and/or training that could help them face the interview task effectively. Subtle 'positive discrimination' favouring men candidates for principalship due to Cypriot men's compulsory service in the army for two years was offered by one narrator as another potential barrier to women's progress during the interview for promotion.

The personal/psychological barriers recognised at the Micro level comprise the issues of role conflict and self-esteem/confidence. Role conflict between women's familial/domestic and the excessive occupational responsibilities of principalship was highlighted by many participants as a serious impediment and a key factor discouraging Cypriot women educators from seeking promotion throughout the period under investigation. The obligation to be transferred away – sometimes too far away and to remote places – from their place of residence for two years once promoted was provided as a reason that intensified the piling up of role conflict and further added to many women's decision to refuse principalship or at least postpone it until the final year of their service. The fact that many women did not even know

how to drive or were afraid of driving further complicated the situation. Moreover, day-to-day travelling particularly for long distances was not favoured by Cypriots and this also averted women from seeking promotion. Holding an 'inferior' position compared to their husbands within the family and/or feeling somewhat 'bounded up with' them, often made many women finding it 'incorrect' to acquire a leadership occupational post whilst their husbands had not. This was particularly evident in the cases of couples of teachers. Finally, some participants claimed that, as a consequence of their socialisation, Cypriot female educators frequently lacked self-esteem and confidence to take on the enormous burden of managerial responsibilities and to face the intensive criticism women often come up against at the principal's post.

5.4. Limitations, Strengths and Contribution of this Research

As in all kinds of research, various limitations and strengths of this enquiry need to be acknowledged. As explained in the Research Methodology Chapter, following the principle of 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen et al., 2007), the interpretive paradigm and a qualitative approach such as the narrative enquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) were employed. On the one end, the specific choices could be perceived as a limitation of the thesis on the basis that they do not allow for statistical generalisations within and beyond the Cypriot milieu. On the other end, though, these selections could be seen as the main strength and contribution of this piece of research because they enabled a multifaceted phenomenon such as the one under consideration to be examined in depth (Lieblich et al., 1998; Bassey, 1999). Detailed and thorough investigation was the fundamental aim of this enquiry. Bearing in mind the dearth of relevant research in Cyprus, this kind of exploration was required. Interpretive paradigm and narrative inquiry allowed deeper insights into women's own lived experiences (Elliot,

2005) of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus. They provided the opportunity to “view situations through the eyes of participants ... [and] catch their interpretations” (Cohen et al. 2007:384) for women’s disproportionate representation in primary school leadership, offering a wealthier and more comprehensive picture (Taylor et al., 1995) of the topic in the specific socio-historical context and within the particular timeframe of the past five decades. In this respect, they can allow ‘fuzzy generalisations’ (Bassey, 1999) to other Cypriot female primary school principals with the same or similar experiences over this period. As this piece of inquiry is the initial attempt to investigate and provide detailed insights into the reasons beneath Cypriot women’s unequal partaking in principalship, I call for more relevant research in the particular setting that could offer additional perspectives and further illuminate the phenomenon.

Even if fairly limited in scope (23 participants), I argue that this research can offer valuable multidimensional theoretical, practical and methodological contributions. At the theoretical level, it has generated and recorded a historical account of women’s experiences of ascending the hierarchy and working as leaders in Cypriot primary sector for the first time. Moreover, it has been a significant endeavour to understand and conceptualise women’s diachronically unequal participation in Cypriot primary school principalship beginning from independence in 1960 until 2010. More specifically, drawing from and extending the work of Athanassoula-Reppa and Koutouzis (2002) and Cubillo and Brown (2003), in this enquiry I identified the three interrelated levels of barriers to women’s advancement as a conceptual framework for classifying the factors that can explicate the unequal involvement of women in educational management not only within the Cypriot setting but possibly to other contexts as well as elucidated throughout this thesis.

Extending the theoretical contribution of this thesis to the international setting, I argue that, since this is the first piece of local research on the topic, it provides the unheard Cypriot perspective on the issue, with all the commonalities and differences that this brings to the existing corpus of literature in the field. This research can lead the way and can be a valuable contribution to research and knowledge on women's participation in educational leadership, representing the case of Cyprus. By taking place in the Cypriot context, the study aims at responding to Oplatka's (2006) plea for more research investigating women leaders' experiences in developing countries. Moreover, on the basis that, apart from Thornton and Bricheno's (2000) research in England, studies in other countries mainly investigate the specific issue at the secondary and higher education sectors, then this research comes to add to the ignored area of women's uneven partaking in primary school principalship. The conceptual framework comprising the three levels of barriers that has been developed in this research for explaining the unequal involvement of Cypriot women in primary school management can also be employed to other socio-cultural/educational contexts provided of course that it is adjusted to the particular requirements of those contexts.

At the practical level, this enquiry can be used as a tool to awaken the consciousness and raise the awareness of Cypriot women educators and primarily of those currently in the teachers' and assistant heads' posts regarding their career advancement prospects. Most importantly, it can offer food for thought to practitioners, researchers and policy makers on the island regarding the factors influencing women's careers and recruitment in primary school management with the prospect of triggering reforms that could improve the status quo of women's progression to principalship.

With regard to the methodological contribution of this thesis, the employment of in depth interviews encouraging narration of personal experiences of Cypriot women primary school principals across the country spanning the last five decades, was a fairly ‘new way’ of approaching an under-researched area in the context of Cyprus. The scant research on gender issues and equality in education that has been carried out in the Cypriot setting to date has employed mainly quantitative methodological frameworks. Their aim was mainly to document the general trends on gender equality in Cyprus, offering only ‘thin data’ and not penetrating deeper meanings, understandings and explanations of phenomena. These enquiries were not focused on the ‘outliers’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Denscomber, 2007), namely women’s individually lived experiences, distinct circumstances, constraints, beliefs and views (Morisson, 2007). On these grounds, this thesis proposed an ‘alternative’ methodological perspective for researching the topic within the Cypriot milieu.

Of course, it needs to be highlighted that, as with all methods and methodologies, this ‘alternative’ methodological framework is not exempted from limitations. For example, as a qualitative narrative research, unavoidably this inquiry is not immune from my own interpretation of the evidence. The reader of this thesis is confronted with my ‘judgement’ (Saunders, 2007), which, even if premised on a robust link to the evidence and the literature reviewed it is still my understanding and interpretation of an overwhelming amount of narrative interview data that is put forward. The data generated through women’s stories is susceptible to various interpretations and if a different researcher investigated the phenomenon, her/his insights into the data might have been different and this needs to be acknowledged and made explicit to the reader of this thesis. This is why additional local research by other researchers preferably employing the same or a similar methodological strategy is advisable. Additionally, in retrospect, perhaps the employment of focus groups

encouraging narration of personal experiences could also provide additional perspectives, opening up the discussion and in a way ‘complementing’ the individual narrative interview findings.

To conclude with, in my judgement, despite the above-mentioned possible limitations, as a whole, this thesis achieved and fulfilled the purpose and questions established in the outset. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it helped gain insights into women’s common and contradictory experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus and casted light on the reasons behind women’s disproportionate representation in leadership beginning from Cypriot independence in 1960 until 2010. The implications stemming from this thesis as well as potential recommendations for future research and practice are debated in the following Section.

5.5. Moving Forward: Implications of this Research and Recommendations for Future Research, Policy and Practice

As this thesis investigated the under-researched topic of women’s participation in primary school management in the Cypriot setting, it suggests certain significant implications and recommendations for future research, policy and practice. With regard to future research in particular, additional local research particularly focusing on Cypriot women’s disproportionate representation in leadership not only in primary but also in other educational sectors as well or even in superintendency, using the same or similar methods and methodology, is required and advisable in order to build on this enquiry and provide additional insights to the phenomenon.

Secondly, this thesis drew information from and recorded the experiences of a sample of women who finally made it to the upper floors of hierarchy in the Cypriot primary sector. It is likely that the experiences of women who have not managed to progress to a leadership post in primary or in other sectors of public education in Cyprus can offer different and/or supplementary angles and could allow comparisons. Thus, future research might want to look into those women's career stories.

Third, the scope of this enquiry was to examine the topic from women leaders' perspective, shedding light on their first hand experiences and mapping their explanations for women's diachronically unequal involvement in primary school management. Perhaps men educators'/leaders' viewpoint on the particular issue could offer additional perspectives and further illuminate the issue. How did men experience progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship in Cyprus and how do they explain women's disproportionate representation in leadership? This could be an interesting expansion and development of this research, which is in fact in my plans for the near future.

Finally, another possible area of research that emerged from this thesis that appears to beg for further investigation is the phenomenon of men's decreased inroad and shortage in Cypriot primary sector within the past fifty years and their disproportionately high participation in primary school principalship. An investigation into the reasons causing this phenomenon could as well be an interesting field of study.

Regarding the impact this thesis can have on policy and practice on gender equality in educational leadership in Cyprus, as already mentioned, the overtime review of women's experiences of progressing to and experiencing primary school principalship indicated

comparable intersected barriers for Cypriot women aspiring to principalship across the five decades under consideration. As established earlier, these are located at the socio-cultural, institutional and personal/psychological levels. As noted on several occasions throughout this thesis, it is these constraints that determined and defined women's overtime uneven involvement in Cypriot primary education.

More specifically, this enquiry has shown that, despite a slowly changing attitude and positive strides towards gender equality that took place within the last five decades in the Cypriot society augmented by coercion acts, socio-cultural imperatives and stereotypes – situated at the Macro level (society and culture) – about women in educational leadership persevere even in the 'female' sector of primary education. These stereotypes, which are either expressed by others or, most importantly, are internalised by women educators themselves through their socialisation, often inhibit women's progress to primary school principalship. Arguably, the durability of gender role socialisation and stereotyping over the last fifty years, despite the shifts and changes in policy, is the most disturbing finding of this thesis. I argue that this is the apex and the springboard from which all other impediments (institutional and personal/psychological) to women's advancement stem.

Thus, if Cypriot society is to move forward and Cypriot women educators are to cease being 'outsiders in leadership' (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2009), dealing with the problem in its deeply founded patriarchal roots becomes a necessity. If the situation is to be modified, typecasted assumptions about gendered roles need to be abolished. Providing girls the opportunity to develop their leadership skills early on and training boys to accept and respect females in these posts and to share household/familial responsibilities, should become the focus of attention of families and schools. The initiative undertaken by the Ministry of

Education and Culture since September 2010 aiming at instilling gender equality in the perceptions of students and teachers at all sectors (Savva, 2010), is certainly a positive step towards the right direction. It is a significant move towards altering the socio-cultural structure and conventional preconceptions that often prevent women from escalating to leadership posts.

Drawing from the participants' narratives, at the Meso level (educational institutions), if higher numbers of women educators are to pursue managerial positions, it is necessary for them to exert their 'personal agency' (Smith, 2011) and dynamically get involved and 'trained' in leadership throughout their careers. This should be targeted not only by the Ministry of Education and Culture, but most importantly by women themselves. To be specific, the establishment of formal and/or informal mentoring and/or sponsorship practices aiming at involving women in managerial tasks could further contribute in raising women's confidence to claim principalship.

Moreover, formal briefing on promotional opportunities should be accessible by all and this should be put forward by the Ministry of Education and Culture. More than this, however, women themselves should 'take the bull by the horns' and stop concentrating solely on teaching but take interest and make effort to seek information about their career prospects as well.

With regard to the interviews for promotion, it seems that the process is anachronistic and needs to be reviewed and reformed. 'Transparency' throughout the procedure and most importantly when the committee's decisions about who to promote or not take place, is the key word. As one narrator suggested and I agree, interviews – and I would add, post-

interview conversations and decisions – could be video-recorded. In this way, any attempt for ‘positive discrimination’ or in fact any kind of discrimination (gendered and/or political) could essentially be monitored and avoided.

At the Micro level (personal/psychological sphere) the outcomes of this thesis underlined the necessity to establish women-friendly policies to help women balance the role conflict that often discourages them from seeking further education and subsequently promotion. The need to develop appropriate infrastructures to help women unhamper themselves from the piling up of role constraints is apparent and it is essential to become the focus of attention for government’s policy makers.

Women-friendly policies regarding transfer after promotion also need to be established. Evidently, women’s multiple roles need to be taken into serious consideration when deciding where newly-promoted heads will be posted. Specific criteria related to their familial circumstances should be determined for female educators when deciding their transfers. If women-friendly policies are established, women who would like to seek promotion to principalship will be impelled to do so, not having the fear of an uncomfortable transfer standing as a hanging sword above their heads.

All in all, the outcomes of this thesis reinforce Coleman’s (2002) assertion that an amalgam of interrelated factors may pose barriers to women’s mobility towards headship. The range of barriers identified in this research is reminiscent of the impediments women in both the developing and the developed world anticipate. However, as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, it needs to be emphasized that certain constraints to women’s advancement particularly related to the specificity of the Cypriot setting such as the centralised educational

system, the ‘positive discrimination’ favouring men who obligatorily serve the army, women’s compulsory transfer after promotion or women’s ignorance and/or fear of driving, strengthen Cubillo and Brown’s (2003) claim that there are no uniform glass ceilings between and within societies and cultures as well as Shah’s (2009: 128) assertion that “educational leadership is a situated concept”. Put plainly, certain barriers to women’s advancement are context – or even time – specific and they have to be confronted and dealt with as such by local governments and authorities. The multiplicity of barriers every woman is confronted with leads me to caution against putting all women educators in one group. For every woman, the potential barriers and/or enabling influences she may face when seeking to ascend the hierarchy are different and can interact in a myriad of compound ways that can deter or help her attain leadership. In Niki’s (2006-S) words, “... the case for all women is not the same...” with some of them choosing to embrace while others to resist the challenge.

To conclude with, this thesis has been a step towards identifying the specific underlying causes of Cypriot women’s uneven involvement in management. The plan is to disseminate its findings as well as the developments this thesis proposes via lectures, conference presentations and publications to relevant stakeholders and intellectuals in Cyprus and abroad. It is time for researchers, policy makers and practitioners on the island to move on. Underpinned by previous coercion acts that seem to have eased the way for change, more than ever, the period is currently ripe for introducing innovations that can allow Cypriot women educators to unencumber themselves from the external and/or internal impediments they often face in their effort to assume principalship. Of course, a multifaceted phenomenon such as the one under consideration cannot have simple solutions and any drive for change cannot be implemented from one day to the other but it demands informed and deliberate planning. In any case, what is essential to bear in mind and what this thesis has sought to

accentuate and rigorously put across can be expressed in Dougherty's (2009: xi, xii) words: "the fact that women are underrepresented, whatever its cause, is unjust". Thus, implementing policies that can facilitate Cypriot women to attain what they deserve not only in educational management in particular, but also in society in general, is like balancing the equilibrium and restoring social justice.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Teaching and leading staff and principals between 1961 and 2009

SCHOOL YEAR	TEACHING AND LEADING STAFF			PRINCIPALS		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
1961/1962	1294	683	1977	240	21	261
1962/1963	1308	683	1991	245	21	266
1963/1964	1309	710	2019	248	21	269
1964/1965	1226	794	2020	241	21	262
1965/1966	1300	767	2067	257	21	278
1966/1967	1331	784	2115	265	23	288
1967/1968	1379	765	2144	276	27	303
1968/1969	1377	805	2182	277	27	304
1969/1970	1372	813	2185	263	26	289
1970/1971	1349	857	2206	273	28	301
1971/1972	1316	890	2206	270	28	298
1972/1973	1298	910	2208	273	28	301
1973/1974	1286	933	2219	267	28	295
1974/1975*	-	-	-	-	-	-
1975/1976	1171	885	2056	236	24	260
1976/1977	1178	932	2110	236	22	258
1977/1978	1222	933	2155	242	24	266
1978/1979	1233	946	2179	247	32	279
1979/1980	1176	935	2111	244	34	278
1980/1981	1178	925	2103	240	35	275
1981/1982	1163	942	2105	242	37	279
1982/1983	1156	948	2104	246	39	285
1983/1984	1151	969	2120	224	37	261
1984/1985	1112	979	2091	254	42	296
1985/1986	1112	993	2105	216	42	258
1986/1987	1147	1104	2251	203	39	242
1987/1988	1196	1235	2431	207	47	254
1988/1989	1191	1355	2546	213	50	263
1989/1990	1200	1471	2671	207	55	262
1990/1991	1201	1663	2864	207	58	265
1991/1992	1209	1851	3060	209	58	267
1992/1993	1205	1949	3154	210	67	277
1993/1994	1183	2031	3214	206	72	278
1994/1995	1184	2113	3297	193	69	262
1995/1996	1148	2058	3206	213	65	278
1996/1997	1259	2672	3931	199	73	272
1997/1998	1000	2298	3298	174	82	256

1998/1999	953	2432	3385	180	96	276
1999/2000	913	2598	3511	188	101	289
2000/2001**	922	2585	3507	370	402	772
2001/2002	869	2900	3769	353	461	814
2002/2003	822	2985	3807	320	488	808
2003/2004	855	3137	3992	297	501	798
2004/2005	826	3183	4009	293	560	853
2005/2006	811	3243	4054	269	577	846
2006/2007	824	3318	4142	252	619	871
2007/2008	818	3438	4256	246	627	873
2008/2009	811	3505	4316	223	662	885

Source: Ministry of Finance, 2010

* In 1974/1975 no research was carried out due to the Turkish invasion in the island.

** Since the school year 2000/2001 the numbers of principals and assistant principals are merged (Ministry of Finance, 2010)

Appendix 2: Final Interview Schedule

*1) Aspiring To Principalship**

Key question

Can I start by asking you to tell me about your personal experiences (positive or negative) **as a woman*** aspiring to principalship?

*Sub-questions:**

- When did you decide to assume headship?
 - Have you always wanted to become a head?
 - Why did you decide to become headteacher?
 - Did you have any hesitations? Why? How did you overcome them?
 - Did you have any mentors or role models?
 - How was your relationship with female/male colleagues, senior staff (principal, assistant principals), superintendents, parents when you decided to become a principal? How did they react to your decision to seek promotion? To what extent did they support you, encourage you, motivate you, advise you? To what extent did they discourage you?
 - How was your relationship with your family members (husband, kids, other relatives and friends), others when you were aspiring to principalship? How did they react to your decision to seek promotion? To what extent did they support you, encourage you, motivate you, advise you? To what extent did they discourage you?
-

*2) Promotion Process**

Key question

Could you tell me about your experience (positive/negative) **as a woman candidate*** when you attended the interview for promotion?

*Sub-questions:**

- What was the consistency of the interview panel in terms of gender and number?
- How did you feel during the interview?

- How was the panel's attitude towards you? To what extent did your gender had an influence on the way they faced you during the interview?
 - How did you feel when you got the promotion?
 - How did people around you (female/male colleagues, family members: husband, kids, other relatives and friends), others reacted when you got the promotion?
-

3) *Experiences as Principal**

Key question

Could you tell me about your experiences (positive/negative) **as a woman principal***?

*Sub-questions:**

- How is/was your relationship with female/male colleagues, senior staff (other female/male principals, assistant principals), superintendents, parents, students while in principalship?
 - How is/was your relationship with your family members (husband, kids, other relatives and friends) while in principalship?
 - To what extent did your gender influenced/influences the way you work/worked as a principal or the way people face/faced you?
 - Are/Were there any changes in your daily routine?
 - Are/Were there any differences in your home/work balance?
 - Could you talk us through a typical day while a principal?
 - How do/did you feel now/when you are/were a principal?
-

4) *Gender Issues**

- How would you explain women's disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary school management as recorded by the Ministry of Finance?
 - Any suggestions to women aspiring to primary school principalship and to policy makers based on your personal experience?
-

5) Personal Details

- current age
 - year and age of entering the teaching profession
 - total number of years in the posts of teacher, assistant teacher and headteacher
 - year and age of becoming assistant head and head
 - location(s), type(s) of school(s) where they served as heads and number of years in each location, school
 - type of retirement (normal or early) and at what age / reasons for retiring early if applicable
 - family situation when they assumed headship and during it (marital status, number and age of children)
-

6) Concluding Question

- Is there anything else you would like to add in conclusion?
 - Thank you for your valuable time and cooperation.
-

- Suggest other women principals who could take part in my study. (After the recorder is off)

** Pilot guided modification*

The sub-questions were used as prompts in case the informants have difficulty to narrate (Riesman, 1993)

Appendix 3: Table for Data Analysis

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: How did women teachers experience progressing to primary school principalship in Cyprus from 1961 to 2010?

SUBTITLE 1.1: 'Aspiring to principalship'

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
Name							
Name							
Name							

Appendix 4: Consent Form

My name is Elena Savva-Kyriacou. I am a primary school teacher and I have worked in this sector in Cyprus for seven years. I have also worked as teacher/acting head in Greek schools in England for one and a half years. Since October 2008, I am a doctorate student at the School of Education, University of Leicester. My area of interest and research is women's experiences of progressing to primary school principalship and experiencing principalship in Cyprus spanning the last five decades. Over the next three months, I will be conducting independent research into this field.

As part of my research, I would be grateful if you could share your valuable experiences. Your contribution is highly significant because you may contribute in explaining the phenomenon of women's diachronically disproportionate representation in Cyprus primary education; provide your advice to other women aspiring to primary school principalship; and help inform practitioners, researchers and policy makers about women's careers and recruitment in Cyprus primary school management.

The information provided will not be associated with names of persons and places in the final report (pseudonyms). You are eligible to review your transcripts, comment on and correct them and you are entitled to withdraw from the research any time you wish. Due to the nature of the research, the estimated time required for the interview is between one and two hours. If necessary, follow-up interviews may be conducted. To facilitate the conversation and the data analysis, a small digital recorder will be used. Only I and possibly my supervisors/examiners in the University will have access to the recordings.

Please underline below if you do/do not agree to participate in the research.

I agree to take part in an interview / I do not agree to take part in an interview

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 5: Map of Cyprus with the five districts



Appendix 6: Narrators' profile

Pseudonym	Year Of Appointment As Teacher	Age When Appointed As Teacher	Year Of Promotion As Assistant Head	Age When Appointed As Assistant Head	Year Of Promotion As Head	Age When Appointed As Head	Marital Status When Appointed As Head	Number & Age Of Children When Appointed As Head	Year Of Retirement	Age When Interviewed For This Research
Christiana	1989	20	2003	34	2009	40	Married	2 children Age: 16 14	To retire in 2029	41
Irene	1990	21	2004	35	2010	41	Married	1 child Age: 16	To retire in 2029	42
Sofia	1988	20	2003	35	2009	41	Married	3 children Age: University student 14 12	To retire in 2028	42
Niki	1988	21	2002	35	2006	39	Single	No children	As of this writing in 2011, she was promoted as superintendent. To retire in 2027	43
Marina	1987	20	2003	36	2009	42	Married	3 children Age: 17 15 10	To retire in 2027	43
Zoe	1975	22	2001	48	2007	54	Married (husband head)	2 children Age: 31 26	To retire in 2013	57
Margarita	1974	20	2000	46	2004	50	Married	2 children Age: 24 20	To retire in 2014	57
Kyriaki	1976	23	2000	47	2004	51	Married	3 children	To retire in 2013	57

								Age: 1 University student, 2 secondary school students		
Eva	1973	21	1996	44	1999	47	Married	2 children Age: 22 17	2012	58
Katerina	1971	21	1999	49	2003	53	Married	3 children Age: 24 22 19	2011	59
Fani	1972	20	2000	48	2005	53	Married	1 child graduated from university	2010	59
Eliana	1973	22	2001	50	2008	57	Married	2 children Age: 28 23	2011	59
Anastasia	1964	21	1994	51	2000	57	Married	2 children Age: 31 27	2003	67
Melina	1960	20	1989	49	1997	57	Married (Husband teacher)	2 children Age: the oldest child was married and the youngest was a university student	2000	70
Stella	1960	20	1980	40	1991	51	Married	2 children Age: 26 25	2000	70
Alexia	1959	20	1987	48	1994	55	Married (Husband teacher)	4 children Ages: the oldest child	1999	72

								was married and the youngest was a university student		
Athina	1958	20	1976	38	1989	51	Married (Husband teacher)	2 children university students	1994	72
Eleftheria	1957	20	1973	36	1981	44	Married	2 children Age: 21 13	1997	73
Loukia	1954	19	n/a	n/a	1961	26	Single	No children	Promoted as superintendent in 1992 and retired in 1995	74
Antigoni	1953	20	1973	40	1979	46	Married (Husband teacher/head)	2 children university and secondary school students	1993	77
Stefania	1951	19	1982	50	1991	59	Married	2 children Age: 34 28	1992	77
Theodora	1951	21	n/a	n/a	1962	32	Not married	No children	1990	80
Kornelia	1947	19	n/a	n/a	1961	33	Not married	No children	1988	82

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