



**PERCEPTIONS FROM TEACHERS IN SOUTH WEST EDUCATION DIVISION ON  
WOMEN ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITIES, A STUDY ON FEMALE SECONDARY  
SCHOOL MANAGERS**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I Monica Mtisunge Yekha declare that PERCEPTIONS FROM TEACHERS IN SOUTH WEST EDUCATION DIVISION ON WOMEN ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITIES; A STUDY ON FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGERS is my own work and that it has not been submitted at any other university.

The sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed (student) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Supervisor) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership in secondary schools is common in many developing countries, raising issues of equity and social justice. Studies on gender and leadership have revealed that a number of barriers exist for women seeking positions of educational leadership. This includes social-cultural factors, organisation factors and the expectations of the society.*

*This study focused much on understanding the various modes of perceptions various stakeholders have on female leadership capabilities. In particular, it explored the factors contributing to low numbers of women in administration positions in schools within South West Education Division (SWED). The study further sought the strategies to enhance the participation of women in leadership roles.*

*Data was collected using interview guide, a tool mostly used in conducting a qualitative study. There was no determined sample size as the saturation point was arrived at in various stages. The study also benefited from numerous secondary sources. Data collected was analysed using content analysis approach where it was categorized and interpreted. It is considered in a view of the teachers that women with appropriate qualifications can perform or discharge their duties well given proper working environment. The teachers demonstrated that female administrators are good at completing tasks on time, are transparent and able to resolve conflicts amicably hence making them capable for the management positions. The teachers further discovered that the participation of women in school leadership positions could be enhanced by means of effective mentoring, positive role-models and programmes for the preparation for leadership positions.*

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION TERMS**

AU	African Union
EDM	Education Division Manager
HOD	Head of Department
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SMC	School Management Committee
SWED	South West Education Division
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNWPP	United Nations World Population Perspective

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The teaching profession has become a female-dominated profession in both secondary and primary schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Cubillo and Brown (2003) notes that today in France, as in the vast majority of developed countries, the rate of female school teachers is around 80%. However, despite the fact that women dominate the teaching profession, they remain underrepresented in leadership and management positions in both public and private education institutions (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). A set of historical, social, economic and organizational factors have been cited by researchers as being the main contributing factors to the working status of women in the 21st century, which in turn has led to their underrepresentation in leadership and management positions (Powell & Graves, 2003).

In African societies, leadership has always carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women (Kiamba, 2008). Public perceptions tend to favour men as being better able to handle discipline than women, to work with predominantly male boards of education and to deal with political influence (Kiamba, 2008). However, recent changes in the nature, structure and composition of many organizations have brought about opportunities for women to embark on managerial careers that were previously overwhelmingly occupied by male employees (Priola & Brannan, 2009). Changes taking place in today's schools have opened a window of opportunity for women to move into education leadership and management. Schools that traditionally had male leaders are

experiencing changes in leadership positions; that some schools are experiencing their first female head teachers ever (Priola & Brannan, 2009).

The entry of women into male dominated professions is one of the major transformations of the century. However, the recent and optimistic trend cannot hide the serious fact that in most African countries only a small percentage of women are in management and related decision making positions (United Nations, 2010). A study by Green (2000) revealed that little has changed in this regard over the past few decades. The study reveals that, despite their large numbers in the teaching industry, women remain underrepresented at higher levels of management. The study confirms that men with similar qualifications and experiences generally meet with greater career success and participate more fully in the management process than their female counterparts (Green, 2000). This is supported by a report made by United Nations (2010) official statistics on women indicating that while conditions for women have improved in various areas particularly education, women in general continue to face many challenges. Worldwide statistics proves beyond doubt that women are underrepresented in management positions.

African societies believe that men are born with leadership traits that is why women are perceived differently in their general characteristics. Powell (2010) sets forward the “*Think manager –Think Male*” syndrome which suggests that there is a close relationship between gender role stereotypes and the characteristics associated with a successful leader. Traits associated with men include aggressiveness, strength, independence and decisiveness (Powell, 2010). Women on the other hand are perceived as kind, helpful, empathic and inclusive, which are features not associated with leadership qualities. Baker (2009) notes that negative perceptions about female leadership exist and are widely spread, deep-rooted and difficult to change.

Women who are in leadership and management positions try to overcome the underestimations by using transformational leadership skills which are very helpful in avoiding critical situations in the organisations (Green, 2000). Transformational leadership inspires people to achieve unexpected or remarkable results and gives workers autonomy over specific jobs, as well as the authority to make decisions once they have been trained (Adair, 2014). Adair adds that some of the basic characteristics of transformational leadership which women possess are inspirational, in that they inspire workers to find better ways of achieving a goal, mobilize people into groups that can get work done and motivate the group through excellent rapport. All of these traits make transformational leadership a good fit for many types of organisations. However this has proved to be futile as women's contributions towards the organisations are minimally appreciated (Blackmore, 2005).

In recent years, several countries have made unprecedented gains in the appointment of women in leadership and management positions. In Rwanda, for example, forty-eight per cent of women were elevated to management positions (UNDP, 2004). Mozambique has also achieved remarkable numbers with thirty-five per cent of women represented in the management positions. South Africa's achievements in the area of women's representation can be attributed in large part to the role that women's groups played in the anti-apartheid movement. Recently, women in South Africa lead the way for institutional transformation, legislative reform and gender equality (Blackmore, 2005). The successes witnessed in South Africa can also be attributed to the adoption of gender budget initiatives. The governments on the other hand have tried to provide practical initiatives to overcome the negative perceptions of women in such senior management positions (UNDP, 2004). Commencing from the education sector, young women are made aware of the opportunities ahead of them to avoid

the creation of any negative perceptions about top management situations (Davis, 2000). For example, visits to various departments headed by women to create interest. Again during women's training in management skills, proper placements are provided to overcome the negative perception of the culture and structure of the organisations (Davis, 2000).

Malawi, a socially conservative country with dominant beliefs and norms about the roles and capabilities of the different sexes, upholds the principle of equal rights for men and women and prohibits any discrimination based on gender in the workplace (Kiamba, 2008). Though the country has been profoundly modernised since it embraced democracy in 1994, it remains a very traditional society. The number of women in leadership and management positions is very weak, though the representation of women in subordinate positions has progressed somewhat (Banda, 2000). Being a small, land-locked country in Southern Africa, Malawi experiences a number of obstacles in getting women into leadership roles. While there are currently more women in the teaching profession than ever before in Malawi's history, the overall representation of women in key decision-making positions such as school administrators remains low (Chirwa, 2001).

Despite efforts made to ensure that female representation is achieved at all levels of governance, women are still underrepresented in many government and non-governmental organizations particularly in positions of power and leadership (Nzomo, 2009). Support to women's representation in the education sector in Malawi has focused almost wholly on increasing the number of female teachers, with limited attention to the elevation of such teachers to management positions (Nzomo, 2009). This is the case because women and leadership in Africa is perceived as something that is closely linked to motherhood, as it is argued that women as mothers are inclined to make the world more peaceful due to their

nurturing and caring characteristics which also affects their leadership abilities, hence female leaders are perceived differently than their male counterparts (Kagoda, 2000).

Women continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance both in the public and private sectors across the country by obtaining higher qualifications as it is a way of broadening ones capabilities (Kuada, 2013). However, this aspiration has not always been translated into equal representation in leadership positions. Once promotions are made and leadership and management positions are assigned, one realizes that women are no longer visible (Haruna, 2014). Indeed some countries like South Africa and Mozambique have made progress in their efforts towards a gender-neutral society, but for other African countries, Malawi inclusive, the pace has been much slower (Kiamba, 2008). From statistics presented by United Nations (2010) on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) structures, it is evident that the target of fifty percent representation by women in decision-making structures of member states is not yet met such as in Angola, Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe. The progress towards women's involvement in management positions is initially very slow. According to Nzomo (2009), although independence brought new possibilities for political involvement, there is still scepticism on granting women the same opportunities as men. For this reason, equitable participation in leadership positions is yet to be attained.

The history of education in Malawi is traced back from 1879 when Missionaries arrived in Malawi and established Western-styled schools (Banda, 2000). By 1927, Malawi had 2,788 schools, which were staffed by 4,481 teachers, many of whom were males who were even unqualified. Following the break-up of the Central African Federation in 1963, the Malawi government decided to assume responsibility for schools. During the transition period from

one party rule to multiparty democracy the demand for secondary education became even greater than before (Chirwa, 2001). The country witnessed the establishment of more secondary schools which were supported by the government.

Despite the establishment of more schools in Malawi, the management and the appointment of head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior teachers and heads of departments indicated the trend of male dominance (Banda, 2000). This is due to a set of historical, social, economic and organizational factors. Although the reasons for these persistent and pervasive inequalities vary somewhat across cultural and occupational contexts, Kagoda (2000) revealed that common obstacles to the underrepresentation of women include the choices that women make namely; some opt out full-time professional work to keep the home fires burning. Women internalize some of these barriers and this creates a psychological glass ceiling. As a result, they appear less willing to engage in promoting themselves or in taking the risks necessary for leadership roles (Kagoda, 2000).

Compared to other countries in Africa, UNESCO (2008) report shows that Malawi is not doing well or as much as many other countries in the African region with regards to promoting women in positions of leadership. The reasons for this can be explained in part by Malawi's failure to adopt innovative strategies such as gender budgeting initiatives or quota systems to ensure accountability to women. However, other important factors need to be considered particularly those relating to the political history and political culture of the country, which have perpetuated and institutionalized gender inequality (UNDP, 2004).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The role of women is slowly changing in most African countries. This has been noticed in the increase in proportion of women attending college and obtaining higher qualifications which broadens their capabilities in leadership roles. No longer are women associated with low expectations both in education and the workforce. Women now seek and obtain the highest leadership roles in various professions and in business. For example, according to a report by UNDP, Rwanda registered forty-eight per cent of parliamentary seats won by women in the October 2003 elections and of the ministerial posts; twenty-eight of them are held by women representing one of the highest proportions in the world. In the banking industry on the other hand, the ranks of women in senior level management positions have increased from nineteen to thirty-one percent during 2010 to 2015. Even more importantly, the percentage of women at the management level in the education system has also increased from twenty-seven to thirty-seven percent in this same year period.

Political and legal changes on the other hand have also tried to create opportunities to increase the representation of women professionals in many sectors across the country. It is therefore stipulated in the Malawi National Policy on the Appointment, Deployment and Training of school administrators that the posting and deployment of head teachers shall be based on gender balance amongst other factors (MoEST 2007).

Indeed, it can be noted that over time women have attained qualifications and experiences to enable them carry out administrative duties in schools. Others are serving the roles of middle managers or Head of departments in many schools across the country. Given these changes

and large percentages, one might conclude that this migration of women towards leadership roles has been widely accepted.

Much as women have attained higher education qualifications and experiences, the number of women in school management positions is still insignificant. Although promotion vacancies are identified at district level, there is disparity between policy and implementation in as far as the appointment process is concerned. Evidence from teachers suggests that resulting postings for promotions do not impact women as head teachers do not recommend them to the Education Division Manager regardless of their qualifications (Ngambi, 2015). Normally the appointment is based on the recommendation of a head teacher and approved by the District Education Manager (DEM) or Education Division Manager (EDM). Such recommendations may have contributed to women's comparative absence from the management positions resulting in a strengthening of occupational gender segregation in the contemporary labour force, yet the insignificant numbers of women in top positions have demonstrated that they are powerful performers.

Despite having more female teachers, South West Education Division suffers from a pronounced underrepresentation of women school administrators. While some people view women as potential school managers, others are still sceptical about women as capable managers of schools. Culturally people have believed that women are to be assigned domestic roles as primary caretakers of children and the household. In contrast, men are typically associated with workforce involvement and the responsibility to financially provide for a household as breadwinners. Therefore, despite some positive work to uplift women, the fact still remains that the few women who have risen to management positions in secondary



schools are still perceived as incapable; hence limiting the chances of other women to be considered on such leadership positions.

It is due to this uncertain thinking that the study assessed as to what are the key issues limiting people to accept the fact that women have the capacity to deliver at decision making levels.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study was aimed at assessing the perceptions from teachers in South West Education Division on women administrative capacities in managing secondary schools. Specifically it was set out to determine the organisations' perceptions on female headship inherent in the schools and or within the wider education system of governance.

### **1.4 Main Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess the perceptions from teachers in South West Education Division on women administrative capacities; a study on female secondary school managers.

## **1.5 Specific Objectives**

This study was guided by the following specific objectives;

1. Analyse work experience and professional qualifications women have for the management of schools.
2. Assess the administration roles female head teachers play in the management of schools.
3. Analyse factors to low female head teachers in secondary schools in SWED.
4. Examine the coping mechanisms to avert the situation in SWED.

## **1.6 Rationale of the Study**

In the experience of the teaching profession, the researcher noted that there has been a significance underrepresentation of female head teachers within South West Education Division despite some positive work to uplift women within the Division. Therefore the underlying principle of the study is to eradicate the negative myths instilled in people on the incompetence of women in management positions and enlighten the society of possible strategies that may be applied to improve women's participation in educational leadership.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study on perceptions on women's leadership capabilities in secondary schools will provide important information about current attitudes towards women, how these vary across the country and where change is happening. This will be valuable information to inform future action to support increased representation of women in decision making levels. The information shared would enhance attitude change to the communities on women administrators and their effectiveness in service delivery.

The study will help moulding organizational structures and gendered cultures that prohibit women's career advancement. This approach will offer a way to address gendered social status assumptions which are embedded in the organizations. Instead of attempting to train women to lead like men, the study will be important for organizations and practitioners to develop interventions that aim to address and resist the broader and systemic problem of cultural and structural issues derived from gendered social status in organizations.

The study will assist the concerned governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and media in general to work on moulding unfavourable socio-cultural issues such as cultural norms that demean the status of women. This will be useful in sorting out and celebrating various contributions women leaders make in public life and as excellent managers.

## **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

The researcher sought to make the study manageable by limiting it to public secondary schools headed by female head teachers in South West Education Division. This was based

on the fact that female leadership patterns in the education system set-ups are similar and replicated across the country as such the study was limited to top female head teachers.

## **1.9 Operational Definitions of Terms**

*Administration:* Running an organisation

*Capacity:* Ability of a person that enable performance of a job.

*Challenges:* Problems which hinder, slow, hold back progress of certain tasks.

*Female school manager:* Female teachers responsible for the day to day management of an institution.

*Gender:* Social and cultural construction of being a male or a female.

*Incompetency:* Incapability of performing a function properly.

*Leadership:* Process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.

*Management:* The act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives efficiently and effectively.

*Patriarchy:* A social system in which men hold primary power and predominate roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property.

*Performance:* Successful accomplishment in particular area summarized in ranking of grades, scores, or descriptive commentary.

*Top leadership position:* The highest position in an office

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The chapter presents an overview of literature on women administration concepts in general and its related Theoretical Framework.

### **2.1. The Concept of School Management**

An educational organisation as one of the largest enterprise undertaken for the purpose of development, growth of the individual and meeting the needs of the society has one individual who is at the helm of administering all aspects of a school's operations. To be at the helm of a school operation means that someone has the authority of controlling the day to day activities of the school to achieve its intended goals (Shakeshaft, 2004). As such it involves the activity of a large number of people such as students, teachers and the public hence a need for a competent and well qualified manager. Fiore (2009) characterizes school management as a process of systematically arranging and co-ordinating the human and material resources available for the main purpose of achieving stipulated goals of that particular institution.

Regardless of gender, school leadership and management needs competent and qualified people because they perform tasks that include demands, constraints and an in-between area of choices as they seek to maximize resources for the fulfilment of specified objectives (Green, 2000).

School managers make tough decisions and get involved in the day-to-day operations of the school hence more women today have attained higher education qualifications suitable for the position. For example according to Burke and Nelson (2000), school managers are in fore front making school development plans, promoting community participation through the formation of Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), strengthening staff and pupil supervision, enhancing communication and practicing proper financial records management. Much as school managers face demands and constraints on the position, Moser (2009) observes that female school managers in most cases find themselves not fully accepted by the community they work with due to socio-cultural factors, making their contributions to the schools not important.

For effective day to day operations, school managers need to function as effective planners. Planning defines where the school wants to be in the future and how to get there. Plans on which they are based give purpose and direction to the school. Fiore (2009) adds that a school manager in this case realizes that though he has vast authority to force teachers do their job in line with the established teaching and learning objectives, there must be a positive influence for teachers to take responsibilities in planning. Once the teachers are taken on board they start developing and eventually put more commitment towards their work. Green (2000) adds that female head teachers are however facing more challenges to be accepted in the administration world hence finding it hard to effectively plan for the school goals.

Throughout Malawi's history, women have been considered subservient, illiterate and fit only for the kitchen (Chirwa, 2001). At this modern age, there are people who still believe that women are incapable of competing effectively with men for higher job status, thus such type of thinking devalues women liberation efforts (Blackmore, 2005). Female head teachers

therefore have had difficult time convincing their subordinates that they are capable of managing schools. In most cases women have to work extra hard in their occupations to be recognized and accepted as compared to their male counterparts who are readily accepted in the community (Moser, 2009). Therefore Malawians are forced to recognize that giving women an administrative position would not satisfy the global demands for the national development in education sector. Cultural issues have generally become more conspicuous especially when a female teacher strives to work in the management position.

A number of theories have argued that school management currently can either be acquired or learnt. This is irrespective of sex, a sharp contrast to traditionally held beliefs that leadership is a gender phenomenon (Moser, 2009); this in view has necessitated various leadership and management training programs. Coupled with democratic and economic values which require women participation in the quest for a better livelihood both nationally and domestically; some women are taking up leadership and management positions (Moser, 2009). Indeed over the last half-century, women have made significant advances in education and are equally qualified as men. It can be noted that education has improved women's living standards and has enabled them to have a louder voice in decision-making in Malawi. This implies that academic qualification is not an obstacle since most of the female teachers have achieved highest level of academic requirements suitable for school management. However, Fiore (2009) notes that despite high levels of academic preparedness, women are still more likely than men to work in low levels of management in African schools. This clearly shows that the negative attitude towards women is due to beliefs and values dominant in a given society.

From this perspective however, David (2000) notes that anyone can be a school manager or in any top management position regardless of gender. Priola & Brannan (2009) on the other

hand states that there is skepticism when women lead and in many situations, gender, more than age, experience or competence determines the position one is assigned to. Fiore (2009) continues to say that there is research to show that such doubts about women in school management positions is baseless because studies in school administration found out that schools with female managers are better planned and managed, on average such schools perform better than those managed by men. The only difference can only be noted in the leadership styles of women and that of men.

## **2.2. Women's Participation in Educational Leadership**

Changes taking place in today's society have opened a window of opportunity for more women to move into school leadership and management positions. Jones (2006) explains that education reforms have brought new governance structure and modified leadership practices. A convergence of school reforms and societal changes indeed has enhanced opportunities for female teachers to become school administrators (Lumby and Azaola, 2011). In 2010 the Malawi government created a national machinery to implement the Forward Looking Strategies that came out of the UN Conference on women held in Nairobi (Chirwa, 2001). The national machinery was supposed to study the obstacles to women's advancement and make recommendations to the State. However, the policy platform and the national machinery were hindered by limited authority for implementation. Furthermore, Malawi had no specific policies on gender equality until when the country came under increasing international pressure (Chirwa, 2001). It was at this time that women's programmes were incorporated into policy papers.



Malawi's history of creating education opportunities and sustaining associations for and by women has also played a potentially promising role in women's current prospects for leadership participation. A report by UNDP (2004) notes that this has helped in allowing women attain higher qualifications and form organizations which have expanded their agendas to fight for greater female representation in leadership positions. It can be noted that education improves decision making skills that is why more women today continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance both in the public and private sectors (Chisholm, 2001). A report presented by ILO across the world, noted that the majority of women are every bit as capable of being good leaders and the same can be said of their ability to dominate the corporate boardroom (ILO, 2009). According to a new Pew Research Centre survey on women and leadership, most women are not different from men on key leadership traits such as intelligence and capacity for innovation, with many saying they are stronger than men in terms of being compassionate and organized leaders (AU, 2010).

The teaching profession has been traditionally viewed as the ideal profession for women in both Africa and in the world (Akaria, 2007). In academic circles the picture of women in leadership positions is very minimal especially if one looks at education; one would expect that things would change faster in this environment since schools are traditionally viewed as centres of free thought, change and human development (Akaria, 2007). Background information on leadership in education systems generally reveals that women are less likely given the opportunity than men to participate in upper levels of school administration. This is universally evident in primary schools, secondary schools and in the higher learning institutions (Akaria, 2007). This is the case because historically, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders hence leadership in education circles is viewed as a man's world (Gumbi, 2008).

Women's entrance to a traditionally masculine domain entails a direct threat or challenge to men's positive distinctiveness (Akaria, 2007). Consequently, men have the decision-making power and authority regarding strategic direction and allocation of resources unlike women. Indeed leadership tend to focus on maleness. As a result of this perception, male behaviours and characteristics in leadership roles have been the standard against which female school leaders are assessed. That is to say male-centric leadership models and norms have served to limit women's participation regarding leadership (Gumbi, 2008). The underestimation of women in administration suggests that masculine practices and leadership norms function to exclude women.

Malawi like many African countries still treat women as secondary citizens and regard them as minors who cannot perform competently in the society as such no record of their professional achievements have been highlighted (Chirwa, 2001). At times this is seen in cases where most intensive positions are occupied by men while the softer positions are occupied by women. The intensive positions are regarded to be more challenging hence women cannot competently manage such positions (Nzomo, 2009). The society on the other hand continues to doubt the ability of women to competently accomplish all tasks in the world of work equally like the male counterparts. They suggest that since women are minors, then it follows that they cannot competitively perform well hence occupy low-level positions in the workplace and therefore cannot even be remunerated at levels that match their capabilities (Gumbi, 2008).

The current scenario glorifies men and relocates women to the background. The entrenched assumption is that authority and decision making positions are men's prerogative. This assumption is grounded in the unthinking belief that there is a 'natural order' male leadership

and female subordination” (Kunin, 2008). Hence, women in school administration often adopt a back-seat image and remain in a subordinate position to men both at home and at work. Subsequently, this impedes the thinking that women are as competent as men in leadership positions. Due to this, women experience a strong gender bias when being evaluated for leadership positions on their level of performance as well as their potential impact (Kunin, 2008). Research by Burke and Nelson (2000) shows that within the professional groups, women have to significantly work harder to be perceived as equally capable as men.

Moreover, Baker (2009) adds that unfortunate assumptions about women’s ineffectiveness are sometimes made about due to women’s lack of ambitions and abilities. It has been argued that women themselves are often reluctant to run for top management positions. The lack of ambition among women in reaching managerial positions has been ascribed amongst others to overburdened roles, insufficient preparation and training (Akaria, 2007). When women believe that they are disadvantaged, they may be less likely to express an interest in top management jobs than equally qualified men. That is why in most cases women are underrated when in top management levels (Powell, 2010).

Recent International research indicates that in educational leadership women are in minority in countries that are developing (Brioso, 2009). A study done in Uganda by (Kiamba, 2008) reveal that there is underrepresentation of women in leadership positions at all levels of the education system including primary schools, secondary schools and other higher educational institutions. Men on the other hand have been thought to possess qualities necessary to be school leaders.

When Malawi broke loose from colonialism and became independent in 1964, there have been a significantly low number of women attaining leadership positions. May 2012 was the first time when leadership took a turn; Joyce Banda became the female president of Malawi. She was greeted with negative attitude from the menfolk underrating her that she cannot perform better on such a challenging post. Though that was the case, Dr Joyce Banda received positive support from nations and organisations around the world which assisted in uplifting women to higher levels and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Female president of Liberia) said, *“because of another female president, the potential for more women leadership at the highest level is now made even stronger”* (United Nations, 2010). Indeed more women reforms were made where it saw a number of them rising to different top positions.

A report made by United Nations, (2010) indicates that when women achieve positions of influence and participate in policy decisions, they have the opportunities to open up access to knowledge and motivate those with less power. Individuals are more likely to be attracted to those who are similar in terms of values and attitudes. Brioso, (2009), adds that this tendency suggests that men in organizations are likely to feel satisfied with a higher proportion of men. Logically, men tend to maintain such proportion while consciously and unconsciously blocking opportunities for women to join the same positions (Brioso, 2009). Women from all levels of the social hierarchy, not only those occupying official status positions, work to alter the undemocratic culture and structure of institutions and society, improving the lives of those who have been marginalized or oppressed (Brioso, 2009). However, a study by Onyango, Simatwa, Enose and Ondigi (2011) indicates that in Africa, most top position women are jealous of each other as result most women fail to be motivated and attracted.

It has been noted that when women are in leadership positions, they bring different leadership styles in the institutions. Kiamba (2008) further explains that if more women are highly motivated and given the opportunity to participate in management, the society and institutions benefit from their talented and distinctive ways of handling leadership. That is why the Kenyan Ministry of Education formulated a policy requiring a third of management positions in education systems to be occupied by women by the year 2010 (Onyango, et al, 2011). Statistics collected by Onyango, et al (2011) still shows that in Siaya district, women are still underrepresented when it comes to management positions due to cultural factors which beam women as house wives.

The majority of the school leadership positions are due to merit basing on the capabilities and relying little on the credentials (Kunin, 2008). Kunin adds that this is because the education system is generally structured like a traditional home where men are regarded to run the schools and women to nurture the learners. For example the National Centre of Education Statistics in Fiji reported that while eighty-three percent of primary school teachers are women, only twenty percent of them are school principals (Nzomo, 2009). The statistics also shows that at secondary school level, forty-six percent of the teachers are women, while only three percent of them are principals. Therefore, Nzomo (2009) concludes that though the teaching profession is said to be feminized, educational leadership opportunities are highly gendered.

South West Education Division has five education districts with about 149 public secondary schools. The minimum requirements for a teacher to be promoted into the administration position include qualifications such as diploma or degree in education and a teaching experience of not less than eight years for a diploma holder and four years for a degree holder

(TSC, 2001). Despite having more female teachers within the division, their contributions are minimally taken on board as notable in positions of head teachers where preferences are given to men. Moser (2009) agrees with the situation of underrepresentation in SWED, that despite women's education qualifications, the woman's role is typically regarded as one of a homemaker; the man on the other hand is a bread winner and head of the household. Generally, negative attitudes towards women are hostile to women's involvement in the so called male dominated positions.

### **2.3. Administrative Approaches of Women in the Management of Schools**

It is argued that women lead differently from men in the management of schools. Adams and Hambright (2004) states that female school managers in general have specific approaches, attributes, characteristics and skills that are beneficial to institutions. In recent years, in a research carried out in the United States of America, it pointed out that women's' administrative approaches or styles tend to be democratic, participatory and more motivating than their counterparts (Powell 2010). The view was advanced that there are no differences in administration approaches between men and women, however; women do bring good different styles when in management positions which help organizations maintain a competitive advantage (Brioso, 2009).

In African secondary schools, female head teachers tend to be more supportive, approachable, sensitive, understanding, nurturing, organized, creative, and receptive than their male counterparts (Adams & Hambright, 2004). It is observed that women are perceived as being more likely to be transparent in their working relationships and tend to use democratic leadership styles and power which in turn contribute to achieving high levels of

job satisfaction among staff members (Helfat, Harris & Wolfson, 2010). Women are viewed as change agents who are deeply involved in reforms and who work towards creating common visions of schooling for children, as well as climates conducive to learning (Wickham, 2007). They are regarded as being relational and open.

The language used by female leaders is more likely to express courtesy, gratitude, respect and appreciation (Jones, 2006). Women leaders show respect for their audience by listening. They remember more of what is said by all the participants. Wickham (2007) adds that women are also good at picking up or solving emotional and personal issues amicably. It is noted that this kind of reaction is likely to encourage community-building in the management of schools.

From a cultural feminist perspective, women value intimacy and develop an ethic of care for those with whom they are connected (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). An ethic of care may be characterized by acknowledging multiple perspectives, being open to hearing other's perspectives and valuing collaboration. This view agrees with the leadership approach demonstrated by female school leaders in Kellerman and Rhodes' (2007) study of female secondary school leaders who practiced an ethic of care towards those who worked for and with them. As leaders, the women demonstrated a self-less desire to both serve and prepare others and simultaneously created an organizational system that was committed to sharing and developing relationships that drove to goodness. In a study by Kiamba (2008), it was found out that female heads expressed concern about knowing where employees were residing; in a way they called 'monitoring by mothering'.

Similarly, Nzomos' (2009) study of female and male executives with similar backgrounds concluded that women tend to manage in different ways than men. The study found out that female executives are more interested in transforming people's self-interest into organizational goals by encouraging feelings of individual self-worth, active participation and sharing of power and information. Similarly, Lumby and Azaola (2011) reports that teachers tend to accept female leaders as school principals because they have good relations with staff, are efficient organizers, self-disciplined and have the ability to bring about positive change often democratically. Furthermore, Kunin (2008) notes that female principals are better than males in the area of communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, promoting professional development and providing incentives for learning.

Although Moser (2009) dispute the view by explaining that men unlike women accomplish all tasks in the world of work; Shakeshaft (2004) points out that female administrative styles fit well with the notions of how to run successful schools because they are transformational in their styles of leading. Similarly, Kasente (2003) on his study on teacher's perceptions on female leaders in Botswana, reports that teachers accepted females as school administrators because they had good relations with staff, were efficient organizers, self-disciplined, had the ability to bring about change.

#### **2.4. Circumstances to Women's Underestimation in Administrative Positions**

Women's contributions in administration positions are minimally appreciated due to a number of issues. According to Kunin (2008), Nzomo (2009) and Powell (2010), women are underrated due to a number of issues stemming from socialization and stereotyping, patriarchy and education factors.



### **2.4.1. Social Cultural Factors**

Social cultural factors emanate from social operations of the human being and the development of the person within the society (Powell, 2010). These factors rotate from the norms and the beliefs of the community. These beliefs, attitudes and practices dominant in the society have differentiated effects on boys and girls. In most cases, more prejudice is placed on girls while boys are favoured in all aspects of life (Nzomo, 2009). Traditionally, girls are viewed to be inferior and therefore discriminated right from birth. Studies on the situation of girls show that their disadvantaged position emanates from the parental and societal attitude which stresses the value of sons against daughters (Powell, 2010).

Cultural aspects drive assumptions about competencies in various professions particularly when considering putting women in educational management positions. Female socialization practices inhibit women from attaining leadership positions because women are historically encouraged to develop personality traits and behaviours that prevent them from participating in leadership (Nzomo, 2009). Thus, women may perceive that there is a mismatch between themselves and those who are involved in management levels. Such beliefs are more likely to affect women's career aspirations in a negative way and may partially explain why women are underrepresented in higher management positions. Societal values and traditional roles combine to have a detrimental effect on how women are valued as leaders. Kiamba (2008) adds that in many societies women are still assigned secondary positions by the prevailing customs and culture. As a result, role incongruence occurs when a woman exhibits the behaviour expected of leaders (Jones, 2006).

Due to cultural factors, people have negative perceptions on women's proficiencies and this has made it difficult for others to be considered on administrative positions (Baker, 2009).

A report by UNESCO (2008) asserts that women are undermined from management positions not because they lack education qualifications but rather they believe that they are not capable hence deviating from the status-quo. This assertion suggests that these exclusions are by no means intentionally discriminant. They are simply developed in response to the norm that women are incompetent (Baker 2009).

Studies further show that when women are given management positions they always find it difficult to reconcile with the traditional roles as caretakers and mothers with high career expectations (Nzomo, 2009). There are several women who place priority on their careers and their progression to leadership, but that decision leads to conflict. Kunin (2008) found that this conflict is a major source of stress in the lives of women who have had the dual responsibility of family and career. Another important point of consideration is the time commitment involved in fulfilling the role of a school manager more especially when considering traditional behaviours associated with women who are assumed to be less capable and productive (Kunin, 2008). Women aspiring for leadership positions face the day-to-day challenge of finding time for community responsibilities. Feminists have long argued that the multiple gender roles of women include work categorized as productive labour such as farming and income generation and reproductive labour. These socially defined gender roles create what has been referred to as the 'triple role' or 'multiple burden' whereby women often work longer and more fragmented days (UNDP 2004), thus limiting their opportunities to become active in leadership activities.

A study of women in educational leadership positions undertaken by Appleton (2005) also indicates that women are making little progress in achieving equity with men in attaining management positions. The study suggests that women are hindered by both internal and

external barriers that keep them from advancing to leadership. Internal barriers include the effects of sex roles while external barriers are derived from the structure of the education system that locks women into low-power and low-visibility hence limiting their performance and opportunities. In Uganda, Appleton (2005) clarifies that female education administrators' advancement is further impeded by the cultural attitudes of male dominance. Women have the qualifications and experiences to apply for the position of a school administrator but cultural attitudes prohibit them from aspiring for such management roles. Such attitudes might reinforce perceptions of women's 'proper place' as in the home.

Women have been socialized to believe that qualities frequently associated with females are antithetical to those qualities needed to manage an organisation (Moser, 2009). As a result, aspiring female secondary school managers may resolve not to pursue for management positions due to their belief that they do not have the qualities and skills to lead. This is the case because traditionally, leadership has generally been associated with specific traits of behaviour often displayed by men (Gumbi, 2008). Leadership in secondary schools in SWED has generally been associated with men and male traits of behaviour, and as a consequence the perception of a leader is dominated by male stereotypes. Female teachers are undermined of their capabilities yet they have proven to be great performers when in top management positions. Indeed Social cultural challenges greatly affect women's' attainment in school leadership positions.

#### **2.4.2. Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property (Gumbi, 2008). At the basic level, patriarchy implies that the male is supreme and almost anything and

everything must conform to the culture of the males. At a deeper level, it implies that femaleness represents subjugation; therefore women must silently bear it all and do whatever it takes to conform to the male culture (Baker, 2009). Therefore where a leader is to be elected, people will prefer electing a man rather than a woman. Elective positions like Board of Governors, chairman are usually occupied by men.

Much as women continue to rise in top positions in the developing countries, research in Malawi has uncovered a perception of women as second-class citizens. According to the UNDP (2004) report, patriarchal norms require that a woman is not above a man, especially in the northern region of Malawi where patriarchal norms are more deeply entrenched than many other parts of the country (Chirwa, 2001). It is noted that men are believed to be leaders and that they do not want women to advance.

A report by UNDP (2004) shows that perceived struggles women face as they enter managerial positions stem from the challenges of operating in male-centred institutions. When women are placed in management positions, they are overshadowed by men; have to shout to be heard or to work twice as much as their male colleagues so as to be recognized. Positions of leadership roles are more difficult for women because they have to prove themselves rather than being accepted for their accomplishments, talents and skills. Even those women who find themselves in decision making positions are still not taken seriously by their male colleagues; their efforts are not appreciated because patriarchy continues to dominate and influence societies (UNESCO, 2008). The concept of patriarchy manifests itself in all the spheres of life ranging from the family to the world of education, politics, culture and leisure. Patriarchy affords men the superiority lens while concedes women to the lens of inferiority (Jones, 2006). The patriarchy society in the education system views men to

be superior to women in terms of leadership. Members of the society feel that men make better school leaders than women in the education administration.

Getting into the school administration position is therefore not sufficient as women's participation remains threatened (Jones, 2006). Therefore, women's participation in male dominated institutions is often inhibited by patriarchal norms that leave women unable to operate effectively as a result of where they are located within the institution; gender unfriendly work environments; unfamiliar language and rules.

### **2.4.3. Education Factor**

Women's education has become one of the key development objectives from way back the nineties. Since the UN Declaration of the Decade of Women in 2010, attention and action on women's education concerns have steadily increased in the form of consciousness-raising and skills acquisition (UNDP, 2004). The underlying assumption is that if women are educated, understood their conditions, knew their rights and learned skills traditionally denied to them, empowerment would follow (ILO, 2009). The International Seminar on Women's Education and Empowerment therefore was convened amidst the discussion on the relevance of women's education in improving their situation in short term (UNDP, 2004). Years have passed and there is an increasing access to women's education and training which have resulted in the tilting of the power balance in favour of women. Due to education programmes, women have acquired managerial positions in different spheres of work. It is observed that in the developed countries, there is a real commitment to provide sustainable programmes for women (ILO, 2009). Education has empowered women in many leadership

positions because developed countries allocate resources in proportion to women's diverse needs (UNDP, 2004).

In terms of government policies on women's education, it is observed that there is no real commitment to provide sustainable education programmes for women in Malawi (UNICEF, 2012). As such there is a perceived gap between the rhetoric and policies of decision makers that many of the women consider the policies as simply paying "lip service" to women's concerns (UNDP, 2004). The proportion of resources that is being allocated to women's needs is small considering the many diverse needs of women. The fact that many of the decision makers are men also constrains their appreciation of these needs.

As articulated in the UNICEF report (2012), the girl child is socialized to be a self-sacrificing person destined for biological reproduction and service to others, especially her family. As a result, girls' education in Malawi is given little or no attention while that of boys' being very important since they are expected to be the breadwinners, heirs, professional persons and leaders of society (Abagi, 2000). By contrast, boys are much valued, wanted and favoured. Therefore, girls become helpers to their mothers at an early age and gradually internalize their roles. According to Abagi (2000) the social image of the differences between women and men is a projection of the cultural environment in which we live. This image is a self-fulfilling prophecy to the extent that formal education of girls is even viewed with suspicion, as a threat to their morality.

In a study by Appleton (2005), low valuation of schooling by parents, especially in the case of girls, is out of the belief that women are less capable and their place is in the kitchen. Therefore, women become conditioned to see their future as housewives who would not need

much formal education whereas boys know very well that they are future breadwinners and need education for formal employment. Abagi (2000) indicates that there is evidence that educating women is beneficial at the national, community, family and individual level. With even basic education women effectively engage in economic activities and thus contribute to greater national productivity. At the society level, educated women participate more in development activities as well as in political and economic decision making processes. However for one to occupy top management and leadership positions one needs higher education. According to Priola & Brannan (2009), one fact that is evident from the various research findings shows that the lower the level of education of women, the wider the gender leadership gap.

In exploring women's route into leadership, Brioso (2009) concurs with Abagi (2000) that education and self-determination are perceived to be at the core of a career in leadership. It is mentioned that the increased education attainment and the enhancement of academic credentials of women have subsequently accompanied an increased commitment to professional and managerial careers. A respondent in Kiamba's (2008) study on the leadership experiences of four female secondary school heads cited a strong knowledge base and value on having attained a doctorate as a motivator for joining education leadership.

#### **2.4.4. Lack of Motivation**

Women are more likely to be attracted and motivated to those who are similar with in terms of values and attitudes (Brioso, 2009). The similarity influences the direction of other women to leadership positions. Lack of motivation is often reasons given for women's low representation in positions of educational leadership in Malawi. Shakeshaft (2004) indicate that when women lack female motivators in applying for promotion and that, in contrast to

their male colleagues, they only apply for jobs for which they are fully qualified. Women may be aspiring to leadership positions, but systemic barriers such as lack of female models can prevent them from acting upon these aspirations. Women leaders have often been cited as an influencing and pull factor in education leadership (Akaria, 2007).

Although it is assumed that female teachers are eager to participate in decision-making processes and serve on governance structures, research by Kiamba (2008) suggests that women do not jump at the opportunity. In the study, Kiamba (2008) indicated that forty percent of the female teachers interviewed on the lack of interest in applying for administrative positions, said that nothing would encourage them to become school administrators because of the few numbers of women in top school administration. It appears that some well-qualified women have psychologically accepted a secondary role in their profession because they lack models hence lack a sense of themselves as leaders.

## **2.5. Strategies that Encourage Women to Education Leadership Positions**

Certain prevailing factors do or would encourage women to take up education leadership positions. These include policies, organizational motivators and also women's own motivators. A study by Wickham (2007) states numerous policies on equal opportunities, economic and legal developments that have benefited women into managerial positions. According to Wickham (2007), amongst others, policies that are used worldwide to enhance women's participation in decision-making positions include a rhetorical strategy which is an informal means of getting women to participate in decision making structures articulated through political and other public speeches. An example is a 2006 presidential decree in Kenya that aimed at a target of thirty percent representation of women in the public service.



In a study by Kiamba (2008), an affirmative action was described as also a meritocratic policy that aims to achieve fairness in recruitment by removing practical barriers that disadvantage women. Kiamba (2008) explained that affirmative action programmes provide training on public speaking, for example, advisory group goals, financial assistance and the monitoring of outcomes.

Positive discrimination strategies, which set mandatory quotas for the selection of candidates from certain social or political groups also helps women's inclusion in leadership positions (Kiamba, 2008). Quotas can be set at different levels to indicate proportion of representation or at different stages of the selection process. Kiamba (2008) observed that when quotas are legally specified as part of the constitution, they are more likely to be implemented and guarantee women's inclusion in leadership. On the other hand, Jones (2006) in his study mentioned that the increased education attainment and the enhancement of academic credentials of women subsequently accompany an increased commitment to professional and managerial careers. A respondent in his study on the leadership experiences of four female secondary school heads, cited *"a strong knowledge base and value on having attained a doctorate"* as a motivator for joining education leadership.

In a study on perceived barriers and successful strategies used to attain the superintendence in California, Wickham (2007) discovered that obtaining a doctorate degree was considered one of the successful strategies. The academic attainment could be attributed to the fact that women need to feel well-prepared before they apply for a leadership position, that is, when they have become competent and well qualified teachers.

The availability of preparation and leadership programmes for aspiring head teachers is also a motivator for women to venture into educational leadership. Preparation for school leadership is concerned with developing the capacity of individuals by means of pre-service preparation, induction and opportunities for in-service professional development (Jones, 2006). Formal mentoring and leadership development is one way of promoting and uniting women in education administration, namely by offering them the chance to engage in mentoring relationships and to network with other practicing female leaders. In the study of school principals in Scotland and England, it was noted that working with one another in preparation programmes, helped to develop the identity of the principals (Adams and Hambright, 2004). Through collaborative activity and networking with colleagues, a sense of trust is developed, allowing the female principals to share and to learn from each other's experiences.

Women who participate in leadership training programmes and more formalized types of mentoring are more competent than women who did not attend any training programmes (Brioso, 2009). Brioso gave an example of the Kaleidoscope Leadership Institute which provides an intensive training, tools for self-analysis and where women leaders go to sharpen their leadership skills. It is reported that when these women leave the leadership institute they know who they are, they understand what they bring to the table and understand that there is a seat for them at the high table (Brioso, 2009).

According to Kellerman and Rhode (2007), some women may be attracted to management levels by the promise of status and power to influence others. Others may be seduced by the wish to prove themselves and others that they can do better and can achieve success in environments which are traditionally male dominated and highly competitive or that may represent difficult challenges. Some of the reasons cited by women that did encourage them

to join education leadership include an intrinsic need and a moral responsibility to make a difference in the lives of students and a need to empower other female teachers to make positive decisions.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that the issue of women and leadership is complex. The inclusion of women in educational leadership and management positions cannot be taken lightly by stakeholders, as it has been seen to promote equity, create role-models for other women and also bring into leadership a different style of leading. Women still face certain barriers on their journey to decision making levels despite their education qualifications and experience. Although these barriers may affect some women, it is encouraging to note that there are many who feel encouraged to lead and display same leadership traits as their male counterparts.

Despite the government's commitment in terms of signing protocols and policies, women are underrepresented in positions of leadership in the country. The progress of women into administration roles has been positive but slow. Positive action measures are slowly making a difference in the country in relation to women's share of leadership and positions on private and public boards. It is assumed that once the situation of gender equality has normalized, the attainment of such positions will be through a competitive process. However, it appears that it will take time to get to that stage due to the various challenges that confront women in public spheres.

The representation of women in school leadership nationally can therefore be difficult to tell because of lack of data showing the number of women in such top positions. Lack of data that clearly shows the number of women participating in school management positions indicates

therefore the need to assess the perceptions people have on women capacities in management positions.

## **2.6. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

### **2.6.1 Critical Mass Theory**

The study employed Critical Mass theory which was put forward by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in 2004. The theory views the presence of having more women in positions even those who do not view themselves as representatives. It draws on the concept to explain a range of different outcomes, most obviously instances where increased numbers of women result in greater attention to women's issues (Kanter, 2004). It assumes that the percentage of women in the organisations is the key determinant of people's behaviour towards them. That is, once a sufficiently large number of women achieve a critical mass representation, however, they may begin to exhibit decision-making proclivities that differ from their male counterparts as such viewed as competent enough.

Kanter's theory further states that when women serving in top positions with other women increase, group interactions will change and substantive differences in the behaviour of the involved groups will begin to emerge, women will become more assertive in their shared interests and perspectives and consequently exhibit more distinctive behaviour. According to Critical Mass Theory, the nature of group perceptions towards women depends at least to some extent upon the size of the female members involved. Therefore, how women respond to dynamics of marginalisation in different situations and experiences will change as the number of women increases.

Critical Mass Theory posits that until women working within male dominated professions increase in number beyond token status, they will largely adapt to the characteristics of that dominant or leading group (Kanter, 2004). This means that once large numbers of women achieve critical representation, they may begin to display decision tendencies that may even differ from their male counterparts. This claim implies that when the number of women increases in top positions, the performance will be high, and if low it reduces performances.

Critical Mass Theory makes it clear that numbers, especially relative numbers of women in top leadership positions can strongly affect the effectiveness of an organization. Women tend to bring new perspectives, a new and desirable leadership style and a willingness to tackle tough issues. Therefore the presence (or absence) of significant numbers of members of a minority group (women) can have an influence upon their performance or competency. This is the case because women will perform differently from men when they serve on top management position with other women (i.e., in critical mass environments). Women are not likely to have a major impact on outcomes of their performance until they grow from a few token individuals into a considerable minority; only as their numbers increase will women be able to work more effectively together to promote women-friendly policy changes and to influence their male colleagues to accept and perceive them as competent.

Prior to reaching of a critical mass threshold, the theory suggests that a minority group (women) would not likely exhibit behaviour that is distinct from that of the larger majority (men). Such a minority group would instead tend to confine its behaviour to opinions of the larger dominant group. Therefore the study looked at how critical mass is able to respond to people's perceptions on women in administrative capacities.

However, gender and politics scholars have become increasingly sceptical of the concept as they have discovered that an increase in the proportion of women in top leadership positions actually decreases the likelihood that individual female leaders will act on behalf of women as a group (Kramer, 2006). With an increase in relative numbers, minority members may begin to become individuals differentiated from each other hence finding it difficult to generate an alliance that can become powerful and competent in the group.

Kramer (2006) pointed out that when there is a majority of female leaders, men may still be seen as more effective than women due to the increased perceptions of their masculinity, competence and leadership abilities born with them. Thus, as the percentage of male leaders reaches either low or high extremes, men may be seen as more effective due to the salience of gender to the context.

There might be lack of enough qualified women available to substantially increase the representation of women at decision-making levels. Normally, in order to improve the effectiveness of an organization, boards actively seek qualified women and not the satisfaction with the large number of women on their boards. Women cannot be put on management boards in token size simply because they are women (Kramer, 2006). To serve on management position well, they need high-level qualification, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities needed to contribute to the organization. Much as women bring new perspectives and styles that enhance the quality of an organisation, the system will always view the characteristics of a person and not the number of people (Kramer, 2006).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

This chapter discusses research design and methodology and what the researcher used when collecting, analysing and discussing the data. The chapter also highlights the area where data was collected, the population of the study, size of the sample that participated in the study, sampling technique that was used and type of data collection instrument which was used in the process.

#### **3.1. Methodology**

This is the specific procedure used to process information (data) about the topic (Bryman, 2012).

##### **3.1.1. Research Design**

Research design can be considered as the structure of research; it is the glue that holds all the elements in a research project together (Bryman, 2012). A Research Design is intended to provide an appropriate framework for a study. The study was therefore based on Phenomenological Research Design. The design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to explore experiences and sensory perceptions of researched phenomenon and the formation of understanding based on the experiences and perceptions (Macmillan, 2004). The design helped the study to understand the meaning of peoples lived experience. In other words the Phenomenological design enabled the researcher to interact and probe the everyday working experience of teachers with female head teachers in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality.

### **3.1.2 Research Approach**

The aim of the study was to explore perceptions on female administrator's capacities when discharging their duties. To be able to do this the qualitative approach seemed suitable for the study. A qualitative research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and relies much on the experiences of human beings in their everyday lives (McMillan, 2004). Human phenomena that cannot be investigated by direct observation, such as attitudes and other emotions, are best studied by means of the qualitative method (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). In seeking to understand the experiences of female head teachers and the teachers, the researcher was interested in the context of the situation. This context could only be revealed by the respondents themselves, by telling their own stories. This could best be understood by means of a qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is subjective and this assisted the researcher to learn from the participants in order to understand the meaning of their experiences. In other words the approach helped the researcher to focus on areas such as the individuals themselves, societies and cultures.

The approach was also chosen for its flexibility because it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and collected rich descriptive data in respect of particular experiences with the aim of understanding a situation from the participants' point of view.



### **3.1.3. Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm is a shared belief system that influences the kinds of knowledge researchers seek and how they interpret the evidence they collect (MacMillan, 2004). Therefore the main tenet of this study was interpretivist paradigm. As stated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), a research can never be objectively observed from the outside but rather it must be observed from the inside through direct experience of the people. Therefore, the study used interpretivism paradigm because it enabled the researcher to enter and grasp the subjective meaning and beliefs of teachers about female headship, rather than imposing the researcher's view of the world on the participants. The researcher's intention was to understand and interpret teacher's perceptions on female head teacher's capabilities.

## **3.2. Methods**

These are techniques utilized in the collection of data or evidence for analysis in order to uncover new information or create better understanding of the topic (Bryman, 2012).

### **3.2.1. Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

Data was collected using interview guide where the responses were recorded using an audio recorder and later transcribed the verbatim. The interview guide is a list of questions the researcher asks the participants during an interview (Cohen et al, 2007). This method allowed the researcher to probe some responses in the course of the interview sessions. The tool helped to solicit answers in this qualitative inquiry. The main task in interviewing was to understand the meaning of what the interviewees said. Additionally, Bryman (2012) explains that the method has high validity in that participants are able to talk about something in detail and in depth.

Basically, the qualitative research interview guide was opted because it sought to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. Interviews helped the study in getting the story behind a participant's experiences. This means that the interviewer pursued detailed information around the topic. The method was in agreement with the nature of the study, that understanding social and psychological phenomena is done from the perspectives of people involved.

Again the interviews were used because they allowed the generation of complete information from different categories of the sample. The interview guide intended to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provided more focus than the conversational approach, but also allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewees. The data collected from the respondents helped to establish understanding on four main categories, that is, female leaders' self-perceptions; cultural perceptions and organisational perceptions on competence prevailing in the schools.

Secondary data was obtained by means of desk research. This involved a thorough review of the existing literature (McMillan, 2004). It included work published internationally and these included books, articles in academic journals, official literature, namely government reports and documents. Internet data on women and leadership, with particular focus on school leadership, were also consulted.

### **3.2.2. Research Population**

Research population refers to individuals who participate in the study through giving data to the researcher (Bryman, 2012). Therefore the research population included the Education

Division Manager, female head teachers and teachers (both male and females). Male and female teachers were selected because the researcher wanted to balance the perspectives from both sexes and because of their closeness to the topic of the study; that is they have ever experienced female leadership.

The reason for targeting the division manager is that he had the best experiences concerning the issues to do with initiating headship positions and female management of schools within the division. The head teachers were also selected because they are the main people who hold the top administrative positions and have the best experience in the positions.

### **3.2.3. Sample Size**

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). However in a qualitative research the sample is not numerically predetermined. It is only achieved having reached a saturation point. Therefore the study depended upon reaching a saturation point which was resolved at different points. Saturation means that no additional data is being found whereby the researcher can develop properties of the category (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). This means that as the researcher started hearing similar instances over and over again, the researcher became empirically confident that a category is saturated. Therefore the researcher stopped collecting information at 10 head teachers and 18 teachers respectively. This means that data was collected until there were fewer surprises and no more patterns were emerging from the data.

### **3.2.4. Sampling Procedure**

Qualitative sampling procedure is normally based on what the researcher will look at, what he wants to know and what will be useful (Bryman, 2012). Sampling refers to methods used

to select a given number of people or things from a population (Cohen, et all 2007). Therefore the study used purposive sampling procedure in sampling schools, the EDM and the teachers. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to target schools headed by female head teachers and specifically teachers based on their knowledge about the study (experienced female leadership). That is schools managed by female administrators in South West Education Division were preferred because they gave the most important information about the phenomenon the researcher was studying.

### **3.2.5. Research Area**

The study was carried out in South West Education Division (SWED) which has five districts with about 149 public secondary schools (Rural and Urban). The majority of teachers within the Division are females but their presence in management positions is unnoticeable. This finding was confirmed by a case where parents, the community (PTAs) and teachers once rejected a female head teacher who had been posted to a local school within the area. They claimed that a woman could not head the school. These factors influenced the researcher to choose SWED as a research locale.

### **3.2.6. Data Analysis**

Data analysis is about making sense of the information provided by the participants during the data collection process (McMillan, 2004). Data of the study was analysed using content

analysis approach. This is the method of analysing data where patterns are identified in a recorded communication. According to Cohen, et al (2007), the method does not employ numerical interpretations. As such the interviews were recorded and later were transcribed verbatim. After reading through them, the researcher developed patterns so as to establish repetitive points. The patterns were drawn from the participants' own words. The patterns were then given codes, thus organising the frequency of individual words and phrases.

According to McMillan (2004) coding is the process of categorizing the raw data usually into descriptive categories. The codes were identified by extracting meanings from what participants communicated and then put them into general groups of meanings. Content was analysed; that is eliciting meanings from the data. The nature of themes were generated and this was determined by Inductive approach where the researcher built themes from the observations or at the end of the process by organising data into more abstract units of information (McMillan, 2004). In other words, the researcher moved from data to theory or from the specific to the general until a comprehensive set of themes was established.

### **3.2.7. Trustworthiness of the Study**

Trustworthiness is all about establishing that the results of the study's findings are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). The trustworthiness of the study was achieved by conducting a pilot study. A pilot study is a small scale preliminary study that researchers conduct in order to help them decide how best to conduct a large scale research project (Bryman, 2012). Piloting was done to help the researcher discover any weaknesses in the research design and to gain useful suggestions to improve the research questions. Piloting was done by administering the interview schedule to a small representative sample identical to, but not including the group being surveyed. In this case it

was done at two schools which were not part of the final study. Interviews were conducted with two female head teachers with the aim of finding out whether the interview questions provoked a response; whether the wording was clear and whether the respondents interpreted the questions in the way it was intended. Piloting also helped to detect any bias in the questions.

The study also used triangulation. Bryman (2012) defines triangulation as the practice of using application and combination of multiple research methods of collecting data to enhance the dependability of the study. This helped the study to overcome biasness from one dimension. Therefore the researcher examined data from different interviews with the aim of capturing different dimensions of the same experiences. Triangulation helped the researcher in checking consistency of the findings obtained from the different sources. It also increased the chances of controlling or at least assessing threats influencing the results.

### **3.2.8. Ethical Considerations of the Study**

Ethical considerations are norms and principles which are supposed to be followed in order to guarantee that all human subjects are choosing to participate out of their own free will and that they have been fully informed regarding the procedures of the research project and any potential risks both in physical and psychological (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Ethical standards protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the subjects. The researcher got an approval from the university to conduct the study and further produced an introductory letter from Mzuzu University that acted as proof to the respondents that the research was meant for education purposes only. This is because some of the respondents could have feared that the information given could be used against them.

Participation in research must be voluntary and people have the right to refuse to divulge certain information about themselves (Bryman, 2012). For this research, it was important to obtain the necessary consent from the authorities to collect data from schools in SWED. A consent letter was also solicited from the Education Division for permission to conduct the study in different schools within the division. It was also important to get the consent of the head teachers to be interviewed. Being the first time for most of them to participate in a research project where they were expected to share their own experiences, it was important that they were supplied with all the necessary information in order to understand fully their involvement in the study. This information included the purpose and nature of the research and their right to choose whether or not to participate. This was necessary, so that the head teachers did not feel nervous about the whole process. In turn, they were in a position to give their well-informed consent.

When conducting research, it is important to protect the participants' information by keeping it confidential (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). It was thus important for the researcher to ensure the participants' confidentiality by agreeing not to make their identification known. To ensure anonymity in this study, the researcher used pseudonyms in concealing names of the participants. The participants were also assured that the information would be used only for the purpose of the research study. On being assured they freely provided their honest and complete information.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the results of the study, interpretation and discussion of the findings which were collected according to the methods set out in chapter three. It also discusses emerging themes in terms of how they relate to research objectives and the interpreted results of the findings drawing on appropriate literature and theoretical stand point. Data was presented as quotations from the participants' own words. The proper names of the participants were disguised and pseudonyms were used for confidentiality.

#### **4.1. Analyse work Experience and Professional Qualifications Women have for the Management of schools**

The female head teachers were derived from ten secondary schools under SWED. As shown in the table, the participants were referred to using pseudonyms, in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality (Bryman, 2012).

The findings relating to the objective are presented in the table below;



HEAD TEACHER	QUALIFICATION	YEARS AS HEAD TEACHER	WORK EXPERIENC E
A	Degree (studying master's degree)	8	Worked as deputy head
B	Degree	6	Worked as a deputy head
C	Degree	4	Worked as a deputy head
D	Degree	5	Was a deputy head
E	Degree (studying master's degree)	6	Was a deputy head
F	Degree	6	Was a deputy head
G	Degree	4	Was a deputy head
H	Degree	6	Was a deputy head
I	Degree	4	Was a deputy head
J	Degree	4	Was a deputy head

The Table presents the profile of the participants in terms of their various qualifications attained, work experience and the number of years they have been on their current positions. The female head teachers that were interviewed were holders of bachelor's degrees and even others were studying for their master's degrees in different courses. This implied that most of the female teachers were qualified to head schools as pertaining to their academic and professional qualifications. Their years on the positions ranged from four to eight, this can be

an indication that the inclusion of female head teachers in SWED is something that is just beginning.

The head teachers were also asked if they had any work experience similar to the position of the school manager. It was found out that all the head teachers had been deputy heads before. Two of them were promoted at the same schools where they had worked as deputy head teachers hence an assumption that these head teachers had the comfort of a familiar environment. Three were promoted and transferred to start new schools; this category faced the challenges of starting a new school from a scratch. While five were promoted and transferred to schools that already existed. This category of head teachers had to experience a new environment.

It would appear that the only related work experience for headship most of these head teachers had was working as deputy head teachers. Therefore it was revealed that administrative duties delegated to them acquainted them with headship skills so they did not feel like they were groping in the dark when they got into their current positions. Head teacher D credits her former head teacher with his mentoring and modelling responsibility in headship. She commented;

*“My former boss was a person who took his work seriously and would sometimes say to me jokingly, ‘you know you may find yourself heading this school someday’. Then he would guide me through some of the duties required of a head teacher and explain to me how to deal with various official duties. Sometimes he would even call me into his office to listen in*

*and comment when he was handling parents' and teachers' issues. That helped me a lot when I took over the school. I used to consult him a lot in the initial days”.*

Similarly, Head teacher H gained experience to the position from having to do administrative duties delegated to her by her former head teacher when she was the deputy head;

*“My head teacher always depended on me. He gave me a lot of responsibilities because I did not mind taking them - sometimes I was literally the one in the office. There is not much I am doing now that I am doing for the first time. The only difference was that then, if I got stuck with something, I would keep it aside for the head teacher to come and handle. Now everything is on my shoulders”.*

Furthermore, the female head teachers were asked how they attained the leadership positions. According to most of their responses it emerged that none of the women had started their careers dreaming of a future in which they would be school head teachers. This was confirmed by the fact that the majority of the women in the study had not applied for the position of head teacher. They did not follow the procedure set out in the TSC policy on the Appointment and Deployment of Administrators which states that one has to indicate interest by applying for the position. They waited for the positions to be offered to them. Interestingly, none of the participants in this study resisted taking up the posts when they were offered to them.

Head teacher B said,

*“I found myself in this position after my head teacher had passed away. ‘The division education officer offered and encouraged me to take up the position saying women were so few in school management and he thought I was capable”.*

The female head teachers attributed their promotion to headship due to their presence as deputy head teachers in their respective schools. They would contentedly have remained second in command, if it had not been for their head teachers being transferred to other schools. They had worked in an acting capacity for some time before they were confirmed and given letters of appointment.

*“I did not apply for this post. My former head teacher went on transfer and I naturally took over the running of the school, having worked as a deputy head teacher in the school”*

Elaborates Head teacher E.

Two of the participants had applied for headship. These women seemed to have gained confidence and started believing in their leadership capabilities during the years they had worked as deputy head teachers. A common motivation among them was their knowledge of administrative duties at a higher level. One of them said her head teacher was away from school most of the time. She found herself handling the head teacher’s duties and this motivated her to showcase her capabilities.

Data revealed that in most cases the women’s path to leadership was, in a way, unplanned. The majority of the participants in this study did not declare any intent to lead in their career. It can be concluded that the women did not make themselves visible for consideration of promotion by applying for leadership positions. Their visibility was accidental (head teacher being transferred, head teacher passing away and a new school being opened). This indicates how the women perceived themselves, that men should lead and women should follow.

During the interview, the teachers suggested that head teachers should at least have qualification above their teachers. They cited that head teachers should be more knowledgeable than their teachers especially these days whereby most teachers in secondary schools are holders of bachelor's degrees. Some participants recommended that these qualifications should be coupled with managerial skills acquired through professional development. The findings revealed that the female head teachers were able to head the schools competently because they had suitable qualifications and experiences for the management positions as all of them were deputy head teachers before the positions.

Teacher 5 commented that;

*“These days secondary schools are staffed with teachers who are holders of bachelor's degrees; therefore it is necessary that head teachers should have higher qualifications for them to lead effectively”*

The findings illustrates that the female head teacher's experience and responsibility for school duties in their work as deputies, and by means of other duties delegated to them by their head teachers coupled with education qualifications helped them to do their work proficiently. Though the majority of them had not attended school management courses, the participants were, however, in agreement that some form of training, specifically directed at the duties they were going to take up as head teachers, would have helped them in performing their duties more efficiently.

It can be observed that the education levels of women are slowly changing. This is noticed in the increase in proportion of the female head teachers attending college and obtaining highest qualifications such as Master's degrees. No longer are women associated with low

expectations in education. Women now seek and obtain the highest levels in education. Women are now making significant advances in education and are qualified as men.

It can be noted that when female head teachers are coupled with the required work experience and capabilities, they are unlikely to be underrated by teachers. The findings have shown that teachers' attitudes towards female head teachers have always been positive. In addition teachers believed that attitudes towards female head teachers were not determined by gender but their highest qualifications and experience.

The findings revealed that the female head teachers were able to head schools because they had suitable education qualifications coupled with experience and were familiar with their school setting. It can therefore be observed that though leadership carries the notion of masculinity, high education qualifications on the other hand tends to nullify the negative sentiments that men make better leaders than women. This is the case because these changes in education are slowly opening a window for women to move into management positions. Given these qualifications of the female head teachers, one might conclude that this migration of women towards education has been widely accepted as something which can be achieved by everyone regardless of gender. However, the trend cannot hide the serious fact that in most schools under SWED, only a small percentage of women are head teachers despite their large numbers in the teaching profession.

The qualifications of the female head teachers are consistent with TSC (2001) recommendation for the appointment of head teachers for example diploma in education with not less than eight years of teaching experience or a degree with four years teaching experience. This is also supported by a report presented by ILO across the world, noting that

when women attain the highest education, they are every bit as capable to dominate the corporate boardroom because education broadens ones capabilities (ILO, 2009). Indeed over the last half-century, women have made significant advances in education and are equally qualified as men. It can be noted that education has improved women's living standards and has enabled them to have a louder voice in decision-making levels.

Education improves women's empowerment and decision making skills. That is why more women today continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance both in the public and private sectors, hence a pull factor to other women (Chisholm, 2001). The study also corresponds with the Critical Mass Theory that the minority group (women) tend to behave rigidly when they face a threatening situation for example, low numbers of women acquiring education. Specifically, a stressful or threatening situation reduces flexibility and induces dominant behaviours to control such changes (Kanter, 2004). However, until women attaining highest education qualifications increase in number, they are more likely to be attracted to such women and begin to display decisions of attaining the similar goal.

With regard to experience, it was noted that long service in the teaching profession is the requirement for appointment of head teachers. The teachers believed that before appointment, to the position of a head teacher, they should be exposed to leadership skills by assuming middle management positions. The related work experience for headship these head teachers had was working as deputy head teachers and were promoted to headship because of transfers of former heads and to manage new schools. According to government teaching service regulations (TSC) of 2001, experience is considered important in the process of career development and progression. Onyango, Simatwa, Enose and Ondigi (2011) also correspond

to the TSC report that high education qualifications and experience broaden one's chances of attaining management positions.

## **4.2. Assess Administrative Roles Female Head Teachers play in the Management of Schools**

The study found out that competent school managers play the same roles in the management of schools regardless of gender, citing examples such as;

### **4.2.1. Planning School Activities**

The head teachers indicated that since they are in control of the school they have a great role in planning school related activities. They explained that planning defines where the school wants to be in the future and how to get there. The head teachers lamented that they also have a role in executing roles to the rightful members of staff. For example, the librarian to make sure books are well kept, the sports master to fulfil sports activities and the head of departments to make sure teachers are recording their lessons plans and schemes of work. Therefore for all these activities to be achieved it requires proper organization of a competent head teacher.

*“Being the head teacher of this school I have to be a leader in planning, for instance if the goal of the school is to start classes at 7:30 am, then the head teacher must take lead in reporting early for duties otherwise if am coming late the followers can be influenced*



*negatively, again regular school staff meetings, assemblies and checking of weekly lesson plans are some of the planned school activities which require the head teacher to plan them efficiently. In the end this helps to achieve the goals of the school".* Explains Head teacher J.

Teachers 3 also commented;

*"A competent head teacher organises effective school activities, such as when to start exams, when to hold staff meetings or conduct development trainings for his or her members of staff"*

From the responses the researcher observed that school administrators are effective regardless of sex because they perform tasks that include demands, constraints and an in-between area of choices as they seek to maximize resources for the fulfilment of specified objectives of the school. School administrators make many decisions and get involved in the day-to-day operations of the school despite the fact that the schools are headed by female head teachers. This explains the fact that leadership skills currently can either be acquired or learnt. This is irrespective of sex, a sharp contrast to traditionally held beliefs that leadership is a gender phenomenon (Kuada, 2013).

In Malawi, the management of secondary schools is the responsibility of the head teachers who undertake the instruction, supervision and management in general. The government and all other stakeholders look upon the head teacher either male or female for the effective implementation of any program introduced at this level (MOEST, 2007). Therefore, for effective day to day operations of the school, the head teacher must be an effective planner.

From the findings it can be argued that female school administrators have so many roles to play just like their male counterparts however, Green (2000) notes that women lead differently than men. Women in general have specific attributes, characteristics and skills that are beneficial to organizations and teams (Kellerman and Rhode, 2007). In school administration, school head teachers have a key role in managing schools because they are the main decision-makers and they have more responsibilities than any other staff members. The success of a school and the degree of attaining the educational aims depend on the school administrator's capacity and his or her governance (Shakeshaft, 2004). In highly effective schools, as well as in schools which have reversed a trend of poor performance and declining achievement, it is the head teacher who sets the pace, leading and planning to perform to the best of their abilities (Shakeshaft, 2004).

The teachers on the other hand indicated that a competent head teacher should display good roles of leadership and professionalism. They indicated that their head teachers were capable on the position because they have the ability to come up with very good plans that aim at improving school performance. This is consistent with the findings by Shakeshaft (2004) that female teachers are very organized in planning day to day activities and they have a positive influence for teachers.

#### **4.2.2. Monitoring School Affairs**

The head teachers explained that in order to attain the teaching and learning goals the head teacher who is in control of the school has the capacity to monitor and control the affairs of the school. Head teacher I noted,

*“I make sure I monitor school affairs daily through supervision of teaching and learning, encouraging effective use of teaching and learning materials, checking good upkeep of school records such as mark books, scholastic records, period registers, attendance registers, stock books, etc.”*

Head teacher I further explained that;

*“Monitoring is the responsibility of every head teacher, which may also involve walking around the building to see how things are going, talking to students, visiting classrooms or talking to departments so as to check on the quality of performance. When the head teacher monitors the activities of the school regularly, then the teaching and learning objectives are successfully achieved, hence you can be viewed as an effective head teacher”. (Laughs).*

On the teachers views on the roles of a competent head teacher, most teachers showed that a successful head teacher is someone who has the ability to inspect what is happening on the school. When this question was put forward to teacher 4, he noted this;

*“My head teacher is someone who has high expectations of her learners; as such she inspects each activity happening at the school with a clear vision and focus on teaching and learning”*

Teacher 8 also noted;

*My head teacher is good at maintaining discipline at the school, she monitors everything day in day out; no wonder our school has good results at MSCE”*

In order to attain the teaching and learning goals, Akaria (2007) notes that a proficient head teacher who is in control of the school has the capacity to monitor and supervise the affairs of the school. This is done through supervision of teaching and learning.

An effective head teacher should not simply sit in his or her office. He or she should supervise the work of the school everywhere, supervise instructional work, have a round of the class-rooms, supervise the proper use and keeping of school materials. The findings agree with Fiore (2009) who noted that head teachers are involved in walking around the building to see how things are going. When the head teacher monitors the activities of the school regularly, then the teaching and learning objectives are successfully achieved (Fiore, 2009).

However, the head teachers were quick to point it out that this is not to be a fault finding business. The head teachers revealed that monitoring school activities is not simply a fault finder but rather wherever they find defects, errors and inefficiency they should show the correct path to the members of staff and the students. He or she must guide the teachers in the methods of teaching and organisation of activities. This correlates with David (2000) that good school administration is more attuned to feminine than masculine modes of leadership behaviour. David (2000) further added that female attributes of accommodative, cooperative and hardworking are increasingly associated with effective administration.

### 4.2.3. Resolving Conflicts

The female head teachers also explained that they have a huge role of resolving conflicts at the schools. This is such the case because schools nowadays have become increasingly complex hence challenging.

Head teacher A elaborated that,

*“Teachers come with their values that they believe in; with time which can be changed in the interaction with the others therefore, if the school head teachers do not pay attention to the existing differences they will notice an aggressive development of the members, so we need to resolve all the differences among teachers and even students”*

The participants pointed out that, the head teacher must be in fore front in resolving conflicts because if left unattended to they produce inappropriate reactions by the persons involved since they see one another as opponents and not as partners working towards a common goal as the case should be in the institutions.

Teacher 7 explained that,

*“Successful resolution of conflicts among members of staff will therefore depend on the effectiveness of the head teacher as the manager of the school; the school manager’s responsibility is not to resolve a conflict between the two parties by taking sides, but to act as a referee and counsellor in helping the fighting teachers to reach an acceptable solution so as to improve the overall productivity and performance of the school”.*

Teacher 14 also noted that;

*“The head teacher should be able to show some kind of independence in coming up with a solution to the problem that arises at the institution without relying on others”*

Conflicts are inevitable within or among members in a school organisation. A conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards and interfere in achieving goals (Adair, 2014). Education institutions in today’s society have become increasingly complex and challenging due to increase in conflicts because the teachers come with their own models of behaviour. A head teacher is always in fore front in resolving conflicts because if left unsolved they produce inappropriate reactions in the institution (Adair, 2014). Successful resolution of conflicts among members of staff therefore depends on the head teacher as the manager of the school.

During the interview it was observed that skills in resolving conflicts are associated with high school effectiveness and student performance. It is believed that the way head teachers deal with problems is one way of determining his or her success as an educational leader. These findings are similar with sentiments echoed by David (2000) that female attributes of understanding and nurturing establishes the basic conditions that allow conflict to be easily resolved.

#### **4.2.4. Directing Financial Functions of the School**

During the study, it was found out that an effective school administrator has to systematically arrange and coordinate financial resources available to the institution for the main purpose of achieving stipulated goals of the school. In this case it is assumed that a capable administrator

has to be quite knowledgeable in finance management as this is one of the most crucial functions.

Teacher 16 further explained that,

*“A capable head teacher has to start with budgeting by properly articulating the cash inflow and outflow in the system, distributing the available resources among the competing needs in the school and his or her accounting and financial reports must be straight so as not to raise questions”.*

Head teacher J said;

*“Being a boarding school, I have to plan and budget appropriately, as such I have been able to formulate ways of sourcing extra funds and am able to manage the school well that is why the school is able to run effectively”, you may wish to know that the previous male head teacher of this school was transferred to another school due to mismanagement of school funds, I have been here for four years and am sustaining the school”*

Teachers collaborated that a school head teacher must take lead in directing school related budgets so that day to day school related activities are effectively attained. If the head teacher is able to manage financial resources and manage the school resources, then that school is in the hands of a capable head teacher.

It is observed that the presence of women in leadership positions is important because women are transparent and accountable when it comes to management of public funds. Accountability is the requirement that officials become answerable to stakeholders on how they managed finances. Effective leadership is not possible if teachers are not aware of how

head teachers carry out financial functions at the school. As the head of the school, the headmaster is responsible for all that is being done in or by the school. As the schools start, the head teachers start attending to each activity to be done in that particular term which most of the times involves money and ensures that human and material resources of the school are adequate, and makes sure that purchases are made wherever needed in accordance with the prescribed official need.

An effective school administrator systematically arranges and coordinates financial resources available at the institution for the main purpose of achieving stipulated goals of that school. In this case Fiore (2009) assumes that the administrator has to be quite knowledgeable in finance management as this is one of his most important tasks at an institution. The prudent education administrator creates alternative strategies for cash inflow.

The findings relates with Kunin (2008) who emphasizes that the education administrator distributes the available resources among the competing needs in his organization preferentially and is responsible for the procurement and maintenance of educational plants and facilities. Kunin (2008) concludes that the school head teacher takes lead in directing school related budgets and develops maintenance schedules so that day to day school related activities are effectively attained. The findings showed that the head teachers take a lead in organising or budgeting what to buy such as teaching and learning materials, maintaining schools buildings and infrastructures and try as much as possible to manage the funds appropriately.



#### 4.2.5. Retaining Quality Teachers

The school administrators also lamented that the number of teachers leaving their schools is a huge determiner for them to be viewed as effective in running the schools; as such they have a huge role in devising mechanisms for retaining their teachers.

Head teacher E said;

*“An effective head teacher should be able to retain the quality teachers they already have so as to avoid seeing their best teachers ruled away to other schools. The head teacher in this case needs to have good administrative skills and support the teachers for them not to leave, I usually use motivation incentives such as sending the teachers to do school errands in the end give them allowances, we provide sugar, milk in the staffroom, when a teacher falls ill or is bereaved we are always together providing the necessary provisions. In this way who would dare report me to the division that am incapable, or who would go to the division asking for a transfer? I believe none”*

The head teachers conquered with each other by saying that a school culture that includes strong motivation incentives most strongly correlates to high morale, stronger commitment to teaching and intentions to remain in the profession. This indicates that an effective head teacher has to create a school culture which is conducive and this will enable the retention of teachers.

Research findings have revealed that schools that are managed by women are effective and have the capacity to improve because they make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of their staff (Akaria, 2007). Research on female school leaders in Denmark, Scotland, England and Australia by (Chisholm, 2001) concurs with the findings by

identifying a number of characteristics of female effective leaders including such as working alongside their colleagues, respecting teachers' autonomy and protecting them from extraneous demands. As such teachers are attracted to stay at the school and in the profession because they feel they belong and believe they are contributing to the success of their school.

The findings concurs with the study by Gumbi (2008) that making use of motivation theories and other associated motivation strategies assist school administrators in creating cultures that are supportive in the end retention of teachers. From his investigations, Bush (2007) concurs that a school culture that includes strong motivation incentives, collaboration and teacher decision making, most strongly correlates to high morale and stronger commitment to the occupation.

There is no doubt therefore that the teachers themselves prefer the female school managers because of their reasonable expectations of their teachers. The findings therefore revealed that motivation incentives are seen as important aspects in retaining teachers at a school which in most cases is practised by the female head teachers because of their nurturing leadership styles.

#### **4.3. Analyse Factors to Low Female Head teachers in South West Education Division**

With regard to the participant's views on underrepresentation of female head teachers in secondary schools in the division, the EDM mentioned several factors. He explained that the lack of female leaders in top positions is the result of both internal and external barriers women encounter and have to overcome on their journey to become school managers. The findings revealed factors such as;

#### **4.3.1. The Nature of the Institutions**

The EDM agreed with the teachers that the nature of the head teachers' work is always hectic and challenging regardless of how big or small the school is hence women are reluctant to go for the administration position.

For example Teacher 15 said;

*“On the average, the head teacher maybe works fifty-six hours a week on school-related activities and they are observed to have attended numerous meetings and took a tour of their schools daily which is a hectic task”.*

Teacher 8 further said;

*“Sometimes they are involved in unexpected disturbances or eruptions requiring immediate action and unscheduled meetings. Usually free time is scarce, and even when pressure is temporarily relieved there is previously postponed activities that need to be completed”.*

For effective day to day operations of the school, the EDM explained that head teachers shift their gears rapidly because in school management, there is no continuous pattern in their work. Usually significant crises are intermingled with insignificant events in no predictable sequence. Consequently, the head teacher who is at the helm of operations has to decide and tackle each issue as quickly as possible and this scares women to aspire for the position.

The EDM said;

*“The way schools are set up, its administration is formulated in such a way that the head teacher in his capacity has to manage compact workload for the successful achievement of the school goals, this scares female teachers”.*

The findings showed that the reasons why women do not move into the higher ranks of leadership may be related to pressures inherent in the job situation. Organisational factors are the barriers to fair representation of women for example the prejudice against females in management that prevents full utilization of their talents and abilities. Both the teachers and the EDM also agreed that existing work structures and organizational routines are predominantly male-oriented, which tend to impede women's participation in decision-making roles in organizations. Working long hours was seen as a sign that the employees are readily available and eager to meet other's needs. This further reinforces the perception of the ideal worker- most often a man who does not have or attend to other pressing commitments outside work.

The findings also revealed that there is disparity between policy and its implementation in as far as the appointment and deployment of head teachers is concerned. The appointing authorities do not recommend women for headship. The researcher observed that there are more female teachers in the district. Statistics from the schools involved in the research revealed that most teachers in secondary schools were females with reference to school staff returns. This was the case because most women followed their husbands due to professional duties. The findings do agree with Kunin (2008) who also observed that time commitment involved in fulfilling the role of a school manager becomes a threatening point for women more especially when considering that women have to meet other home needs as per tradition behaviours associated with women who are assumed to be home makers.

That is the reason that Nzomo (2009) also stated in agreeing with the findings that that when women are not able to reach top leadership positions it is not because they are not willing but rather organizational structures and cultures which are keeping them from reaching the top.

That is to say men are perceived to be more competent than women, resulting in producing evaluation bias against women (Kunin, 2008). Accordingly, men tend to receive higher expectations for their performance on unspecified tasks. Due to these expectations, women receive a strict standard for evaluating their capabilities than their male colleagues; this keeps them away from the top positions.

#### **4.3.2. Women's Reluctance to Apply for Promotion**

The EDM noted that,

*“Women themselves seem to be the cause of their low numbers under this division because they have the tendency of avoiding the risk of receiving negative feedback and fear of failure, for example qualified women do apply for the posts when vacancies are advertised, however, when they are offered schools they would rather accept the higher grade and leave out the appointment, therefore, in this education division men are given more privileges because men are more determined to take the offer”.*

The study showed that qualified female teachers do apply for the posts when vacancies are advertised, however, when they are offered schools they would rather accept the higher grade and leave out the appointment. The EDM explained that they give lame excuses such as balancing work and family as a burden.

From the findings, lack of motivation is often a reason given for women's low representation in positions of education leadership. There is some evidence to indicate that women lack motivation in applying for promotion and that, in contrast to their male colleagues. It can therefore be noted that women's self-perception linked with culture has impacted on women's spirit of competing with men. This is the case because women still avoid competing

with the male counterparts when vacancies arise due to cultural beliefs that men lead and women follow.

The teachers interviewed on the reasons why women seem to lack interest in applying for administrative positions, said that nothing would encourage them to become school administrators because of the low numbers of female head teachers within the division and how home responsibilities affect their career advancement.

Women have been socialized to believe that qualities frequently associated with females are antithetical to those qualities needed to manage an organisation (Moser, 2009). As a result, aspiring female secondary school managers may resolve not to pursue for management positions due to their belief that they do not have the qualities and skills to lead. Kanter's Critical mass theory (2004) poses the same thinking that when the number of women in leadership is insignificant; women tend to inhibit their potentials. An increase in the number of women occupying senior management roles presents more opportunities for others to occupy the same positions and display their potentials. In effect, lack of more women in management positions reduce the possibilities of women to apply for promotions.

#### **4.3.3. Home-Work Conflict**

The female head teachers spoke of how their social lives had been affected by their entry into leadership. Spending many hours at school meant that part of their private lives needed adjustment.

Head teacher A explained that,

*“I used to knock off early and attend to my business in town. I rarely do so these days. Time does not allow for it”.*

Time commitment of these female head teachers is incredible. They spend so much time juggling school-work and responsibilities at home that they have no time left they can call their own. Some of them said they had sacrificed of their friends as they did not have time to interact with them. The added responsibilities kept the women so busy that it affected their relationships with their friends, their religious obligations and even the time meant for them. The head teachers agreed with one another that one area that all the participants felt that suffered the most was their family life. The ascribed roles of women on the domestic front create a challenge where they have to balance work and home.

Head teacher D indicated,

*‘My son would get home before me, and since I am tired most of the time when I get home, I was not able to share his enthusiasm. I decided to send him to boarding school with the hope that I would be in a position to give him better quality time when we are both at home during the school holiday’.*

It seemed that even as these women attended to their leadership roles, they still valued the roles they played at home. They felt as if they were not adequately performing their duties as mothers, wives and home-makers. This left them with a sense of guilt.

The EDM spoke of how women’s social lives had been affected by their entry into leadership. When women spend many hours at school this means that part of their private

lives needed adjustment. Women's productive activities are often hampered by the unofficial and private domestic responsibilities that compete for women's labour in terms of time and energy not to mention the increase in workload and long working hours. The issue of children and or family is one that deters many women when they have to make the decision to take up a leadership position. The responsibility that comes with a family is a significant barrier to women attaining top jobs. Many mothers feel exhausted and overwhelmed trying to balance paid work commitments with the commitments of being a parent, thus they feel psychologically, intellectually and emotionally drained. Women often reduce their hours at work when they have children. Some women even quit work and spend one or more years devoting their efforts to their families.

It is maintained that these are 'self-imposed barriers' to leadership. Jones (2006) defines self-imposed barriers as "the failure to attain the top positions or the decision to avoid it because of family responsibilities". Thus, these women make a choice to put family considerations and responsibilities before assuming the job. It is observed that this thinking tends to support the idea that cultural factors influence the way people carry out and respond to different leadership styles where women are homemakers and the community is for men.

This notion is supported by Kunin (2008) who agrees that indeed there are several women who place priority on their careers and their progression to leadership, but that decision leads to a conflict. Appleton (2005) further supplements the findings that this conflict is a major source of stress in the lives of women who have had the dual responsibility of family and career. Another important point of consideration is the time commitment involved in fulfilling the role of a school manager more especially when considering traditional



behaviours associated with women who are assumed to be less capable and productive (Kagoda, 2000).

In the investigation of home-work conflict, Moser (2009) concurs with the findings that women's gender identities are embedded in responsibilities for care that extend beyond mothering young children and the care of husbands. In some cases, women intentionally avoid work outside the home to have time to maintain family relationships.

#### **4.3.4. Stereotypes Associated with Gender**

The participants cited that the appointing authorities are biased in appointing head teachers since they favour men. This keeps female teachers at the margin of school leadership. Some participants indicated that not all female teachers with appropriate teaching experience have the capacity to take up leadership positions; most females feel comfortable in the lower ranks.

Teacher 8 observed;

*“I feel that female teachers are marginalised, they are looked down upon, and they are not recognised to be fit for the position just like men”*

According to staff returns, it was noted that there are more female teachers in SWED; this was the case because most of these female teachers follow their husbands to their professional stations.

Teacher 1 noted;

*“Honestly, women and the society need to change their mindset that males are superior to them, often times women are directed by their husbands in decision making, so they end up positioning themselves below standard”*

Teacher 2 further observed;

*“the society views men to be superior to women in terms of leadership skills, members of the society feel that men make better leaders than women, therefore, where a leader is to be elected, people will prefer electing a man to a woman.....mmmmhu”*

Teacher 9 added,

*“Women are underrated by teachers and even students, this makes them to work under pressure and lack confidence in themselves because of inferiority complex”*

The findings from the participants revealed that stereotyped attitude which was practised in the past and may be still is the contributing factor to underrepresentation of women in senior positions in education. Female socialization practices inhibit women from attaining leadership positions because women are historically encouraged to develop personality traits and behaviour that prevent them from participating in leadership. The findings further revealed that most times women have held on to the culturally entrenched idea that expected patterns of behaviour existed and that they have to live up to them. Such stereotyping affects women’s self-esteem and confidence because they see themselves as unfit for leadership roles or unable to perform outside their domestic roles. Thus, women may perceive that there is a mismatch between themselves and those who are involved at the management level. Stereotyping processes are more likely to affect women’s career aspirations in a negative

manner and may partially explain why women are underrepresented in higher management positions in SWED.

Societal values and traditional roles have a negative effect on how women are valued as leaders. In many societies women are still assigned a secondary position by the prevailing customs and culture (Kiamba, 2008). Gender stereotype leads people to perceive women as more communal and less agentic, thus perceiving them as less qualified for leadership positions (Jones, 2006). Apart from that, the prescriptive component of the stereotype suggests that when women leaders successfully demonstrate favourable leadership characteristics, they are perceived less favourable because it is inconsistent with expectations of appropriate or desired female behaviour (Jones, 2006). Together these two forms of prejudice account for the research findings that indicates less favourable attitudes toward female than male leaders and for the greater difficulty for women to attain top leadership positions.

The study findings coincides with the study by Jones (2006) that female socialization practices inhibit women from attaining top positions because women are historically encouraged to develop personality traits and behaviour that prevent them from participating in leadership. Haruna (2014) supplements that in many societies women are still regarded as secondary citizens due to the prevailing customs and culture, as a result, role incongruence occurs when a woman exhibits the behaviour expected of leaders.

#### **4.3.5. Fear of Geographical Mobility**

The EDM noted that;

*“When women are offered schools they rather accept the higher grade and leave out the appointment due to fear of transfers to leave their families behind”*

Teacher 18 noted;

*“Normally there is a conflict where women are expected to maintain their families, it is not easy to transfer or move because they have been posted to another school, usually, men do not allow that, in the end the female teachers end up teaching than aspiring for the head ship position”*

Due to the fact that schools are found everywhere in the country, teaching is seen to have provided many opportunities for women to be employed without adversely affecting the family situation. However, a recurring hindrance, as noted by the participants, was the fear of geographical mobility. They said women feared applying for headship because most of the time the promotion means movement from one school to another, usually away from home. This could explain the fact that some of these women had worked as deputy head teachers without applying for headship. They had waited to be noticed and perhaps to be assured that they would be promoted at the same schools or to schools that were nearby. Indeed, almost all the head teachers interviewed worked at schools where they commuted or walked from their homes, while some were housed in the school compounds. Some of them said that women would consider stepping down from their current positions if they were transferred to areas far away from their homes.

Relocation is considered as one of the major barriers for women offered promotion as it involves separating from their families or sometimes relocating the entire family. The findings showed that women do aspire and apply for promotions, but once they are offered schools far from their families their priority would always be the family because their husbands would never allow it to follow the wife. The findings correlates with the study by Nzomo (2009) who found out that most women preferred staying at their middle ranks for fear of seeking promotion and being transferred up-country to work at district or provincial headquarters, as this would affect their families. This shows that when women are given management positions they find it difficult to reconcile the traditional roles as caretakers and mothers with high career expectations.

A woman's culture demands from her that she should stay at home and mind her husband, her children and her home (Nzomo, 2009). A husband who allows his wife to leave home, even on promotion, would be frowned upon by the community. The majority of the participants thought moving away from home is likely to cause conflict at home and this makes a lot of women shy away from applying for school leadership.

#### **4.3.6. The Lack of Self-confidence and Determination**

As the EDM shared his views on why there are low numbers of female school managers in the division, he noted that these women see themselves as leaders, however they lack confidence and determination in themselves. He explained that,

*“Women seem as the cause of their underrepresentation under this division because they are not assertive enough, do not want power and they avoid criticisms”.*

Head teacher E explained;

*“I did not apply for this post, I found myself in this position after my head teacher had passed away. ‘The divisional education officer encouraged me to take up the position saying women were so few in school leadership and she thought I was capable’”.*

Head teacher H added;

*“I find myself scrutinizing my reaction to situations all the time and wondering whether I handled them in the right way. I usually take time before making a decision as I ponder the best route to take. The moment just before a major decision has to be made are the most trying times for me. It is as if I am carrying my work with me in my mind and heart all the time”.*

She further explained that;

*“The first time I addressed the school assembly as head of a new school I felt uneasy. I had prepared a very short speech because I felt my confidence failing. I felt like I was not ready to head such a school”.*

From the findings, it is noted that women’s self-determination progress to succeed is fundamental to their career progression. Few women perceive themselves as capable of holding leadership positions in schools. Most of the female head teachers revealed that they had never envisioned themselves becoming an administrator and that they were perfectly comfortable in the classroom. There existed a general feeling that some women feared the responsibilities associated with heading a school. They preferred to remain in their safe zones where they were not exposed to too many challenges and too many responsibilities.

It can be noted that women do not make themselves visible for consideration of promotion by applying for leadership positions. Their visibility is accidental (head teacher being transferred, head teacher passing away, a new school being opened). This indicates how the women perceive themselves as leaders. The respondents reported that women typically have a low self-worth, hence rottenly they are being perceived as timid and preferring to maintain a low profile. No matter how skilled women leaders are, a lack of confidence is a deal-breaker. The study found out that confidence spreads to those one is leading and that if a leader does not have confidence, the followers will not have confidence in that leader.

Personal factors such as beliefs, self-perception and expectations, referred in the study by Gumbi (2008) may explain the reason why most women in this study took a relatively long time in their careers before entering leadership. They did not see themselves as leaders; hence they did not strive for top level positions due to lack of confidence. The social environment triggered their interest as they waited to be noticed by others. They also accepted the leadership positions where the physical settings were convenient for them.

Various studies, for example Onyango et al (2011) which attribute the underrepresentation in leadership positions to women's own decision not to apply for promotion due to lack of confidence hold true in this study. The female head teachers waited for someone else to notice them and give them 'a slight push'. The think-leader-think-male label also has deleterious effects on women leaders' self-perceptions as it is associated with decreased performance (Shakeshaft, 2004). It is suggested that women are less able to deal with negative comments, in effect taking them too personally and allowing their confidence to be unnecessarily damaged (Gumbi, 2008).

#### **4.3.7. The Lack of Role-Models and Mentors**

Teacher 7 noted that;

*“I believe the lack of female models makes the female teachers reluctant to apply for the administration posts, women should be provided with mentors who can coax them along the way, try to develop them and help them to strengthen their areas of weakness”.*

Teacher 4 noted,

*“Lack of trainings for the post, models and mentors makes it all difficult for women to get the courage of accepting the position”*

It is observed that mentors have a critical role to play in the advancement of women in leadership. Support by means of advice, opportunities to acquire diverse experiences and access to leadership development, all provide critical career skills (Appleton, 2005). The respondents collaborated that some women may not consider upper level positions on their own, adding on to the increased importance of well-placed suggestions by mentors. The participants conquered that strong mentoring relationships provides women with resources to draw upon in their first year of leadership. It was revealed that women do not support one another on the upward ladder of leadership. Women tend to see other women as a threat and are jealous of one another.

This observation supports the idea by Moser (2009) that women at senior positions are not always supportive of other women and tend to maintain status quo. There is an evidently negative relationship among women in senior management positions and their female subordinates. Women in senior management positions display a tendency to disaffiliate from



other women to prevent other women's career advancement (Moser, 2009). He further observed that women have the potential to bring about change but they lack mentors.

The findings also corresponds with an observation made in a study by Kuada (2013) that some women may not consider themselves capable for upper level positions on their own, and thus a need for models and mentors. Lack of motivation to participate in school leadership was evident, according to most of their responses that they waited for the promotions to be offered to them through the transfers of their former head teachers. Women in leadership positions may be breaking new ground but are unable to offer the mentoring and encouragement to other women who may find it necessary to overcome their lack of confidence and self-esteem (Powell and Graves, 2003). Others may be so beset with problems created by resentful teachers, both male and female who are unwilling to accept a woman 'boss', that the example they provide does not encourage other women to undertake the same trial by ordeal (Wickham, 2007). Such kinds of leaders are likely not to be effective role models to aspiring women leaders.

The discoveries agrees with Akaria (2007) that women may be aspiring for leadership positions but systemic barriers such as lack of female models can prevent them from acting upon these aspirations. Women being leaders have often been cited as an influencing and pull factor in educational leadership positions (Akaria, 2007). Lumby and Azaola (2011) also supplement that the number of women in management positions implies an increase in confidence and motivation for more women securing positions in the administrative field.

Critical Mass Theory supports the study that same-sex role-models are crucial for women, but unfortunately there are not enough to go round for all of the aspiring female leaders. When

women work in isolated environments (dominated by men), they need those ‘who look like them’ to reinforce their feelings of self-worth and excellence. It is important then that more women participate in school leadership in order for others to feel encouraged and confident.

#### **4.4. Examine the Coping Mechanisms to Avert the Situation**

The participants felt that there was a need to avert the situation citing measures such as;

##### **4.4.1. Putting More Women in Top Management Positions in the Schools**

Teacher 3 felt that;

*“Female teachers should be positioned as HOD’s in order to prepare them for senior positions; this gives them a chance for them to become head teachers without fear”*

Teacher 10 also made an observation that;

*“Female teachers should be given duties from time to time; this makes them to master administration duties with ease”*

Participants felt that putting female teachers in middle management positions such as HODs would pave way for them and this would create opportunities for female teachers to get appointed to headship. They alluded that this is a strategy which can be put in place by the administration to encourage women into leadership position as appointment of teachers to leadership positions is done internally or externally. The findings revealed that administrators can therefore create an enabling environment for female teachers to effectively participate in school leadership. Kanter’s Critical Mass Theory (2004) also supports the notion that once more women are involved in their work as leaders, they discover new capabilities within themselves. Knowing that they are able to deal effectively with the duties, they gain a

mastery of experience, social persuasion, increased self-efficacy and confidence with each passing day.

Further to that, delegation of duties was also found to be very effective by the respondents in the study. This implies that when the duties are delegated to the female teachers it helps them learn how to do managerial jobs and they discover their potential in problem-solving and also in public relations. Their self-doubt diminishes as they deal with different kinds of people which make some of these women better problem solvers and when they finally land in the office of the head teacher; they are well prepared for some of the issues.

It would seem that exposure to headship makes one discover a side of themselves that had not been explored before and which may otherwise not have been known if they had not participated in school leadership. The cognitive perspective as explained by Wickham (2007) holds true in this respect that it is associated with the mental processes by which people gain knowledge about themselves and how this knowledge is internalized and usually determines future actions. According to Wickham (2007), enhancing women's participation in decision-making positions is an informal means of getting women discover their capabilities and to participate in decision making structures articulated through political and other public spheres.

#### 4.4.2. Providing Role Models and Mentors

Head teacher F explained that;

*‘I found myself in this position after my head teacher was transferred, otherwise I was comfortable in my former position, however, if there was someone who could push me for this current position earlier, well I could have tried my luck’... (laughs)*

Teacher 13 noted that;

*“Female teachers need role models where they get an example from. Do you know the ‘I can do it too syndrome?’”*

Head teacher I said,

*“When I looked at schools headed by men honestly I thought that was the norm in the education system, which is why maybe I waited for the position to be offered to me”. (laughs)*

The EDM also said;

*“As a division we are trying in appointing more female teachers to senior levels, such as HODs and assigning them any administration work that may arise in the particular schools”*

The participants made several suggestions on what they thought would attract women to school leadership. The lack of mentoring was a concern raised by the majority of them, in terms of grooming and preparing them for school management levels. Several of them felt that the presence of very few women in school leadership at the time they had started their careers made it a very foreign idea to them. Therefore, findings from the participants showed that women’s relative absence from top leadership position is not because they are not willing but rather they lack a motivation factor to pull them.

The findings revealed that the division is trying to avoid the situation by encouraging mentor systems and gender awareness in schools, putting more female teachers as HODs or in supervisory roles. The existence of role-models and mentors were specifically mentioned as a factor that would help other women to have interest in school leadership. The participants felt that if women who are found at all levels of the education leadership ladder mentored aspiring women leaders, the increase of women in school leadership would have been realized.

This notion finds support in the work by Kellerman and Rhode (2007) who assert that the visibility of female role-models is particularly effective for those who are attempting to determine their potential. According to Kellerman and Rhode (2007), some women may be attracted to management positions by the promise of status and power to influence others and also themselves. Others may wish to prove that they can do better and can achieve success in environments which are male dominated.

This also relates to Kanter's Critical Mass Theory (2004) that once women reach a critical representation, they become more assertive. Critical mass theory correlates with the suggestions that when the number of women in leadership is significant; women exhibit their potential in aspiring for top management positions. It is noted that individuals striving to become successful within an organisation need coaching and guidance from supervisors and mentors.

#### **4.4.3. Offering Continuous Professional Development Trainings**

Head teacher G noted that,

*“If new head teachers are oriented and offered trainings as soon as they are appointed, this would show them how to go about carrying out the administrative issues and managing schools, I believe more female teachers would be motivated to take up the leadership position”.*

Teacher 3 added that;

*“The nature of work changes as one get into administration, and I feel that some form of training or orientation should be given as this would assist the head teacher to work competently and make others grab the opportunity”.*

Teacher 6 noted that;

*“This position without any professional development training scares our female teachers as they do not know where to start from”*

Teachers emphasized the importance of orientation and continuous development programmes to prepare new head teachers. The participants felt that there should be specific courses for women who aspire for school leadership as well as further courses where women can receive training and get to share school leadership experiences that are unique to women. This notion is in line with Davis (2000) who observed that women who participate in aspiring leadership programmes are able to advance to administrative positions. Fiore (2009) concurs with the findings that the availability of preparation and leadership programmes for aspiring head teachers is also a motivator for women to venture into leadership because preparation for school administration is concerned with developing the capacity of individuals and

professional learning development. Green (2000) supports the notion that formal mentoring and leadership development is one way of promoting and uniting women in education administration by offering them the chance to engage in mentoring relationships and to network with other practicing leaders.

Preparation for headship can therefore help women to develop the professional identity, broaden their outlook and develop confidence and self-belief. To be professional means having continually update of knowledge, skills and attitudes in every aspect of one's work as a school manager. This is supported by Jones (2006) who points out that nowadays school administration involve tasks which not only requires academic certification but also professional expertise in carrying out management duties.

#### **4.4.4. Empowering the Girl Child**

*“I feel like from an early stage girls should be taught and oriented on the importance of education, they should be provided with bursaries where possible”*. Noted head teacher G.

Head teacher H also explained that,

*“Girls need to be groomed from a tender age that there are no differences between a man and a woman, they should be taught that educated girls are more capable of making their own decisions”*

Teacher 9 on the other hand noted that;

*“Constructing more schools especially in rural areas so that these young girls can easily access, you know most girls drop out due to long distances”*.

Where a country finds itself with glaring gender disparities, efforts are made to ensure that all citizens are represented in employment (Kasente, 2003). The participants responded that empowering women starts with empowering the girl child, so that she may grow up with self-confidence and with the belief that she will have the opportunity to work anywhere, including in the highest leadership positions. The findings revealed that women develop their vision of leadership from the experiences they may have had as young girls. Empowering women begins with empowering the girl child at each step of the education ladder.

In a study by Priola & Brannan (2009), it is observed that the increased education attainment and the enhancement of academic credentials of women subsequently accompany an increased commitment to professional and managerial careers. Wickham (2007) who studied perceived barriers and successful strategies used to attain the superintendence in California also discovered that obtaining a highest degree was considered one of the successful strategies. Therefore from the respondents it can be noted that improving the representation of women in education leadership positions therefore begins with girls having access to education.

Though not much, the government of Malawi has really taken some measures to promote the education of girls and women through appropriate policies and programmes which include the review of the teaching materials to ensure gender sensitivity, the re-entry to school of adolescent mothers and enhancement of bursary funds for girls' education (Ngambi, 2015).



#### **4.4.5. Using an Affirmative Action**

*“I believe selection of students to both secondary and tertiary institutions should favour girls to boys”*. Observed Teacher 5.

Head teacher C explained that;

*“Women bring a lot to the table when in management positions, as such the education division should try to achieve gender equality when recommending people for administration posts, women should atleast be given first priority, this can widen the number of female head teachers in the division”*.

Affirmative action was perceived by the participants as a strategy to help female teachers achieve senior positions. Female participants also believed that affirmative action helps to create equal employment opportunities for women to gain access to leadership positions. According to Kiamba (2008) an Affirmative action was described as also a meritocratic policy that aims to achieve fairness in recruitment by removing practical barriers that disadvantage women. Kiamba (2008) explains that Affirmative action programmes provide mandatory quotas for the selection of candidates from certain social or political groups. Actions are set at different levels to indicate proportion of representation or at different stages of the selection process.

The participants recognized that the quality of the country’s labour force, to a large extent, depends on the capacity and performance of women. Women’s capacities and performances are in turn dependent on the attention paid to their employment opportunities and status. Therefore, Gumbi, (2008) observes that national agreements and conventions should persistently stress on the importance of women’s equal participation in leadership. The

Government of Malawi signed various policy documents which aim at attaining gender equality. These policy documents seek to mainstream gender in all sectors, pledge to enforce a policy of equal opportunities, lay emphasis on the education of girls and stipulate measures of mainstreaming gender in the education sector (UNESCO, 2008). Kiamba (2008) observed that when affirmative actions are legally specified as part of the constitution, they are more likely to be implemented and guarantee women's inclusion in leadership.

The findings revealed that some of these documents were signed more than twenty years ago, but the progress of women's involvement in leadership and decision-making is still slow. Much is still needed to be done to get more women on board.

#### **4.5. Assess the Perceptions from Teachers in SWED on Women Administrative**

##### **Capacities**

Initially the questions were directed to both female and male teachers with the aim of hearing their respondents and own perceptions on women's administrative capacities in managing secondary schools in SWED. This provided a better understanding of how they perceived the idea of female school managers in various secondary schools within the division whether they are inclined to one's sex or not. Through the experiences in working with the female head teachers in different schools, the EDM and most of the teachers expressed that female head teachers are as capable as their male counter parts.

The teachers indicated that they equally cooperate with female head teachers because they involve them in decision making and treat them fairly irrespective of gender.

Teacher 8 noted that;

*“I feel women are good administrators because they are more likely to employ a cooperative approach in sharing of power as compared to men, they use a democratic style that encourages inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in schools. In other words, women do involve us all to participate in the school activities”.*

The EDM explained that;

*“Working with these few female head teachers is quite a good and exciting experience, exciting in the sense that they are cooperative, they mostly run to the division for help even with an issue that can be handled by themselves,..(laughs) but all in all they are able to understand and cooperate to the demands of the education division”*

The participants held the view that female head teachers established good relationship with the members of staff, they are honest and trustworthy hence it was easy for them to accept them.

Teacher 9 noted that;

*“To be honest female head teachers treat us with respect and they really appreciate our efforts just as like a mother”*

He further observed that,

*“If members of staff have a good [working relationship](#) with their head teacher, they can work effectively [together](#), this is what my head teacher do, generally she is effective”.*

The respondents highlighted that the female head teachers are good leaders in that they are able to care for the staff members. Caring was one of the important characteristics that women possess.

On the other hand, the participants felt that female head teachers are effective managers because they are always transparent when handling public funds.

Teacher 13 explained that,

*“The previous male head teacher of this school mishandled funds to the extent that student’s diet was very bad and books were not enough; but with the coming of this female head teacher she tells us what is happening around, in fact she is very good in managing school funds, students are enjoying their diet and there are more new books”.*

Teacher 11 added that;

*“Our school is just four years old, and our head teacher was posted at this school to start it from a scratch, there were no class rooms and other resources, she had to borrow two blocks from the primary section, with her coming she has managed to lobby for resources in different organisations and there are two new classroom blocks, books and they are even building a library, look around, all these it’s because of her”.*

The EDM lamented that schools having a representation of female head teachers in the division significantly outperformed those schools with no female head teachers because women are connected with better financial performance.

*“Staffs of female administrators have higher job satisfaction, and are more engaged in their work”*. Explained the EDM.

From the findings it was noted that the participants praised female head teachers as competent because they are good at increasing teacher’s motivation and morale to achieve high quality teaching and learning. From the responses it was apparent that a good head teacher is the one who guides and motivates teachers and influences them positively.

*“Motivated teachers lead to increased productivity and allow the school to achieve higher levels of output, imagine having a teacher who is not motivated at work he or she will probably use the time at their desk surfing the internet for personal pleasure or even looking for another job, our head tries to motivate everyone here”*. Explained Teacher 14.

It was also noted that female head teachers who had attained their degrees were viewed as capable as anyone to head schools. The interview revealed that the female head teachers were able to head the schools because they had experience and were well qualified for the positions.

As explained by teacher 15;

*“The minimum qualifications for someone to be a head teacher is diploma, my head teacher has degree, and she is even doing her master’s degree, this makes her capable for the position”*

Traditionally, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that males are perceived as better leaders (Gumbi, 2008). Participants held the view that female head

teachers were so cooperative making it easy to work with them. MOEST (2007) defines cooperation as people working together or collaborating to achieve better results. In a school setting, collaboration occurs through working together with the staff members and the head teacher. This is in agreement with Akaria (2007) in his study about women in management positions that female school principals try to cope up by building team work so as to nullify the negative discernments towards them. Akaria (2007) noted that the importance of building networks facilitates one's success as a leader. Therefore relationship building is the most critical task at hand when one transitions to a new institution because it restores a sense of trust between the members of the organisation.

The results do agree with the study by Lumby and Azaola (2011) who noted that women leaders may obtain more respect resulting from their collaborative decisions which are in accordance with their subordinates' expectations.

It was apparent to note that the respondents believed that cooperation in school administration contribute to the achievement of the goals of the school. In addition, they felt that lack of cooperation can bring chaos and mistrust among people in the school. The findings agree with the study by Azaola (2011) that women in leadership positions are often valued if they display feminine behaviours such as (nurturing, cooperative, passive) and rebuked when they exhibited masculine behaviours (assertiveness, independence, aggressiveness). It can be noted that the involvement of other teachers is vital and can only be done if there is good relationship between the members of staff and the head teacher, a characteristic which makes the head teacher competent.

The participants also held the view that female heads maintain a good relationship with the teachers, learners and the PTA hence it was easy for them to accept their effectiveness. The findings noted that the members of staff opinion's and views should be critically considered and develop an ethical of care on staff. According to Kellerman and Rhodes (2007), an ethical of care is characterized by acknowledging multiple perspectives and being open by hearing other people's perspectives. This view agrees with the leadership style demonstrated by female school leaders in Kellerman and Rhodes' (2007) study of female secondary school leaders who practiced an ethic of care towards those who worked for and with them. The study found out that the female leaders demonstrated a self-less desire to both serve and prepare others and simultaneously created an organizational system that was committed to sharing and developing relationships that drove to goodness.

In a study by Kiamba (2008), it was found that women heads expressed concern about knowing where employees were residing; in a way they called 'monitoring by mothering'. The women heads often are participatory and enjoy good interpersonal relationship with teachers. The majority of the respondents had faith in female head teachers and their capabilities by stating that most of them are approachable hence being competent administrators as they lead intuitively and holistically. The participant's responses clearly showed that a capable head teacher is one who shows good relationship with the co-workers for effective running of the school.

Female head teachers are viewed capable as they are more honest and approachable while male head teachers are authoritarian. These sentiments agree with a recent research carried out in the United States of America which pointed out that women's administrative approach or styles tends to be democratic, participatory and more motivating than their counterparts

which emphasizes on individualism and rules (Powell 2010). The teachers believed that their head teachers were trustworthy, open and honest hence it was easy for them to accept their capabilities.

It was apparent from the interviews that participants perceived female head teachers to be efficient managers. The teachers felt that female head teachers are good leaders as they are transparent in the management of school finances. Transparency is about conducting activities or performing actions in an open and clear manner. To ensure transparency, competent head teachers need to be approachable and be directly accessible to teachers, learners and parents so that the concerned parties know what is happening in the school (Helfat et al, 2010). During the interview, most teachers lamented that male head teachers are very reluctant to open up compared to female head teachers.

The participants collaborated that effective management of schools cannot be possible if teachers and even the community are not aware of how head teachers carry out their financial transactions. The findings agree with the observation by Wickham (2007) who observed that women are more likely to be transparent and open in their working relationships and tend to use democratic leadership styles and power which, in turn contribute to achieving high levels of job satisfaction among staff members. Wickham (2007) added that women are viewed as change agents, relational and open. It is apparent to note that the more the teachers know about the head teacher's actions in the schools, the better the judgements made about that particular head teacher.

Further to that, findings have shown that schools that have female administrators attain better financial results than schools run by male head teachers. It was noted that the female head



teachers were viewed competent because they were very good at influencing and soliciting funds from NGOs and public officials to assist in running the schools. The female head teachers managed to systematize the academic budget allocation process when previously it was rather a challenge. The teachers described the head teachers' transparency that helped to focus on resource generation and allocation. Powell & Graves (2003) advanced the findings that there are no differences in administration styles between men and women; however he stressed that women bring good different styles when in management positions which help the organizations maintain a competitive income advantage.

The findings dispute the traditional notion that in African societies men lead and women follow. It can be noted that competency of head teachers is not determined by gender but their effectiveness and efficiency in running a particular school.

In a study conducted by Abagi (2000), the findings are consistent with the participant's observation that schools with female head teachers are better managed because the female head teachers are task oriented and they do their work on time. Completion of tasks is the act of finishing something that one is doing on time. It was noted that the female head teachers used completion of tasks as a way to qualify their effectiveness. Abagi (2000) concurs with the findings that leadership traits can be developed in any individual regardless of gender.

The findings correlates with Akaria (2007) that task-orientation is a key criteria used by organizations in appointing managers and administrators. Jones (2006) further explains that task orientation is often considered a prerequisite entry into administrative careers. It is not surprising therefore that women in top leadership positions have used this as a strategy to cope with the challenges in the management positions. Women leaders try to focus on both

task and maintenance of inter-personal relationships. They centre on being self-directed and task oriented. That is delivering what was asked of them and doing so on time or ahead of schedule. This brings an impression hence showing others that women are capable and ambitious. Research by Blackmore (2005) in agreeing with the findings has found out that female principals in the organizations are much more on hands-on and getting things done. The study suggests that women use such strategies in order to impress others that they are capable with an emphasis on task completion. It was fascinating to note that most teachers opted schools managed by women because they are good at task completion and problem solving.

From the responses it was evident to note that a good head teacher ensures that his or her employees are well motivated and rewarded on how their individual efforts and contribution has played an important part of the school's overall goals and direction. In this way teachers take pride and are engaged in their work if they are aware how their efforts create an impact to the school; regardless of how big or small their contributions are (Kagoda 2000). These meaningful rewards acknowledge effort, build loyalty and encourage teachers to work even harder. The findings do correlate with the report by United Nations (2010) that when women achieve positions of influence and participate in policy decisions, they have the opportunities to open up access to knowledge and motivate those with less power so that they can be productive. This is also in agreement with MOEST (2007) in its hand book that low motivation makes a brilliant worker totally unproductive whereas high motivation can lead an ordinary person to be above performance.

The respondents felt that a capable head teacher should communicate constantly with staff members. Participants held the notion that female head teachers are able to communicate

effectively with the community, teachers and learners. MOEST (2007) defines communication as the process of exchanging information to initiate action or solve a problem. In a school set up, communication is done through notices, meetings, assemblies and circulars. Kunin (2008) explains that effective communication in the workplace is important because it allows managers and employees to share vital information, which helps companies succeed. Effective communication prevents barriers from forming among individuals within organisations that might impede progress in striving to reach a common goal. For school activities to function as desired, effective school head teachers and members of staff must be able to interact clearly and effectively with each other through verbal communication such as staff meetings and non-verbal communication such as notices to achieve specific school goals (Powell and Graves, 2003).

There was a time it was believed that due to minimal numbers of women in management positions, men are born with leadership traits. According to Critical Mass Theory, women are seen as followers to men just because their numbers in management positions is insignificant. However, current thinking on leadership assumes that leadership can be taught and learnt. The findings by Kiamba (2008) noted that it is possible to develop leadership traits in any individual regardless of gender.

The findings are consistent with the above views that female head teachers are as capable as their male counterparts and teachers do not mind working under them. The teacher's attitude towards female head teachers is positive because of their effectiveness in the management of the schools.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter was designed to present and discuss the findings on the perceptions of teachers on female administrators' capacities. Much of what was discussed affirms the current literature in this discourse. It has been demonstrated from the discussion that both male and female teachers who have worked under female head teachers have positive perceptions on female head teacher's capabilities.

However, despite the positive perceptions, women continue to face certain barriers on their journey to leadership. Participants acknowledged that organization structures, stereotypes and socio-cultural factors result in underrepresentation of women in secondary school administration. Although these barriers may affect some women to shy away from leadership, it is encouraging to note that there are some who feel encouraged to lead with the aim of improving themselves and the school systems which they head. Regardless of gender, school administrators play a number of roles such as planning, organising and monitoring school activities.

It was reported that gender do not matter in education leadership and that the participants have positive perception on female head teachers' management of schools. They accepted female head teachers as being capable and effective or sometimes being better than their male counterparts. These experiences were revealed by means of emphasis on recurring issues that arose from the in-depth interviews. They also gave their opinions on what they thought would enhance the participation of women in school leadership such as, adequate professional training, the presence of role-models and use of an affirmative action.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents a summary of the main findings, conclusion and recommendations arising from the study. It will further present the implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

#### **5.1. Summary of Main Findings**

The female head teachers were holders of bachelor's degrees and others were studying for their Master's Degrees. The qualifications are consistent with TSC (2001) recommendation for the appointment of head teachers for example diploma in education with not less than eight years of teaching experience or a degree with four years teaching experience. Some participants recommended that these qualifications should be coupled with managerial skills acquired through professional development. The female head teachers who were involved in the study were therefore qualified to head the schools because they had acquired academic and professional qualifications. In addition, they had experience and administrative skills as all of them were deputy head teachers before the promotions.

The study established that a competent head teacher who is at the helm of administration plays a number of roles. The teachers viewed their head teachers as competent on the positions because they were able to plan, organise and monitor school activities among others effectively. However, home-work conflict, fear of transfers, stereotype, were among the factors that lead to underrepresentation of female head teachers in South West Education Division. The findings revealed that the lack of female leaders in top positions is the result of both internal and external barriers women encounter and have to overcome on their journey

to become educational leaders. Therefore the study established that there is a need to provide special programs that would improve female teacher participation in leadership such as; putting women in management and supervisory roles in secondary schools, provision of role models and mentors and providing continuous professional development trainings to new head teachers.

Through the experiences in working with the female head teachers in different schools, the EDM and most of the teachers accepted the leadership of the female head teachers and did not mind working under them. They expressed that female head teachers are as capable as their male counterparts citing that women have even better leadership characteristics such as; cooperation with staff members, good motivation, transparency in handling school funds and completion of assigned tasks on time.

Furthermore, participants felt that their attitude towards female head teachers is not determined by gender but their effectiveness and efficiency in managing schools. According to the study, participants did indicate that they are in support of the female head teachers. However, it was noted that eliminating gender stereotypes in the society would help increase the number of female school managers in the division.

## **5.2. Conclusion of the Study**

The study results reveals that female leaders are considered competent usually because they demonstrate exceptional and often times higher professional expertise than their male peers. Furthermore, female leaders are considered to have the ability to cooperate with staff members which is viewed important for women's success. However, being able to adapt to

masculine behaviour and determination, were considered as key factors that greatly impact women's success within the male-dominated occupations.

It is evident to note that the participants envisaged women as leaders. The participants spoke in terms of vision, motivation, power and the fact that they are concerned with inclusiveness. The study thus posits a view that because women tend to be nurturing, democratic, caring and communicative, they offer a diverse leadership style from men. Such a transformational approach to leadership may be critical in educational environments such as schools where processes and practices desiring socialization and team work are seen as pivotal. Despite insignificant numbers of female school administrators, they have high quality capabilities for leadership.

It is noted that secondary schools have always one individual who is at the helm of administering all aspects of a school's operations regardless of gender. As such, findings revealed that head teachers play a number of roles such as retaining teachers, planning and organising school activities, monitoring and supervising in trying to realise the objectives of the school.

The findings of this study have shown that women have appropriate education qualifications coupled with experience and when chances arise they do apply for promotion. However, this study confirms and extends that gender-related factors marginalize women in school leadership. They are continually underrepresented and in some ways inhibited in their leadership potential by negative male perceptions; cultural perceptions; organisational perceptions and sometimes by their negative self-perceptions. Oftentimes their potential as leaders becomes gravely affected. This study also illuminated patriarchy as the underlying

common thread which perpetuates barriers for women's advancement to school leadership. The male domination of educational leadership subordinates women's aspirations and manifests itself in various ways at different levels of the school organization, management and leadership. Hence, women encounter various forms of glass ceilings which impede their career advancement.

Most women lack motivation to apply for school management posts. However, suggestions from the study shows that role-models, mentors, empowering of girls and profession development in senior education office play a major role in triggering the women's interest and decision to participate in leadership positions.

From the theoretical point of view, the theory provided a rich theoretical basis for the study. The researcher noted that the theory was an appropriate framework that can be used in studies related to women in educational leadership more especially when looking at how people perceive the capabilities of women with regard to their numbers occupying such positions. For example, Critical mass theory poses the thinking that when the number of women in leadership is insignificant; women are viewed to inhibit their potentials and once women reach a critical representation, they become more assertive.

### **5.3. Implications of the Study**

This study demonstrated that both male and female teachers recognise the strength that lies in feminine qualities. Therefore, this study should be seen to motivate female head teachers and aspiring female teachers to apply for leadership positions. These positive perceptions shown on female leadership is an indication that leadership is not linked to any gender or sex. The



study can play a role in changing the negative expectations which the society holds towards women.

The study will benefit and help both men and women to understand and appreciate the differences and consider themselves as equals. This will encourage women to aspire for male-dominated areas of management and leadership, influence expectations and also help to create a more favourable environment for other women.

#### **5.4. Limitations of the Study**

The current study was limited in respect of the following;

The study included the perceptions of teachers on female head teacher's capabilities in South West Education Division schools. Perceptions of teachers of other schools in other education division and or in private schools may not have similar experiences, so the generalization of the findings should be done with caution. This study included only the positions of headship; Deputy Head teachers and senior teachers who also hold leadership positions in the schools could reveal other experiences unique to their levels of leadership.

The study only considered female head teachers. Male head teachers could also possibly have different experiences. A different perspective of capabilities could likewise emerge from other levels of leadership in other organisations. The use of a tape recorder also affected the way the respondents were answering questions. Since the interview was conducted in schools where the head teachers were women, participants might have been hesitant to give information for fear of reprisal from their head teachers.

## 5.5. Recommendations

From the research study and the views shared by the participants, several recommendations became apparent that could be beneficial to educational administration and female leadership in secondary schools. Therefore, the following recommendations were made;

- Implementation of preparation programmes. It was apparent from this study that one of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in education administration is the fact that women avoid applying for leadership positions. It also emerged that those women aspiring for leadership feel unprepared for headship, as they have no prior training directly related to their work. This aspect could be addressed by ensuring that all aspiring head teachers attend a management course in accordance with the recommendation of the policy on the identification and deployment of school head teachers.
- Having a Gender policy in education sector. All stakeholders in education should be made aware of and participate in implementing the strategies laid out in the Ministry of Education's gender policy on school administration, aimed at addressing issues on gender in governance and management. The progress of this implementation should be monitored at all levels to ensure proper gender representation in education management.
- Establishment of a mentoring network. As noted previously in the study, the presence of mentors and role-models is essential in improving the participation of women in educational leadership. An effective mentoring network can provide guidance and support to women who are reluctant to enter leadership and encourage those who are

already in leadership to do their work better. This mentoring can have a positive impact on the number of women in school leadership. The network of mentoring can be achieved by having experienced women educational leaders reaching out to their novice colleagues and by modelling leadership styles. Successful female head teachers and educational officers can also be assigned to aspiring female teachers and to already active head teachers who may have problems with self-confidence, so as to assist and guide them along the leadership path. Another avenue of providing mentorship would be the forming of networking groups in districts where women can meet to empower one another and gain the strength and courage to continue.

#### **5.6. Possible Areas for Further Research**

The study calls for more research on the topic. Some of the areas that were left uncovered by this study which would benefit from further research are;

- A study of deputy head teachers and senior teachers would be appropriate in order to collect data on gender in these positions, as well as on the aspirations of those who are already holding the positions.
- An investigation into the number of female teachers who academically and professionally qualify for positions of headship in accordance with the laid down policy and an exploration of the reasons why they have not sought administrative positions or if they have, what hindrances were there in achieving the positions.
- A replication of the study on the female heads in other education divisions in the country.

- An investigation into the teachers' training programmes to assess how women are assisted to develop a strong self-concept in their preparation for leadership.
  
- A comparison between aspiring and non-aspiring female teachers to ascertain the differences in their perception of leadership.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Letter of Introduction to the Division

Mzuzu University

Private Bag 201,

Luwinga, Mzuzu 2

Tel. 0881 771 528

The Education Division Manager,

South West Education Division,

P.O. Box 386,

Chichiri, Blantyre 3.

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITHIN THE DIVISION

My name is Monica Yekha a post graduate student at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a study on *Perceptions from teachers in South West Education Division on women administrative capacities; a study on female secondary school managers*, as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of education in leadership and management. I am therefore writing to request for permission to carry out this study in some of the schools within your division.

Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University

Yours faithfully,

Monica Yekha.

## APPENDIX B: Letter of Introduction to Schools

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201,

Luwinga, Mzuzu 2

Tel. 0881 771 528

The Head teacher,

\_\_\_\_\_ Secondary School.

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Monica Yekha a post graduate student at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a study on *Perceptions from teachers in South West Education Division on women administrative capacities; a study on female secondary school managers*, as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of education in leadership and management

I am therefore writing to ask for permission to carry out this study in your school. Attached is an introduction letter from Mzuzu University and the Education division manager.

Yours faithfully,

Monica Yekha

## APPENDIX C: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT  
IN A RESEARCH



FORM FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Monica Yekha a post graduate student at Mzuzu University. I am carrying out a study on *Perceptions from teachers in South West Education Division on women administrative capacities; a study on female secondary school managers*, as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of education in leadership and management.

Information you will give in this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be accessible to any person except me and my supervisors. The Information will be used for academic purposes only.

Participation in this study is voluntary. For this reason upon accepting to take part in this study, you are requested to sign in the space provided below.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: Interview Schedule

### **Interview guide questions for the Education Division Manager (SWED)**

1. How many schools are under this division?
2. How many schools are headed by Females?
3. Are women incapable of holding such managerial position?
4. What can be the reasons that have contributed to low numbers of female head teachers in this education division?
5. What are your experiences with female head teachers' leadership? Any challenges working with them
6. Do you provide support to these female head teachers when they face challenges in running the schools; what kind of support?
7. Under this education division, do you have female head teachers who are successful in the management of the schools? What contributes to their success, provide examples
8. What do you think should be done in order to have more female head teachers?

### **Interview guide questions for Female Head Teachers**

- a. How did you attain this position? Was it on merit or affirmative, please explain
- b. For how long have you been on the position?
- c. What professional qualifications do you have?
- d. Did you have any experience similar to the position before attaining this position?
- e. What are your roles as someone holding this position
- f. What challenges do you face as a female head teacher
- g. What strategies do you use to overcome such challenges
- h. What have you achieved on this position for you to be viewed as capable on this position
- i. What mechanisms do you think can be employed to avoid the situation of underrepresentation of females in leadership positions in this division?

**Interview guide questions for Teachers (Males and Females)**

1. In your opinion, how do you view female head teachers' management of schools?
2. What are your experiences in working with female head teachers?
3. In your opinion, what qualities are attached to a competent head teacher to possess?
4. What professional qualifications and experience do you expect head teachers to have in order to attain the position? Please explain what happens.
5. Give examples that head teachers do that make them capable or competent on the position.
6. Is there any female head teacher that you know who was competent on the position? What contributed to her competency?
7. What mechanisms can be employed to avoid the situation of underrepresentation of females in leadership positions under this education division?

## **APPENDIX E: Work Plan of the Study**

### **TIMELINE/WORK PLAN**



<b>Month</b>	<b>Activity</b>
01/04/19 to 30/04/19	a. Data Collection
01/05/19 to 26/06/19	b. Presentation of Findings of Study
01/07/19 to 30/07/19	Meeting with the supervisor on presented findings
01/08/19 to 30/08/19	Discussion of the findings
01/09/19 to 20/09/19	Discussion of Findings continues
24/09/19 to 25/09/19	Thesis Presentation
01/10/19 to 24/10/19	Corrections as per supervisor's recommendations.
10/12/19	Submission for External Examination
10/05/2020	Corrections from the External Examiner
02/06/2020	Final presentations of the study
10/06/20 to 30/06/20	Corrections from the presentations of the study
20/08/2020	Submission of final work

## **APPENDIX F: Budget of the Study**

### **RESEARCH BUDGET**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Amount (K)</b>
1	Recorder	1	90,000.00
2	Batteries	4	4000.00
3	Printing of drafts of thesis		30,000.00

4	Transport to Mzuzu University	4 trips	112,000.00
5	Transport for data collection		80,000.00
6	Accommodation	12 days	60,000.00
7	Realm of plain papers	4	20,000.00
8	Pens	5	1000.00
9	Hard covers	2	4000.00
10	Binding of thesis		40,000.00
11	Airtime		20,000.00
12	Contingency		50,000.00
	<b>Total</b>		<b>511,000</b>