

**An Enabling Environment for Female Leadership in Finnish
Comprehensive School**
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ABSTRACT

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Though women account for over one-half of the potential talent known throughout the world, as a group they have been subordinated and their economic, social and environmental contributions go in large part unrecognized. This is due to gender socialization which is based on the socially-constructed and historically- developed roles of men and women; putting men as actors whilst women are at the recipient end. However, the scenario in Finland shows a slightly high level of equality as there are many female leaders in Finland. Global Gender Gap Report 2013 p. 9. Thus this study aimed to explore the factors that have created an enabling environment for female leadership in Finnish comprehensive schools.

This study used qualitative phenomenological methodology to invoke the perspectives of each of the participants' experiences. Purposive interviews were used to collect data from five female principals in different comprehensive schools in Jyaskyla. Thematic analysis of data led to the discovery of four principal themes which altogether answered all the three research questions and addressed the subject matter.

Data revealed that the overall structural elements, that is the institutional aspect, culture, norms and values in Finland build gender equitable environment which goes a long way to promote female leadership in Finland. This holds true that gender equality is more entrenched in Finland. From the respondent's experiences, gender as it self, is not important. What is important is the personality. However, these women still face challenges as leaders next as female leaders.

Keywords: *Leader, Leadership, Female Leadership, Enabling Environment, Finnish Comprehensive School.*

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is still believed in the world that, women are not capable of occupying certain positions in society such as school leaders, politicians, and top managers because of gender stereotype. However, the situation in Finland is a bit different in the sense that, it does not matter if you are a man or woman to occupy certain leadership positions. This research is a study of women in leadership positions as principals in Finnish comprehensive schools. The factors that affect women's leadership roles are quite different across the world, with regard to the dynamic temperament of the environments in which they live (Bajdo & Dickson, 2001, p. 412). Sanders, Willemsen and Millar (2009) concluded that, there exists a positive relationship between the perception of women-friendly environment and, both the experience of their own career path and the perceived ease with which other women could become full professors. This means that the higher the number of female leaders in academics the stronger the correlation between the perception of women friendliness and ease with which women attain the level of a full professor.

In Finland, the policy of equity and equality is very strongly upheld and enforced regardless of a person's gender or background. About a hundred years ago, Finnish women were the first in the world to exercise full civic rights such as the right to vote and to stand for elections. This was followed by the reform of the parliamentary system and in March 1907, some 19 women were elected to the single-chamber parliament.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2013 p. 9, Finland ranks in second position in closing her gender gap in regards to health and education. As cited by Lea Kuusilehto (2000), about 50% of wage earners are men, 50% women. About 70% of women in Finland have a career and a family. There are some legal rights that support women to work out of the home, like the availability of child day-care centers, and free public transport system that supports the management of family transport. Both men and women are educated in Finland. As cited by Lea Kuusilehto (2000), in the

educational sector, the number of female teachers in (1997) was 69% in comprehensive schools, 65% in upper secondary schools, 53% in vocational institutions and polytechnics and 38% in universities. The pay rate of the Finnish women is on average 20% lower than that of men. Unlike the educational sector, where the pay rate is equal. Finnish working women constitute about 25% of leaders in the work force. Yet it was not until 1992, that a woman was appointed to a very prominent public position; Manager of the Bank of Finland and the first ministerial head of cabinet were not appointed until 1995. Despite the struggle for gender equality, it is glaring that educated women with interest still face discrimination as to work and leadership positions.

Cited by Bulloch (2008), women in developing countries occupy minor leadership positions through supportive roles. About 70 women have occupied prime minister or president positions around the globe. However, despite the fact that these women stand as role models for all types of followers, observers, and admirers, they are still a minority and represent a very small percentage of women in leadership positions.

Knörr (2005) in her literature review on women's career development in organizations, identified other barriers and these include the absence of effective management training programs, access to training and development opportunities, inadequate compensation systems, inflexibility of work schedules, and absence of programs to balance work-life demands. The outcome of this study will expound the essential factors that promote women's leadership, the challenges they are experiencing and result in recommendations for how the activity of women in the educational sector can be encouraged and promoted.

1.1 Researcher's perspective

I was exceedingly inspired to write a thesis on female leadership because female leadership is an essential part of my career goals and objectives. I purposely selected this topic because I am a woman who is aspiring to become a school principal. Also the research will entice other women aspiring for leadership positions.

In addition, among the schools I visited in Finland, I noticed that most of the principals are female with good leadership skills. I will say that coming from Cameroon as a teacher to Finland, I have learned quite a lot and am I am still developing my pedagogical skills. This has helped to empower me to become a better female principal in my country Cameroon where most principals are male. It is well known that for a country to experience sustainable development, the country has to have a flourishing and well-built educational sector and to attain that level of economy we need to invest in education especially in high level of female education. Education is a prerequisite for women's empowerment and gender equality. Therefore, we need to invest more in women's education and promote a good climate that will lead to female participation in leadership positions.

All the way through this journey, I have become even more reflective on my personal and professional experiences. My leadership education and experiences combined with women and gender studies education led me to the topic of female leadership in Finnish comprehensive school.

1.2 Aim of the study

I am interested to explore the factors that have created an enabling environment for female leadership in Finnish comprehensive schools. I wish to find out what actually led to female leadership in Finland and what makes it more vibrant as compared to other countries where women are not opportune to occupy certain positions as school leaders. Although this is not a comparative study, it is important to note other countries' situation in terms of female leadership to show that Finland is far ahead of her neighboring countries. The specific aim of the study is to gain an in-depth of the impacts on Finnish Comprehensive schools as a result of these enablers and also to discover the challenges that they are facing as female leaders and ways to overcome them taking into consideration the fast space at which the society is changing.

1.3 The problem statement

Though women account for over one-half of the potential talent known throughout the world, as a group they have been subordinated and their economic, social and environmental contributions go in large part unrecognized. This is due to gender socialization which is based on the socially-constructed and historically- developed roles of men and women; putting men as actors whilst women are at the recipient end.

However, the scenario in Finland shows a slightly high level of equality as there are many female leaders in Finland. Global Gender Gap Report (2013, p. 9). Most specifically, this study will be interested in exploring the factors that led to female leadership in Finland specifically in the field of education. The major focus is in Finnish comprehensive schools. In order to reach objective findings, the following three research questions are identified.

The questions for the research were:

1. What Factors promote an enabling environment for Finnish Female principals?
2. How do women perform on core aspects in educational leadership?
3. Are there challenges faced by female principals and; how to overcome them?

1.4 Purpose statement

The study seeks to contribute to the research on female leadership development, thereby examining the enabling factors, experiences of the informants, challenges and solutions that will promote female leadership in Finland and that which could be transferred to other parts of the world. This study will offer me the opportunity to make recommendations for my country. Thus the factors that promote female leadership, their experiences and solutions to the challenges faced as female principals can be applied in my country Cameroon, which is yet to attain Finnish level of female leadership.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter reviews some contributions made by different authors on leadership, precisely gender leadership. The chapter also examines the strength of female leadership in Finland, likewise, factors that promote it, challenges and solutions. This chapter is divided in to three parts. Firstly, definitions of key concepts like; leader, leadership, female leadership, enabling environment, and Finnish comprehensive school. Secondly, the chapter will introduce the concepts of gender and leadership and gender and leadership style which will mainly be described followed by some reviews and discourse on some related literature.

2.2 Key words

Leader, Leadership, Female Leadership, Enabling Environment, Finnish Comprehensive School.

Though there may be numerous conceptualizations of the terms listed above, definitions are given that best reflect the connotation of these terms as offered in these research study, others are defined as they come into view in the literature and those sources are mentioned.

Leader: For the purpose of this study, a leader is considered to be the head of a school.

Leadership: “A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”. (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). According to Johnson and Kruse (2009, p. 5) “leadership is decision making in action” This goes to support the fact that decision making is the heart of leadership in school. Therefore, decision making in leadership is quite significant in female leadership discourse.

Female leadership: Female leadership is just one branch of leadership and has different definitions accrued to it. For some, female leadership means women can be and are leaders. From the feminist perspective, it is an issue of equality and the right to have the same opportunities as men. As cited by Lahti (2013, p. 13), others hold that it refers to certain feminine characteristics that are still valuable in organizations. Others are of the view that leadership should not be differentiated from female leadership. According to Chin (2007, p. 15), for both women leaders and feminist leaders, the objectives of leadership consist of empowering others through (a) one's stewardship of an organization's resources; (b) constructing the vision; (c) social support and change; (d) encouraging feminist policy and a feminist agenda and (e) altering organizational cultures to build gender-equitable environments. For many women, a successful leadership style is transformational.

Enabling environment: According to Thindwa (2001), an enabling environment can be broadly defined as, a set of interconnected conditions such as legal, organizational, informational, fiscal, political, and cultural factors that influence the ability of individuals to develop and perform in a sustained and successful manner. In line with this definition, an enabling environment is capacity building in women's participation in the world's resources.

Finnish comprehensive schools: This is the primary level of Finnish educational system. All children between 7 and 16 years of age are enrolled in basic education, whether in school or at home. Graduation from the basic education opens access to the secondary education. The curriculum model is encyclopedic. This approach continues the pedagogic principles and objectives of the founder of the Finnish basic education, Uno Cygnaeus, to "educate not only the head, but also the heart and the hands". Democracy is the foundation of the Finnish society, as well as Finnish education system. The first Finnish national curriculum to democratize the education and school practice was launched in 1970. The basic education reform of the 1970s introduced the comprehensive school. First, it abolished the parallel school system where the students had been divided in to secondary school or vocational school at age 11 and was the end

of destining 11-year-olds to either a limited choice of vocations, and instead providing them with open choices with social status. Second, the values of the reform are equity and equal opportunity. Third, primary school teacher must have a master's degree in education. Fourth, the well-educated and motivated Finnish teachers possess excellent diagnostic skills of assessing student needs on the spot, and they implement timely and sophisticated early intervention procedures either by themselves, with peer colleagues or multiprofessional groups in school. Similarly, special education needs (SEN) are well recognized and differentiated and inclusive special education is provided in a timely manner. Additionally, basic education students are provided with well-resourced institutional learning environment. (Väljärvi, Linnakylä, Kupari, Reinikainen & Arffman, 2002). The result of the reforms has been that 99.9% of students complete comprehensive school, the quality of learning is highlighted by the PISA results, the expenditure is at an OECD average and the number of teaching hours allocated per student is at or below the OECD average (Aho, Pitkanen, & Sahlberg, 2006, p. 133).

2.3 Gender and leadership

Not until (1970s), male researchers were largely unconcerned in the topic, and an academic assumption of gender and leadership (Chemers, 1997). Northouse (2007, p. 265), posited that, the growing rate of women in leadership positions and women in academia, as a result of dramatic changes in America society, have fueled the scholarly interest in the study of women leaders. Recently, writers such as Book (2000) have written on the topic of gender and leadership, thus portraying the differences between women and men. The differences show that women are inferior to men (e.g., some writers claimed that women lacked skills and traits necessary for managerial success (Henning and Jardin 1977, p. 221). Bulloch (2008, p. 3) has also observed that

Leadership is therefore defined more broadly here as the influence an individual has, whether directly or indirectly, on followers or observers from her/his organization, community, or society.

In the 21st century, women are not only seen as being educated but they are also very influential in the society as they can be found holding corporate and political leadership roles. Examples of such women are eBay's CEO Meg Whitman, Avon's CEO Andrea Jung, former US Secretary of State and former New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, just to name a few. According to Lahti (2013, p. 26), there are many reasons why female leadership should be promoted. She divides this into four themes they include equality, women's contribution as leaders, the importance of women being able to speak out and meritocracy. In terms of equality, both genders should be given equal opportunities to get ahead in their careers and climb to higher positions, considering their competencies, skills and not gender. Promoting female leaders by bridging the gap of gender division in leadership would bring new ways of operating and thus leads to organization development.

With women in leadership roles, the big question we ask is "What are the leadership style and effectiveness differences between women and men?" and this boils down to "why women are poorly represented in elite leadership roles?" despite their high level of education. The failure of women to gain leadership positions within Australia's top ASX200 companies despite the implementation of a number of strategies aimed at improving the gender balance at this level was the subject of research by Nesbit and Seeger (2007). These authors reviewed the activities of thirty Australian organizations across three distinct industry groups (Construction and Engineering; Health and Community Services, Finance and Insurance;) in regard to the actions taken to support and enhance women's participation in management roles. The following remarks were made in regard to their findings:

While overt gender discrimination was generally reported to be a matter of the past, indirect obstacles, relating to both organizational culture and wider social values, still seemed to be in existence preventing women from reaching the top levels of their organizations in equal proportions as men. Until these broader social values are challenged and dealt with, organizational efforts for the advancement of women in

leadership will continue to advance very slowly. (Nesbit & Seeger, 2007, p. 21). Clearly, then, in the broader debates on inequalities between men and women in every society, the relationship between gender, on the one hand and leadership styles and effectiveness, on the other, must be addressed.

2.4 Gender and leadership style and effectiveness:

Eagly and Carli (2003) offers a meta-analysis of 94 leadership studies seeking to address the “female leadership advantage.” They found that female leadership tendencies are generally more effective for leadership challenges, concluding that “Compared with male leaders, female leaders were more transformational and engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviors” (Eagly and Carli, 2003, p. 817). They also found that men are more likely to focus on the follower’s mistakes or poor performance. Moreover, males were found to be less proactive when dealing with a problem. Instead of dealing with it right away, males tend to wait until the situation is extreme before taking action.

Below is a table of recent empirical gender studies in leadership, which present the differences between women and men in organization based on their gender. The studies focused mostly on the leadership traits and behaviors between women and men.

TABLE 1 Summary of Case Studies in Women’s Leadership Styles

Wolfram, Mohr, & Schyns (2007)	Investigated 81 leaders and 121 followers from 34 German organizations and found that female leaders receive less professional respect from their followers than their male leaders.
Burke & Collins (2001)	In a sample of male and female accountants, found that females are more likely than males to indicate that they use a transformational leadership style. Females reported somewhat higher perceived effectiveness on coaching, developing, and communicating.
Vinnicombe & Singh (2002)	A study of 363 managers in a British/Australian insurance company found significant gender differences in perceptions of

	their own leadership style and that of successful leaders in their organizations. Thus, Concluded that shifting perceptions in leadership styles leads to preferences of an androgynous manager.
Lucas (2003)	Applied status characteristics theory in an experiment to test the idea that institutionalizing women can legitimize leadership for women in a structure that is predominately male influenced. Initial results showed that males attained higher influence than females. When institutionalized, women leaders appointed on ability achieved influence as high as men with ability.
Groves (2005)	108 senior leaders and 325 of their direct followers were examined to uncover the relationships between the gender of the leader, their social and emotional skills, and charismatic leadership. Female leaders scored higher on social and emotional skills, and follower ratings of charismatic leadership. In addition, social and emotional skills mediated the relationship between leader gender and charismatic leadership
Weikart,Chen, Williams,& Hromic (2007)	Explored 192 female and 192 male U.S. mayors. Results showed no real differences on policy issues, the use of power, and budget issues. However, women were more willing to change the budget process, be more inclusive, seek broader participation, and admit fiscal problems and discuss changes in their goals. Men were less likely to believe that women face gender-related barriers in leadership.

Several articles have been written on the leadership styles of males and females. Some writers hold that male and female leaders lead quite differently, while others claim that it is the situation that determines the best leadership style, regardless of the sex of the leader (Fine, 2009). However, there are still some authors who suggest that both men and women lead similarly depending on their positions or situations.

Most writers see gender issues as women issues. Shakeshaft (1993) asserts that gender has been related so closely with women that in a number of cases they are synonymous. She defines gender from a cultural perspective which: is socially

constructed and depicts the characteristics that we attribute to people because of their sex, the manner in which we believe they act or the characteristics we consider they have based upon our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female. (Shakeshaft, 1993, p. 52).

In general, the term “sex” and “gender” mean different things. In simple words, the term sex refers to one’s biological characteristics, and gender is a social and cultural construction which involves; social role, social identity and social behavior. Gender socialization as masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture or how individuals are brought up.

According to a study carried out by Simon and Reape (2009) on the perimenopausal experiences of professional women, majority of women they surveyed reported physical and/or emotional symptoms which many believed has a negative influence in both their personal and professional lives in regards to leadership style and effectiveness. To be precise, the authors found that night sweats, insomnia and hot flashes were the most disruptive to women’s professional lives. The authors conclude that

Menopausal symptoms can have a significant effect in the workplace. Physicians should be aware of the frequency and impact that menopausal symptoms can have on patients’ lives and discuss the appropriate options available for treatment of these symptoms” (Simon & Reape, 2009, p. 76).

In the contemporary globalization of business practices, opportunities, technologies, and cultures, women face special challenges that differ depending on the context of the environment in which they work. From numerous research carried out, it could be concluded that gender is a values-based impediment and move towards a discussion of the relationships among culture, context, and practice, with the goal of developing new applicable theories and frameworks (Earley, 2006).

Again, Thornhill (2011) cites studies by Eagly and Carli (2003) as well as Fine (2009) that finds that women’s leadership styles are seen as more transformational – more caring, nurturing, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context (i.e., the organization, community or country). Conversely, masculine leadership styles

tend to be characterized as more transactional (information, power or service in exchange for cooperation or participation) or autocratic and hierarchical.

The changing trend in leadership theory towards more collaborative models has coincided with the increased numbers of women in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Women have brought a new style of leadership that is more relational than hierarchical to organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Regan & Brooks, 1998). "Gender is part of what informs female leaders values and priorities...women's different backgrounds and commitments have made a fundamental difference in leadership positions" (O' Connor, 2007, p. 15). Female leaders are seen to be more collaborative, community-oriented and concerned with empowering others.

2.5 Leadership for sustainability

In the course book *Classics of Organization Theory* (2001), the authors omitted the theory of Leadership for Sustainability, which is the prime factor of any successful organization, institution or a country as a whole. Irrespective of this fact, Shafritz & Ott (2001) wrote on so many theories that are related to leadership for sustainability. These theories are: division of labor, organizational structure, motivational theory, human resource theory, organizational learning, principle of management, scientific management and last but not the least organizational culture.

To begin with, sustainability means continuity and leadership for sustainability means leadership that leads to continuous high performing organization or institute. Sustainability is a broad concept and different leadership uses it as a guide in building continuously high performing institutions.

To throw more light on what exactly means by leadership for sustainability, I will draw reference from Hargreaves and Finks (2003), *The Seven Principles of Sustainable leadership*. According to these authors, sustainable leadership matters, spreads and lasts and it is a prerequisite for school improvement or for an organization to continue booming. In their publication, they explained that there are various ways in which

leaders develop sustainability. This could be seen by how they approach, commit to and protect deep learning in their schools or organizations, by how they sustain themselves and others around them to promote and support that learning, by how they are able and encouraged to sustain themselves in doing so, so that they can persist with their vision and avoid burning out, and by how they try to ensure the improvements they bring about lasts over time especially after they have gone.

Another piece of advice is that leaders should be able to read the complexities of their followers and the environment. There should be trust between leaders and their followers and likewise between colleagues. There should be reexamination of how principals are currently prepared, developed and supported to work. All these will lead to a successful and effective succession in the running of the organization and institution. These will ensure “Flows of Leadership across many years and numerous people” (Hargreaves and Finks, 2006, p. 5).

According to Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012), the ultimate goal of sustainable development is securing a better quality of life for all, both for the present and future generations. Both authors suggest that this could be achieved by pursuing responsible economic growth, equitable social progress and effective environmental protection. The writers assert that for a society to continue witnessing sustainability, the societies, organizations and individuals must work towards that dimension. For a leader to ensure leadership for sustainability, he/she must have specific qualities and stretch the boundaries of his knowledge, and always keep the sustainability principles at the core of his vision, mission and strategy. A good leader is one who works in line with the three dimensions mentioned in Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012). This has to do with the leader’s personal values but it must not be more valued than the organizational values. The organizational value relates to the value of relationships that exist in the organization. The last but not the least is societal values. This respects the leaders’ values, organization and the society. A leader who successfully exercises these three dimensions of care in an organization promotes leadership for sustainability.

The first theory I am going to discuss on is the Division of Labor, by Adam Smith (1776). He encouraged people to focus on a particular task, which will result in specialization, he advocated for free choice, trust, change space and tools and workers should find better methods to work because it will improve productivity in the organization. Extrapolating from this theory, if there is trust among the leader and his workers, like wise everybody specializing in a particular field of work and becomes an expert in his field of work and share with each other and with the use of machines, the whole organization will grow, because the production will be of better quality and the produce will increase in thousands. The manager also has to increase the dexterity in every workman; this will also help to save time, and make them become more proficient in their work. This will in a larger extend lead to leadership for sustainability. This is to say for a complete leadership for sustainability there are other factors that need to be considered.

The second theory is the scientific management theory by Frederick Taylor. It is the way in which people are organized into social units in order to achieve the goals of their companies or government. In this theory, the leaders learn from the past, both positive and negative effects in order to safeguard against unforeseen circumstances in the future. An organization which is well organized in to social units and the leader always look back so as to avoid mistakes in the future is a succeeding organization and will not easily burn out if other principles are being fostered.

Third is organizational culture. This theory depends on the background and culture of each organization. A theory could work well in America but the same theory will not work in Africa. Culture is the values and beliefs of a particular society which has been respected over a given period of time and is still respected. Culture is power. It is for inclusion. For example festivals, feeling of safety. They are traditional ways of doing things in an organization. The way people behave within the organization, it helps for human development, professional and intercultural development. The human behavior and organization behavior is influenced by culturally rooted beliefs, values, assumptions and behavioral norms that affect all aspects of organization. An

organization with good culture that is well respected by everyone in the organization will obviously provide a good climate under which work is being carried out smoothly. This will lead to sustainability of the organization. Also in a school milieu, leadership for sustainability can be promoted in the way the principals treat both teachers and students.

Another theory that leads to leadership for sustainability is the centralization and decentralization theory. For example, Cameroon has a centralized system of government. The trend of command is from top to down. This means that all international or official documents are processed only in the capital city, Yaoundé. Obviously such a thick-layered bureaucratic system of government implies wastes of so much time, energy and money on the part of both government and citizens. Additionally, however, citizens (who are the main users of public services) are exposed to high risks of accidents simply because they must often travel from very distant and remote corners of the country to Yaoundé, to have even the most basic of decisions or documents issued to them. Such heightened bureaucratic red-tape is deleterious for both small and big business just as leaders, in theory at least, are unduly overburdened by their involvement in almost aspect of leadership and decision-making.

In contrast, Finland practices a greatly decentralized system of government and can boast of leadership for sustainability. There is power distribution in the decentralization system, though there is still a top-down position. For example, in an organization, there could be different independent units but all the units are joined to the main system of organization at the end of the day. This creates flexibility in the organization and leads to sustainability in the organization. The Finnish Educational System is decentralized, they have a decentralized curriculum. This gives the teachers autonomy to plan their curriculum, time and how to manage their classes. Both the government and parents trust the principals and teachers. This has led to sustainable learning outcome in Finland. Their great performances in the PISA test speak volume.

Next, organizational learning theory talks about learning communities and networking. We need a learning society so that we can learn to be persons not just employees,

increase skills for efficiency in the work place. Networking means people relating with each other and offering to enter relationships with others in order to respond to each other's needs and together enrich each other's lives. An example of a learning community can be seen from the number of exchange students who come to Finland for exchange programs in the University. This is a new phenomenon and it has help to create networking or alliance between Finland and the other countries. Pedagogical leadership is jeering from organizational development to organizational transformation they share ideas, and adopt relevant once which promotes intercultural relationships and thus sustainability in learning institutions.

There is the open system theory which encourages leadership for sustainability. Organizations which are open system are likened to enjoy sustainability. Such an organization is influenced by the world around it. The external inputs are raw materials, capitals, labor, market, technology, politics, and society's culture and subculture. Organizations are inseparable parts of the society and the culture in which they exist and function. A good school prepares the students base on what is needed in the society.

Last but not the least is the principle of management by Henri Fayol (1966). A leader who knows what he needs and is able to provide it can be a good leader. Organizations as entities are basically alike and are that a manager who could cope well in one organization could equally adopt in coping with others even though their purposes and functions might be widely disparate.

In conclusion, theories are fundamental guidance for leaders to apply in different circumstances. Without theory, there is no applicability and this will lead to vulnerability and thus no leadership for sustainability, whereas the applicability of theory promotes leadership for sustainability.

2.6 Women and education

Educating men and women is key to economic growth and sustainable development in both OECD and non-OECD countries. Raising the education levels and literacy rates of women is one of the most effective investments for increasing female productivity as well as enhancing the well-being of families and children. Therefore if women are educated, this will lead to economic and social benefits in the society and it will permit women to develop new identities and having more decision-making power, both privately and publicly. Conable (1977), concluded that, if women's intellect and ability are to be fully developed and utilized, the world will be a better place. Education is a prerequisite to create a suitable atmosphere to learn about democracy and a governance system. None the less, education is equally important to learn about decisions made by leaders and the results it has on human being. There is a significant need for leaders in the world to consider women's needs and wants when deciding on political and economic decisions.

In the OECD area, where women are becoming more educated than men, the challenge is making better use of women's qualifications. In developing countries, reducing gender inequality in literacy and in primary and secondary education is essential to reducing poverty and accelerating economic development. More to that, educated girls have healthier children, and they live in good health conditions. To crown it all, educated girls educate the next generation of students. The child of an educated woman is more likely to receive education.

It is evident that the school is a place where children, students are taught, and thereby gaining knowledge and they are transformed to become the leaders of tomorrow. However, not all children at the same level (class) still attain the goals of the school mostly because of their gender. According to the MDGs (2013, p.20) report, 123 million youth aged 15-24 lack basic reading and writing skills, 61% of them are young women.

Gender socialization has emerged as one of the key issues in the discourse of gender inequality in the educational sector. This is because children from their

childhood easily learn more about their gender, parents teach their male children to be bold, strong, and that, they have to go to school for a very long-term so as to be able to get a good job in the future since they are the future breadwinners. On the other hand, parents teach their female children traditional female gender roles like, nurturing and household chores. Young girls grow up with the knowledge that they are not supposed to go further in education, because men will be scared to marry them. In addition, when the family is suffering from financial crisis, the girl's education is usually sacrificed at the expense of the boys' education. The above assertion is gendered stereotype and this has affected female children in their educational career in all over the world, especially in Africa. Thus this can account for some of the reasons why very few women hold leadership positions especially in schools and in government.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2003) purposely address women-related issues, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, like-wise the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) (UN, 2005a) promotes equality with men across the world for sustainable development, peace and security, governance, and human rights. As a result of the laws enacted by the UN, poverty has been reduced, the gender gap in education has narrowed, more women are involved in both political arenas, and in the economic labor market. Despite the struggles, there are still some glaring inequalities as women are still at a disappointing minority in education, and also in the parliament, and are more likely to work in the lower paid jobs, less reliable informal sector, and they get left behind with the progress of economic growth and trade liberalization (Chen, Lund, Jhabvala, & Bonner, 2005). Since women make up the majority of the informal working poor, a focus on women's leadership is needed to strengthen the organization of the working poor into a representative voice for effective policy making (Chen et al., 2005).

For women to be promoted in government, professional and technical positions, and business ownership, the best option is that women leadership should be institutionalized through the growth of schools and education for girls. Institutionalization is doable as culture is not only a stable characteristic of society.

According to Berry (2002), it is also evolving, allowing for the co-mingling of traditional with modern values.

Research has shown that educating and training women for them to become more active in the paid and productive workforce has a tremendous impact on the economics (Boserup, 1986). Since majority of students on college campuses are female, it is quite obvious to have female leaders be involved in the decision making process on these campuses. It is important for young women to see other female leaders as role models, that they can achieve leadership roles; especially while they are in the course of self-discovery, both personally and professionally, which occurs while they are in college (Ropers-Huilman, 2003).

2.7 Women and leadership in a global context

Karine and Sarah (2013) stated that the low percentage of senior management jobs held by women is a global phenomenon. Women make up not more than 21 percent of senior management roles around the globe. What is common among women leaders regardless of the country in which they are is gender stereotype, Karine and Sarah (2013). As children, both boys and girls subconsciously learn their gender roles. As time goes by, women learn the unchallenged gender norms and rules of the societies and they grow up with this ideology which shapes the educational path, and impacts their beliefs and behaviors as they enter adulthood and the workplace. Karine and Sarah (2013) posited that many companies' beliefs and systems have not changed much from the 19th and 20th century thinking of gender stereotype. In the past, companies were fairly homogeneous and organizational values systems, working practices and decision-making processes have not necessarily kept pace with their mixed gender, multi-cultural, and diverse workforces. This lack of evolution hinders companies' productivity and growth, as it fails to utilize the world's global work force. The way in which, women are treated in the work place is an exact reflection of how they are

treated in the society as a whole. Thus the reason why sustainable development can not be achieved.

It is very true that there are specific legal and religious constraints that prevent women performing similar tasks to men in professional environments and indeed, many countries still have laws incompatible with the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (3).

Karine & Sarah (2013) pointed out two important things those leaders responsible for successfully developing global women leaders must do:

1. *Be able to diagnose precisely where female leaders, irrespective of their nationality or geographic locale, will benefit from support across common developmental themes.*
2. *Develop a much more informed understanding of the intensity in which aspiring women leaders around the world live their professional experiences.*

The authors also listed five important elements to developing global women leaders:

(a) Raise awareness: Invest time in understanding yourself and how other people in the organization perceive you. (b) Understand your employer: Investigate the unspoken rules of promotion, the behaviors that are valued, informal organizations, and how people share, collaborate, and work together. (c) Examine your approach to power and politics; ask yourself two questions:

1. *Can I dispassionately describe how the company's politics work?*
2. *If yes, are my views and values dominating my reaction to the rules of the game or to the abuse of the rules of the game?*

(d) Build the quality of your network: High quality networks include three sets of individuals: sponsors, mentors, and coaches. (e) And for senior leaders: Reflect upon how senior leaders sponsor and mentor women and foster environments that allow new generations (with often very different needs and wants) to flourish. Karine and Sarah (2013).

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) is an Australian Government agency consulting with Australian employers. It monitors women's participation in the Australian workforce. With regards to a number of educational and other initiatives, EOWA conducts an annual census of Women in Leadership. According to the EOWA Census figures from 2008, women in leadership positions are very few in almost every sphere of industry. In addition, women become increasingly isolated as they advance to senior management levels until, at the level of Board Director, they are outnumbered by men. The ratio is 10 to 1 at the level of CEO, and 49 to 1 within the ASX200 companies (EOWA, 2009).

2.8 Factors affecting women leadership

The Glass Ceiling: The glass-ceiling metaphor was first described by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) as an impediment that prevents or constrains women from rising into the ranks of senior management. According to (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002), context is very crucial when it comes to women's involvement in leadership role. This is because if the environment is not gender sensitive, women feel estranged from leadership positions and they become discouraged from participating or striving for leadership roles. In defining glass ceiling, Powell and Butterfield (1994) combined the definitions of Labor (1991), Morrison, White, & VanVelsor (1987) to describe the glass ceiling for women as

A barrier to entry into top-level management positions ... based on attitudinal or organizational bias ... simply because they are women rather than because they lack the ability to handle jobs at higher levels" (p. 68).

Glass ceiling is one very popular topic in modern gender discourse, and because of this, so many writers have written on it. This review of the glass ceiling is to point out the discrepancies in findings and possible biases some researchers might have towards either the idea of women as victims or the contrary idea that gender does not matter at all.

There have been some different findings that account for the severity of the glass ceiling effect. To begin with, one study found that presently women make up half of the work force in developed countries, but however, there are still visible glass ceiling effects that prevent women from moving into middle- and senior-level management positions. This is as a result of long of political confidence, gender role socialization (subtle socialization processes that politics is a man's world), family responsibilities, and a lack of other women politicians as role models (which may explain the gender role socialization finding) (Elder, 2004).. Thus this explains the under-representation of women in politics.

Since cultures differs from one society to another, so does the effects of the glass ceiling differs from one society to another. For example, the more a country has reached higher levels of gender empowerment and equality, the less likely it may be that women will face glass ceiling obstacles. Context has a significant role in mediating and moderating variables which influences the relationship between gender and the glass ceiling. For example, in societal cultures or in organizations where women are generally accepted and hold leadership positions, the glass ceiling effects is considerably low. On the contrary, societies where gender inequality is still very high, and few women hold leadership positions, the glass ceiling effects is equally high. In cases like this, it is up to the society or organization to promote women in higher leadership positions in order to halt the glass ceiling effects.

Research on Work-Family Balance: Among the hot topics in the gender literature is the fact that women work very hard to successfully balance their work and family lives. Women managers or women in leadership positions, particularly in Western societies, are compelled to handling multiple tasks at the same time. This multitasking leadership styles leads to preferences of a genderless manager. Burke and Collins (2001) in a sample of male and female accountants found that females easily indicate that they use transformational leadership styles. Females were also reported somewhat higher on coaching, developing, and communicating than the male counterparts. Women are smart enough to juggle all the responsibilities of the home and each family member.

As much of the work on Work-Family balance research is Western-centric, it is imperative to review its role to the field. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) establish that family composition has undergone major transformations and that these changes in roles and relationships can have a major influence on the working lives of both men and women. They further explain that in North America, up until the 1950's and 60's, "family" usually meant a nuclear two-generational group with parents and children sharing the same household ... when few women worked outside the home ..." (Aldrich and Cliff, (2003, p. 578).

Family systems influence women's decision in leadership position by affecting resources, family transitions, and finally the attitudes, norms, and values of each family member. According to Huang, Hammer, Neal, & Perrin (2004), women continue to face more household demands and family responsibility even when working outside the home because women are still expected to be the primary caregivers. This reduces time available for work and increases stress, leading to more work-family conflict that affects their leadership style. Citing Jennings and McDougald (2007) and (Simon, 1995) Bulloch (2011) points to their conclusions that men, unlike women, are expected to be excellent economic providers for their families and thus devote more time to business. Therefore, as "breadwinners" men are better able to uphold their family and work demands at the same time than women. Jennings and McDougald (2007) further underline that men are known to make greater sacrifices at home in order to maintain their work responsibilities whereas the reverse is true for women.

Family-work constraints have a negative effect on women's productive work in that, in trying to balance both home and work responsibilities, women give higher priority to their spouse's careers and make sacrifices in their own. Jennings and McDougald (2007) posited that the different life experiences that women go through will cause women-led businesses to face more challenges compared to men-led businesses; to respond differently to their environment, and in turn lead differently than men (Weikart et al., 2006) and for different reasons. Samkia (2008), study highlights the effect of the family-work dilemma on the formation of the glass ceiling

women managers are confronting in public organizations in Sudan. The author found that female managers give first priority to their families and secondary importance to their job. The priority married women leaders give to their families play a negative role in their career progression and thus contributes to their under representation in higher leadership position.

Women also experience the work-family interface in a positive way through the benefits and enriching properties of both work and family and the effects that both realms simultaneously have on each other (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King (2002) counter the claims made by (Goode, 1960) that women have a rigid amount of time and energy divided into pieces of a figurative pie and that for more time or energy to be allocated to one slice, another slice needs to be reduced. The authors contested that the roles present in women's personal lives psychologically enhance their effectiveness in their productive roles. Specifically, multitasking, emotional abilities, interpersonal skills, and leadership activities embedded in women's personal spheres has a positive influence into her profession. Ruderman et al. (2002) sees this as the role accumulation perspective - this means that multitasking provides some people with more energy, rather than exhaust one's energy.

Stereotypes, Role Congruity Studies and Individual Differences: This paragraph expounds past research on leadership and gender. It brings out stereotypes based on assumed gender differences and the traits specific to both genders, and the incongruity with these stereotypes with expectations about leader characteristics and last but not the least, the individual differences between men and women in leadership style. Some of the findings in this research are not consistent and sometimes contradictory, revealing the fact that context is very important in evaluation, since society varies in terms of (social, technological, economic, business, political, and cultural). Eagly and Carli (2004) present some explanations for women's lesser occupancy of high-level leadership positions in the United States. According to the authors women do not make high investment in human capital; however this is quite different in terms of education or work experience. Because women are primary care-givers, they do not have much

time to offer for training, they jeopardize their paid work because of their domestic work, thus causing them severe problems in their work history, more than men. In addition, men and women lead differently. Women's style to lead is found to be a bit different from the role expectations of leaders and this leads to discrimination against women in leadership positions. (Eagly & Carli, 2004).

Another explanation is the role congruity theory of prejudice. This theory suggests that a clash between female gender role and their leadership role most often lead to prejudice (Eagly & Karau, 2002) or a glass ceiling. One form of this prejudice is that, men are seen as potential candidate and more favorable than women to occupying leadership roles. Another form of prejudice is that leadership is seen as a male preserve, thus evaluating behaviors that correspond to the prescriptions of a leadership role is less approving when the position is held by a woman. As a result, female leaders receive less positive attitudes, thus stifling the possibilities for women to aspire to becoming and achieving success as leaders. Very few women hold leadership positions because the requirements of leadership roles have been associated to be generally constructed in masculine terms. (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Sex role stereotyping shows men as the best gender type in leadership roles because they possess the masculine, strong qualities (e.g., men are more courageous, daring, assertive, and competitive). With the male attributes it is easier for male leaders than female leaders to gain respect from the supervision of their followers (Eagly & Mitchell, 2004). Women are compelled to display relatively feminine characteristics; cooperative, and compassionate, communal values by acting affectionate. In general Women are not expected to exhibit the characteristics that are typically associated with men and leaders, such as being independent, dominant, strong, assertive, ambitious, and self-confident (Eagly & Mitchell, 2004). As a means to curb glass-ceiling, Burke (2002) suggested that the society should react towards providing both women's present and future needs. Thus this will go a long way in encouraging talented women to aspire leadership positions.

2.9 Factors that empower women

A lot of research exploring the factors that hinder the advancement of women in organizations has been carried out. However, Knörr (2005) insists that the literature about factors that promote such development is scanty. This paragraph reviews factors that contribute to the advancement of women's careers. It also explores implications for organizations and Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals.

Organizational and Government Policies: Knörr (2005) states that in most countries especially in the developed world, organizational and government policies are bent on achieving not just gender equity in the workplace but also the promotion of women's career advancement. Citing other researchers Knörr (2005) further explains that recently, a number of government initiatives have been implemented in the U.S.A. beginning with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which is designed to respond to unexpected illness, and other needs of the family. Secondly, the Affirmative Action program or the Equal Employment Opportunity law which seeks to allow equal access to work for women and minorities. In the same vein, the United States' Congress enacted the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 that encourage organizations to create a more diverse workforce by paying attention to eliminating barriers that hinder the development of women and minorities (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Supportive Work Environment: Catalyst (1998) in his study, found that a major factor contributing to women's stay and evolution within organizations is the crafting and execution of work-family programs as well as the creation of supportive environments for women. In a Rogier and Padgett study (as cited in Knörr, 2005) women expounded that the prospects of flexible time schedules makes for an easier work-life balance and as a result facilitates their access to leadership positions.

Organizational Support System: Morrison et al. (1987) concluded that, the existence of an organizational support system is a vital factor that engenders women's advancement in leadership. Knörr (2005) further underlined that the support system ought to incorporate an assessment structure for tracking achievement that measures

how well women are advancing through the ladder in order to evaluate the organizational progress. Along the same line, and for emphatic purposes Knörr (2005) cites earlier research which suggested that the system would measure employees' needs, career goals, assess performance and promotion of women, identify assumptions, and, potential discrimination factors. Finally, in a Culpan & Wright study on women manager expatriates (as cited in Knörr 2005), women confirmed that an organizational support system helps boost their job satisfaction.

Mentoring: A very crucial factor that contributes to women's advancement in leadership roles includes mentors and access to networks (Morrison et al., 1987). As suggested in the career development literature by Morrison et al. (1987), mentors play a very important role in women's development in organizations. This is corroborated in a Nelson and Quick study (as cited by Knörr, 2005) that clearly stated that female mentors are very crucial because they act as role models to their protégés, helping them cope with discrimination, Work-Family balance, stereo-typing, and social isolation.

Networking: Catalyst (1990), concluded that women rely on networking with other women to advance to high leadership levels. According to Burt (1998), networking predisposes women to more information and options than they would otherwise have gained access to. In actual sense, networking provides women the opportunity to strengthen ties with prospective sponsors.

Training and Development: It is known worldwide that, training and development opportunities enhance employee overall performance and achievement. In fact, Burke (2002), argues that access to education, training, and development would support women's advancement in organizations. Citing a 1995 report on accounting firms by the American Institute of CPA's, Knörr (2005) suggests that wining practices for supporting women employees include educational programs and advisory groups that aim at enhancing career opportunities and workplace environment for women employees.

Organization Culture: In general, organization culture is among the factors that are central to promote a supportive work environment (Lobel, 1999). However, Knörr

(2005) did not find any literature about the structure of organization cultures that promote gender equity and, by so doing, increase the number of women in leadership positions.

2.10 Female leadership in Finland

In Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has four separate working for the promotion of gender equality: The Gender Equality Unit, the Ombudsman for Equality, the council for Gender Equality and the Equity Board. All these four workings put in place is the main reason why, female leadership in political, economic, social and cultural spheres is a common phenomenon in Finland.

In 2014, Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, ranked Finland second after Iceland as far as the level of gender equality was concerned. The Index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria. In terms of international comparisons of education, health, political empowerment and labor force participation, the Nordic countries in variable score best with 80%. In Finland, however, gaps of equality still remain for example in the division of economic power, and in the gender differentials concerning wages. According to global rankings (2014), Finland ranks, 1st in terms of political empowerment, in educational attainment Finland ranks amongst the 1st, and 21st in economic participation and opportunity, in health and survivor, 52ND.

According to Markkola (2011), Finnish women were given the right to vote and to stand for elections 1906. Thus Finland being one of the first countries to bridge its gender gap. Equality in Finland means treating everyone the same before the law irrespective of their person. In the late 1960's era of industrialization, the demands on women's labor potential increased and the tensions between work and care had to be resolved so as to make women's gainful employment possible without radically altering their primary caring roles. Committees on the position of women and day-care were nominated to create a system of equality based on public day-care services and parental

leaves. In 1963, the Social Democratic Women's League discussed for the first time the need to conduct an official investigation of the social position of women. This report was finally issued in 1970. The most important issue discussed in the report was the economic independence of women. The committee report to combat discrimination were both legislative (implementing the prohibition of discrimination in the labour law) (Markkola, 2011).

According to the Child and Family Policy in Finland (2013), there is a family policy that aims to create a safe environment for children to grow up in and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children. The most important forms of support for families are child benefit and day-care services. One of the most important elements of the family policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is reconciling paid employment and family life. The aim is to improve the possibilities of parents to spend time with their children, to make working easier for parents. Amongst the Family Policy in Finland is the housing policy, environment policy, education policy and employment policy which have implications on the daily lives of families. There are various forms of child care available to families. A prerequisite for the active participation of women in working life has been the development of legislation, services and financial support relating to the care of small children and the job security of parents. After the parental leave period, parents have three government-assisted forms of child care to choose from until the child starts school, usually at the age of 7. The options are: municipal day care either in a day-care or in the home of a family day care provider, private day care either in a day-care center or in the home of a family day care provider, subsidized through a private day-care allowance, and one parent staying at home on child home care allowance, if the child is under the age of 3.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the background of Finnish schools as well as the study context. It further gives a detail description of the entire research design and rationale employed in this study. The main research approach is the phenomenological research. Last but not the least, it also presents the procedures that were deployed in collecting and analyzing data.

3.1 Background of Finnish schools and the study context

The Finnish education system comprises four levels: pre-primary education, basic education, general and vocational secondary education and training, as well as tertiary education which could be either polytechnics or universities.

The first is a pre-primary education for one-year-olds for six-years. This type of schooling is arranged in day-care centers. The aim is to develop children capacity for learning. The core of the basic education system is a nine-year comprehensive school which children enter the year they turn seven. According to the Constitution of Finland (1999, p. 4) education is regarded as one of the most fundamental rights of all citizens. The constitution guarantees the right of all Finnish citizens and foreigners resident in Finland the right to free basic education. Children from age 7 to 16 years have as obligation to acquire at least basic education schooling (Basic Education Act, 1998, p. 11). Students at the secondary level has the right to choose either general or vocational education (General Upper Secondary Schools Act, 1998, & .19). As stated by Kupiainen, Hautamäki and Karjalainen (2009, p. 14), though there is division amongst the Finnish comprehensive school, that is from (1-6 grades) is considered as primary education and (7-9 grades) is secondary education, Finnish education system still does not officially make that division following the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED (2012, p. 30, 33, 34).

Current issues:

In December 2014, Finland completed the reform of the National Core Curricula for pre-primary education and for compulsory basic education. Schools will start working according to the new curricula in autumn 2016.

Participation in pre-primary education or corresponding activities will be mandatory from August 2015. A majority (98 %) of 6 year-old children already attend preprimary education. (FNBE, 2015).

Upper secondary education is composed of two tracks, vocational and general or academic upper secondary schools. Admission into higher education is via entrance exams.

Finnish higher education comprises two types of institutions, universities and polytechnics. Whereas the Universities are oriented towards academic research the polytechnic programmes are geared towards the demands of working life. Both polytechnics and universities are built on the freedom of education and research. Entrance to higher education is through programme specific entry exams.

Data for this study was collected from the Finnish schools described below. The background information of the various schools was retrieved from emails sent by the principals from the various schools:

Tikka school: Tikka school was founded in 1947 and Nenainniemi in 1992. Tikka School has 22 teachers plus 5 teachers in a few lessons (Islam, bah'ai, orthodox, English, and Spanish while Nenainniemi has 4 teachers who are all females. Tikka School has 7 male teachers and 20 female teachers. In Tikka School, there are about 372 pupils from grade 1-6 and in Nenainniemi there are 81 pupils from grade 1-3.

Kuokkala School: The school has been in existence since 1994. There are 29 female teachers and 10 male teachers making a total of 40 including the principal. The school has 370 pupils starting from grade 7-9.

Keljonkangas School: This school was opened in 1950. It has 27 teachers; 5 males and 22 females. The pupil's population is about 479 and it offers education from grade 1-6.

Säynätsalon School: The school has been existing since 1950 and it has three different units. There are 41 teachers in this school and 27 are females and 14 are male teachers. There are 505 pupils from grade 1-9.

Vaajakumpu Comprehensive School: There are 500 pupils and 60 teachers. The school starts from level 1-9 with special education classes.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, necessitated this study was the need to understand the factors that promote female leadership in Finnish comprehensive schools.

3.2 Qualitative research approach and rationale behind it

Creswell (2009, p. 3-21), considers an awareness of the three definitions of the research study as essential element for the researcher because it helps the researcher in considering the best approach that suits his or her study.

According to Creswell (2009, p. 4) “a quantitative approach is one in which the investigatory primarily uses postpositive claims for developing knowledge (cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation and the test of theories”.

Unlike quantitative approach, “qualitative research is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (the multiple meanings of individual experiences, socially and historically constructed with an intent of developing a theory or pattern”.

“A mixed methods approach is one in which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds, e.g. consequence-oriented, problem-centered and pluralistic”. Thus it employs both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Since this research seeks to discover the factors that promote female leadership in Finland, couple with female leadership style; outcome, challenges and way forward, a qualitative method was employed. Likewise, the researcher was certain to get the answers to the research questions because the Finnish people are cooperative in

research work. Also, the nature of the research is explanatory. Thus, using qualitative research methods will help the author to use interpretive practices when researching the topic. To understand better the respondents' views regarding the female leadership phenomenon, the qualitative approach was used. According to Creswell (2012, p. 16, 19, 56), naturally the qualitative research questions are often open-ended and geared towards describing the phenomenon under study. One of the rationales of using qualitative data is because of its naturalistic nature. Researchers doing a qualitative study collect data in its most natural settings because actions and words lose their meaning out of the setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 4) concurred that a qualitative researcher needs to marshal a broad spectrum of interlinked interpretive practices that provide a possibility of gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, qualitative research is descriptive and thus could be collected in various forms such as a words or pictures. Qualitative research is mostly concerned with processes rather than with outcomes or products. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 4-7), researchers doing qualitative studies are concerned in the meaning of participant viewpoints; how they are connected to their lives and thus try to capture this facts exactly. Finally, qualitative method allows the use of multiple sources like interviews, published data, documents, and observations. (Davies, 2007, p. 10). The sources will be used in the study.

Strauss and Corbin (1990 p. 17), defined qualitative research as “a research that creates findings not arrived at by means of statistical measures or by some other means of quantification”. Furthermore, the authors pointed out that a qualitative analysis involves a “nonmathematical analytic procedure that results in findings derived from data collected by a variety of means” (p. 18). Researchers such as (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 4-8; Creswell, 2007, p. 20, Morrow, 2007, p. 216) mentioned human subjectivity in the process of doing qualitative research because true objectivity is unachievable.

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources for the data collection. For the empirical part of the research, primary sources as interviews and observations were used. Secondary sources such as literature, published data for the theoretical part

were used as well. All in all, a qualitative method of data collection and analysis permitted the researcher to reach an in-depth understanding of the complex factors that influence female leadership in Finland.

3.3 Research approach

Phenomenology is one of the major qualitative research approaches. It is purely meant for qualitative research. Merriam (2009, p. 23), defines phenomenology as a “study that seeks understanding about the essence and the underlying structure of the phenomenon”. According to Van Manen, (1990, p. 9), phenomenologist do not spend time to categorize, simplify, and reduce phenomena to abstract laws. Rather they are interested in our “Lived experience”. Husserl (1970) concurred that “Phenomenological research has overlaps with other important qualitative approaches including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactions”. Thus the main aim of a phenomenological research is to describe, and to start from a viewpoint that is free from hypotheses or preconceptions.

As outlined earlier, this study seeks to discover the factors that promote women leadership and their lived experiences. Thus phenomenology will be the most appropriate research approach for this study.

Another reason that let me in choosing this research approach is because I needed an approach that will restrict me from being bias or subjective and thus will provide me a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Enabling factors of female leadership and the challenges). The perspectives of the participants were vital. This judgment was accepted by phenomenologist and several researchers that have used phenomenology in their studies. Researchers such as Eagleton (1983, p. 56) and Moustakas (1994, p. 26), in their work used the motto “back to the things themselves” to support the claim that this method has a major aim of returning things to the concrete. This research seeks having an “insight of the real nature of things” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 77). According to Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189), “the phenomenologists are

interested in understanding the social and psychological phenomena from the participants' viewpoint". As stated by Lester (1999, p. 1), phenomenological methods are connected with and are profoundly fixed in the paradigm of individual knowledge and subjectivity, and give priority to individual perspective and interpretation. This makes the approach reliable for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions and wiping away previous assumptions and conventional wisdom with the intention of revealing the specific, to recognize phenomena in the course of how they are perceived by the actors in a given circumstance (Lester, 1999, p. 1).

Last but not the least I was further motivated by the conviction that an understanding of female leadership development and what women can contribute in the society specifically in Finland, learning from their shared experiences will expand the scope of understanding what led to female leadership in Finland, the present state of affair, challenges involved and best practical solutions. This premise was propagated by Moustakas (1994, p. 26), and was vividly captured by Creswell (2007, p. 62), when he found out that knowing some general experiences of several individuals can be very crucial for groups which include health personnel, policy makers and educators to create a deeper understanding of the characteristics of a phenomenon so as to develop policies and practices.

3.4 Selection of the participants of the research

The female principals interviewed for this study were selected from different institutions located in Jyväskylä, in the Central Finland. The reason why this region was selected is because this is the region in which I reside. Writers such as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) encourage researchers to choose a place for study that is in close proximity to the researcher. For that reason, the schools were selected in the region in which I live. To select the sample, purposive sampling was used in this study. There are two types of sampling procedures. First, is the probability sampling, which seeks to generalize

findings to the larger population and is often found with quantitative research studies. The second is non-probability sampling. This sampling procedure is ideal for qualitative research studies because the sampling is based on the characteristics of the sample, not the generalizability to the population (Merriam, 1998). To be more precise, there are two main types of non-probability sampling; purposive and theoretical. For the purpose of this study, Purposive sampling was used. Five female principals were selected as informants for the data collection because they were the right persons to answer the research questions.

According to Merriam (1998) the needs of qualitative research are best met when non probability sampling is used. She further described purposive sampling as “based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; hence one needs to select a sample from which one can best learn” (p. 48). Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out that a small group of the studied population from the same background makes up a purposive sample. Also, they showed that initial choices of participants in the research study can result to unlike or like subjects which helps the researcher to better describe the entity. Thus, purposive sampling entails selecting participants based on criteria relevant to the topic which the researcher wishes to study. The criteria are determined, in the early stage of the study. Though the sample size was small, it was quite enough because qualitative studies tend to be small. According to Ritchie, et al., (2003), the aim of qualitative research is not to generalize, it is not necessary to find a sample size that is statistically significant. Again, an incident only needs to appear once to be analyzed, so including more people does not necessarily add to the evidence.

A variety of methods were used to determine the sample frame. The researcher visited the websites of several schools to obtain a list of women leaders in Jyväskylä region. It was found out that, there are 42 principals in Jyväskylä, and 22 are women and 20 men. Out of the 22 female principals, five female principals were selected. They were contacted by emails in November. The aim of this email was to introduce the

researcher and briefly explain the research project. If the participant should adhere to this email, it means she will be considered for the study and vice versa.

This study employed purposive sampling. As suggested by Merriam (1998, p. 83), the crucial factor is not the number of participants, but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, it was important to be intentional when determining the criteria used to select participants. The overall criteria for the selection of the participants included: 1) because the goal of this study was to explore female leadership, the first Criteria, being female, was a required characteristic; 2) those female principals who were willing to participate in the interview; and 3) those female principals who had held their present position for at least one year. This length of time allowed the respondents to become familiar with the organization's culture and to address questions that pertained to their ability to promoting an enabling environment as well as their ability to lead.

This choice was further motivated by the conviction that I have increased my knowledge about this field of study by reading extensively, coupled with my background knowledge in women and gender studies and educational leadership. Thus the selection of the interviewees was restricted to experience female principals. As cited in Kruger (1988, p. 150), "looking for those who have had experiences necessary for the phenomena to be researched" within the phenomenon under study.

3.5 Data collection

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. From the secondary data, it was the related literature viewed by different authors on female leadership. On the other hand, primary data was gotten through the use of interview guide. These questions were the interviewer's self-administered interview. The interview was structured in two parts namely; the background questions and the life experiences questions. This data was purely collected from the 10th to the 22nd of January 2015. Most

of the interviews were conducted during school hours. These interviews were collected on the days when the participants were available to be interviewed.

Qualitative data can be carried out in four different dimensions: interviews, observation, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2007, p. 129-130; Patton, 2002, p. 4). I found in-depth unstructured or open-ended interviews appropriate because I wanted an interactive way to collect my data. According to Babbie & Mouton, (2001, p. 33). This technique allows objectivity from the perspective of the subject. The study had a rich data because interviewing “can reach the parts which other methods cannot reach” (Wellington, 2000, p. 73). More to that, interviewing is regarded as “a flexible tool” because it can collect the data through “multi-sensory channels, verbal, nonverbal, spoken and heard” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 349). Worthy to note is that, there are various types of interviews. Since the purpose of this study was to explore the women leaders’ experiences, beliefs and perceptions about leadership, in-depth unstructured or open-ended interviews were employed to generate the data.

An interview in actual sense is a face-to-face conversation with one or more participants with the intention to get information for a study (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2003, p. 94-95). The data was collected through individual interviews. Interview participants were 5 in total and all female. Though interviewing is a powerful instrument; it is advised that researchers use it with caution because of its shortcomings. Initially, bias is likely to occur as a result of “the researcher’s perceptions and interpretations” of the data (Wellington, 2000, p. 73). Again, the data might fall short where there is power imbalance in the relation between the interviewer and the interviewee where the researcher is found in a more powerful position that “defines and controls the situation” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). In this situation, bias can easily occur especially when interviewees are children.

Interviews permit the researcher to gain knowledge, experiences, and the participants own viewpoint of the phenomenon under study. As sited in Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 28) through this mode “the researcher tries to see through the eyes of the participant - standing in their shoes”. In the course of interviews, the researcher also

pays close attention to the participants' facial expression, intentions, descriptions of the subject's meanings. The above assertion ties in with Babbie and Mouton's (2001, p. 33) and Patton's (2002, p. 5) assertion that an interview is incomplete if it entails just asking questions.

Before the interview, I pilot tested one of my participants. A pilot test according to Turner, (2010, p. 757), is an important component in preparing for an interview. Researchers are compelled to use people who are interested in what the researcher seeks to study for the pilot test just as the potential interviewees. Pilot testing is important because it offers the researcher the opportunity to see if there are mistakes in his/her research questions and research instrument in order to fix them beforehand. My participant for the pilot testing advised me to delete some questions which were very much similar in order to avoid repetition and waste of time. She also cautioned me of my African ascent, to try to make it understandable, since I was going to interview typical Europeans. Last but not the least she told me to allow enough time for my participant to answer the questions because Finns think about the questions posed carefully before answering. I took all the advice in to consideration during the actual interview. All in all, it permitted me to fine-tune my questions and to consider the length of time that was apt for each interview. My interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. I did individual interviews involving 5 Finnish female leaders.

The research data was collected in January (2015) and the process lasted two weeks. Dr. Seppo, my supervisor helped me to get the participants. I made preliminary communication by sending emails to my participants and they all confirmed the various date for the interview. Prior to the interview, I obtained the following documents from the Institute of Educational Leadership: first, a letter of acknowledgement establishing that I was a fulltime Master's degree student at the Institute; second, a research permit request letter that expounded the purpose of the study so as to gain access to the research site and informed consent. Worthy of note, is the ethical considerations that were exercised before, during and after the interview. The researcher also guaranteed their confidentiality and anonymity in the research

during the individual interviews. They were conscious of the fact that an audio recorder was being used during the interviews. My interviews were audio-recorded alongside taking some important notes. The questions were open ended questions to give freedom to the interviewees to describe at length and also the researcher made use of follow-up questions (Creswell 2007, p. 61, and Lester 1999, p. 2). As a phenomenological research seeking for life experiences, most of the questions started with “What”, “How”, and “Would” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 12). Example of the questions asked were: What is an enabling environment for female leadership in Finnish Comprehensive schools? How do these factors influence your leadership roles in school? Would you please share with me your experiences of challenges you have been facing within and outside school since you became a principal?

During the interview sessions, the researcher tried as much as possible to restrict biases by intentionally suppressing any information that was obtained before the interviews so as to understand things from the interviewees point of view, and to “grasp the real nature of things” (Lester 1999, p. 2; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26; Van Manen 1990, p. 77; Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 189). Bracketing (Wertz, 2005, p. 168; Creswell 2007, p. 62) was also observed by overlooking information that had been obtained before the interview. At the end of every interview, the recorded information was uploaded onto my computer and saved with each file name labeled P1, P2 respectively. This made it much easier to find and listen to the recorded interviews during the transcription phase. Because female leadership in Finland is so common in almost every aspect of the society, therefore, I wanted to understand the enabling factors that led women to this leadership position and what they have been doing to keep rising. The research data were transcribed, notes were organized and both analyzed following qualitative analysis.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a very important section in the research and thus needs to be considered at an early stage of the study. In the words of Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 201) “data analysis is the process of moving from raw interviews to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundation for published reports”. Given that this was qualitative study, the researcher employed a thematic approach to analyze the descriptive data.

The following authors (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, p. 140) posited that, data analysis is about finding a method or methods to dig out what we view to be valuable in the data that was collected. According to these authors, this process entails downsizing the data, giving recognition to important themes, grouping them and presenting the findings in the best reasonable way that would be of great interest to readers. According to Maykut & Morehouse, (2005, p. 112) data analysis is the process of describing the meaning of people’s words and actions. Sudweeks & Simoff, (1999, p. 33) corroborated this definition by saying that, it is a fundamental aspect of the qualitative analysis.

It is worth noting that, before the commencement of data analysis, the researcher has to familiarize him or herself with the information at hand through repetitive readings to view some particular words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subject’s thinking modes, and outstanding recurrent events that relate to the subject matter under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 173). This process allows the data analyst to come out with a coding system to make interpretation a lot easier.

3.6.1 Thematic data analysis

According to Braun & Clarke, (2006, p. 79); Attride-Sterling, (2001, p. 387), thematic analysis involves the recognition, the analysis and presentation of data. Still in the same trend, Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas (2013, p. 400) said that thematic analysis has a descriptive approach which is based on “...identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns

(themes) within data". According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) this approach helps to describe the phenomenon under study. This approach is similar to the content analysis as suggested by Cohen et al. (2007). As pointed out by Ezzy (2002), the author claims that content analysis begins with predetermined categories whereas in thematic analysis, "categories are 'induced' from the data" (p. 88). Thematic analysis is mostly used in a qualitative data. It can also be termed "grounded theory" because it develops the theory inductively (Mutch 2005, p. 177). Ezzy (2002) confirms Mutch (2005) claims and posited that both content and thematic analysis employ similar techniques to analyze data but grounded theory entails "theoretical sampling in which emerging analysis guides the collection of further data" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 87).

Thematic analysis is a perfect choice for this study for not only does it possess several advantages, it especially allows for a great degree of flexibility and permits the novice researcher that I am to learn and apply qualitative analysis within a short period of time. As Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 83-84) propound is flexible and can be used in inductive and deductive methodologies. Both authors further explain that the inductive approach involves moving from the specific to the general as the whole process of coding the data emerges from the data itself. This style is called the data-driven form of the thematic analysis. In contrast, the deductive approach is theoretical driven and moves from the general to the specific. Finally, thematic analysis was employed in this study because it presents a clear and simple picture of my entire results and findings and for readers to easily see what has been achieved and how it has been achieved.

This study initiated data-driven thematic analysis and not theory driven. According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 83-84.) data-driven thematic analysis gives a richer description of the data than theoretical analysis. The first initial steps that were taking in the data analysis were the familiarization process. The Familiarization started from the interactive interviews I conducted for data collection. I began my data analysis by playing the audio-recorded over and over and thoroughly listening to my data before putting them into manuscript. Note should be taken that, it is not necessary to tackle the data analysis process immediately because it is important to listen to the

audio-recorded data several times, read the collected data several times to know it well and then conduct a comparison of both data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 172). I excluded irrelevant materials that were not important for my studies. This study employed Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 50) style of data analysis which states that “the direct tape recordings can undergo processing whereby the researcher for example listens to the recording, takes down notes, makes extracts, makes discernments or makes categorizations to reflect some ranking or grading”. I listened to the tap several times, and incorporated relevant ideas from the notes I jotted down during the interviews into the transcribed data and actually read the whole data carefully while noting down important themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

The next step involves the coding of data. Kerlinger (1970) defines coding “as the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories” (cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 369). Another point to consider is that categories, themes and concepts can be predetermined by reading the literature under study or, during the analysis process, by reading the initial transcripts. As suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 391), after transcribing and reading the interview transcripts, the text that illustrated and fit any of the outlined themes was highlighted and coded. Similar codes were grouped to form another theme. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested that themes and concepts should be systematically examined, grouping and comparing them, and seeking patterns and their linkages. As stated by Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2008, p. 83) The first step in coding entails viewing important moments of the phenomenon, coding them and identifying themes that arrived from the data themselves. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the analyst can use tables, mind-maps or theme-piles to organize the coded data into themes.

To ease my work, I coded the themes from the lowest order themes to the super ordinate themes using different colors to show their importance to each category (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). I used blue colour on the most important global themes, red colour coding for organizing themes, and grey colour coding was for basic themes. In the next phase, I went through the selected themes and refined the themes which might

need to be integrated or separated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Repetitive readings was carried out in the entire set of data to make sure the themes can answer the research questions and no data have been missed, or else, further recoding is required until a satisfactory thematic map is attained. In the following phase, the themes are defined and named. The researcher ensures each theme tells a story which fits into the overall story that the researcher is telling about the data, and the theme must be related to the research questions. Also the themes should not overlap too much and they should be captivating (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The concluding stage involves writing up a report in a manner that “convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The subsequent chapter presenting the findings and discussion describes the context of the thematic analysis respectively; global themes, organizing themes and basic themes. Important quotations from the interviews were incorporated in the discussion to give it credibility. (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 393).

4 RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Chapter four focuses on the presentation of the results and discussion that emerged from the data analyzed. In order to elicit the answers to the main research problem, how an enabling environment in Finland promotes female leadership in schools, the following three research questions was used: 1. What Factors promote an enabling environment for Finnish Female principals? 2. How do women perform on core aspects in educational leadership? 3. Are there challenges faced by female principals and; how to overcome them? With regards to these, the research interviews were conducted in the form of open-ended interview questions, which was found to be the most appropriate tool to collect qualitative data through individual interviews because it allows the researcher to place further questions.

Among the ethical consideration exercised throughout this study, one of them was an agreement not to mention the names of the interviewees. I had five individual interviews involving principals/headmasters serving as leaders in their various schools. I refer to the five interviewees from the different schools as principals: P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 respectively. It is worth to mention that my primary motive was to interview only the five female principals, to see what they had to say about their experiences in leading a school. Thus the reason why the entire findings from the data analysis came from them. Another important factor is that direct quotations that emanated from the data are referenced by using the label of the corresponding interviewee that provided the information. Following the research questions, the results or findings of the study are reported and discussed under the following main Themes: modalities of becoming a principal, factors that promote female leadership, impacts and challenges of female principles, and suggestions on strengthening and improving female leadership.

4.1 Modalities of becoming a principal

When the informants were asked to tell the story of their leadership, surprisingly enough, they all had similar stories. Some discussed their educational background leading to their professional career where as others discussed just their career paths. Some of the questions asked also required them to explain at length their leadership approach and leadership philosophy.

Principal went on retirement

According to Madsen (2008), the women in her study did not seek leadership Positions, on a positive note they were excellent at their jobs and were recognized by others as a result of their work and work ethic. Per the data analysis of this study, three women had similar experiences. The three women explicitly stated that originally they did not see themselves as leaders as emphasized they were recommended by their colleagues to become principals because of their work-ethic and ability to lead, maintain and to promote a suitable learning environment.

Four of the participants, P1, P2, P3, and P5, explained that they became principles because the principle went on retirement. Thus they did not intentionally seek principal positions in school, but were encouraged by their colleagues to assume the post. They all like the job and also like organization. Four of these participants were vice-principals before becoming a principle and just P5 was a mere teacher. P2 described her story of becoming principle first as:

Somehow by assisting, our former principal went on retirement and we had to find someone to continue his job and nobody in this School wanted to do the job, so I said I should take opportunity. (P2).

From the explanations giving by P2, one could claim that it was some sort of a situational leadership. Situational leadership approach was developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969a) and in Northouse (2013). They both specify what leaders need to do in applying the situational leadership model properly. A good leader must: specify the

task and the objectives, define the appropriate leadership style, evaluate the result of the leadership intervention, and define follow-up and treat the people base on readiness. An effective leader is a person who easily adapts his or her styles to suits the new circumstances of the situation.

The school principal actually asked me to work with him, and he sought of persuaded me, please, start to work with me.... Actually I never wanted to be a principal, it just happened like everything else in life. (P3)

According to P5, she was a very young teacher when her colleagues encouraged her to take the principal position.

Ok, in the beginning, I was a pretty young teacher; I was 32 years old, just suddenly my colleagues askedare you interested in this Position? Because we see a lot of potentials in you and the Principal was retiring... so I agreed. (P5)

Qualifications

According to (the Constitution of Finland, 2012, p. 1-3), all teachers must have a master degree in Art. All the five participants were highly qualified with lifelong experience in teaching. With one having PhD. Most of the teachers were vice-principals before taking the principal post. In Finland, principals are called teaching principals because they do teach. It is also interesting to know that, there are no special requirements for female principals thus it is the same requirements as men who aspires becoming principals. Global Gender Gap Report (2013, p. 9).

(P1) I studied school law, salary things and leadership to become a Principal.

(P2) I have been a school teacher for 10years, and 12years as a Principal... it was in 1992, and the rules were a little bit different, we did not Need this kind of masters certificates, because I have been so many years as a Teacher, it was enough for the school leader's job.

(P3) I have studied in the Institute of Educational Leadership and made a degree there and of course I have my Masters degree from the university before I became a Teacher.

(P4) There is no legal difference from males. You have to have a Masters degree and work experience which, you must first be a teacher before being principal.

(P5) Also you need to have Masters Degree, be ambitious and have time for this job.

When asked to recount what they went through to become a principal, some of the participants said there has been a big change right now because at first in the 90s, there were only few female principals in Jyvaskyla. The obvious choice was always male, with teachers being females and principals being male. This is what Nesbit and Seeger (2007, p. 21), called overt gender discrimination. Recently in Finland, it does not matter if you are a man or woman to occupy leadership positions. Several informants attested to the fact that, women are more emotional and think a lot before taking decisions in following a life career unlike men who just go for it. On the other hand, it is a good thing, because research has shown that one of the characteristic to be a good leader is to be sensitive towards your followers. Female leadership styles are seen as more transformational; nurturing, more caring, focusing on a win-win situation as well as the larger context (i.e., the school) (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fine, 2009). On the contrary Masculine leadership styles tend to be characterized as more transactional. Thus women are like mothers when leading schools and like a mother they do a lot for their teachers and pupils unlike men who see themselves as directors and give directions.

Leadership philosophy

A leader is a key factor of any organization or a team that he/she belongs to. Leader should carry certain virtues that distinguish him/her from the organization or a group in spite of a member of it. All the informants stressed *lead by example* as their leadership philosophy (see mica). This included passion for others, serve people, patience, having the right qualifications and honesty and transparency. Nelson and Quick (1985) confirmed the above suggestion by saying that female mentors are very crucial because they act as role models to their protégés and thus need to show good example to them.

P2 mentioned that, her leadership philosophy entails good behavior in every situation, being ethical; friendly and do just the right things at the right time. Thus personal leadership has to be good because you are an example to others. Other interesting leadership philosophy mentioned were communication skills; listen keenly to others, and courage to accept mistakes because everybody makes mistake and to collaborate genuinely with different groups around the school and with the administration.

Leadership strategies

The participants in this study shared several leadership strategies. These women sought to create a positive work environment. They had job satisfaction and wanted those with whom they work to be as happy. They worked hard in creating a conducive atmosphere where people want to come to work every day, and be recognized for their contributions. The method by which these women implemented their strategic planning was through their self-awareness and understanding of their core values. All the five participants were intentional about including their employees in the decision-making process of the school. They worked very hard were to ensure that their expectations were being met. All the participants mentioned having regular meetings with their employees, and also rewarding appropriate behavior. Also, they acknowledge the fact that it was practically impossible for them to know everything, thus they often relied on the expertise of others. They involved others in the strategic planning of the school curriculum and other important decisions concerning the school believing that if peoples' opinions are heard, they will helped create the goals and objectives and this will contribute to the success of the school.

To conclude, all the five participants mentioned in this study incorporated different leadership style into their leadership strategies. From the interviews, the leaders led their schools based on their values and personalities thus, sought to "walk the talk". The leaders were all conscious of their own preferences toward leadership; however, they were very flexible with their style, because time and situation could influence their decisions and thus have to follow the trend of change, which happens all

the time. P3 described this as her leadership style. She explained that there are times when one has to be soft towards a situation and times where one has to be hard as a leader. P3 further explained that it was her role and responsibility to be aware of which style is the most appropriate to use in a given situation.

Leadership approach

The data analysis established that the leadership commitments reported in this study are integral part of leadership. Teaching and administration were mentioned by all principals. The principal acts both as an administrator and school manager. They each have their personal values and participate in school events. They are good in risk taking and problem solving, they resolves internal matters of the school amicably with justice. They also have the ability to influence other teachers' behaviors by showing a hard working example in school. They trust the teachers and supervise them to work harder. They have a supportive behavior; they listen to the teachers' opinion. In Northouse (2013, p. 13), the function of a manager is to provide order and consistency to organization, whereas the primary function of a leader is to produce change and movement in the organization. Besides being a leader, the participants are also good manager. They are responsible to establish agendas, set timetables, allocate resources, make job placement and develop incentives to motivate teachers. The principals also have substantial teaching commitment. They teach, manage and lead the schools. They also attend meetings and professional development events on behalf of the school. They prioritize teaching and learning ahead of management and administration for school improvement.

In addition to this, P2 and P5 emphasized that, they virtually do every thing in the school starting by handling the pupils, which is their primary motive. Next they also lead two schools simultaneously. One big school and the other small school which is quite close. All the principals agreed that they do hold meetings with teachers to hear their points of view concerning how they can best develop the school. More to that, the Principals attested to the fact that, they do motivate their teachers by words of

encouragement and at times with gifts. P2 also said that one of her leadership commitment is to have knowledge about management so as to share the salary well and be quite strict with it. She further stressed the fact that honesty and transparency is the most important of all because when dealing with human beings, one has to be honest and treat people equally (the Constitution of Finland, 2012, p. 1-3). In addition, P5 said she also does the recruitment at school, she has curriculum responsibility, for example she provides in-service training for teachers and she also attends principal's meetings.

4.2 Enabling environment

This paragraph, examines the definitions of enabling environment through the eyes of the Finnish principals from the comprehensive school. The main research question is, *what Factors promote an enabling environment for Finnish Female principals?* The definitions of an enabling environment that were given by the interviewees provided an important inside into how they view the conceptual framework of enabling environment with regards to female leadership. The findings revealed that initial definitions of enabling environment fall into various dimensions from the interviewees' point of views. Culture, gender equality, good social system, more female teachers, education, networking, and job satisfaction were mentioned by all the informants in their definitions.

The data analysis established that, in Finland, the environment is safe for all. One of the strongest factors that promote female leadership in Finland is the *Finnish constitution*. The Constitution of Finland is the official comprehensive document which addresses the fundamental democratic principles. First, the Finnish children and young people have the right to be heard and involved in decisions that affect their lives. Second, the Finnish Constitution protects the freedom of opinions, of choice, of convention etc., which refer to personal liberty. Third, Finnish democracy advocates social justice based on the principle of equality in economic, religious, gender and social issues and by ensuring the safeguard of human rights (the Constitution of Finland,

2012, p. 1-3). Thus, one can say with certainty that the democracy in the Finnish context is about citizens' participation based on liberty and social justice where the women folk is an equal part of the Finnish democratic society.

In discussing the data analysis, *culture* in this study, falls under the Finnish constitution. Culture is defined as the learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols and traditions that are common to a group of people. It is these shared qualities of a group that make them unique. Culture is dynamic and transmitted to others. Gudy Kunst & Ting-Toomey, (1988). Culture is the way people perform everyday routines and work in the organization. Culture is the way how an organization solves problems to achieve its goals and to sustain itself. Culture gives life to structure. Kilman, (1985). Thus the Finish culture embraces the above criteria of culture and makes it very easy for everyone to operate in the society without biases. Likewise Organizational behavior and culture are strongly determined by the basic assumptions of organizational members. School begins with change in leadership culture. Culture is extremely powerful, good culture matches with new strategies. This is in line with (Thindwa, 2001) who states that, an enabling environment can be broadly defined as, a set of interconnected conditions such as legal, organizational, informational, fiscal, political, and cultural factors that influence the ability of individuals to develop and perform in a sustained and successful manner.

As mentioned by the participants, it is obvious that a good cultural climate promotes good learning outcomes. The climate presents the internal and external state of the school. Finnish schools have a conducive environment for learning; qualified staff, good class size, good sanitary conditions, health unit and clean drinking water. In general, Lobel (1999) posits that organization culture is among the factors that are central to promote a supportive work environment. This is further reinforced by van Vianen and Fisher (2002) who finds that organizations are based on norms, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions, which in turn influence organizational practices, tacit norms, and values. Putting it in context Bajdo and Dickson (2001) seek to establish that organizations that maintain cultures that promote gender equity are more likely to have

an increasing number of women in leadership positions as in Finland where several women hold leadership positions. A school is a moral organization with structure. "Structures are distributions of people among social positions that influence the role relations among people, (Blau, 1974)". A good school structure should be flexible and adaptive to change. Structure help to define settings where power is exercised. It is important because it produces organizational outcomes and goals. It makes work easier. In Finnish schools, there is a good relationship between the principal and teachers, principal and student, and teachers and students. Teachers interact well with their colleagues. A teacher's meeting is held at least once in a week; teachers are giving the opportunity to express themselves concerning the management of the school.

A principal's job is to combine strategy and culture. Principal create cultures and one of the most important issues in leadership is creating and developing the organizational culture. Echoed by all the five participants, some of the cultural dimensions practiced in the studied schools are based on performance orientation, in-group collectivism, assertiveness, future orientation and human orientation. (Northouse, 2013, p. 383).

The Finnish environment and culture promote female leadership; there are good structural and internet facilities. As mentioned by P1, "We have the same salary as male teachers and the salary is quite encouraging. There is no difference if you are a man or woman to do the headmasters job, all the same you are respected". This assertion is contrary to the empirical studies carried out by Wolfram, Mohr, & Schyns (2007), who investigated 81 leaders and 121 followers from 34 German organizations and found that female leaders receive less professional respect from their followers than their male leaders.

In addition, P4 mentioned that leadership in Finland is some kind of a cultural thing, because there are so many female teachers, so it is quit natural of them being principals. She further mentioned that what actually led to female leadership is that women have gained more courage and also that the post of the principal has changed, (Eagly & Carli, 2003). As P4 observed, *"It's no more like the big leader; it's more like seroing the school community... It's not such a good job as it used to be 20 years ago."* This point

shows that leadership in school, especially at the comprehensive level, is more of a servant leadership than autocratic. Since women are known to be soft because of their gender upbringing, they are termed to be better servants than men who are stereotypically viewed as autocratic. Women's leadership styles are seen as more transformational—more caring, nurturing, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context (i.e., the organization, community or country) (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fine, 2009). Masculine leadership styles tend to be characterized as more transactional (information, power or service in exchange for cooperation or participation) or autocratic and hierarchical (Eagly & Carli, 2003). This throws more light to why there are so many female principals in Finland. P3 mentioned that Finland in the early years encouraged women to be teachers since teaching was regarded as a feminine job. Presently teaching is a very prestigious job and as there are more female teachers than men it is just but normal to find more female principals especially with the Finnish level of gender awareness. Markkola (2011). Although the Finnish culture promotes gender equality, P5 stated that she has experienced some few cases where she was disrespected as a principal because she is a woman. Such cases are very rare. As mentioned by P2, 20 years ago, there were 33 principals in Jyvaskyla city and only five of them were female. Presently there are more female principals because this job is not very nice anymore and not very well paid. As a result to this, men seek refuge for well paid jobs rather than becoming principals. All in all, the participants have created a productive culture base on mutual respect and trust to enable a better school environment in achieving learning outcomes.

Shapiro and Olgiati (2002), said that, countries in the developed world, organizational and government policies are serious to achieving gender equity in the workplace and to contributing to women's advancement. According to P5, there has been greater *gender awareness* in Finland. Per data analysis, there has been a general rule change from the 90's to the 21's centuries. (Eargly & Carli, 2003). This is because not only do they have female leaders in school, but according to google search, Finland has had a female president, and Prime Minister. Tarja Halonen was the first female head of

state in Finland and while she was in office, in 2003 and 2010-11, Finland also had female Prime ministers (Jäätteenmäki & Kiviniemi). Finland is also having company leaders who are women and all these changes happened at the same time when there were changes at school. *"Nowadays gender does not matter... in fact when we meet in meetings with other male principals we are all professionals"* (P5) observed. Still in line with the long history of gender awareness, data analyzed demonstrated that, there has been a strong history of women who fought for the rights of women in Finland in the 1920s. (Markkola (2011). This means that before this époque, Finland like most of the other countries especially Africa also witnessed gender inequality. As earlier mentioned, P1 corroborated the fact that, it was only after this fight for women's right that Finland ever witnessed a female president and prime minister. P1 went further to buttress the fact that, though women have equal rights as men, women are not similar to men because women are sensitive, so because of this it is not easy to be hard and tough. Surprisingly enough what used to be considered as a weak trait in leadership which is empathy is nowadays a good thing. This is because as a leader one needs to be able to understand and feel the pains of his/her followers. Since women are empathetic, this is one of the reasons why women are in high positions in leadership. (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fine, 2009).

Also in regards to gender equality, Finland is more advanced in female leadership than countries like Spain, Britain, and Netherlands who according to the global rankings (2014), are reported to be amongst the 1st top 10 countries in breaching their gender gap. Females are quite respected as a leader, the Finnish policy of equity and equality is very much practiced. P3 mentioned that *"many visitors coming from Asia and Africa were surprised to see a young female principal like me."* There are no barriers in women's way to get to leadership position in schools.

I have met headmasters from Spain, Britain, Netherlands in a Couple of years back and they are having the same situation we had some years back. They are having very few female Headmasters there. So they are facing the same situation we Faced 20-30 years ago (P5).

Culturally it is not wrong to have a Female principal like in other cultures which might be awkward. It is a cultural thing. (P3)

From the analysis gathered, there are more female principal in comprehensive schools than in vocational and higher schools probably because of the technical things. This goes to buttress the fact that though Finland is more advanced in female leadership than other countries, there is still some loophole in higher leadership positions or in jobs which are stereotypically known to be a man's job. In Finland the environment is very conducive for being a principal and it is the same for everybody whether you are a female or male. As mentioned by P4, there is no distinction between a male and a Female in meetings *"and if I should notice any funny thing, I say I don't like that. Don't call me a girl for example, but they don't do that."* (P4)

Data analyzed revealed that Finnish *social system* speaks volume because it is one of the major factors that promote female leadership. Morrison et al., (1987) concluded that, the existence of an organizational support system is a vital factor that promotes women's advancement in leadership. A similar, study conducted by (Culpan & Wright, 2002) found that, organizational support system contributes to women's job satisfaction. The respondents from the various schools explained that Finnish social system connotes the process of creating an enabling environment for realization. It entails capacitating service providers, such as the family Policy, housing policy, environment policy, education policy and employment policy which have implications on the daily lives of families. Child and Family Policy in Finland (2013). The most important forms of support for families are child benefit and day-care services. One of the most important elements of the family policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2013) is reconciling paid employment and family life. The aim is to improve the possibilities of parents to spend time with their children, to make working easier. The social system makes it possible for women to be principals and having a family by providing social benefits. Thus there is little or no pressure from outside that you cannot be a principal

when you are having babies. The choice is always yours if you will be able to handle both. The social system provides maternity allowances and is possible for principals to have them too. Some of the social benefits mentioned by the principals were, maternity allowances, day-care centers for children, financial support for having kids, and last but not the list, you can study and work even as a mother. *“The society helps women who are working by providing day-care Centers, which support one to study and work when having a baby. I think that too is good. (P1 &P2).”*

Thus, the social system goes a long way to support women who are mothers to work and even climb to leadership positions. In his study Catalyst (1998) found that a major factor contributing to women’s retention and development within organizations is the implementation of work-family programs and the creation of environments that are supportive for women. At first, family was one of the greatest obstacles for women to aspire to leadership positions because women always prioritized family over work, because of their nurturing attitude. Because of these women could not handle leadership positions which required so much time. Presently with the evolution of daycare centers, and trustworthiness of the teachers, and safe environment, female principals can go to work and carry out their activities peacefully knowing their children are in safe hands. Thus the system is enabling for women to be leaders. *“During the years, I had three kids and almost all the time, I have been working and studying. (P3).”*

Majority of the interviewees said that they were above 40years old and did not need such benefits because their children were all grown-ups. But have used it when they were teachers. P1 mentioned that *“teachers had shorter days at work and I could be with them at home. As a principal I spend more time at school, I have to be the last to leave the ship.”* A close analysis of this study shows that, most women prefer having their babies when they are teachers, and still get to enjoy all the social benefits. As per the interviewees, it is good to have your babies when you are a teacher because teachers have shorter time to spend at school where as principal’s job entails so much commitment and time constraint. *“I think most female principals I know are like 40-50s so they have made their babies*

and they have been teachers then and when their children are a bit older, then they start applying for the principal's post." (P4) Principals also take vacation to release stress.

Thus even with the availability of daycare centers, as a nursing principal, you will need extra support with children probably from your family so as to meet up with the demands of the principal's duties. Talking about the internal factors that promote enabling environment, P3 mentioned that staffs and teachers are very important in the environment. This can only happen when the leader is in good relationship with them, trust and respect each and everyone regardless of their gender.

Another important factor mentioned was *Education*. All five participants that took part in this study were of the viewpoint that education plays a key role in creating an environment that enables female leadership. Their perceptions correspond to what Fox et al (2002, p. 1-7) described as the role of the state. Education system is open to all with no segregation of women. (The Constitution of Finland, 2012, p. 1-3). As we all know education is a prerequisite to create a suitable atmosphere to learn about democracy and a governance system. Education is equally important to learn about decisions made by power holders and their effect on human being (MwolloNtallima, 2011, p. 18). There is a significant need for leaders in the world to consider women's needs and wants when deciding on political and economic decisions. Karine and Sarah (2013).

A keen observation in the Finnish education system shows that there are more female students than male students. Thus, with girls having better education than boys, it is obvious to find more females in leadership positions. (Ropers-Huilman, 2003). Nowadays, it does not matter if you are a man or a woman to be a principal. What is considered are; the qualifications, work experience and ambition for the job.

When we think about higher education, there are more female students than male students. The young boys are not interested to further their studies. When we think of something like universities I think there is something like 60% girls and 40% boys and this holds same in comprehensive schools. (P5)

Moreover, the number of female principals in Finland is increasing. This is because there are many good schools and teachers in Finland. Most of the teachers are women.

According to P1:

Finland has a very good situation if I think of other countries... in Finland we have long study time, we need to study for about 4-5 years to become a teacher... and our teachers are very professional. Thus it goes to showcase the reasons why there should be a lot of female principals. (P1)

Next, *networking* also stands out as one of the most influential factors that contribute to female leadership in Finland. Hadfield, Jopling, Noden, O'Leary, & Stott (2006, p. 5) define networks as "groups or systems of interconnected people and organizations (including schools) whose aims and purposes include the improvement of learning and aspects of well-being known to affect learning". The definition by Hadfield et al. (2006, p. 5) is suitable for this study because the authors stress on a network functioning for the reciprocity of learning among the actors. Thus the purpose of adapting this definition to this study, is because networks is a means for the female principals to exchange ideas, benefit from sharing of ideas, and also to co-construct knowledge that will be used in the future. All the participants mentioned that they get support from colleagues through networking. They also receive support from the municipality. They ask for help from other colleagues when they face difficulties and through networking, the other colleagues collectively present new ideas how to solve the problems.

According to P1, group discussion is a very vital instrument when it comes to continuous learning. *"I read all the time, I have joined a group leadership management program here in Jyvaskyla with other principal and they discuss with you about leading."* As per P2, she learns new computer programs and also takes part in conferences so as to gain some knowledge in teaching and the educational system in Finland and the entire world. In line with this, P3 affirms that, she learns all the time, analyze quite strictly

and carefully all the time. *“If I think something went really good, I spend longtime to analyze the factors that led to the good results and also on the other side, if something goes bad, I analyze what was the point that led to this bad result, what should I have done differently.”* P3 also mentioned that she goes to lectures, reads books, blogs and tries to follow the current trends on leadership by attend meetings and conferences. She is also a member of the ICT in Jyvaskyla. P4 said she collaborates with different groups around the school, and defends the school’s interests from the administration and all these requires a huge amount of courage.

Trust is believed to be built over time and therefore it must be nurtured to a sufficient degree to permit any in-depth learning to occur (Håkansson, Havila & Pedersen, 1999, p. 444). Morris et al. (2006, p. 548) found that people in learning networks are at the beginning unwilling to be open and share what they know if they perceive co-actors to be rivals until such a time when a sufficient amount of trust is developed. It is observed in educational establishment that trust is very important in building networks. Child and Faulkner (1998, p. 46-47) contend that if trust prevails as part of partnerships, it will make the networking more authentic, decrease the necessity to devote time and energy to monitoring the other partner, and help the partner to invest his/her attention and energy into realizing longer-term results of benefit to both partners. Thus trust is indispensable for effective networked learning to occur.

A very crucial factor that contributes to women’s advancement in leadership roles includes mentors and access to networks (Morrison et al., 1987). Some informants noted that during the last 30years, the government has been encouraging female leaders to take some research courses and creating networks so as to empower them. This is in line with Muijs et al. (2010, p. 7), who defines the present nature of network goals in education as concerning the realization of raising the performance of schools, expanding opportunities, and resource sharing. In addition, there are also some colleagues who encourage others to become principals. P3, P4, & P5 added that, great involvement of parents in schools is another form of networking that improves on school development.

Support from family and friends were also mentioned as a humanistic factor. Principals need help with children especially when their husband is having a demanding job as well. You cannot say at school, *"sorry I have to live now because I have to go take my children from the day-care center"* says P1. This insight supports Helgesen's (1990) findings that family and friends were important aspects of female leaders' lives, in addition to their career. Some of the informants said that they are now principals because their parents gave them the best education. In Finland parents encourage their children to get good education regardless of your gender. P4 mentioned that *"I think the internal factor is my own family how they support my work, which is very important"*. Despite support from friends and family, some participants claimed that there is lack of community support.

This could be very challenging especially when you are a new headmaster. The government believes that you have a master's degree, therefore means you should know everything or better still find out things by yourself. (P5).

In view of their personal efforts to promoting an enabling environment, majority of the interviewee dwelt on person to person discussion with staff; motivate them to trusting themselves in doing a good job. Burt (1992, 1998), Catalyst (1990), and Tharenou (1999), concluded that women rely on networking with other women to advance to high leadership levels. According to Burt (1998), networking provides women with more information and options that they would otherwise be exposed to. In actual sense, networking provides women the opportunity to strengthen ties with prospective sponsors.

Some of the interviewees brought out the *qualities and strategies of a good leader* which also influences an enabling environment for school activities. Just to name a few; sensitivity, knowledge and skills, experience, charisma, ethics, transparency and honesty were listed as some of the qualities that make a good leader. Thus creating a positive work environment was very important to these women's leadership strategies. They mentioned that since people spend more time and energy at work, it is imperative

for them to have a positive environment, to facilitate work. According to P1, experience is very important because *“if I have worked 20years at school, I think I know a lot about school, if I came straight to principal, I never had been a teacher, is not that good.”* Experience they say is the best teacher. Thus having such number of years of experience in teaching is a good remark for one to be promoted to leadership positions regardless of gender. According to P3, a good leader must possess good communication skills; know how to talk and listen to others. She also posited that *“personal leadership has to be good because you are an example to others.”* (P3 echoed these sentiments and it was clear that good personal leadership is a high priority for her because it also fosters a positive environment. P4 mentioned that *“power is in the relationships.”* Thus she strives to remain nice and maintain a positive attitude, even when faced with a difficult situation.

All the five participants mentioned that *“we do not have barriers for female aspiring to leadership positions.”* This is a very strong assertion which goes to prove that, there is gender equality in Finland, which stands out as the most enabling factor for female leadership. In Finland, it is not a question about your gender but, it is a question about your personality; how you treat others as your colleagues and that’s how they relate to you, how professional you are and how reliable. All in all, gender does not really count, what matters is the persons output.

4.3 Impact and challenges of female leadership

The participants displayed the perceptions that leadership as a concept depends on the personality and not the gender, (Dobbins & Platz, 1986; Engen, Leeden, & Willemsen, 2001; Powell, 1990). As a matter of fact, leadership depends on the person. Women can be as good and as bad, so do men. The most important leadership qualities are charisma, knowledge and skills. The findings of this study show that women performances on core aspects in educational leadership support the school climate. However, these benefits also come with some challenges being a principal and at the same time considering their gender as female leaders.

4.3.1 Impact of female leadership

The research results indicated that, there is a particular touch in women bearing leaders. These include the following: Motherly commitment, Honesty and transparency, Leadership skills/ lead by example, Positive perceptions from staff, Support staff/ regular group meeting.

Motherly commitment

According to the five participants mentioned in this study, motherly commitment creates a relationship that is mutually beneficial to the entire school. Women experience work-family interface in a positive way through the benefits and enriching properties of both work and family and the effects that both realms simultaneously have on each other (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). P4 insinuated that, women take things seriously probably because of their motherhood, and see in to it that everybody is fine. Their primary occupation is the welfare of every one on campus. This is because if the mind is not well-balanced, it will be difficult to teach or learn in school. Thus they make sure the school environment is friendly and safe for all. Besides that, P4 reiterated that women are emotional and take people's problems to heart. Female leaders are quite different from male leaders, as postulated by (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fine, 2009). Women's leadership styles are seen as more transformational – more caring, nurturing, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context, whereas Masculine leadership styles tend to be characterized as more transactional (information, power or service in exchange for cooperation or participation) or autocratic and hierarchical.

In addition, P3, P2 & P5 perceived teaching and leadership in school as an extension to women's work. This is because, most female leaders are mothers and like mothers, they know best how to handle children and any situation that arises in school because of their home experiences. I contend Ruderman et al. (2002) claims that the roles present in women's personal lives psychologically enhance their effectiveness in their productive

roles. Specifically, multitasking, emotional abilities, interpersonal skills, and leadership activities embedded in women's personal spheres has a positive influence into her profession. This means that multitasking provides some people with more energy, rather than exhaust one's energy. *"I take care of the students' welfare, so I have a lot of meetings with that."* P3.

P3 was of the view that, women are more in with their emotion, and which sometimes it is a bad thing and sometime a good thing. She further added that, some female leaders could be very cold and trying to support their role as a leader by using power, because they feel unsecured being a female leader.

It was mentioned by P2 that *children welfare* is the most important objective of the school. She does everything in school, starting by handling the pupils. She leads and teaches not much. This is because in Finland teaching is compulsory for all leaders at least in the comprehensive school and upper secondary school and it is good because you can understand how it goes well for teachers and of course most important for pupils. She concluded by saying that women are emotional even in the work place where as men are autocratic. *"As I told you, I'm like a mother and they are not like a father, they are managers."* P2 observed. The above assertion ties with Groves (2005) empirical study that Female leaders scored higher on social and emotional skills. P5 concerned that women are better principals than men because you have to be very patient and sympathetic when you work with children and staffs and this is easier for females than male teachers. She added that women are more understanding than men.

Female teachers work harder than male teachers my male teachers are very good in computer arrears... They have their special arrears they are good at, but as a Whole my female teachers work much harder than male Teachers. (P5)

Emotional intelligence is indispensable to both employers and employees if only there is the need to collaborate in order to build synergy in doing their work efficiently and effectively. Several of the women discussed how having good relationships with people

have contributed to their success. P3 explained how developing relationships furthered her career and helped her achieve many of her goals. *“Good relationships open doors to new opportunities in life and foster one’s career.”* According to participant P1, there are more risks with human relationship when a man is a leader. Thus females have more good possibilities to manage people than men, *“I think is more of a female thing, but it depends on the personality.”* (P1).

In every sphere of human endeavor, for examples, education and business, human beings are involved with dealing with each other and the success that comes out of what they do is to a very large extent a function of how best they use their interpersonal skills, hence the need to understand Goleman (1998, p. 84). In evaluating, Goleman puts human capabilities in to three categories and of relevance to the foregoing discussion is “competences demonstrating Goleman such as the ability to work with others and effectiveness in leading change”. So the concept of Goleman is about the capacity to recognize our own feelings, moods and those of others who do business with us and our capability to handle our emotions and our relationships with others in the interest of a successful business in a win-win manner. In other words, Goleman (1998) affirms that it is our ability to engage in doing something with others and effectiveness in spreading changes. Deductively, Goleman encompasses such components and these are self-awareness; motivation; empathy; and social skill (Goleman 1996, 84-91).

Empathy is actually important today as a component of leadership including such reasons as the increasing use of teams; the rapid pace of globalization; and the growing need to retain talent. Knowing our emotions and being able to manage them are necessary for peaceful coexistence, personal and organizational achievements. Emotional intelligence must be our guide and guard, and must therefore be upheld in all spheres of life, especially in the working environment, this is because the very existence of an organization is to make corporate profit and boost shareholder value, and in the realm of education, it is to ensure that we are able to teach students so they graduate to solve the problems of this our coarsely societies. Oatley and Jenkkins (1996).

Support staff

Leadership style consists of the behavior pattern of a person who influences others. It includes both directives (task) behaviors and supportive (relationship) behaviors. According to the data analysis, the female principals encourage teachers to accomplish their syllabus by giving directives, establishing goals and methods of evaluation, setting time lines, defining roles and creating awareness, Karine and Sarah (2013). Like Johansson and Adams (2004, p. 5), and Fox et al (2002, p. 1-7) the participants viewed support staff as one means of creating an enabling environment for teaching. As mentioned by the informants, this involves empowering the staff, providing in-service training, awarding prizes and having meetings. *"I think in Finnish schools, it is men who need empowerment, because the Finnish female principals are so strong."* (P4). This statement is contrary to the role congruity theory of prejudice. This theory suggests that a class between female gender role and their leadership role most often lead to prejudice (Eagly & Karau, 2002) or a glass ceiling. One form of this prejudice is that, men are seen as potential candidate and more favorable than women to occupying leadership roles. Another form of prejudice is that leadership is seen as a male thing. Furthermore, most of the participants mentioned that men still do things like in the past and likewise some women. They do not want to develop their pedagogical skills. *"I bring education here at school for them to go in for in-service training program so that they cannot get away from this change."* (P4). In addition, (P4) mentioned that there are more females in the leading group and everything works out well for the common good of all.

Other participants mentioned that, it is easier for them to empower their female staffs because they are role models to other women and moreover, know the struggles of women like combining work and home situation. Nelson and Quick (1985) confirmed the above suggestion by stating that female mentors are very crucial because they act as role models to their protégés, helping them cope with discrimination, family-work balance, stereo-typing, and social isolation.

Well it is easy for me because I am a woman myself I know the struggles of women, like combining work and home situation, taking care of the sick kids, studying... I think I can feel their pains because I have been there, and I am one of them, that is why I can help them ... share their Feelings, and sometimes give some good advice on what they should do. (P3)

According to P2, & p5 both the leaders and the staffs *support* each other. Eagly and Carli, (2003). "*Am not very superior here as a leader, am one of them, they know that.*" P2 observed. Just like the other informants responded, P5 mentioned that she encourages talented female teachers to take the principal studies and also have individual meetings with each member of her staffs. They also plan for the school meetings and education. This is in line with Burke (2002), who confirmed that access to education, training, and development, would support women's advancement in organizations. She also mentioned that, she encourages ladies more because from her experiences, ladies have a certain kind of nurturing nature, unlike men who are independent, dominant, strong, assertive, ambitious, and self-confident (Eagly & Mitchell, 2004). It was mentioned by P1, that both male and female teachers need support but as a leader, you have to handle them quite differently.

Positive perceptions from staff

All five participants confirmed having good relationship with their staff. They also confirmed having good remarks from staff by employing John & Jeffrey (p. 27, 1997) 360 degree feedback for school development. "*Sometimes they say I should be more autocratic, but then at same time, they thank me that I am not autocratic, because they can come to me and discuss. They are not afraid.*" (P4). According to P1, P2, P3 & and P5, they get a lot of feedback from their staffs. The informants said it is a good thing because it helps them to become better leaders. Thus they respond and react to things depending on the outcomes and feedback from the staffs. If all goes well, it is a good thing but on the contrary if something goes wrong, they sit and discuss it with the staffs to get a better option.

Well I think they see me as leader who has time for them, and a good listener who stops and listen to them. I see that very important.... I take out time for sharing with my staffs. (P3)

According to P5, her staffs, children and parents see her as a friend, so there is no matter they cannot talk with each other. Thus there is actually no difference between the leader and the staff, since the relationship is built on trust and equality which is practiced at school.

P1 was of the view that, the staffs saw her as a friendly and trustworthy person.

We are family here and we laugh very much. I am not trying to be beautiful or something I am not... they have said to me that is very nice you are what you are so we can be what we are too. (P1).

Qualities of a good leader

The leadership characteristics described in this study support previous research about women's leadership. Eagly and Carli (2003) in their study, found that Female leaders are more collaborative; communicative; relationship-oriented; seek to empower others; and address difficult situations immediately. All the five participants in this study possess what (Stodgill, 1948) terms as Physical characteristics of a leader; activity, energy; social background, social mobility; intelligence and ability, Judgment, and decisiveness, Knowledge and Fluency of speech.

All the informants agreed that as a good leader you must possess certain particularistic that distinguish your leadership from others. Next you must have the necessary qualifications and lead as an example to others. Nelson and Quick (1985). Since leadership is still very new to women, most of the participants reiterated that, they do their job with passion and even encourage young teachers to aspire becoming principals through their actions and words of encouragements.

Some of the participants saw trust and transparency as very important criteria when it comes to leadership. For trust to prevail, people have to be honest in their daily activities, respect themselves and each one another. Trust is believed to be built over

time and therefore it must be nurtured to a sufficient degree to permit any in-depth learning to occur (Håkansson, Havila & Pedersen, 1999, p. 444). It is observed in educational establishment that trust is very important in building networks. Child and Faulkner (1998, p. 46-47) contend that if trust prevails as part of partnerships, it will make the networking more authentic and thus lead an enabling environment. According to P1, you have to be very ethical, *“I mean you have to be friendly to yourself, know what is right and what is wrong and do what is right.”* Furthermore, People must do what they are obliged to do, can do and must do them within the agreed deadlines, thus trust will continue to exist. In real sense, trust and transparency are needed to ensure that the objectives of the school which is learning will be achieved. This can only happen when, the leaders are trusted, by the parents and teachers, and also when the parents trust the teachers. This provides an enabling environment for the smooth running of the school. This agrees with the claim by (Håkansson, Havila, Pedersen, 1999, p. 444).

Next, other participants mentioned **ethics** as one very important criterion for a good leader. According to the Advance Learners Dictionary, ethics are moral beliefs and rules about right and wrong. According to Johnson (2009, p. 2), an understanding of ethics begins with an analysis of values, both individual and organizational. In fact, ethics is the heart of leadership, as reflected in the title of the 1998 leadership classic by Joanne B. Ciulla. Indeed, ethics and leadership should go hand in hand. Effective managers and leaders must be aware of their values, morals, and system of ethics and ethical decision making. According to P1, an ethical leader is one who is human and can face others with an open mind. Good character and integrity are what we look for in our leaders. In fact, in their research, Kouzes and Posner (2007) as highlighted in Johnson (2009), identified honesty as the number one characteristic most identified by leaders.

I think we are very equal; we are what we are so we don't try to be something else what we are not. I am that kind of a person that I am what I am not trying to be beautiful or something I am

not. They have said to me, that is very nice you are what you are because we can be what we are too. (P1).

Employees are said to choose their work environments based on their ethical preferences and the connection of their values and those of their workplace. There must be a correlation between a sound value system and the ability of the leader to use these values in his/her decision making. Per P3, she can drop out all other things and concentrate on a teacher who is in difficulties, thus taking out time for sharing and listening is a virtue which most female principals have. From a virtue or principle based ethical perspective, if leaders, executives, and managers adhered to the six pillars of character, which include; trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, Citizenship in day to day decision making, an ethical environment might likely be created, and in turn, employees might follow. The existence of an ethical environment breeds mutual trust between employees and management. Good leaders garner trust. The most fundamental way to develop trust is through leading by example. According to P3, personal leadership has to be good because you are an example to others. Leaders must act within ethical barriers on a consistent basis in plain and full view for their constituents to see. As mentioned by P2, it is very important for a leader to be honest and just, serve people and behave very well in every situation. Transparency is critical in creating an ethical environment. The Johnson (2009, p. 3).

P4, P3 & P5, saw *communication skills* as an equally important point to be considered as a good leader. Eagly and Carli (2003). The informants mentioned that as a leader you have to listen keenly to everyone and ask good questions. It is not ethical to shoot others opinions. Thus as a good leader, one has to be able to manage relationship because the power is in the relationship. Eagly and Carli (2003). It is very important to know how to lead yourself, because if you cannot lead yourself, then you cannot lead others, thus personal leadership has to be good because you are an example to others. *"The good relationship with them, trust and respect are the most important in the*

environments." P3 observed. The informants also mentioned that, they address situations according to preference of the school.

According to P2 and P5, one of the most important qualities of a good leader is to be patient. In line with this, one has to be ready to serve everybody even when faced with difficult parents. She proceeds to say honesty and transparency are equally very important to handle people. The Johnson (2009, p.3). In order to maintain the smooth running of the school, she has to exercise patience, honesty and transparency, thus lead by example for others to follow. "*Have passion for others, lead by example.*" P5. This is because if there is no passion for the job, it will be impossible to do the job well. Thus a good leader must be passionate about teaching, and leading effectively and of course must have the right qualifications and know what to do because there are so many pupils and staff members to take care of. So if the leader does not know what to do, there will certainly be a mess and there is anarchy at school after that.

I think is very important to realize that you are here to serve people and not to act as the superior to others...it is your job to make everything go smoothly and easy for every one so they can concentrate on teaching and taking care of children. (P5).

On the other hand, P2 was of the opinion that men are straight and are the best colleagues to work with. She proceeds to say that women will be even better leaders if they should be as straightforward as male leaders.

A good leader always anticipates about the future to safe guard against unforeseen circumstances. According to Stoll and Fink (1996, p. 150), the most difficult part of change in a learning Organization is sustainability. As echoed by all the participants not only are they female leaders but pedagogical leaders as well and thus move with change, in order to prepare the students with what is needed in the society. They made mentioned that they keep the school together and train someone who can equally handle the leadership position in their absence. This is in line with the words of Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012). To ensure sustainability, the leader must take into

consideration the three dimensions of sustainability. First, “care for me” the leader must have his personal values which blend with the learning organization and this brings in the second dimension which is “care for me and you.” And the third is “care for all”. This recognizes the leaders’ organizations’ and the societal values.

4.3.2 Challenges of female leadership

The data analysis describes so many challenges that female leaders go through. The challenges are divided into two, first and foremost as *leaders* and secondly being a *female leader*.

Leadership challenges

P1 and P4 were of the view that, *lack of trust* was one of the greatest challenges, they ever experienced at school. I contend with Morris et al. (2006, p. 548) that people in any organization are at the beginning unwilling to be open and share what they know until such a time when a sufficient amount of trust is developed. (P1), reiterated that during her early days as principal of the school, she felt there was lack of trust, between her and the big leader, who was much older and autocratic. It was quite difficult to cooperate in such situation, it demanded a longer time of working together in order to build trust, same with staffs, since it takes time to build trust (Håkansson, Havila, Pedersen, 1999, p. 444) and this affected the smooth running of the school for quite a long time. Thus, it is a very big challenge to trust people especially when they are new in an organization or school.

Also, (P1) mentioned that, another challenge is the air. She said there is a problem with clean air in some of the older part of the school building.

Another challenge faced by the informants is lack of money. Per (P2), there is so much pressure coming all the time from the city and lack of money. As a result of these changes, she is no more motivated to continue as a principal. At first, there were so

many male principals but now, there are less male principals because the job is not very well paid. So many men go for the well paid jobs rather than becoming principals.

According to P3, the principal's work in Finland is getting more and more complicated. There are coming more and more different areas to take care of, thus it's a multi-task thing. She further mentioned that the most difficult task is to find the right time for the right things always. As a leader, one has to solve problems in school, especially from parents. As a leader, you have to listen to your employee or angry parents who come to you, and you have to make a decision to quit what you were doing and attend to the person, and those decisions you have to make all the time.

Female leadership challenges

All five participants mentioned that, it is easier for men to go further in their career because they do not have to take care of the children but as female leaders, one has to consider that business first; taking care of the family before pursuing their career. That is a very big obstacle in the female world. According to the data analysis, almost all the leaders had their children before taking the principal positions. For those who hadn't baby at the time they were teachers, had to pause for some years to make babies. This shows that women's nurturing role as mothers has some challenges in their leadership role. According to P1, as a female leader, there are challenges that one experiences not just because you are a leader, but because you are a female leader.

I don't know if it happens because I am female, but I feel bad because I am female. When some difficult parents attack me, I feel bad. I am so sensitive. I think they don't do it because I am female but I feel bad because I am female, some men will not take it so personally or emotionally. (P1)

P1 and P5 mentioned that, they *lacked trust* in themselves. Most women do not trust themselves easily as men do. They take so much time to ponder on a certain career if they are up to the task due to societal limitations (Madsen, 2008), whereas men do not

think what other people think about them, they just go and do it. Looking at it from another angle, it is a good thing because when you are working with people you need to be sensitive, but it is very hard when you think of what other people think about you.

Another challenge faced by female leaders is *time constraint*. Women are perfectionist in their work and they take so much time where as men do not take things so seriously. 'men have easier way to live than women ... female have to consider so many things before they take decisions' P1 observed.

P4, P2 & P5, also lamented on time constraint. The headmaster's job is very demanding especially when you are having a family. It is very stressful if you want to combine motherhood and your job. As a headmaster in Finland, you have to work for longer hours, work during summers, and having meetings. Despite all these, there is still much work left and is carried home. In this case, it is very difficult to manage both work and family especially when you want to have some time with your family and concentrate on it.

(P2) The most Disgusting thing is lack of time, you get so busy and have to do so many things at the same time and you make mistake, then you hate yourself.

(P4) It can be a challenge, like I told you of these working hours.

(P5) You cannot plan your hours in this job. In this job every day is different and some thing can happen and you have to make changes and or you have to work for longer hours and it is almost impossible when you are having small children.

The next challenge faced by female leaders is *difficult parents*. According to P5, despite the fact that the culture in Finland promotes gender equality, there are still some parents who act contrary to that. They still have that old fashion way of thinking, regarding women as secondary to men, and also seeing women as less competent in handling leadership position.

I had two experiences from my pupils' fathers who accused me of having made a wrong decision because I was a woman. There have been very few cases where I felt that he or she

behaved badly because I am a woman. I think he was a smack; it didn't hurt me because I knew that was bad behavior and old fashion way. (P5).

P3 explained that, her biggest challenge is part of her being female. This statement goes to confirm Sex role stereotyping which shows men as the best gender type in leadership roles because they possess the masculine, strong qualities (e.g., men are more courageous, daring, assertive, and competitive). With the male attributes it is easier for male leaders than female leaders to gain respect from the supervision of their followers (Eagly & Mitchell, 2004). As a result of this, she takes care of everybody and always ready to attend to their needs. She further explained that, as a result of this she has to be very careful about leading herself so she can find the right amount of time to different people and different things so they do not suck her dry. P2 also lamented that, the biggest challenge is difficult parents. The challenge arises from the parents of those kids who need extra teaching. P5 also lamented on the fact that, she sometimes face problems with her male teachers who hasn't taken care of his job in a proper way. As a female leader, it is easier to reproach a female teacher for something bad than a male teacher. This is because as a female leader you need to be very careful in choosing your words when addressing a male teacher.

P4 and P5 mentioned that they lack courage during the early years of their principal posts. They further mentioned that they had to think for a very longtime if they really wanted to become principals. In line with this remark, it could be due to lack of role models as female leaders. Female leadership though has long been talked about, actually came into action in Finland around (1977), thus it is just but normal that, some of the participants mentioned above, did not have role models, thus the reasons why they doubted themselves if they could handle leadership positions. Another, point is that, women think a lot, before embarking on a career, whereas men do not think that much before applying for the principal post. Thinking much is part of being female. Also men are quite younger when they think of getting to the principal position, unlike

women who have to make sure her children are quite grown-ups before accepting such positions.

Again, being a female leader, there are some situations that are very difficult to handle. As P4 mentioned, a case where a fight broke out between two big boys.

I can't go there between them, because I am a woman, may be if I Were a male, it would have been easier for me to go there and Separate. This is some kind of situation that makes me feel because I am a woman. (P4).

4.4 Proposed solutions for female leadership

This part of the report provides answers to research question three (b), which aimed at collecting information while at the same time attempting to understand the informants' perspectives on the possible ways of addressing female leadership challenges. The data analysis also portrayed the following visions of the leaders on how to enhance an enabling environment for female leadership in Finland.

Courage

According to the research findings reported, most female leaders lack courage to forge ahead and at the same time are very emotional which sometimes is tantamount to their leadership role. However, the participants acknowledged the need to be courageous through the following ways:

Though some leaders acknowledged the fact that they are strong because of their long term as leaders in schools, some participants suggested the need for a leader to be courageous, strong and vibrant so as to harmonize their ideas, agendas and objectives of leading the school nicely. According to P1, being courageous entails learning how to speak with yourself and try to be stronger in difficult situations, the practice of calming down and telling yourself "*I have seen this before so I can handle the situation makes you grow up so you can stand any difficult situation.*" Also according to some participants, improving your education and

taking professional training also helps to boost morals and gives you more exposure on how to tailor very difficult situations.

I think my doctoral thesis has helped me quite a lot to understand theory and practice and this has made me self-confident and I think is very important for me as a female. (P4).

As a matter of fact, women should be encouraged to take leadership positions because too often women are not confident in their leadership abilities and are constrained by the societal limitations that appear to be placed on women. (Madsen, 2008). However, Ropers-Huilman, (2003), concluded that as more women are encouraged to take on advanced roles and are seen in higher positions; this could translate to more women being confident taking on leadership positions.

Exercise

The research participants suggested the need for proper and constant exercise mechanisms which enable them to gain self-balance, since they work a lot and deal with different age groups and genders. P3 buttressed this proposal with the following recommendations: As a leader, is good to exercise a lot, go to the gym, and always try to do the mindfulness practice and above all, try to always see the bright side of life.

Gender neutral

According to the participants, being gender neutral is good at times especially when confronted by difficult parents who attribute a fault on the leaders based on their gender. For example, (P5) asserts: *"I just try to forget it all that there is some kind of sex issues. I try to be as human and try to be the headmaster and try to press it backward."* The participants strongly suggested the need to be gender neutral in such cases and maintain good behavior.

4.4.1 Vision on enabling environment

According to the respondents, their visions on enabling environment entails, networking, administrative support and trust, gender balance and organizational change. Some respondents also recommended that people should be human and face others with open minds.

Networking

All the participants mentioned networking as a key factor in developing women leadership. Networking is good conversation and learning through discussion and opening things up and analyzing quite strictly. For instance, P3 had this viewpoint on the Municipality to ameliorate the situation *“It is good to get female leaders more together to share and discuss about their work and experiences.”* (P3).

Training course be made available to women in all sectors. These would have a number of aims: to encourage women to apply for leadership positions, to provide an opportunity for them to discuss their future options in a supportive environment, to provide a forum in which alternative styles of management can be discussed and analyzed and to provide opportunity for a system of support networks to be established. These courses could operate as part of in-service training provided and funded by the management bodies in different sectors, or as an integral part of diploma course in educational management or Masters in Education currently run by universities and Education Centers. Issues of women in education should be presented in a positive light and the effects of sex-role stereotyping on attitudes, assumptions and value judgment be highlighted. The issues such as gender balance in education and career development should be incorporated into all pre-service teachers training. Eagly and Carli (2003) recommended training programs that centers on valuing relationships. This study found that the participants actively develop and maintain relationships as a core component of their leadership career. Hence, having a formalized program that

offers an insight into the strategies and benefits to develop relationships could be useful.

Administrative support

In order to make the environment more enabling for female leadership, the research informants recommended administrative support from the Municipality. The respondents mentioned the need for money in running the school. Thus teaching and learning is not very much developing because of insufficient funds. Furthermore, the informants suggested the need to consider and invest more in professional training programs which will sustain lifelong learning. According to (P1):

We need more support in our city because we have so many changes in the administration. I think we need to build something new and our bosses are quite new, I think they know what we need but it takes time. We need to be one. I think there is some lack of trust in the administration and is not personal but is about the organizational changes what we have had these past years.

Gender balance

As mentioned by some of the respondents, the amount of women applying to be teachers is increasing than that of men, that sort of influences women to become leaders. In a long run, it is also a problem because schools need male leaders for role models, thus there is likely to be a problem because men are not so interested in teaching. As recommended by P3:

Let us change our ways of thinking, make it more motivated, promote ICT in schools, discussions and different ways of learning so that we get boys to be interested, ask students how they wish to be taught and their interest in studying.

Organizational change

According to the respondents, there is the need for an organizational change especially in the field of education. Some respondents suggested a change in the principal's job,

because it takes so much time, it is even more stressful for women leaders with family to take care of. If nothing is done immediately, then is going to happen like 30years ago that very few women will be principals if they chose family. Thus a need for the reorganization of the system, so that female leaders can do their job well as well as take care of their families.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations for future studies based on the research results presented and discussed in the previous chapter. It also gives a remark about the limitation of the study and the ethical and trustworthiness used in the study. This study set out to uncover the factors that led to female leadership in Finland specifically in the field of education. Evidence shows that the overall structural elements, that is the institutional aspect, culture, norms and values in Finland build gender equitable environment which goes a long way to promote female leadership in Finland. This holds true that gender equality is more entrenched in Finland. Apart from the structural elements, there are more female teachers which is but normal to have female leaders as well.

Also the female leaders have the right qualifications in occupying this post likewise their motherly commitment in handling the school speaks volume. Since the phenomenological research approach was used in the study, the results revealed how the respondents became leaders and what they have been doing to promote an enabling environment for female leadership and the good running of the school. From the respondent's experiences, gender as it self, is not important. What is important is the personality. The leader needs to be competent, have knowledge and skills on how to lead. It is also worthy to note the leaders' experiences of the challenges that hamper leadership and enabling environment were revealed through insufficient funding from the municipality, inadequate networking, difficult parents, lack of trust, time constraint and their motherly commitment as a result of their gender.

Though the results strongly indicated some remedies and visions for an enabling environment for female leadership as per the respondents, their lack of trust and multi-task, coupled with other challenges, overwhelmingly deprived some females in choosing that career part of becoming a leader and if the municipality does not do something very quickly, this will obviously hamper the environment for female

leadership, since most women will prefer teaching because with that, they can have time for their family.

5.1 Validity, trustworthiness and ethical consideration

The quality of an interview research is confirmed by its validity and trustworthiness. According to (Wellington, 2000), Validity refers to the extent to which what we investigate reflects what it is supposed to investigate. On the other hand, trustworthiness means the research decisions, research design, data collection and analysis strategies have been clearly documented and the study ethically conducted (Mutch, 2005). Thus when carrying out a qualitative research, validity and trustworthiness must be carefully considered throughout all stages of the research so as to ensure quality. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

I tried to understand the issues from the perspectives of the participants and the phenomena under investigation, thus, investigating the participant's lived experience rather than as I conceptualize it, and balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30-31).

A clear, concrete and detailed description of the research process, the reasons for using the phenomenological design, the challenges involved and how these challenges were resolved, further contributed to the trustworthiness. Moreover, the researcher's knowledge of the subject, and the use of triangulation further enhanced the credibility and strength of this study (Tracy, 2010, p. 841-842). My ethics application was approved by the Institute of Educational Leadership in Jyvaskyla. As women in leadership is a sensitive topic and since interviews involve interpersonal interaction, procedural ethics were carefully considered as letters of informed consent, acknowledgement, research request and interest were presented to the participants and access was granted. Prior to any interview, the participants were normally informed well in advance and the intended use of the purpose of the research, its procedures, confidentiality and benefits, and the right to withdraw (Burns, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

5.2 Limitation of the study

It is worth to mention that every study has its limitations because it might have access to only certain region, organization, people, and documents and etc. This phenomenological study is an empirical inquiry that investigated the influence of an enabling environment on female principals within its real context of comprehensive school in Jyväskylä. Though the study is more robust for the evidence of the phenomenon from different schools and increases the generality of the data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172), nevertheless, it is still limited. As earlier mentioned, each school has its own organizational context and principal. As a result of this it is practically impossible to apply the findings regarding female leadership to other Finnish schools and or regions. On the other hand, these will contribution to the validity of the research if similar studies could be carried out in other comprehensive schools to prove whether the findings would be generalized.

Another limitation concerns the language accuracy. The language barrier existed between the researcher and the participants; this affected the data collection and the results (Squires, 2099, p. 279). However, some participants made an effort to express their experiences completely in English. Similarly, coming from Africa, some participants had difficulties to understand my English accents. Consequently, there are possible risks that some information, facts and details were withheld, or replaced by inaccurate wording during the transcription.

Another limitation observed connects to documents on enabling environment which were adapted in the study. Because of insufficient documents on enabling environment on female leadership, the study did not cover as much result as to what constitute and promote an enabling environment for female leadership.

Finally, the weather condition in Finland is too harsh as the data was conducted during winter. It was therefore an uphill task for the researcher accessing the schools, because everywhere was full of snow. All in all, my guess will be that a larger sample size would have indicated a better result.

5.3 Recommendation

Several suggestions for future research emerged from this study. To begin with, the researcher will need to design and conduct a study that, when interviewing the women leaders, would incorporate interviews of people with whom they work into the study. Also further research could be conducted in the area of women leaders in top ranking positions in the government to determine their characteristics, strategies and their role implementations. Since this study is based only on female leaders; however, conducting a similar study with men as the participants would yield additional insight into the phenomenon of an enabling environment for leadership.

The next suggestion is to study the context of the school setting and the region to determine what it is about the school and region that attracted these women to work there. This is because in most cases leadership is influenced by its context. The last recommendation is to conduct a similar study in different regions of Finland so as to address the different values and influences associated with different geographic locations.

According to this study, although these female leaders could be characterized as enabler leaders based upon their individual interviews, caution should be used when making final assertion. These female leaders were asked questions about their, values, leadership style, strategies, challenges and visions. The responses given were according to their perceptions and experiences in the field. Their responses were not verified by others to prove if the way they think they lead is in the best interest of all.

Thus a future research could be conducted that interviewed the staffs with whom the leaders work and compare with the self-perceptions of the leaders.

Again since all of these women work in a comprehensive school, the context of the schools setting could be further researched to answer the question of: why primary education? For some of the women hold bigger qualifications that they could work in higher education and or multitudes of industries and in the government. But, they

chose to work in a primary school. Could this have something to do with their gender? It would be worth exploring.

Although Finland is a small country, population wise, it would still be best to look at its different regions, as well as internationally. It is worth noting that different countries and her regions in the world could be influenced differently by economic, political, social and cultural factors. For example, the culture, values and life styles in Europe is different from that in the America, Asia and Africa. Since institutions are likely structured differently it is but normal that the context of leadership may be affected by these different structures. Thus conducting a similar research study in different regions may yield different results. This would enhance the knowledge base of enabling leadership.

Other recommendations for further research include the following: Women's needs and wants, women and family, motivation and learning for girls.

Management bodies be given the necessary resources and be required to collect and publish records of applications and appointments by gender to all promotional posts which are filled by competition in the schools in their sector.

Further research, quantitative and qualitative; be undertaken in a number of areas including power relations in school, the values and attitudes of women in teaching, the impact of feminization and the in some sectors of education.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

School Information:

1. For how long has this school been in existence?
2. How many teachers are there in this school?
3. How many male and female teachers are there in this school?
4. How many pupils are there in this school?
5. The school starts from what grade to what grade?

Personal Information:

6. Would you please share with me how you became a principal and for how long have you been serving in this capacity?
7. What are the requirements for becoming a female principal?
8. Please why did you become a principal?
9. How would you compare what you went through to become a principal to what men go through to become principals?
10. What led to female school leadership in Finland and what has been promoting it?
11. How would you compare female leadership in Finnish schools to other countries around the world?

VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE ON WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

12. What do you think are the most important qualities and characteristics of a good leader?
13. How do you develop your leadership skills?
14. Please what are your leadership commitments?
15. What is an enabling environment for female leadership in Finnish Comprehensive schools? What does this environment inculcate into Finnish

female teachers to prepare them as future principals? (What are the impacts of these enablers)?

16. What are the internal and external Factors that promote an enabling environment for Female school leadership in Finland?

17. How do these factors influence your leadership roles in school?

18. Would you please share with me your experiences of how male principals relate to female principals during meetings and other gatherings or interactions?

19. Would you please share with me your experiences of challenges you have been facing within and outside school since you became a principal?

What is your most difficult task being a female leader?

How do you address these challenges?

20. Do you have more males or females serving in leadership positions and why?

Do schools benefit more under female school leadership or under male school leadership? Please what explains this?

In what ways have you been empowering the female teachers in your school?

21. How do women perform on core aspects in educational leadership?

22. In what ways do female teachers in your school contribute to school leadership?

How do male and female teachers perceive you as a leader?

From your experiences, how are female leaders different from their male counterparts in schools?

23. Would you recommend a female rather than a male to aspire becoming a principal? Please why?

24. What have you been doing to promote an enabling environment for female school leadership?

25. Please do you have any vision to share about an enabling environment for female school leadership?

26. How would you explain the relevance of gender in school leadership?