# UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
# FACULTY OF EDUCATION

## Linda Ukimeraj Harris M.A.

## Challenges and Incentives in the Management Path of Female Principals in Kosovo Primary Schools

## Doctoral Dissertation

## Ljubljana, 2022

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**Ovire in spodbude na managerski poti ravnateljic osnovnih šol na Kosovu**


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**Statement of original authorship**


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# ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation contributes to the expansive global research on the role of women in education management and leadership, by examining the poorly researched barriers and opportunities that are experienced by female school principals in the Republic of Kosovo, a small and developing country in the Western Balkans. The research questions are triggered by the comparatively low representation of women in education management in Kosovo and seek answers in the perceptions of a group of women who have successfully traversed the path from anticipation to acquisition, to performance as school principals in a male dominated profession. The research employed a case study approach, involving in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 women, ten women principals of primary schools in Kosovo through purposive sampling. Using a qualitative research methodology, the analysis of the resultant data drew out thematic trends and patterns that were correlated and compared with multiple sources of data, strengthening and reinforcing the weight of the conclusions. Data was structured and analysed through use of a 'management path model', filtering data under the anticipation, acquisition and performance stages, and identifying and correlating personal, organisational barriers and opportunities that impact women, segregated as novices, intermediates and experienced principals.

The findings contribute to the global, regional and Kosovo debate about the role of women in education management, drawing implications for policy makers and school management and leadership practices. The study provides valuable knowledge about women who aspire to and achieve principalship in the context of Kosovo, by identifying certain barriers that hinder a proportion of women in Kosovo's educational management, as well as revealing important insights concerning the incentives that facilitate and encourage an increased representation of women in the country's management positions. The results fill a significant knowledge gap about the causes of various impediments and obstacles that act upon potential female aspirants to careers as school principals in Kosovo, as well as founded evidence about poorly exploited remedies and solutions.


**Key words: education management and leadership, primary schools, women principals, management path**

# IZVLEČEK

V doktorski disertaciji dodajamo svoj prispevek k obsežnemu globalnemu raziskovanju vloge žensk na področju menedžmenta in vodenja v vzgoji in izobraževanju. To smo dosegli s preučevanjem manj raziskanih ovir in priložnosti, ki si jih izkušajo ravnateljice v Republiki Kosovo – v majhni razvijajoči se državi Zahodnega Balkana. Dokaj nizka raven zastopanosti žensk v menedžmentu v vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Kosovo nas je spodbudila k zastavljanju raziskovalnih vprašanj in iskanju odgovorov na vprašanje: Kako dojema svoj položaj skupina žensk, ki so uspešno prehodile pot od začetnih pričakovanj  do uresničitve svojih ciljev, torej do uspešnega opravljanja dela ravnateljic v poklicu, kjer prevladujejo moški? V raziskavi je bil uporabljen pristop študije primera, ki je vključeval poglobljene polstrukturirane intervjuje z petnajstimi ženskami, od tega dvanajst  ravnateljica osnovnih šol na Kosovu, in sicer z namenskim vzorčenjem. Z uporabo kvalitativne raziskovalne metodologije smo z analizo dobljenih podatkov izluščili tematske trende in vzorce, ki bili soodvisni in primerjani z več viri podatkov. Na ta način smo podkrepili težo svojih sklepov. Podatki so bili strukturirani in analizirani z uporabo »modela menedžerske poti«, s filtriranjem podatkov v fazi pričakovanja in prizadevanja za položaj, v fazi pridobitve položaja oziroma funkcije ravnateljice in v fazi izvajanja te funkcije ter s prepoznavanjem in ugotavljanjem soodvisnosti osebnih in organizacijskih ovir ter priložnosti, ki vplivajo na ravnateljice v naslednjih kategorijah: ravnateljice začetnice, uveljavljajoče se ravnateljice in izkušene ravnateljice.

Ugotovitve te raziskave prispevajo h globalni in regionalni razpravi o vlogi žensk na področju menedžmenta v vzgoji in izobraževanju ter razpravi o tej vlogi na Kosovu. Pri tem izpostavljamo pomen te vloge za oblikovalce politik, za šolski menedžment ter prakse vodenja. Raziskava daje dragoceno znanje o ženskah, ki si prizadevajo za in tudi dobijo mesto ravnateljice na Kosovu, ter o nekaterih prepoznanih ovirah, ki preprečujejo, da bi bil delež žensk v menedžmentu v vzgoji in izobraževanju na Kosovu višji. Raziskava tudi razkriva pomembne vpoglede v zvezi s spodbudami, ki pripomorejo k  povečani zastopanosti žensk na vodstvenih položajih v državi. Z raziskavo in njenimi rezultati smo zapolnili precejšnjo vrzel v prepoznavanju različnih motenj in ovir, na katere na svoji poti naletijo potencialne kandidatke za ravnateljice v Republiki  Kosovo, podali pa smo tudi izsledke o slabo izkoriščenih pravnih sredstvih in rešitvah.

**Ključne besede: menedžment in vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju, osnovne šole, ravnateljice, menedžerska pot**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---|---|
| DES | Department of Education and Science |
| EC | European Commission |
| EU | European Union |
| GIZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH |
| KAS | Kosovo Agency of Statistics |
| KEDP | Kosovo Education Development Program |
| KESP | Kosovo Education Strategic Plan |
| MED | Municipal Education Directorate |
| MEST | Ministry of Education, Science and Technology |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| NPM | New Public Management |
| OECD | The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OSCE | Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| UNMIK | United Nations Mission in Kosovo |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

# DALJŠI POVZETEK

V nadaljevanju je daljši povzetek doktorske disertacije z naslovom »*Ovire in spodbude na managerski poti ravnateljic osnovnih šol na Kosovu*«. V povzetku podajamo kratek pregled literature, opredelitev problemov, analizo podatkov, zaključek in priporočila.

## Pregled literature

Obstaja obsežen nabor literature o menedžmentu in vodenju v vzgoji in izobraževanju, zajemajoč več desetletij in vse celine. Medtem ko so se raziskave na tem področju večinoma začela v razvitih državah (Bush, 2008, 2018; Fullan, 2001, 2008; Hallinger in Heck, 2021; Harris, 2009, 2014; Leithwood, 2019; Lumby, 2019), pa so se sčasoma preselile tudi v manj razvite države, vključno z državami Balkana (Buleshkaj, 2017; Celikten, 2010; Kaparou in Bush, 2007; Karamanidou in Bush, 2017; Pol in Lazarová, 2019; Trnavčević in Vaupot, 2009). *Vodenje in ravnateljevanje oziroma menedžment* sta široka in kompleksna koncepta, ki obsegata široko paleto človekovega dela v obeh sektorjih, tako v javnem kot v zasebnem, ter na področju storitev, industrije in trgovine. Koncepti menedžmenta in vodenja v vzgoji in izobraževanju so osrednja tema nenehnih, živahnih in pogosto zapletenih razprav o organizaciji izobraževalnih ustanov in razprav o tem, kako so ti koncepti povezani z uspešnostjo izobraževanja (Connolly idr., 2019; Hallinger in Heck, 2021). Kot je opozoril Lumboy (2019), se je menedžment v vzgoji in izobraževanju umaknil v senco bolj priljubljenih lastnosti vodenja v vzgoji in izobraževanju, kar zagovarja tudi Bush (2018).

Nekateri trdijo, da menedžment in vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju nista dve strani iste resničnosti, temveč da sta kategorično precej drugačne dejavnosti (Connolly idr. 2019). Menedžment v vzgoji in izobraževanju se nanaša na organizacijsko hierarhijo akterjev (Mullins in Christie, 2016), ki jim je dodeljeno »nositi odgovornosti« in so pristojni oziroma odgovorni za delovanje sistema, ki žene izobraževalno ustanovo (Ball, 2008; Møller, 2007). Vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju naj bi vključevalo vplivanje, navdihovanje in motiviranje drugih za dosego ciljev znotraj izobraževalne ustanove (Connolly idr. 2019). Taka delitev se sklada s tradicionalnim konceptom menedžmenta v vzgoji in izobraževanju in se nanaša na urejanje statusa quo v izobraževalnih ustanovah (Bennis & Nanus, 2007), medtem ko se vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju nanaša na upravljanje sprememb za izboljšanje v teh ustanovah (Fullan, 2008, 2014; Harris, 2002).

Nekateri avtorji pa se ne strinjajo z mnenjem, da sta menedžment in vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju popolnoma različna koncepta. Po Dayu idr. (2001) ter Kottermanu (2006) sta vodenje in menedžment tako medsebojno povezana, da ne moremo imeti enega brez drugega. Glede na to ugotovitev se vodenje nanaša na razvoj osebja oziroma zaposlenih, postavljanje zgleda in standardov, ki jih drugi nadalje razvijajo; medtem ko se menedžment bolj nanaša na sisteme in na to, kako delati z zaposlenimi in učenci. Podobno Spillane (2009) trdi, da z osredotočenjem na vodenje ne dajemo zadostne „pozornosti pomenu menedžmenta ali pa da z osredotočenjem na formalno šolsko organizacijo spregledamo ali zanemarimo neformalne odnose, ki so temeljnega pomena za vodenje«. Prav tako prepozna Bush (2018) tesno povezavo v načinu, kako je vodenje povezano z vrednotami in cilji, medtem ko se menedžment ukvarja s praktično izvedbo tehničnih zadev. Po Bushu (2018) imajo birokratski in racionalistični menedžmentski pristopi v vzgoji in izobraževanju omejitve, v kolikor preveč poudarjajo postopke in to v škodo namena ter vrednot vzgoje in izobraževanja.

Vendar pa je po drugem pristopu ideja „*iniciatorja sprememb*" povezana s pojmom vodenja in vplivanja na druge, da bi dosegli cilje organizacije (Fullan, 2001; Mullins in Christie, 2016; Yukl, 2002). Takšnih programov sprememb ne bi mogla izvesti ena sama oseba, potreben je nabor akterjev, ki bi upravljali sisteme v izobraževalni ustanovi. Zaradi tega Hawkins in James (2018) trdita, da vodenje kot »*dejavnik vpliva*« ni enosmeren, temveč interaktiven proces, kar prinaša spremembe tako pri vodji kot tudi pri tistih, ki jih vodja vodi. Koncept iniciatorja sprememb je povzročil nastanek velike palete modelov vodenja, ki jih strokovnjaki različno kategorizirajo, in sicer v kontingentne (naključne), participativne, vodstvene, moralne, transformacijske, poučevalne in distribuirane oziroma razpršene modele vodenja (Bush, 2018; Leithwood idr, 2006). *Transformacijsko vodenje* v vzgoji in izobraževanju je bilo odziv na spreminjajoče se in zahtevno gospodarsko in tehnološko okolje, na politične zahteve po izboljšani kakovosti vzgoje in izobraževanja ter na zahteve po povezovanju izobraževanja z gospodarskim uspehom (Pollitt, 2013). Bistvena podkomponenta transformacijskega vodenja je občutek za motivacijo za delo na resnično motivirajoči nalogi (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). *Transakcijsko vodenje* pa za spodbujanje motivacije vključuje zunanjo spodbudo (Miller in Miller, 2001), torej nekaj, kar presega neposreden vpliv vodje kot iniciatorja spremembe.

Obstaja veliko raziskav, ki razkrivajo *odločilno vlogo ravnatelja* pri reformi izobraževanja, in sicer kot iniciatorja sprememb v kakovostnem izobraževanju (Fullan, 2008, 2014; Harris in Jones, 2019). Raziskave kažejo tudi, da sta menedžment in vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju po pomembnosti takoj za poučevanjem, in sicer med vsemi izobraževalnimi dejavniki vpliva,

ki prispevajo k temu, kar se učenci v šoli naučijo. Poleg tega raziskave tudi kažejo, da lahko k spremembam prispevajo tudi številni drugi dejavniki, vendar sta menedžment in vodenje tista spodbujevalca, brez katerih se druge dobre stvari verjetno ne bodo zgodile (Leithwood in Sun, 2012). Pri tem je enako izpostavljeno tudi to, da na dosežke in uspešnost učencev, razen učitelja, najbolj vpliva ravnatelj (Lynch, 2012).

Bush (2018), kot najvidnejši zagovornik zgoraj omenjenega, meni, da je ravnatelj eden najpomembnejših dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na kakovost vzgojno-izobraževalnih dejavnosti v šoli. Buleshkaj (2017) trdi, da je ravnatelj odgovoren za ustvarjanje šolske kulture, ki spodbuja stalen strokovni razvoj, omogočanje učnega procesa za vse zaposlene in izgradnjo mehanizma sodelovanja z osebjem (zaposlenimi), učenci in širšo skupnostjo oziroma srenjo.

Menedžment je bil v vsaki ustanovi ali organizaciji, vključno z izobraževalnimi ustanovami, povezan z moškimi kot vodji in njihovimi značilnostmi vedenja ter zato v mnogih vodstvenih kontekstih, zlasti na najvišjih položajih, ženske niso ustrezno zastopane (Hoyt, 2010). Številni raziskovalci trdijo, da četudi v učiteljskem poklicu v večini držav običajno številčno prevladujejo ženske, le-te ne zasedajo ustreznega deleža vodilnih položajev (Coleman, 2007) in še vedno ostajajo premalo zastopane (Lumbiy, 2014).

*Vprašanje prenizke zastopanosti žensk v managementu v izobraževanju* so preučevali raziskovalci po vsem svetu: v Evropi (Bush, 2018; Coleman, 2007, 2011, 2020; Hall, 1997; Jones, 2017; Karamanidou & Bush 2017; Krüger, 2005; Møller, 2007); v Združenih državah Amerike (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Fuller, 2014, 2017; Hoyt, 2010; Miller & Miller, 2001; Robinson, et al., 2017; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010); v Turčiji ( Celikten, 2005, 2010); v Savdski Arabiji (Arar & Oplatka, 2015; Arar, 2019; Shapira et al., 2010), v Avstraliji (Blackmore, 1999, 2018), na Novi Zelandiji (Fitzgerald, 2006), v Kanadi (Hargreaves in Fink, 2006; Reynolds idr., 2008) in v drugih državah.

Dokazano je, da so raziskave spolov prispevale k razpravi o vodenju v šolah, saj so opozorile na razsežnost spola. Takšne raziskave so prispevale k boljšemu poznavanju tega, kako se neenakost ter diskriminacija na delovnem mestu pojavljajo, dojemajo in vgrajujejo v sistem (Young in Skrla, 2003). Te raziskave se osredotočajo tudi na nezadostno zastopanost žensk in na ovire, ki se postavljajo na pot ženskam na njihovi težavni poti do ravnateljske funkcije. Raziskave kažejo, da ženske in moški v mnogih ozirih različno razumejo vodenje v šolah. To

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je tako zato, saj se že po tradiciji, kulturnih vidikih, dojemanju moških in žensk postavljajo vodje in voditeljice (ravnatelji in ravnateljice) v šolah na različna mesta oziroma položaje (Arar in Oplatka, 2016). Študije, kot so študije Armstrongove in Mitchellove (2017), so pokazale kompleksno situacijo, s katero se soočajo ženske, in sicer v kulturi, kjer položaje moči večinoma zasedajo moški. Ženske, ki delajo kot vodje v organizacijah, kjer prevladujejo moški, so tako „insajderke" z institucionalno močjo in pristojnostjo kot tudi „avtsajderke" ali obrobne opazovalke, so ženske v moški kulturi (Blackmore, 2018). Vstop žensk v šolski prostor pomeni, da lahko sedaj tudi one postanejo iniciatorke sprememb. Blackmore (2018) meni, da so ženske tiste, na katere letijo kritike tako za organizacijske spremembe kot tudi za napetosti v podjetju.

Literatura o raziskovanju spolov in menedžmentu v izobraževanju navaja, da je za ženske težje, da si pridobijo in obdržijo ravnateljsko funkcijo, kot je to za njihove kolege moškega spola in da ima spol velik vpliv na dostopnost in vstopanje žensk na vodilne položaje (Arar. 2019, Blackmore, 1989, 2018; Coleman, 2020).

Nekatere raziskave se nagibajo k temu, da krivijo ženske pomanjkljivosti in njihovo usmerjenost za prenizko zastopanost na teh položajih. Sodobne raziskave pa se danes osredotočajo na osebnostne lastnosti žensk, kot so pomanjkanje zaupanja (Coleman, 2007) ali pomanjkanje motivacije (Karamanidou in Bush, 2017). Ugotovljeno je bilo, da se ženske bolj usmerjajo v skrb za družino in manj v kariero ter da raje poučujejo in na splošno raje delajo z otroki, kot pa da bi vodile in izvajale menedžmentske funkcije (Grogan in Shakeshaft, 2011; Kaparou in Bush, 2007).

Številni raziskovalci so zaznali, da je zgodovinsko gledano teorija vodenja zasnovana predvsem na raziskavah o moških in ne o ženskah. Blackmore (1999, 2018), Shakeshaft (1989) in Schein (2001) so dokumentirali moški okvir oziroma model, ki je prevladujoč pri raziskavah o vodenju. Drugi raziskovalci pa zatrjujejo, da ženske niso nagnjene k temu, da bi bile že po naravi nevoditeljice, temveč da je to tako, ker je nanje že več stoletij negativno vplivala prevlada moških v vodenju (Oplatka, 2006). Oplatka (2006) dodaja, da imajo ženske edinstvene vodstvene lastnosti, vendar kulturne in družbene strukture potisnejo moške in ženske v nasprotne smeri in to je glavna ovira za dostop žensk do vodilnih položajev.

Spreminjajoče se družbene in organizacijske kontekste so mnogi raziskovalci preučevali kot še en vidik, ki vpliva na premajhno zastopanost žensk v menedžmentu v izobraževanju. Raziskovalci so prepoznali družbene in organizacijske dejavnike, ki ovirajo ženske pri pridobivanju vodstvenih položajev (Arar, 2019). Nekateri izmed teh dejavnikov so tudi družinske obveznosti, pomanjkanje vzornic (Oplatka, 2006) ter moška institucionalna ali organizacijska kultura (Grogann & Shakeshaft, 2011).

V raziskavah, ki so bile izvedene v mnogih državah po svetu, so bili pri obravnavi različnih vidikov „*ženskega*" menedžmenta in vodenja prepoznani kot pomembni dejavniki družbeni in kulturni vidiki, pomembne pa so bile tudi kulturne in kontekstualne posebnosti pri oblikovanju vodenja v izobraževanju (Celikten, 2010; Coleman, 2011; Cubillo in Brown, 2003; Lumboy, 2012). Na poti do vodstvenih položajev ženske pogosto ogrožajo tradicionalni kulturni vrednostni sistemi in strukturne ureditve v šolah, ki so manj ugodne za ženske (Arar in Shapira, 2015, Moorosi, 2010, 2020). Lumboy (2012) meni, da obstaja nezaupanje v žensko vodenje, in sicer zaradi številnih dejavnikov, med njimi tudi zaradi kulture in tradicije. Murakami idr. (2016) trdijo, da ovire v zvezi s spolom prispevajo k ustvarjanju občutka družbene in poklicne izolacije. Zato si morajo menedžerke dvakrat toliko kot menedžerji prizadevati za to, da bi uspešno izrabile svoje vodstvene sposobnosti.

Davies (2018) trdi, da veljajo ženske na vodstvenih položajih za nosilke obnove in sprememb v šoli. Njihove vodstvene lastnosti so danes izpostavljene kot sposobnosti za reševanje mnogih današnjih problemov. Menijo, da bi povečanje števila ravnateljic predstavljalo novo razsežnost v vodenju ter strukturni izziv in spremembe, kar lahko ustvari novo odprtost glede vrednostnih struktur v šolah in kar lahko tudi preoblikuje šolsko kulturo (Davids, 2018). Bush (2018) pa pravi, da so se do sedaj raziskave o ženskah in vodenju osredotočile predvsem na karierne poti in strategije za doseganje položaja vodje in tudi na stile vodenja uspešnih voditeljic (Bush, 2018). Po mnenju tega avtorja je večina ljudi zavzela odločno stališče glede prenizke zastopanosti žensk na vodilnih položajih, ne pa tako odločnih stališč glede smotrnih postopkov v zvezi z ženskami na vodilnih položajih ali glede pomembnosti konteksta za to, kako se izvaja vodenje. Ta študija razširja raziskavo na specifičen kontekst Kosova in razišče izkušnje voditeljic oziroma žensk na vodilnih položajih v vseh treh fazah v njihovi karieri: v fazi pričakovanja in prizadevanja za položaj, v fazi pridobitve položaja in v fazi opravljanja poklica.

**Opredelitev problema**

Namen te disertacije je dodati manjkajoči košček k večji sestavljanki ženskih izkušenj v menedžmentu v vzgoji in izobraževanju, in sicer z izpostavljanjem njegovih značilnosti v Republiki Kosovo. Ker se vodenje in ravnateljevanje v različnih kulturah razlikujeta, so bile raziskave o spolu in izobraževalnem vodenju v zadnjem času obogatene z analizami nacionalnih študij primerov iz nezahodnih delov sveta. Te raziskave obravnavajo kontekst razvoja kariere žensk in poudarjajo pomen vključitve spoznanj, ki niso bila pridobljena v anglo-ameriškem okolju, s tem pa razširijo našo bazo znanja za bolj raznoliko teoretiziranje na tem področju (Oplatka, 2006). Povečanje nacionalnih študij primerov v sodobni literaturi o spolu in vodenju šol je pripomoglo k širitvi analize, in sicer skozi fokus ovir, ki se na pot postavljajo ženskam, ter z natančnim preučevanjem kompleksnega medsebojnega prepletanja dejavnikov v različnih družbeno-političnih in kulturnih okoljih. Vse spremenljivke lahko v različnih kulturnih situacijah delujejo kot podpora ali kot ovire ter so lahko večjega ali manjšega pomena pri vplivanju na ambicije ter pri dostopu do vodstvenega položaja (Coleman, 2011, Moorosi, 2020).

Razlike med spoloma pri porazdelitvi vodstvenih mest na Kosovu so bile ugotovljene na vseh ravneh izobraževalnega sistema, in sicer kljub temu, da so v zakonodaji zagotovljene enake možnosti za oba spola (Svetovna banka Kosovo, 2012). Enako pa so tudi razlike med spoloma pri razporejanju vodstvenih položajev v kosovskih šolah zaznane na vseh ravneh izobraževalnega sistema, in sicer kljub določbam o enakih možnostih v zakonodaji. Ukimeraj in Trnavčević (2020) ugotavljata, da ostaja neravnovesje med spoloma pri dodeljevanju in porazdelitvi vodstvenih položajev v kosovskih šolah, in sicer kljub zagotavljanju enakih možnosti v zakonodaji, še vedno zelo zaskrbljujoče. To pomanjkanje ravnovesja se zdi še toliko bolj nesprejemljivo, ker so na učiteljskih pozicijah na Kosovu ženske v večini.

V tej disertaciji raziskujemo kompleksno medsebojno delovanje različnih dejavnikov v raznolikih kulturnih okoljih, in sicer tako da postavimo karierne poti žensk v kosovski kontekst. Na ta način raziskava prispeva k trenutnim diskusijam o tej temi, saj podamo natančen pregled kariernih poti ravnateljic osnovnih šol na Kosovu, to je v družbi, ki je izrazito patriarhalna. Čeprav obstaja veliko mednarodnih raziskav o ženskah v vodenju v izobraževanju, pa je na Kosovu izvedenih le malo študij o zaposlenih ženskah in njihovih kariernih poteh. Raziskave o izzivih, s katerimi se srečujejo ravnateljice pri vodenju šol na Kosovu, dejansko niso bile

izvedene, prav tako pa, kolikor nam je poznano, do sedaj na Kosovu ni bilo raziskav, ki bi se ukvarjale s prenizko zastopanostjo ravnateljic v osnovnih šolah.

**Namen raziskave, cilji in raziskovalna vprašanja**

Poglavitni namen te raziskave je bil natančno raziskati vodstvene izkušnje ravnateljic, empirično preučiti ta problem v kosovskih šolah ter tako razviti teoretični model karierne poti ravnateljic do menedžerske oziroma ravnateljske pozicije v patriarhalni družbi. Da bi dosegli glavni raziskovalni namen, v tej študiji raziščemo različne vidike trenutnega prenizkega zastopanja žensk v kosovskih šolah in ta primanjkljaj tudi empirično preučimo ter razvijemo teoretični model za karierno pot ravnateljic do menedžerske oziroma ravnateljske pozicije v patriarhalni družbi. S preučevanjem specifičnega konteksta družbeno-politične in kulturne realnosti Kosova ter skozi prizmo izkušenj ravnateljic v tej raziskavi opredeljujemo in kritično analiziramo vrsto institucionalnih, družbenih in osebnih dejavnikov, s katerimi se srečujejo ravnateljice, opredelimo in analiziramo pa tudi spodbude, ki bi lahko motivirale ženske, da si prizadevajo za napredovanje kot ravnateljice in tudi za napredovanje v okviru svojega rednega dela v osnovnih šolah na Kosovu. Prav tako pa v tej raziskavi prispevamo k boljši opredelitvi obsega in narave podpore, ki jo ženske potrebujejo za dostop do vodilnih položajev, ter izpostavimo nekatere pomembne poudarke za nadaljnje raziskave.

*Raziskovalna vprašanja*

Na podlagi zgoraj opisanih ciljev so raziskovalna vprašanja oblikovana tako, da se usmerijo v raziskavo prenizke zastopanosti ravnateljic v osnovnih šolah na Kosovu:

a) Kakšne so pripovedi oziroma poročanja ravnateljic o ravnateljevanju na Kosovu?
b) Kakšni so opisi izkušenj kosovskih ravnateljic na poti do položaja ravnateljice, ob pridobitvi delovnega mesta ravnateljice in v času izvajanja te vloge?
c) Kakšna je podpora, ki jo potrebujejo ravnateljice na svoji poti do mesta ravnateljice?
d) Kako udeleženci te raziskave razumejo družbeno in kulturno okolje, v katerega sta vpeta vodenje in menedžment v izobraževanju?
e) Kako udeleženci te raziskave razlagajo neravnovesje med številom ravnateljev in ravnateljic v v menedžmentu v vzgoji in izobraževanju?

**Metodologija**

Ta raziskava je zasnovana kot študija primera z namenom, da bi pridobili vpogled v procese in dejavnosti, ki nam kažejo, kako se kosovske učiteljice odločajo in kako delujejo na poti, ki jih

vodi do položaja ravnateljice, ter kako postopajo oziroma ravnajo kot ravnateljice. Raziskava je zasnovana tako, da zajame več različnih virov podatkov. S tem zagotovimo metodološko triangulacijo (Stake, 1995), zvečamo verodostojnost študije ter naposled podamo celovitejšo sliko trenutnega stanja. To pa smo dosegli z raziskovanjem in izpostavljanjem osebnih razmišljanj ravnateljic osnovnih šol na Kosovu, s čimer se je razkrilo medsebojno delovanje pomembnih političnih, družbenih in kulturnih kontekstov ter prispevalo h komuniciranju v razpravi o ženskem vodenju v vzgoji in izobraževanju. Iz pripovedi oziroma poročanja v raziskavi sodelujočih ravnateljic, so bili zbrani dragoceni podatki, ki so nam omogočili, da odgovorimo na raziskovalna vprašanja in izpostavimo izkušnje žensk, ki se v svojih šolah soočajo z izobraževalnimi izzivi, ki jih prinašajo demokracija, socialna pravičnost in enakost.

Za to raziskavo so bili postopki vzorčenja izvedeni v dveh glavnih korakih: prvi korak je bila anketa, izvedena med ravnatelji in ravnateljicami. Demografski vprašalnik je bil po pridobitvi seznama ravnateljev in ravnateljic Ministrstva za šolstvo, znanost in tehnologijo Republike Kosovo razdeljen celotni ciljni populaciji ravnateljev in ravnateljic osnovnih šol. Vprašalnik je vseboval štirinajst vprašanj, in sicer glede starosti, usposobljenosti in izkušenj – tako za delo učitelja kot za delo ravnatelja – ter tudi podatke o šoli (tj. velikost, lokacija itd.). Podsklop vprašanj pa je bil namenjen samo ravnateljicam. Vprašanja so se nanašala na prostovoljno sodelovanje pri zbiranju podatkov in posredovanje kontaktnih podatkov.

Iz skupine prostovoljcev je bilo izbranih dvanajst udeleženk, k so  predstavljale približno 10% vseh ravnateljic v Republiki Kosovo. Pridobljene demografske podatke smo uporabili za razvrstitev udeležencev raziskave v tri različne kategorije glede na izkušnje: ravnateljice začetnice (neizkušene ravnateljice), srednje izkušene ravnateljice in zelo izkušene ravnateljice. Z namenom, da bi dobili vpogled iz perspektive centralne in  občinske ravni, so bili v raziskavo vključeni še trije (3) udeleženci: eden z Ministrstva za šolstvo, znanost in tehnologijo, eden z Občinskega direktorata za izobraževanje in en (1) predstavnik nevladne organizacije na ustreznem področju. Izbor je bil narejen na podlagi našega predhodnega poznavanja izobraževalnih politik, ki so se nanašale na proces zaposlovanja ravnateljev in njihovo vključenost v ta proces.

V raziskavi smo uporabili polstrukturirane intervjuje, da bi izpostavili „najpomembnejše vplive, izkušnje, okoliščine, vprašanja, teme ter življenjska spoznanja" (Denzin in Lincoln, 2018) ravnateljic in drugih sodelujočih v raziskavi.

Analiza podatkov in interpretacija sta odločilni fazi raziskave, saj predstavljata kompleksen in kaotičen oziroma zahteven proces povzemanja tega, kar vsebujejo pridobljeni podatki; to je torej proces luščenja pomena podatkov (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Podatki iz intervjujev so bili analizirani ročno, in sicer po štirih korakih: pregledovanje podatkov, organiziranje podatkov, kodiranje in kategoriziranje podatkov ter interpretacija podatkov. Uporabljen je bil uveljavljen induktivni kodirni pristop, ki nam je omogočal prepoznavanje številnih širših tem in podtem (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Prepoznani so bili vzorci, ki so pripomogli k oblikovanju teoretičnega 'modela menedžerske poti ravnateljic' osnovnih šol na Kosovu.

**Analiza in interpretacija**

Prednosti raziskave so v odkritosti in iskrenosti udeleženk ob razlagi in opisovanju pogosto grozljivih lastnih izkušenj. Mnoge od njih so izkusile boleča in celo brutalna vedenja kolegov, sodelavcev in skupnosti, ki so si ji prizadevali služiti spoštljivo in dostojanstveno. Podatki so sicer razkrili raznolike izkušnje udeleženk raziskave, ki pa so v veliki meri skladni z izkušnjami žensk Zahodnega Balkana (Karamanidou & Bush, 2017; Celikten, 2010).

Podatki so bili analizirani tako z metodo analize vsebine kot tudi (sicer v določenem obsegu) z utemeljeno analizo, in sicer v splošnem okviru modela menedžerske poti (Eck idr., 1996). V tem delu raziskave smo povezali vrsto vplivnih lasov, ki spregovorijo o „potisnih in vlečnih silah“, ki so skupne večini udeleženk raziskave na karierni poti v kontekstu menedžmenta v vzgoji in izobraževanju.

*V pripravljalni fazi oziroma fazi predvidevanja* karierne poti udeleženk smo pridobili vzorce izkušenj udeleženk na tej poti. Te izkušnje smo razvrstili v pet prevladujočih kategorij: (a) patriarhalna družina, (b) stereotipizacija spolov, (c) prizadevanja oziroma ambicije, (d) uravnoteženje delovnih in družinskih obveznosti ter (e) vloga podpornih struktur in vzornikov. V intervjujih so se pojavljale številne teme v zvezi z močnimi vplivi, ki delujejo na ženske in jih ovirajo, omejujejo ter jim narekujejo obnašanje v družbi, družini in poklicu glede na spolne paradigme.

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Ugotovitve oziroma podatki iz intervjujev kažejo, da učiteljice ne stremijo za tem, da bi zaprosile za položaj ravnateljice šole. Večino udeleženk so pri tem spodbujali bodisi sodelavci v šoli bodisi družina in prijatelji. Potrebno je bilo veliko vztrajnosti, da bi se naposled odločile in se potegovale za položaj ravnateljice. Pomanjkanje ambicije obravnavajo številni raziskovalci (Arar, 2019; Celikten, 2010; Coleman 2011; Oplatka, 2006) kot eno izmed ovir na poti do vodstvenih pozicij.

Udeleženke raziskave, ki izhajajo iz *patriarhalnih družin in so si tako izkusile življenje v takih družinah,* se že od začetka izobraževanja ter v času poklicnega življenja in kariere soočajo z večjimi izzivi, in sicer že od začetka izobraževanja ter tudi v času poklicnega življenja in kariere. Iz intervjujev je razvidno, da večina udeleženk raziskave poudarja, da so *spolni stereotipi* med glavnimi dejavniki, ki povzročajo premalo zastopanost žensk na vodstvenih položajih. Večina udeleženk je odraščala v okolju, v katerem je bilo poučevanje priljubljen poklic za ženske in tako so pod vplivom družine in njenega pritiska to tradicijo nadaljevale tudi same. V kosovski družbi je prevladujoča kulturna norma, da je pristojnost oblasti in nadzora v izključni domeni moških. Določena pričakovana vedenja pa v tem okolju delujejo kot notranji ali osebni izzivi, ki vplivajo na življenje žensk in jih oddaljujejo od določenih delovnih mest, ki veljajo za moška. Vse te ovire so globoko zakoreninjene v tradicionalnih in stereotipnih odnosih družbe do lastnosti žensk (Arar, 2019). V smislu *ambicij* so udeleženke govorile o *pomanjkanju zaupanja in pomanjkanju znanja kot zavirajočih silah*, ki spodkopavajo ambicije žensk in njihove težnje v smeri menedžerske ali ravnateljske kariere, ob tem pa so navedle tudi nezadosten finančni učinek, ki bi ga taka kariera zagotovila.

V kosovski družbi so kljub vsemu napredku, ki je bil dosežen v smislu enakosti med spoloma, zadolžitve v domačem gospodinjstvu v veliki meri ostale ženskam. To pripisujemo pričakovanjem in vlogam spola, ki sedaj postavljajo ženske v dvojno vlogo – postavlja jih med obveznosti v *domačem gospodinjstvu in med obveznosti na delu*. Ugotovitve raziskave so tudi razkrile, da je eden od izzivov, ki so ga omenjale udeleženke, pomanjkanje podpore družine in moža. Na vprašanje, kako se spopadajo z obveznostmi doma in na delu, so nekatere udeleženke izjavile, da sicer imajo podporo svojih mož, vendar pa ta podpora pri gospodinjskih obveznostih ni zadostna. Vloga *družinske podpore se je izkazala za* bistveno. Nekatere udeleženke so kljub izkušnji življenja v patriarhalni družini izjavile, da je bil ravno oče tisti, ki jih je kot dekleta spodbujal k izobraževanju, v drugih primerih pa ni bilo razlike med spoloma.

Druge udeleženke so potrdile, da imajo *podporo svojih mož*, še  pogosteje pa imajo podporo staršev ali mater. Za Kosovo je značilna podpora skupnosti, ki je zelo pomembna pri zaposlovanju žensk na delovna mesta v vzgoji in izobraževanju. Kot nujno podporo so udeleženke navedle tudi *institucionalno podporo*. Kot spodbuda za tiste udeleženke, katerih ambicija sicer v začetku ni bilo opravljanje dela ravnateljice, je bilo tudi usposabljanje na področju menedžmenta v izobraževanju, ki so ga opravile udeleženke raziskave. Usposabljanje je povečalo zaupanje žensk, da lahko opravljajo delo ravnateljice šole; tako so lažje sprejele odločitev, da zaprosijo za to delovno mesto. Udeleženke so spoznale, da je za menedžment v izobraževanju koristno, da so vanj vključene ženske, ki so temu poklicu predane in  *so vzor drugim ženskam*, ki jim lahko potem sledijo. Nekatere od intervjuvanih ravnateljic so se zavedale, da bi njihovo delo lahko spodbudilo druge ženske in jih prepričalo, da so tudi same sposobne prevzeti vodstveni položaj.

*V fazi pridobivanja oziroma v uvodni fazi* so udeleženke navedle koristi in velik pomen *odločitve politike*, da so lahko tudi ženske med člani Ocenjevalne komisije za zaposlovanje ravnateljev, in sicer z namenom, da bi spodbudili ženske, da tudi one kandidirajo ali zaprosijo za mesto ravnateljice. Vključitev žensk v te komisije je povečala možnosti žensk, da bi bile izbrane, saj se prosilke sedaj počutijo bolj samozavestne in sproščene, ko vidijo v takšni komisiji sedeti tudi ženske. Udeleženke so navedle, da je bil zanje intervju priložnost, da so lahko potrdile svoje sposobnosti in ugotovile, kako dobre so. Za druge udeleženke pa se je v intervjujih pokazalo, da jim manjka samozavesti, da bi se dobro izkazale v prisotnosti komisije. Skozi intervjuje se je pokazalo, da se morajo ženske bolj boriti, da bi zainteresirane strani oziroma deležnike prepričale, da so primerne za vodenje šole, kar izhaja iz zastarelega stereotipiziranja  spolov na delovnem mestu. Raziskava pa je tudi pokazala, da so po mnenju nekaterih *ženske kvote* učinkovit način za povečanje števila ravnateljic v osnovnih šolah. Drugi pa so izrazili zaskrbljenost ali zadržek glede preveč splošnega dojemanja kvot, saj to izloči možnost, da bi se od žensk zahtevale enake kompetence in odlike kot od kolegov moškega spola.

Po mnenju večine udeleženk, vključno s predstavnicami občinske in centralne oblasti, je vpliv politike v procesu zaposlovanja bistvenega pomena. Izkušnje udeleženih v raziskavi kažejo na zelo *škodljivo vlogo politike* pri imenovanjih javnih uslužbencev na Kosovu. Sčasoma se negativne izkušnje, ki jih imajo ženske v zvezi z imenovanji, razvijejo v splošno dojemanje,

da so imenovanja vodstvenih uslužbencev naperjena proti ženskam. To pa ustvarja občutek, da so imenovanja nepoštena in nezaslužena. Kljub začetnim obotavljanjem je pripravljalno usposabljanje prineslo pozitivne rezultate in vplivalo na povečanje števila ravnateljic. Po mnenju nekaterih udeleženk se je aktivna spodbuda ravnatelja in sodelavcev izkazala kot ključni motivator za udeležbo na usposabljanju. Pokazalo se je, da *programi razvijanja vodstvenih sposobnosti* povečujejo usposobljenost in tudi zaupanje v vodstvo (Moorosi, 2020). V nekaterih primerih so bili motivatorji udeleženk njihovi možje, ki so spodbujali in prepričevali svoje žene, naj se udeležijo usposabljanja ali naj vlagajo v lasten poklicni razvoj. Na splošno so ugotovitve iz intervjujev razkrile, da se je usposabljanje za vodenje v vzgoji in izobraževanju (izobraževalno vodenje) izkazalo za vir spodbud. Izkazalo se je tudi kot ključ do zvečanja motivacije žensk za to, da postanejo ravnateljice ter jim pomagalo pri tem, da svoje delo bolje opravljajo. Ugotovitve kažejo, da je usposabljanje povečalo tudi zaupanje ravnateljic, ki so to funkcijo že opravljale.

*Doseganje pozicije ravnateljice* — Študija je pokazala, da so se ravnateljice soočile z *anksioznostjo in strahovi*, ko so začele delati kot ravnateljice šole. Številne udeleženke so priznale, da so preživljale težko obdobje, ko so pričele s tem delom. Za nekatere izmed intervjuvanih ravnateljic je bil na začetku kariere v ravnateljskem poklicu prvi neprijeten izziv, s katerim so se soočile, *nasprotujoč in odklonilen pristop sodelavcev in skupnosti, zlasti na* podeželju. Odpor sodelavcev se je kazal v različnih oblikah. Obstajajo tudi primeri, ko so njihovi kolegi odkrito izrazili mnenje, da ženske ne morejo sprejeti za svojo nadrejeno, torej za ravnateljico. To je posledica negativnega stereotipa in negativnih pričakovanj o vlogi žensk v družbi. V skladu s tem prevladujočim odnosom do žensk je lahko ravnatelj le moški, ženske pa so iz te vloge izključene. Ob tem smo zasledili tudi pričevanja o zlonamernem vedenju in nezaupanju sodelavcev. Včasih so ravnateljice naletele na merjenje moči ali „boj za oblast“, kar pa je bilo bolj razširjeno v šolah v urbanih okoljih. Udeleženke raziskave so se soočale tudi z izzivi v širši skupnosti, predvsem s strani moških. Moč negativnega vzdušja in skrajnega nespoštovanja zakona izhajata iz globoko zakoreninjenega vrednostnega sistema tradicionalne in konzervativne kulture, ki se je razvijal skozi stoletja prevlade patriarhalnega sistema na Kosovu. Intervjuji so razkrili tudi pomemben vpliv religije, ki ženskam – v kombinaciji s pristranskim odnosom do njihovega spola – zelo otežuje opravljanje dela ravnateljic. Ugotovljeno je bilo, da so ravnateljice podeželskih šol doživele več diskriminacije kot tiste iz mestnih šol. Včasih pa sta se *diskriminacija in stereotipiziranje* v družbi izkazala za spodbude

nekaterim ravnateljicam. Te izkušnje so jih pripeljale do spoznanja, da sam spol ni pokazatelj uspešnosti ravnateljev.

Čeprav *institucionalna podpora* ne more odpraviti ali spremeniti mreže predsodkov v družbi, je raziskava pokazala, da ta podpora lahko in da tudi res olajša pot žensk, ki stopajo na vodstvene položaje in se morajo soočiti z vedenjem, ki ga povzročajo predsodki. Ta podpora je najpomembnejša v fazi uveljavljanja oziroma v začetni fazi, saj se morajo na novo imenovane ženske uveljaviti in dokazati, da so enako kot moški sposobne voditi in upravljati šolo, ne glede na dvome in nasprotovanje sodelavcev in skupnosti. Za Kosovo je značilna podpora kolegov in skupnosti, kar je zelo pomembno za ravnateljice; naše ugotovitve kažejo, da je ta pomoč lahko ključna. Ena od udeleženk raziskave je navedla, da je bila zaradi delovne uspešnost deležna *večje podpore skupnosti.* Tako kot pri ravnateljih je pogosto tudi pri ravnateljicah pozitivna povratna zanka dobrih rezultatov in podpore skupnosti tista, ki gradi zaupanje in predanost ravnateljic.

V intervjujih se je kot eden izmed glavnih izzivov za večino ravnateljic v njihovem kariernem razvoju, še zlasti v fazi izvajanja, izkazalo *uravnoteženje delovnih in družinskih obveznosti.* Ugotovitve kažejo, da včasih ženske tudi same verjamejo, da se vloga matere obravnava kot nekaj običajnega za ženske in da to ni nekaj, kar bi lahko opravljali moški. V intervjujih se je tudi pokazalo, da nekatere kosovske ženske v vzgoji in izobraževanju zavračajo pojmovanje, da je tradicionalna paradigma nujna ovira, saj si v nekaterih primerih družinsko breme deli vsa družina.  Obstaja torej kompromis, ki ga je treba sprejeti, da lahko družina podpre zaposleno žensko. Na vprašanje, kako se spopadajo z družinskimi in delovnimi obveznostmi, so nekatere udeleženke raziskave povedale, da imajo podporo svojih mož, vendar pa ta podpora ne zadostuje za njihovo razbremenitev pri gospodinjskih obveznostih. Po mnenju nekaterih udeleženk je teža družinskih obveznosti pomembna psihološka cena, ki jo morajo plačati ženske, ki se odločijo za zahtevno kariero ravnateljice, za kariero, ki zahteva veliko njihovega časa.  Ugotovitve raziskave so razkrile, da se je kosovskim ženskam težje družiti z moškimi, a ne zaradi moških samih, ki ne bi sprejeli ženske medse, temveč zaradi okolice. Kot je bilo že omenjeno, je prevlada *tradicionalnega stereotipiziranja spolov* na Kosovu pogosto vzrok za to, da pripišejo ženski, ki navezuje stike ali prijateljstva z drugimi moškimi, in to v povsem profesionalnem kontekstu, dvomljive moralne kvalitete in nezvestobo do moža.

Intervjuji so pokazali, da se predanost in zavezanost kažeta kot pomembni lastnosti ravnateljic. Ravnateljice ponavadi prenesejo iz doma v delovno okolje svojo sposobnost, da znajo ustvariti dom in znajo biti tudi ponosne tako na fizično okolje šole kot tudi na vzgojno-izobraževalni proces, ki poteka znotraj šole. *Vztrajnost in poštenost, ki* nista izraziti ženski lastnosti pa sta se (ob korumpiranosti v praksi) pojavljali kot skupna stališča ali izhodišča udeleženk raziskave. Lahko bi trdili, da je manjša razširjenost korupcije med ravnateljicami povezana z bolj materinskim odnosom do zaposlenih in posledično s skrbjo zanje, s skrbjo za učence in za njihovo fizično okolje. Ugotovitve iz intervjujev kažejo, da imajo ravnateljice večji vpliv tudi na pravice žensk in enakost spolov in da iskreno verjamejo, da je njihov položaj – položaj ravnateljice – zanje manj pomemben v smislu statusa in privilegijev ter pomembnejši v smislu obveznosti in odgovornosti. Po mnenju udeleženk raziskave se ravnatelji bolj nagibajo k avtoritativnim pristopom, medtem ko se ravnateljice zavzemajo za bolj sodelovalne in demokratične pristope.

**Sklepi in priporočila**

Ugotovljeno je bilo, da se ženske na svoji težki menedžerski poti soočajo z različnimi velikimi izzivi, a tudi s pomembinmi spodbudami. »*Model menedžerske poti ravnateljic*« (MMPR), prikazan v Sliki 13 (spodaj), povzema ugotovitve doktorske disertacije, tako da v grafični obliki prikazuje različne elemente vpliva v prepletih izkušenj kosovskih ravnateljic in tudi dinamično interakcijo teh elementov, zaobseženih v treh fazah: faza priprave (pričakovanja in prizadevanja za položaj ravnateljice), faza pridobitve položaja ravnateljice in faza izvajanja te funkcije. Novi model (MMPR), ki se zgleduje po modelu menedžerske poti avtorjev Van Ecka idr. (1996), vključuje interakcijske izzive in spodbude na osebni, organizacijski in družbeni ravni ter se navezuje na povezanost s statusom žensk, tj. s statusom začetnic (neizkušenih), srednje izkušenih in zelo izkušenih in usposobljenih ravnateljic. Podatki, ki so nam jim posredovale udeleženke raziskave za vse faze svoje karierne poti, predstavljajo osrednji in svojstven vidik ugotovitev raziskave, saj zagotavljajo vpogled v prepreke in spodbude, ki so na tej poti delovale na individualni, organizacijski in družbeni ravni.

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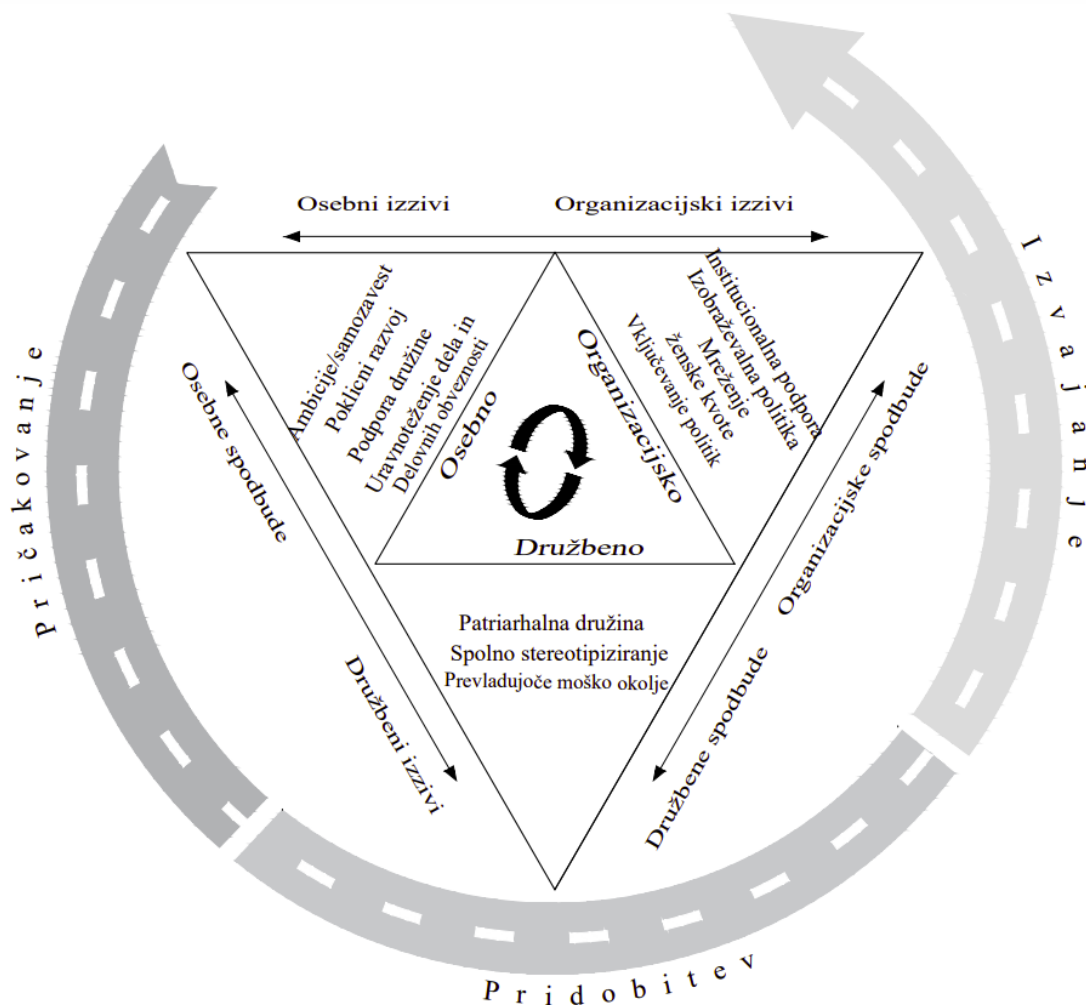
*Slika 13: Model menedžerske poti ravnateljic (MMPR)*

*Osebni izzivi in spodbude* – Čeprav so vsi dejavniki med seboj povezani, je ključni vidik *»notranji vzgib«* , ki ženske spodbuja ali pa jim preprečuje, da bi se potegovale za vodstvene položaje. V raziskavi so tudi pričevanja, ki podpirajo tezo, da nekateri zunanji dejavniki — kot so *prevladujoče vrednotenje spolov, nezadostno poznavanje funkcije menedžmenta* – sprožajo močne  notranje, psihološke zaviralce, kot je *pomanjkanje zaupanja*.  Ta notranji zaviralec je nazorno povzet v sicer zmotni opazki: *»Mislila sem, da moraš biti „superman" – nadčlovek, če želiš biti ravnatelj.«* Moška oznaka, torej »superman«, je v omenjeni opazki tako povedna oziroma zgovorna kot tudi ironična. Vzrok za tako slabo samopodobo oziroma nizko samozavest, ki je „ustvarila" to opazko, pa  izhaja ravno iz družbene strukture, ki jo usmerjajo in imajo od nje  korist le moški. Kot navaja Schein (1996), je ravno razširjenost fenomena »misliti kot menedžer – misliti kot moški« tista, ki ustvarja in daje moč  škodljivim psihološkim preprekam, ki ovirajo   ženske pri njihovem prizadevanju za vodstvena delovna mesta.

Ravnateljice ob vstopu v pogosto prevladujoče moško okolje šole občutijo *tesnobo in strah,* ki ga sprožijo *nasprotovanja in neodobravanja tako s strani sodelavcev kot s strani podeželske skupnosti*. Pojavljali so se tudi *občutki krivde*, in sicer glede neuspešnosti udeleženk raziskave v zvezi z izpolnjevanjem pričakovanih obveznosti matere in žene. Pridobivanje izkušenj in znanja v zvezi z ravnateljsko funkcijo skozi učinkovito usposabljanje pa močno poveča zaupanje v sposobnosti žensk in jim pomaga premagati strahove, ki so jih imele pred nastopom te funkcije. Podrobneje je treba raziskati še eno pomembno spodbudo – privlačno silo, ki jo predstavlja ženska *kot vzornica* v fazi prizadevanja in pridobivanja statusa, kar je sicer že dobro dokumentirano za „moški" menedžment. Ta dejavnik je potrebno tudi vključiti v strateške oziroma politične smernice za žensko vodenje.

V navedbah udeleženk so tudi pričevanja o psihološki samozavesti, ki pomaga premagati razne ovire. Vse udeleženke raziskave so se tako ali drugače uspešno spoprijele z izzivi. Uspelo jim je pridobiti zaupanje in motivirati druge za potrditev tega, da lahko vodijo šole tudi ženske, in to morda celo bolje kot moški. Potrebno je izpostaviti še predanost in vztrajnost žensk pri dokazovanju tega, da lahko dosegajo dobre rezultate, in to kljub številnim izzivom, s katerimi se soočajo. Vse to je izrednega pomena, saj ravnateljice kot vzornice vplivajo na druge, ki jim sledijo po fazah menedžerske poti. Vzornice vplivajo tudi na to, da njihove sledilke verjamejo, da učinkovito vodenje v šolah oziroma ravnateljevanje nikakor ni povezano s spolom. Pričevanje udeleženk je tudi podprlo tezo, da obstajajo pozitivne povezave med delom, ki ga opravljajo ravnateljice, in okrepljenim sodelovanjem v skupnosti, zlasti z vključenostjo mater. Poleg tega je v raziskavi dokazano, da ženske na splošno pogosteje uporabljajo bolj demokratičen in vključujoč stil vodenja, se posvetujejo z zaposlenimi in starši ter nagrajujejo dosežke (Arditi in Balci, 2009; Eagly in Carli, 2003). Ena izmed udeleženk nakazuje na morebitno povezavo med žensko sposobnostjo za prenos „gospodinjskih" standardov in discipline iz domačega, družinskega okolja v šolsko in med splošno trditvijo, da so šole, ki jih vodijo ženske, manj nagnjene h korupciji (Shema in Turner, 2020). Spol torej ni problematičen v smislu kakovosti vodstvenega dela, gre za problem dojemanja lastnega vodstvenega položaja in pogleda na idealnega menedžerja, ki je izrazito moški. Že udeleženke same so pokazatelj dejstva, da je »stekleni strop« razbit in da se spreminja miselnosti kosovske družbe.

*Organizacijski izzivi in spodbude* – Žensko dojemanje vpliva institucionalnih *sil* daje mešano sliko. Na Kosovu so se v zadnjem času pojavile spremembe v korist žensk, ki stremijo za tem, da napredujejo. Kot trdi Coleman (2010), se na obzorju, čeprav počasi, kažejo spremembe in

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potiskajo nazaj vso »plimo« ovir, s katerimi se soočajo ženske. Podpora mednarodne skupnosti in spremembe, ki so se zgodile po vojni, ter prilagajanje zakonodaji EU, so vplivale na bistvene spremembe v miselnosti prebivalcev Kosova. *Izobraževalna politika* je napredovala ter izpopolnjevala primarne in sekundarne zakone, ki bi ženskam omogočili doseganje enakega statusa kot moškim. To je s sabo prineslo možnosti usposabljanja in kariernega razvoja, kar so udeleženke spoznale za zelo koristno. Vendar pa se ta prizadevanja ne skladajo z mlačnimi odnosi na političnem področju, zlasti na občinski in lokalni ravni, kjer ostaja moška pristranskost prevladujoča tema. Politično vmešavanje v imenovanje javnih uslužbencev je tabu tema in se ne nanaša le na spol kandidatov, saj daje prednost kandidatom, ki niso le moškega spola, ampak so tudi politično sprejemljivi (Limani, 2019). To je področje, ki ni zadosti podprto in ki zahteva več pozornosti. Kot nasprotje vzorca zaviralnih sil pa udeleženke pričajo o dejavnikih spodbude ali »potega«, ki podpirajo ženske in jim omogočajo potovanje skozi faze menedžerske poti. To je na primer *podpora uradnikov občinskih oblasti in sodelavcev na delovnem mestu*, ki aktivno nasprotujejo uveljavljenim predsodkom in pristranskosti. Kot zelo pomemben vidik se v fazi prijave za delovno mesto pojavlja *institucionalna podpora*, saj je, kot kažejo intervjuji, velika težava že to, da ženske ne zaprosijo za vodilno delovno mesto in da jih to tudi ne zanima. *Usposabljanje pred nastopom funkcije,* ki sicer ni takoj pritegnilo zanimanja nekaterih žensk, se je pozneje izkazalo za vir spodbud in je bilo ključnega pomena za povečanje motivacije žensk, da bi tudi same postale ravnateljice. Z usposabljanjem, ki je bilo ponujeno udeleženkam, se je pri njih ustvarilo zaupanje, da lahko opravljajo menedžersko delo. Usposabljanje pa jih tudi spodbudi k prijavam za delovno mesto ravnateljic.

*Družbeni izzivi in spodbude* — Skladno s širšim regionalnim kontekstom *poganjajo in oblikujejo organizacijske strukture ter kulturno pogojeno vedenje v šolah zunanje, skupnostne norme spolov*, kar vpliva na aspiracije žensk doseganje položaja in delovanje oziroma opravljanje funkcije ravnateljice. Gre za to, da sta osebna in organizacijska raven kot zrcali ali kanala bolj prodornega in tudi bolj prikritega vira težav za ženske — to pa je družbena raven. Čeprav obstajajo na tej ravni nekatere spodbude, so izzivi na menedžerski poti ravnateljic tukaj očitnejši in povezani s spolnimi, socialnimi, kulturnimi, političnimi in tradicionalnimi stereotipi. Ti izzivi so globoko zakoreninjeni v kosovski družbi, spremembe pa so zelo počasne. Stereotipi in diskriminacija se pojavljajo kot ključni elementi znotraj družbenih in kulturnih dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na posameznice, ki si želijo uspeha v poklicu. *Odpor, nepodrejanje in zlonamerno obrekovanje s strani kolegov* – kar je posledica negativnih

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stereotipov in pričakovanj o vlogi žensk v družbi – povzročajo *strah in tesnobo* pri začetnicah v tem poklicu. Za kosovski kontekst je značilna izredno velika družbena dinamika, ki je zakoreninjena *v patriarhalni družini*. Kosovo spada med družbe, za katere je značilen kompleks moške superiornosti, ki poganja patriarhalni sistem v družini in v družbi ter prinaša velike izzive za ženske, ki so usmerjene v kariero. Diskriminacija spolov je še vedno del kosovske družbe in neposredno vpliva na dojemanje ali družbeno normo, ki predvideva, da je vodstveno delo samo delo za moške. Na pomanjkanje ambicij pri ženskah vplivajo socialni stereotipi kosovske družbe in pričakovanja družbe glede tega, kdo lahko kaj dela.

Ti izzivi so v kosovski družbi globoko zakoreninjeni, spremembe pa so zelo počasne. Hude ali neprijetne izkušnje šolskega okolja kot »kluba starih fantov« niso značilne le za Kosovo (McGee, 2010). Dodaten negativen vpliv neodobravanja (lokalne) skupnosti — včasih že na podlagi lažnih obtožb o nemoralnem in opolzkem vedenju žensk — pa je verjetno značilen za mnoga podeželska okolja (Limani, 2019). Raziskava je tudi razkrila moč družbenih in kulturnih dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na ravnateljice, kar ponovi ugotovitve Oplatke (2006) in Blackmora (1999), ki poročata o »preprekah«, ki ovirajo ženske pri pridobivanju vodstvenih položajev; le-te pa izvirajo iz družbenega in kulturnega okolja.

Diskriminacija spolov je še vedno del kosovske družbe in neposredno vpliva na dojemanje ali družbeno normo, ki predvideva, da je vodstveno delo samo delo za moške. Na pomanjkanje ambicij pri ženskah vplivajo družbeni stereotipi kosovske družbe in pričakovanja družbe glede tega, kdo lahko kaj dela. Tako kot v drugih podobnih okoljih so težnje ali ambicije žensk tudi tu omejene ter pod vplivom patriarhalnih in verskih norm, kjer očetje teh žensk narekujejo poklicne izbire, njihovi tasti pa podeljujejo dovoljenja za delo (Färnsveden idr., 2014). Načrtovanje kariere posameznika je omejeno z družinskimi in domačimi obveznostmi (Vprašanja spolov na Zahodnem Balkanu, 2018). Za udeleženke raziskave je bil dodaten izziv vzdrževanje ravnovesja med družinskimi obveznostmi ter zahtevnimi menedžerskimi nalogami, in sicer ob upoštevanju včasih žaljivih in nerazumnih nasprotovanj vaških starešin in kolegov. Intervjuvanke (udeleženke raziskave) zato najprej niso razmišljale o delu na vodstvenem položaju, saj so tudi same odraščale s prepričanjem, da je položaj ravnatelja le za »nadčloveka«! Poleg tega, da so ženske izpostavljene neprijaznim družbeno-kulturnim okoljem, pa tudi delajo v podobni mreži utrjenih prepričanj, da so primerne le za vlogo učiteljice, ne pa tudi za vlogo menedžerke (Lazarević in Tadić, 2018).

Morda so še najbolj obetajoče ugotovitve, ki izhajajo iz te raziskave, obstoj nekaterih »potisnih oziroma spodbujevalnih dejavnikov« — to so tiste zaznane sile, o katerih se intervjuvanke strinjajo, da delujejo kot protiutež različnim silam nasprotovanja ali oporekanja v vsaki fazi karierne poti ravnateljic. Med temi potisnimi ali spodbujevalnimi dejavniki, navedenimi s strani intervjuvank, najbolj izstopajo raznolike izkušnje, ki so pri intervjuvankah povečale občutek samozavesti in spodbudile spoznanje, da lahko opravljajo in da tudi opravljajo ravnateljsko funkcijo tako dobro — če ne še bolje — kot moški kolegi. Te izkušnje vključujejo usposabljanje pred izraženo ambicijo po ravnateljski funkciji in usposabljanje po tem ter dejansko (četudi samo moralno) podporo mož, bližnje družine in  sodelavcev. Zaupanje udeleženk raziskave se je povečalo tudi s prisotnostjo  vzornic, ki uspešno opravljajo ravnateljsko funkcijo, ter s pomembno  podporo občinskih in političnih akterjev moškega spola. Ti potisni oziroma spodbujevalni dejavniki, ki so ključne ugotovitve te raziskave, ponujajo vpogled v dejanske in potencialne razmere za  razvoj žensk v vzgoji in izobraževanju na Kosovu ter postavlja fokus za prihodnje raziskave.

S sprejetjem ustrezne zakonodaje, politik in priložnosti za usposabljanje žensk je kosovska družba že napredovala. Namen tega je bil zaščititi in izboljšati vlogo žensk v menedžmentu v vzgoji in izobraževanju. Vendar se skozi izkušnje udeleženk zrcali družba in poklicno okolje, na katerega  reforme niso vplivale v zadostni meri. Potrebne so nadaljnje raziskave primerov, kjer so bile izpeljane pozitivne spremembe te dominantno patriarhalne miselnosti v notranjem okolju šole in v neposrednem zunanjem okolju skupnosti, ki ji določena šola služi. Nadaljnje raziskave so potrebne v primerih, ko je bilo spolno stereotipiziranje odpravljeno, ker je povzročalo težave pri dostopanju žensk do vodilnih položajev. V luči širše strategije zahtevajo nadaljnje in podrobnejše preučevanje pričevanja o potisnih ali spodbujevalnih dejavnikih, ki spodbujajo ženske in jim olajšajo „potovanje" skozi vse faze menedžerske poti. Mednje štejemo dejavnike, kot so aktivna podpora občinskih oblasti in sodelavcev. Učinkovite in uspešne ravnateljice se dokazujejo *kot vzornice* in kot pobudnice sprememb v odnosu skupnosti do žensk in prepričanj skupnosti o vlogi spolov pri vodenju šol. Obstajajo pa tudi povezave med aktivnim vključevanjem menedžerk v skupnost in med spremembami v odnosu do žensk. To zahteva nadaljnje preučevanje stanja in dejavnikov, ki povzročajo spremembe.

Podatki, ki bi jih prispevali moški, bi prispevali k triangulaciji podatkov, ki so jih zagotovile že ženske. Raziskavo bi lahko še dosti bolj razširili in obogatili, če bi vanjo vključili podatke o dojemanju oziroma percepciji drugih deležnikov, vključno z učenci in starši. Iz podatkov, pridobljenih v raziskavi, lahko zaključimo, da obstajajo močni pokazatelji o možnih koristih

razširitve vzorca, in sicer z vključitvijo moških v vse kategorije deležnikov. Udeleženke so poročale tudi o odnosu oziroma o pogledih moških, sicer redkih in posrednih, ki so bili v nasprotju s prevladujočo kulturo spolnega stereotipiziranja. Nekatere udeleženke so poročale o izkušnjah aktivne podpore in podpore z besedo s strani možev, partnerjev, sodelavcev, strokovnjakov na ministrstvu in v občini ter, kar je najbolj zanimivo, o izkušnjah podpore s strani članov lokalne skupnosti. Vse to navaja na smiselnost nadaljnjega raziskovanja s še drugimi metodami zbiranja podatkov.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As in many other parts of the world, women's access to positions of education leadership and management in Kosovo remains hindered or obstructed for reasons thinly explored, up to the present time. This dissertation, in some measure, tends to fill this gap in understanding these reasons. The scientific debate that has resulted in a substantial amount of literature on the role of women in educational leadership and management. That debate, fuelled by considerable research data and analysis, has thrown a powerful light on the meaning of leadership and management in education, their specific application to gender, and the factors that influence the management journey of women who seek and achieve positions as school principals. This dissertation adds to that debate, exploring those same issues in the specific context of Kosovo.

## 1.1 Understanding Management and Leadership

There is a vast compendium of literature regarding education management and leadership[1], extending over many decades and crossing all continents. Leadership and management are broad and complex concepts, traversing the wide landscape of human work, both public and private sectors, and throughout services, manufacturing and commerce. The present study is concerned with the meaning of these concepts in the relatively narrow domain of education. It is vital that these terms are clarified at the outset, thereby marking out the parameters of the research objectives. The concepts of educational management and educational leadership lie at the very heart of an ongoing, lively and often complex debate about the organisation of educational institutions, and how these concepts link to education (Connolly et al., 2019; Hallinger & Heck, 2021).

Some argue cogently that educational leadership and management are not two sides of a single coin, but rather categorically different activities (Connolly et al, 2019). Educational management implies an organisational hierarchy of actors (Mullins & Christie, 2016), who are assigned to 'carry responsibility' and are accountable for the functioning of a system that drives an education institution (Ball, 2008; Møller, 2007). Educational leadership is said to involve influencing, inspiring and motivating others to achieve goals within an education institution (Connolly et al, 2019). This connects with the established concept of educational management

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[1] Management and leadership, manager and leader will be further used in accordance with refered authors. When specifically Kosovo is mentioned education manager or school principal will be used.

as concerned with bringing about the status quo in education institutions (Bennis & Nanus, 2007), whereas educational leadership is focussed on change for progress in those institutions (Fullan, 2008, 2014; Harris, 2002).

Others argue against the idea that management and leadership in education are totally distinct concepts. According to Day et al., (2001) and Kotterman (2006), leadership and management are intertwined. Tavčar et al. (2005) on the other hand understands leadership to be one among four functions of management. Whereas other authors (Bush, 2018; Cuban, 1988; Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Dimmock, 1999; Sun & Leithwood, 2012; Wallace Foundation, 2013) pinpoint the divergence of leadership and management by characterizing the former with change and influencing and vision, and the latter as concerned with maintenance activity (Bolman & Deal, 1997). This idea of management as 'maintenance activity' is reflected in the findings of other scholars. Pol & Lazarová (2019) identified management in education as a predominantly administrative function. Likewise, Bush (2018) sees a close nexus in the way leadership is connected to values and aims, whereas management is concerned with the application of technical matters. According to Bush (2018) bureaucratic and rational management approaches in education have limitations, insofar as they emphasise procedures rather than pure values and a sense of purpose in education.

Is the idea of management responsibility devoid of aspects of so-called leadership traits? The idea of management 'responsibility', applied to school principals, can be understood as a state of mind, experienced as a burden to be carried like a 'rucksack' on your back (James & Vince, 2001). Mullins and Christie (2016) also emphasised the complex nature of such responsibility and accountability in an educational organisation. However, it is when the practical nature of such responsibility is unpicked that the concept begins to overlap with that of leadership, insofar as it implies activities such as assisting and pointing other professionals toward their organisational objectives. Other authors (Cuban, 1988; Yukl, 2012) ascribe these 'management activities' to the concept of leadership, creating a confused map of understanding in the literature. Conversely, education management can involve carrying the responsibility for a project that fundamentally alters staff praxis in a school, in a way that insists on constant change and ongoing dynamic interaction (Hawkins & James, 2018). Among the many voices, Harris (2014) urges the idea of seeing school principals as effective leadership in action: in other words, putting the emphasis on contextualised achievement rather than universal attributes of leadership.

The 'change agent' idea is linked to the notion of leading and influencing others to achieve organisational goals (Cuban, 1988; Fullan, 2001; Mullins & Christie, 2016; Yukl, 2012). However, it is unlikely that such change programmes can be realised by one person, without a range of actors operating systems across the educational institution. For this reason, Hawkins and James (2017) state that leadership as 'influencer' is not a one-way process, but is interactional, bringing about change in the leader as much as those who are led. The agent of change concept has resulted in a large range of models of in management and leadership. In yet another approach to link between the management function and the aspects of the life of the organization, Bush (2020) saw the objectives, concept of structure, environmental influences and appropriate strategies as the key to the management role. Bush (2020) went on to list six clusters of management models of educational management: formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity and cultural models.

Many authors have also researched various theories of education leadership. Gumus et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of research on leadership for the period of 1980 to 2014 and found that the most studied models of leadership centred on four areas: transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. It might be argued that neither the theory nor practice of education management and leadership supports a generic answer to that question. In other words, there cannot be a single model that fits with all places, at all times and regardless of the inevitable variables that occur in a particular school. The 'leader as change agent' concept links to the specificity of the context of change. A body of research points to the need to focus on context, in order to understand the meaning of school management in some educational systems.

In the specific context of Kosovo, it is argued in this thesis that the management approach is more appropriate than that of leadership. In other words, the study deals with the function of school principal as essentially one of managing an institution, by means of established procedures of organising human and other resources in pursuit of educational goals, with measurable outcomes for students. It is concerned with those more easily defined management tasks, that are widely recognised and less controversial than the personal qualities ascribed to the concept of leadership.

## 1.2 Gender in Education Management

Many societies around the world fail to accord women equal access to areas of professional life, to their detriment. This point was made by Michelle Obama, when she stated:

"No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contribution of half its citizens". What the First Lady had hit upon remains the perennial problem of overlooking the enormous 'unlocked' potential of women, particularly in those societies that for socio-political or religious-cultural reasons exclude women from the professional workplace. What lies behind Michelle Obama's observation about women in society is the subject of lively debate in both developed and developing countries around the globe. A significant part of that debate and related research relates to professional women in education, a theme of the present thesis in relation to Kosovo.

The issue of under-representation of women in education management has been examined by researchers all over the world: Europe (Bush, 2018, Coleman, 2007, 2011, 2020; Jones, 2017; Karamanidou & Bush 2017; Martínez et al, 2020; Møller, 2007, Vella, 2020); United States (Fuller, 2014, 2017; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Hoyt, 2010; Robinson, 2017; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010), Africa (Moorosi, 2010, 2020); Turkey (Celikten, 2005, 2010); Saudi Arabia (Arar, 2019; Arar & Oplatka, 2015; Shapira et al., 2013), Autralia (Blackmore, 1999, 2018), New Zealand (Fitzgerald, 2006), Canada (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Reynolds et. al., 2008) and in other countries.

Initially, the research on gender and educational management and leadership mainly came from Anglo-American contexts but later this research on gender and educational leadership has prompted a wealth of national case studies from non-western contexts (Arar, 2019; Celikten, 2005, 2010; Karamanidou & Bush, 2017). Dimmock (1999) reveals the extent to which school leadership and principalship are culturally bounded phenomena, with a broad spectrum of consequences for women. These studies underline the need of adding experiences other than those generated in Anglo-American contexts when contextualizing women's professional growth, thus widening our knowledge base and allowing for more nuanced theorisation in the subject (Oplatka, 2006). The upward trend in the number of case studies at the national level in contemporary literature on the role of leadership and gender in the school context has broadened the analysis of a multi-layered and dynamic socio-political and cultural factor that are at work in school leadership. A growing body of literature draws on diverse cultural situations, revealing viable forces either as incentives or challenges in the management journey of women principals.

Earlier studies on women's underrepresentation focused more on their deficiencies and life choices while contemporary studies focus on women's personal attributes, such as lack of confidence (Arar, 2019; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008) or lack motivation (Haskuka et al., 2014; Kaparou & Bush, 2007; Limani, 2019). They were found to be more concerned with their families than with their careers, or to prefer teaching and working with students than managing (Arar & Oplatka 2015; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kaparou & Bush, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). According to existing research, female principals are less likely than male principals to have official or non-official networks or mentors. They lack support from colleagues and administrators (Chen & Houser, 2019).

It is said that females encounter huge challenges in balancing career and motherhood, combined with the ever-present glass-like barriers of gender stereotypes (Celikten, 2005; Coleman, 2011). In many contexts, females live with the requirement to maintain their more traditional function within the family as well as their professional career commitments (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). As a direct result, women are burdened with the considerable challenges of meeting the dual demands of a home keeper and a professional leader in education (Coleman 2011, 2020).

Although not sufficiently deep, there is some relevant literature on gender for the context of Kosovo (Färnsvedenet al., 2014, Limani, 2019) While gender disparities in career growth in general are observed throughout Europe, they are particularly pronounced in Kosovo (World Bank Kosovo, 2012). Women in Kosovo rarely have leadership roles in either government or business institutions. Only 4% of employed women advance to management positions. Kosovo has developed a comprehensive policy and legislation framework related to gender and has established mechanisms and institutions at national and local level to conduct the gender-related reforms. Furthermore, a number of international and local organisations have been working on various projects to strengthen women's rights in Kosovo society.

However, compared with many other countries, there is a dire lack of research into women in managing positions in education in Kosovo. This study examines the context of women's management path in Kosovo and thereby explores the interplay of numerous socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that are perceived to act upon the choices of women in the country's education sector. This is a thinly explored area of professional life in Kosovo. For this reason, the present study contributes to the current debate, at the global, regional and local

levels, by closely examining the management route of women principals in primary schools in Kosovo.

## 1.3 Context of the study

To date, there is an almost total absence of relevant research into the obstacles that are encountered by women school principals as they forge a management career path in Kosovo. Similarly, there is no research that looks at the poor female representation at the level of principals in primary schools. If one looks at the allocation of management functions in Kosovo schools according to gender and at every layer of the education establishment, there are causes for concern. This is in spite of the advanced and detailed laws that deal with equal opportunities provisions. This is seen most obviously in the fact that women principals in primary and lower secondary schools' amount to only 17.5%, and their presence in high schools is a paltry 8.9%, even though they present the majority as teaching staff (ESK, 2020).

This dissertation is concerned with adding to a missing piece of the larger jigsaw of female experience in education management, by exposing its features in the context of Kosovo. This present thesis examines the intricate relationship between various factors in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts by focusing on the experiences of women pursuing a career in Kosovo. Accordingly, the study adds to the contemporary debate by providing a detailed exploration of the career journey of women principals in Kosovo primary schools – a characteristically patriarchal context. While there has been considerable research around the globe regarding female experiences in education management, it is unfortunate that – to date – much less work has been done to examine the lot of professional women who have sought management positions in Kosovo's education system. At the time of writing, no research, to our knowledge, has been carried out on the obstacles and barriers encountered by women principals. In response to this gap, the present thesis considers the root causes and impact of the poor representation of women in the function of school principals in primary schools.

A case study design has been employed in order to obtain a detailed insight into processes and activities of the way in which women educators in Kosovo make decisions and act on the road to becoming principals, and the way they perform as principals. Numerous sources of data are brought together in the overall design of the research with the aim of bringing about methodological triangulation (Stake, 1995), thereby enhancing the credibility of the study and ultimately providing a more comprehensive picture of the situation. This has been achieved by

investigating and exposing the personal reflections of female principals in Kosovo primary schools, bringing to light the interplay of relevant political, social, and cultural contexts, and adding to the contemporary discussion about women leaders in education. In order to provide a coherent and meaningful structure to the study of education management in the context of Kosovo, the author has consciously adopted the 'management route model' (MRM) of Eck et al. (1996). This divides the experiential data into the three distinct phases that women journey through, on route to the function of school principal: aspiration, acquisition, and performance.

## 1.4 Significance of the study

The management route of women principals in Kosovo primary schools provides an important case to add to the existing body of literature on educational leadership and gender. The results from this study will be contextually binding but of an interest for other researchers to make comparison with countries with similar but also different traditions. It will, therefore, compliment the growing pool of research data on successful school management practice. By developing a conceptual/theoretical model of management route elements, the research will contribute to international research community understanding of school management and leadership in globalized yet patriarchal societies.

Although, contextually binding, the results from this study may prove of interest for other researchers, wishing to make comparison with countries with similar traditions. It should, therefore, compliment the growing pool of research data on successful school management practice. In addition, the study provides relevant data to policy makers and opinion leaders in the task of developing appropriate strategies for creating a more conducive environment for women – half of the potential human resources available — pursuing careers in school management.

There is a general dearth of research data on the critical role of school principles in Kosovo and their potential as facilitators of improved education delivery. Within this significant academic gap stands the yet smaller attention given to the gender imbalance in education management. The present research will help fill the gap, to the benefit of all the stakeholders. Firstly, the study will provide relevant data to policy makers and opinion leaders in the task of developing appropriate strategies for creating a more conducive environment for women pursuing a career in school management. Secondly, it will assist the review of the relevant legislation, primary and secondary, and allow legslators to make better informed decisions

about where laws can help to reduce the gender imbalance and capitalise on the contribution of female mangers. Thirdly, the addition of new evidence-based insights into women in education management should help encourage further research among Kosovo academics and students, building on the increased realisation that education represents a vital key to Kosovo's socio-economic development.

## 1.5 Overview of the chapters

The research is structured in five (5) chapters and opens with **Chapter One** (The Introduction) which explores in summary the main concepts of the study, including leadership and management, and the role of gender in education management and also the study context.

**Chapter two** examines the key concepts and ideas that underpin the research aims of the study, through a review of the rich wealth of literature. This assists in clarifying what scholars in Europe and further afield mean by the concepts of education management and education leadership. It also provides insights into actual and potential data about the perceived barriers that obstruct or deter women from entering education management. It draws upon relevant research findings on environmental influences, social and cultural, that have a direct bearing on women's aspirations to education management roles in other contexts. Of particular interest, the chapter examines how researchers view the role of gender in creating barriers for women principals in accessing school leadership and in their workplace experiences. It also looks at the way that experts have developed theoretical models of a female route into the largely male domain of education management, taking cognizance of certain institutional, social and personal factors. Data discovered in the literature is used to inform the conceptual basis of the findings of the present study and reveal points of convergence and divergence in the assessment of those findings.

**Chapter three** explores the specific context of the research – the Republic of Kosovo. It start with an overview of education system in Kosovo, the historical context related to education system and its impact. The chapter further describes the position of women in Kosovo society from the political and economic aspects and then focuses on the education aspect. The chapter tackles the changes that Kosovo state went through and how all this change has had a radical impact on its education system and the professionals who make it work, leaning toward more positive outcomes in the post-conflict era. The last part of the chapter addresses the situation regarding the position of women in management positions in education system in Kosovo.

Methodology is the main concern of **Chapter four**, recognising the need to clarify the methods whereby this study is able to most effectively and efficiently achieve its objectives, as defined and approved in the earlier research proposal. The chapter sets out the selected methodology, starting with a statement of the central problem that the research seeks to address, followed by a short description of the corresponding objectives and related questions that are posed in the study. While exploring the relative strengths and weaknesses of various methodological strategies that might be applicable, the chapter goes on to identify and justify the chosen design and methodology. It describes the adopted sampling procedures, as well as the specific methods, and explains data collection, collation and analysis. Most importantly, the chapter addresses the important ethical considerations that might be relevant to the implementation of the research, and the measures taken to obviate any potential breaches of the ethical norms of the University of Ljubljana.

**Chapter five** represents the very heart of the thesis. It presents and examines in detail the relevant experiences of a group of women who have traversed, often with considerable difficulty, the distance that separates the role of women as teachers and those of school managers in contemporary Kosovo. The evidence they provide paints a rather stark and often uncomplimentary picture of the selection and recruitment process, as well as the experiences of life as a female principal. Their blunt and uncompromising honesty allows the study to identify the key patterns in a system that too often fails to measure up to the high aspirations of the relevant laws and policies of Kosovo, regarding the stated equal rights of women in the education hierarchy. Based on the 'Management Path Model', which was used for data analyses, the research works through the three stages of the management route, identified for women principals of primary schools, namely: anticipation, acquisition and performing. For each of these stages or phases, the perspectives, challenges, and incentives that have been experienced by the interviewees on their management path are presented and analysed.

In **Chapter six,** the final part of the thesis, the converging trends within the research are drawn together and their echoes and resonances in the relevant literature are explored. An effort is made to discuss the points of convergence and divergence with the results that have emerged from the work of relevant experts in this segment of education science. In a hitherto unique exploration of the experiences of female principals in the insufficiently explored context of Kosovo, the study unearths a mixture of trends and patterns in the career aspirations of women

in education management, some troubling others heartening. While there is evidence of a few moments of egality and equality in practice, there are data that raise concerns about the ongoing gulf that separates Kosovo's law and policy, on the one hand, and the less admirable experience of women who seek the same opportunities as male colleagues on the other hand. It is argued that the relevance of the study is vindicated, by pointing to what needs to be done to help women do this work. It is also acknowledged that the findings are tested and tempered against the broader landscape of the relevant literature.

# CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the key concepts that underpin the research aims of the present study, through a review of the relevant literature. This yields a number of benefits, closely linked to the aims of the present study. Firstly, this chapter clarifies what scholars in Europe and further afield mean by the concepts of education management and education leadership. Secondly, it uncovers data about the perceived barriers that obstruct or deter women from entering education management in different contexts. Thirdly, it explores relevant research findings on environmental influences, social and cultural, that have a direct bearing on women's aspirations to education management roles in other contexts. Lastly, the review examines how researchers view the role of gender in creating barriers for women principals in accessing school leadership and in their workplace experiences. These findings in the literature inform the conceptual basis of the findings of the present study and provide points of contrast and comparison in the assessment of those findings.

The review reveals the awe-inspiring and immensely rich range of theory and debate about the nature of education management and leadership, and its significance for school principals. Contextual factors need to be acknowledged and caution given against imposing one of the diverse models as a remedy to the problem of gender balance in Kosovo's education system. What is broadly relevant in this cursory analysis of contemporary literature on education leadership and management, is the recognition that the role of the school principal is both dynamic and demanding in a modern, democratic society. Researchers have sought to bridge the gap in understanding in the often-wide rift, between social expectations of an education system and the capabilities of education providers, most notably the leaders. The questions that flow from this review of the literature concern whether and to what extent the findings have any bearing on the role of women in Kosovo's education management, and the barriers that hinder or obstruct their ability to engage in such leadership. Answers to those questions will be addressed in the following sections of this Chapter.

## 2.1 Concepts of Management and Leadership in Education

The literature reveals a lively, ongoing and unresolved debate about the distinction or otherwise between the concepts of leadership and management: are they but two sides of a single coin or two distinct coins?

It is important to clarify what scholars in Europe and further afield mean by the concepts of management and leadership in the specific context of education. It would be wrong to assume that these more generic concepts which apply across the vast range of public and private commerce and industry and public administration, have a broadly similar significance in the field of education as in so many other disparate areas of human activity. In addition to exploring what scholars have to say about the meaning of these terms in the education context, it will be important to identify distinctions made between the meaning of leadership and management (Fullan, 2001).

Traditionally, management is defined as those processes conducted by persons that hold formal administrative roles in the education organization, and include activities such as planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Fayol, 1949). However, leadership is much less straightforward. For example, according to Leithwood et al. (1996), there is no universally accepted definition of leadership, while Yukl (2012) states that it is not possible to talk about a correct definition, since any attempt must be arbitrary and subjective. Others are less sceptical about its definition and claim that leadership is concerned with motivating by influencing others to interpret situations, work out what needs to be done and how best to do it (Connolly et al., 2019). This unstructured approach to school leadership argues against the idea that there can be a single model, since leading is more about adopting a specific way of responding. This strategy relies on making the right diagnosis and adopting the leadership style that gets the job done effectively.

As recently noted by Connolly, James and Fertig (2019), education leadership and education management are concepts that lie at the very heart of our understanding of how to organise educational institutions, yet the meaning of these concepts and how they differ remain matters of dispute. In this chapter we follow the lead of these authors in viewing education management as a function of being responsible for the successful functioning of an educational institution.

Much of the debate in the literature has been about whether leadership is a component of management, or something distinct and different. For example, some authors, especially those who discuss general management theories, understand leadership to be one among four functions of management (Tavčar et al., 2005). Whereas other authors (Cuban, 1988; Dimmock, 1999; Bush, 2018; Dhuey & Smith, 2014; Sun & Leithwood, 2012; Wallace Foundation, 2013) pinpoint the divergence of leadership and management by characterizing

the former with change and influencing and vision, and the latter as concerned with maintenance activity (Bolman & Deal, 1997). This idea of management as 'maintenance activity' is reflected in the findings of other scholars. Pol & Lazarová (2019) identified management in education as a predominantly administrative function.

Initially, the research on education management was more dominated by developed countries and English-speaking countries such as United States of America (Hellinger & Heck 2021, Davies & Davies, 2005), United Kingdom (Harris, 2009, 2014; Bush, 2008, 2018; Dimmock, 1999) Australia and Canada (Collard, 2001; Fullan, 2005, 2014; Leithwood, 2006). However, the research in the 21$^{st}$ century spread to many other countries when the strong connection of effective leadership in school improvement was recognized: Norway (Møller, 2007), Slovenia (Trnavčević &Vaupot, 2009), Cyprus (Karamanidou & Bush, 2017) Greece (Kaparou & Bush, 2007). Consequently, the research on education management has spread and increased on all six continents Africa (Moorosi, 2010, 2020), Turkey (Celikten, 2010), Arabia (Arar & Shapira, 2016, 2019). Recent studies have identified that education management derive from a common origin. Theories about management have been increasingly linked and inspired by leadership theories in an evolutionary process over the course of the 1980s and later. This is particularly noteworthy in the writings on New Public Management (NPM) and the rich developments in public policy theory that came to influence new thinking about educational leadership (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010).

NPM evolved out of heightened expectation among policy makers that the delivery of public sector services – education, healthcare and policing – could be capable of quantifiable improvement if managed by a new approach to management, known as new public management or in its emphasized form the 'managerialism' as Winter (2009) states. This was built on the assumption that organizations, irrespective of their precise legal form, size or purpose, have more similarities than differences. Managerialism defined a set of management skills, competencies, methods, and processes that are relevant and cane be applied in public or private, commercial or non-commercial organisations (Pollitt, 2013). Moreover, managerialism transformed the idea of public sector management. Managers should have authority, decision-making responsibilities and resources which would be directed toward specific outcomes and motivated by enhanced rewards (Pollitt, 2013). Talk of managerialism and NPM were fuelled by a desire to reform public sector service provision and adopt the private sector emphasis on satisfying the customer – the recipient of public services. In many

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countries, this meant transforming bureaucratic 'administrators' into 'managers' imbued with the culture of profit-making businesses (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). This was and continues to be a considerable challenge.

From the dominant debate around the concept of new public management (NPM) and managerialism as the key to successful delivery of education services, scholars proposed the linked concept of 'leaderism' to leadership. O'Reilly & Reed (2010) state that leadership "advocates more charismatic, pro-active and visionary conception of leadership as a generic cultural resource and process to be mobilized by and diffused through a multiplicity of stakeholder agents". While the concepts of leadership and leaderism have an obvious attraction as inroads into improved performance among education mangers, they suffer from their noted indeterminacy and interpretative flexibility (Grint, 1997b; Martin & Learmonth, 2012). It must be questioned whether the socio-economic context that gave birth to 'leaderism' (i.e. U.K., Australia, etc.) limits its real-world applicability to less affluent and less sophisticated education sectors, such as the western Balkans.

The question is what, in the conceptual world of New Public Management (NPM), might be the transferred significance of the term 'leaderism' for those who function as leaders in a school. NPM sees the school as a place in which power, authority and professionalism are structured in a hierarchy, and the result has been a confusion of ideas and sources of authority as new types of knowledge and power arrive. This has resulted in a evolving role for school managers, as those who can sort out the confusion and create new relationships between the various stakeholders in the school institution, not least the staff and students. According to Clarke et al. (2013), the dawn of NPM has caused education institutions to develop new fusions of knowledge and power, as they seek to address the demands of increasingly vocal, demanding and informed citizens. This is brought about – they argue – by the transformation of educational managers and professionals, from administrators to strategic leaders. Fulfilling the concept of 'leaderism', they become operational practitioners, devising visions of the future and adopting technological solutions for practical delivery issues.

There are inherent dangers with both managerialism and its reaction, leaderism, insofar as they prefer the import of centralised and standardised theory and practice and overlook the benefits of a more immediate interaction with a specific school context, vision and collective ownership (Avolio, 2007).

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Aside from the question of whether the concept of leaderism, as a purported progression of NPM, is de facto restricted to the affluent welfare states, at least one expert has questioned the extent to which leadership and management in education can borrow concepts from the business realm. In a breach with NPM orthodoxy, Bush (2018) argues that leadership in education has evolved into a special discipline, and, because of its particular specificity, it is not possible to simply transfer the logic of management from manufacturing organizations to the field of educational institutions (Bush, 2015). Why is it so distinctive? It is argued that there are seven basic differences that we find in education leadership. According to Bush (2018), these differences include the following:

a) the aim of education is quite unlike other managerial contexts;

b) measuring goals is more difficult because it cannot be measured by financial indicators;

c) the educational process is aimed at students, and not paying customers or taxpayers;

d) the education process is full of unpredictable situations;

e) leaders and employees are professionals focused on vision and a certain measure of autonomy;

f) the student-teacher relationship is dependent on numerical and other professional relationships; there is a great influence of the environment on decision making; and

g) most school staff don't have much time for the managerial aspect.

Although there is an obvious merit in delineating those factors that are distinctive in education, more must be said about leadership as a mechanism for improving performance in education. Inspired by this point, Sergiovanni (2005) looks back at the most influential perspectives in school leadership research. Perspectives used to study school leadership have, according to him, often directed interest either to issues of efficiency (the efficiency perspective; rational decisions, achievement of set goals, etc.), to the individuals within the school (personal perspective; personal needs, loyalties, etc.), or to how the school interacts with its environment (political perspective, competing views, negotiations, etc.).

This approach might be seen clearly in the wealth of research that supports the theory that school leadership is really associated with the programmes of organisational change, education reform, and school improvement (Bush, 2008; Fullan, 2001; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009). In a similar vein, Castillo and Hallinger (2018), state that leadership is a "process through which persons seek to enact change and/or improvement in the organization by influencing people,

organizational structures, and processes". The same view is shared by Connolly et al. (2019). Such an approach views the core leadership skills as having powerful links to the onerous tasks of leaders in numerous other private and public sector contexts. The whole thrust of NPM was to target the role of school leaders as masters of change. Thus, the work of school principals is transformed and driven by the need to achieve improved organisational capacity – bringing together in a close nexus the skills of finance, human resource and site management, with the more traditional skills of pedagogical leadership and leadership development in others. These ideas centre on the concept of efficiency and effectiveness, which have come to dominate much of the contemporary research.

There are many factors that have an influence on the performance of schools (Pont et al., 2008) and not all agreed on what those factors are. Spillane (2009) blames the reduced educational performance and educational reform on the decreased interest in education management and leadership discourse. Much debate about school leadership, is about efficiency creation; how do you create an effective school and what should the leadership look like for such a school to be produced? Although it has been stressed that the change should take place "from within", not much attention is paid to facts at the local level, such as how everyday life actually manifests for the people within the school. According to Spillane (2009) much educational management literature fails to understand the policies that determine the surroundings in which principals work, and leans too much toward leadership at the expense of management. Glatter (2006) argues strongly that the role of management in education is downplayed and too much of the relevant literature places a premium on leadership at the expense of school principals' ability to manage the education institutions.

Not all agree. Others argue that the key to creating an effective school is often argued to be a shift from a focus on one individual to an interest in leadership at all levels within the school, with a more pronounced emphasis on school principals who have linked leadership to the general school environment, performance and the context (Bush, 2008; Day et al., 2001; Fullan, 2008, 2014; Harris, 2002; Harris & Jones, 2019). This is a more holistic approach, one that leans more toward the specificity of the particular school or geographical region, than toward the NPM ambition of universally applicable concepts of education management.

This holistic approach is echoed in research connecting effective leadership to student learning. Contemporary studies confirm that effective leadership is important for the success of the

school, but its effect on student learning is very indirect. This idea of leadership's primatial role is shared by other researchers (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). For example. Hallinger and Heck (2021) argue that leadership plays an important role in other factors which influence student achievement and act as drivers that influence other factors at the school and teacher level. Leadership is emerging as an important force, providing the conditions and support that a school needs to succeed in general and for teacher effectiveness. Can active guidance influence student achievement, making it more rewarding? Elmore (20130 says that for the principal, the influence of learning and improvement on schools is crucial to make real changes. Thus, we find that the basic problem of leadership is knowing what the most important thing is to do: i.e. what are the right choices to achieve the school enhancements. As leadership in scale and quality grows, the influence of teachers and principals grows so that they can better influence students' learning and achievement (Yukl, 2012). It seems that making the right choices stems from the requisite skill sets and, some have argued, the personal qualities of the school leader.

This marks a further step away from the NPM emphasis on generic methodologies borrowed from commerce, and a greater accent on the qualities of the individual education manger and his or her ability to influence their staff. Some professional literature has sought to prove that the leadership quality is important for teacher motivation and of classroom teaching quality (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves, 2003; Trnavčević &Vaupot, 2009). In their study, Trnavčević and and Vaupot (2009) have indicated the dimensions of the processes of principal's leadership processes. According to them, the "features of knowledge about leadership, are captured in four interpretative categories, namely 'being,' 'knowing,' 'acting,' and 'effecting". They argue further that education is partly for the sake of economic well-being and that mechanisms should be introduced that will replace bureaucratic school systems and improve the quality of learning. An important meta-study found that effective schools have school leaders who focus on syllabus and teaching, effective communication, and maintaining positive internal and external relationships, as well as moulding the organizational environment and culture and devising and implementing a vision for the school (Daniëls et al., 2019). Robinson et al. (2008) single out instructional leadership as a key component of successful school leadership, noting that instruction is absent in more general leadership theories such as transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008). This idea is echoed in the findings of Marks and Printy (2003) who found that when transformational and instructional leadership are combined, they have a considerable impact on school performance and student accomplishment.

The prevailing ideas about education leadership can traverse a broad landscape, from macro-level theories linked to the reform agenda of NPM to micro-level theories linked to personal qualities and local education needs. Caution is required, however, before importing concepts – such as those born of NPM – from one socio-economic context into one that is quite different. Beside classical theories of management by Fayol, Mintzberg, Taylor, etc., the NPM gave rise to an understanding of schools as operating in the 'education marketplace' and hence competing for students, personnel, position on national league tables, etc. This is an important point of divergence with the Balkan context where socio-political and economic factors dictate against such marketplace forces. However, the idea that the efficacy of education leadership is contingent upon possession of certain personal qualities might be more capable of traversing the distance between a strong and a weak socio-economic context, such as Kosovo. This avenue of thought warrants further exploration.

## 2.2 Theories about Leadership and Management

In the influential context of education research in the United Kingdom there has been a shift from the narrow concept of 'educational administration' to that of 'educational management' and, in more recent decades to 'educational leadership' (Gunter et al., 2013).

As a result of intensive research and debate there is a bewilderingly broad range of theories and also models of educational management. Summarizing all these theories and ideas and their relevance or otherwise to the diverse school contexts in Europe is a significant challenge. In 1984, Cuthbert attempted to categorize the many educational management theories at the time into five categories: pragmatic-rational, analytic-rational, interactionist, political, phenomenological models. Whereas in 1997, Bolman and Deal sought a different approach and recognized four aspects or scopes in management theories, namely: structural, political, symbolical and human resource. About the same time, Morgan (2002) proposed an alternative approach by seeing the mangers role as derived from the type of organization, whether it be organic, contemplative, cultural, or political, etc. In yet another approach to link between the management function and the aspects of the life of the organization, Bush (2020) saw the objectives, concept of structure, environmental influences and appropriate strategies as the key to the management role. Bush (2020) went on to list six clusters of management models of educational management: formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity and cultural models.

*Formal Models* – The term formal models is an umbrella term that draws attention to the structural elements of an institution and — using rational thinking – facilitate the achievement of institutional objectives (Bush, 2020). According to Bush (2020), there are several models that can be listed under the heading of 'formal', including: structural, systems, bureaucratic, rational, and hierarchal models. The formal characterization means that school principals have an authority that is legitimatized by their position within the education organization, and that authority includes being accountable to various institutions and bodies that sponsor the education programme (Bush, 2020).

*Collegial Models* – According to Bush (2020), this group of models is based on a democratic concept whereby the exercise of power and decision-making is distributed across the institution and shared by its members. In this way, an ideal organization is the one that is built upon a foundation of consensus when developing policy and making decisions. The aims of the education organization are the product and goal of a shared understanding, distributed across the employees (Bush, 2020). Commentators have discussed the close parallels between the characteristics of collegial model with distributed leadership (Harris, 2009; Jones et al., 2012). Lumby (2019) has observed that a distributed leadership approach demands that the school principal must do more that simply listen to the views of their staff, they must empower the staff with the decision-making process and seek consensus.

*Political Models* — Political models take the consensus idea further by arguing that 'bargaining and negotiation' – as in trade unionism – must form an essential part of the decision-making process (Bush, 2020). That process of negotiation is driven by 'interest groups' that form around the pursuit of a particular policy objective. Bush (2020) notes that conflict is the unavoidable by-product of the bargaining process, with power concentrating on dominant coalitions rather than particular leaders.

*Subjective Models* – The idea here is that the individual is paramount within an organization, such that an organization can only be understood as a collective of individuals with their own unique perceptions of the organization (Bush, 2020). Accordingly, the members of the organization will interpret events and interactions, based on their personal background and values and beliefs.

*Ambiguity Models* – As in quantum mechanics, the idea behind this model is that uncertainty and unpredictability underpin and characterize decision-making process in an education institution (Bush, 2020). This leads to the conclusion that there can be no clarity about the goals of institutions or the mechanisms that they use to achieve them.

*Cultural Models* – The key meaning in this model stems from the valid insight that cultural norms and values of staff members will inevitably influence the behaviours and actions. Thus, moral leadership – characterized by values and belief systems – is closely related to cultural models.

There is a vast amount of research also regarding the functions of education management, and acknowledgement that management is vital and inextricably linked to leadership (Bush, 2018; Gunter et al., 2013) and that leadership responsibilities of school principals do not limit or reduce their managerial function (Gronn, 2015). Foyle (1948) identified five key functions: planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Whereas, Koontz and Weihrich (2015) came up with a slightly different cluster of functions many years later which remain popular: planning, organising, staffing, directing, and controlling. Other authors have discussed these key tasks of management, adding and subtracting ideas from the earlier lists, without achieving universal consensus. However, in 2004 an influential thinker proposed the POLC framework, incorporating planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Lamond, 2004).

Regarding the theories on education leadership, there are numerous models of school leadership, derived from theories about the way organizations work and all competing for the position of ultimate answer to the conundrum of how best to run a school (Bush, 2011; Bush & Glover, 2014; Leithwood et al., 1999).

In this section, the study will explore the more popular leadership models and how they measure up to the complex reality of school management.

Despite the colossal volume of theories derived from research on education leadership over the thirty years, there is a surprising lack of consensus on contemporary education leadership. As early as 1988, Cuban identified "more than 350 definitions of leadership but no clear and unequivocal understanding as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders" (Cuban, 1988).

Relevant research is diverse yet increasingly context focused. Sergiovanni (2005) notes three dominant perspectives in school leadership research: efficiency (characterised by rational decisions, achievement of set goals), individuals within the school (personal perspective; personal needs, loyalties, etc.), and how the school interacts with its environment (political perspective, competing views, negotiations, etc.). Among the many voices, Harris (2014) urges the idea of seeing school principals as effective leadership in action: in other words, putting the emphasis on contextualised achievement rather than universal attributes of leadership.

Gumus et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of research on leadership for the period of 1980 to 2014 and found that the most studied models of leadership centred on four areas: transformational leadership, instructional leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Moreover, he noted that empirical research of these dominant models has gradually increased over the past ten years (Gumus et al, 2018).

For example, Daniëls et al. (2019) discusses a number of education leadership theories which best describe the school leader: transformational leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership and contingent leadership. The latter might be also called 'relativity theory' leadership. It emphasizes the dominant role of the specific context of the school, its leaders and the environmental factors at play. In other words, he is sceptical about the idea that there can be one theory or approach that fits every school context. It seems that the old question about whether it is possible to find a, universal definition of leadership re-emerges over time. It is appropriate to examine more closely some of the more topical models, as they relate to the world of education.

Most service sector organizations are rightly said to be only as good as the people they employ. For they rely less on machines and technology and more on the personal qualities and skills of the employees who allow the organization to achieve its goals. Bush (2015) pointed to this important characteristic of school organizations when discussing the concept of '*transformational leadership*' – the achievement of school organizational goals is contingent on the human capacity of its staff. Transformational leadership is about the relationship between degree of personal commitment and capacities to the achievement of school goals and capacities for accomplishing those goals (Leithwood et al., 1999).

In a further development of this approach, Bush (2018) explores the virtues of *transformational*

*leadership,* an approach that became very popular, emphasising the 'vision' as the central feature of successful leadership. Research has shown that this type of leadership helps to improve student performance (Leithwood, 2006). He proposes that the school leader's task is one of being able to create motivation and new thinking among the employees. Further, he describes in eight points how leadership should be conducted on the basis of the transformative idea (Leithwood, 2006). The basic idea is that the school's leadership needs to be changed in order to follow social development. It is about a leadership where the responsibility for change is largely placed on the leader's shoulders. The leader should be visionary, set clear goals for the school and be able to encourage employees to take responsibility and develop their own initiatives to achieve the school's goals. The leader must make demands on the employees but at the same time be responsive to the individual employee's needs, both in terms of personal support and skills development.

Other authors recognize that this approach might be too ambitious and tends to underestimate the reality of leaders not only guiding but drawing upon the team that they lead (Gronn, 2009). For example, Harris (2009) tells us that so-called '*distributed leadership*' has tended to be seen as the normatively preferred leadership model in our time which emphasise the many at the bottom, rather than the few at the top. The emphasis is very much on collective, rather than individual leadership – much like participative leadership.

In a step toward the more pragmatic reality of the workplace, Bush (2015) developed the concept of '*managerial leadership*' as concerned with the competent delivery of those tasks and functions that relate to the core purpose of the relevant organization – i.e. getting the job done. This readily lends itself to the business of a school principal running a school, and achieving quality education outcomes in a timely and effective manner. After all, it is the principal who consciously adopts the right strategies, plans the corresponding activities, organizes the resources and ensures day-to-day control of the delivery processes in the classrooms (Tobin, 2014).

In many textbooks on leadership, whether those that relate to the private or public sector or those that are specifically concerned with the world of education, there is often a grand assumption – that *continent leadership* has the potential to succeed in all contexts. This grand assumption is directly challenged by Lambert (1998) who observes that there can be 'no single best type'. Likewise, Yuki (2012) questions whether a cluster of 'standardized responses to

events' can ever be capable of extracting successful outcomes from the complex and unpredictable reality of an organization. This rejection of the utility of generic models gave rise top the idea of 'contingent leadership', in which the school principal is conscious of the specificity of her school context, and responds to its particular needs and opportunities (Vanderhaar et al., 2007). As noted by Leithwood et al., (1999), a school leader's success is directly linked to her ability to appreciate that which is distinctive in the resources and human potential of her teachers and students. Moreover, this is not a single-event appreciation but an ongoing and continuous task of diagnosis of daily problems (Morgan, 2002; Yukl, 2012).

*Teacher leadership* has been gaining credibility in recent years, according to Gumus et al (2018). This indicates an important change in the way that the leadership phenomenon is understood by practitioners. According to Gronn (2015), this model is seen as a more ''collective performance''. According to Gumus et al., (2018) this pattern may have been influenced by the move toward decentralization in education and greater emphasis on accountability, given that these changes in emphasis have increased the burden on local educational managers. It seems that a traditional understanding of leadership is no longer the assured pathway to success for aspiring education managers.

*Moral leadership* is about the authority and the power to influence others are derived from the drive toward the right and the good (Leithwood et al., 1999), and gave rise to a number of related terms clustered around the concept of moral leadership, as concerned with the ethics, beliefs and values of a leader. The concept of moral leadership is built upon the valid assumption that an education leader's decision-making within an educational institution will be impacted by their personal values and beliefs (Leithwood et al., 1996).

Another noteworthy theory is *servant leadership* which emerged from the writings of Robert Greenleaf (1977), who controversially claimed that "the servant-leader's primary mission is to serve". Patterson (2013) claimed that the servant leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. In the following extract she points toward the qualities of the 'service concept':

> Servant-leaders are those who serve with a focus on the followers, whereby the followers are the primary concern, and the organizational concerns are peripheral. The servant-leader

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constructs are virtues, which are defined as the good moral quality in a person, or the general quality of goodness, or moral excellence. (Patterson, 2003)

Perhaps surprisingly, Patterson has found adherents among recent research scholars. For example, Irving (2010) found evidence that confirmed a positive relationship between servant leadership and effectiveness of the team that is being led. While Herndon (2007) explored leadership in Missouri elementary schools, and found a positive nexus of servant leadership, school culture, and student achievement. Much more research is required to extend the conviction of the benefits of this approach to the sceptical. Perhaps a more profitable approach might involve an inductive study of the function of the school principal, rather than test out theoretical models.

In view of these real concerns, there may be merit in considering *post-modern leadership* ideas, which have links to subjective organizational theory and reject concepts based on absolute authority (Keough & Tobin, 2001), as seen in NPM for example. Thus, the emphasis is placed firmly on the individual. In a refreshing break from 'leaderism' these post-modern ideas challenge the whole notion of organization and place a greater emphasis on connections rather than on formal authority.

It could be concluded that leadership theories have been prevailing in the 90' of the past century and in the first decade of the 21st century. Some authors, like Bush (2020), have started to bring management back to the focus and point out that principal's position, management tasks, and issues of accountability need to be shed light on, especially in specific cultural and legislative contexts. Kosovo could be understood as one of them.

## 2.3 The Role of the School Principal

The focus of the present study is one specific category of education management – the school principal. The school principal's role is emphasized as a means of ensuring sustainability and as a major component of school effectiveness. According to Leithwood and Sun (2012), leadership serves as a catalyst without which other good things are unlikely to happen.

Among the strongest advocates of this argument is Bush (2018), who identifies the school principal as one of the most important factors affecting the quality of educational activities in the school. School principals who are responsible for managing school organizations and

organising all the work going on in the school, including: personal rights, operation of the school building, impression management inside and outside the school, senior management, environmental and interpersonal relations. The fact that school principals have such an intensive workload causes them to prioritize various jobs and postpone some of them. According to some research, school managers – regardless of context – face a dilemma that results from the tension between the competing elements of leadership and management (Dimmock, 1999). Despite the workloads in schools, the personality traits of school principals are the most important resources that enable them to cope with these jobs. The personality trait of the school principal affects their job performance, attitudes towards work, self-efficacy and various situations such as job satisfaction (Bush, 2018).

Research reveals that school principals are one of the most critical factors in creating effective schools and they should take on important responsibilities (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). In today's world, where globalization is greatly felt, information technologies are developing rapidly, new approaches such as learning organization, total quality management, participatory management and strategic management are considered, school principals need to exhibit effective leadership behaviours. Moving from the classroom to the school as a whole, as a focus of change in education, there has been some change in the perception of the role of the principal, from manager to leader. This perception was researched by a number of authors who looked at leadership in advanced schools (Harris 2014; Fullan, 2008; Bennet & Anderson, 2003; Bush & Middlewood 2005), arguing that introducing all employees to the leadership process is the basis for more successful leadership in educational institutions.

A study conducted in 2013 found that the collective support of teachers is a key determinant of quality education outcomes, particularly in respect of the implementation of the strategic aims in school programs, curricula and standards, and performance assessment. (Buleshkaj & Mehmeti, 2013). In other words, a school manager is not an island: he/she relies heavily on the education team. Buleshkaj (2017) confirms that the school principal is responsible for generating a school culture that encourages continuous professional development, facilitating a learning process for all staff, and building a cooperation mechanism with staff, students and community. This is achieved through providing a clear vision, pathway and motivating all stakeholders to journey that path. It is argued – perhaps cogently – that school principals do not have a management monopoly but have the privilege that enables them to organize

leadership into a strategy that will lead to an advanced school. A school principal can achieve a higher status of influence by empowering others.

Moreover, school management requires a sense of situation and adaptation of style and . In this way, context and contextual variables are equally important features of understanding the role of a school manager (Lumby, 2009).

Researchers in countries across two continents have explored the importance of context. It has been found that there are contextual dysfunctionalities and barriers that interfere with school management and prevent school managers achieving results. This has been revealed in many studies of diverse educational systems such as North America (DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2001, 2005, 2008; Hellinger, 2014, 2020), UK (Bush, 2008, 2018, 2020; Harris, 2014; Leithwood & Sun, 2012), Norway (Møller, 2007), Australia (Collard, 2001; White, 2003), the east European counties such as Slovenia (Trnavčević & Vaupot, 2009), Czech Republic (Pol & Lazarova, 2019), Turkey (Celikten, 2005, 2010), Cyprus (Kapamanidou & Bush, 2017), Kosovo (Buleshkaj, 2017; Buleshkaj & Mehmeti, 2013; Goddard, 2007). Indeed, such is the importance of context that some argue that it is not possible to generalise from particular contexts and generate a 'one size fits all' theory of school management. For example, Møller (2007) claims that it is not easy to refer to the international research field on school management as each country has its cultural and historical development. She believes that political governance and the development of a country's school system vary from country to country, which must be taken into account in school leadership studies. School management is a social construct that depends on the context in which the principal resides.

## 2.4 Female Underrepresentation in Education Management

Despite new theoretical perspectives and recognition of the benefits that women can bring to leadership and management, women in leading positions are either few in number or lack parity with men, although they account for almost half of the total workforce and even more in education. Management in every institution or organization, including educational institutions, has been associated with men and therefore, in many management contexts, especially at the top, women are underrepresented (Hoyt, 2010, 2016). According to Jones (2017), in her study of ten women principals of primary schools, women become principals at a rate of one in fourteen, whereas men at a rate of one in six (DFE, 2011, cited in Jones, 2017) which shows that inequalities still exist (Jones, 2017). Many authors have tried to explore the causes of

female underrepresentation in school management/leadership positions. Many research reports address external and internal obstacles that hinder women in their aspirations for management positions (Arar, 2019, Blackmore, 1999, 2018; Coleman, 2007, 2011, 2020; Cubillo & Brown (2003); Davids, 2018, Eck et al., 1996; Karamanidou & Bush, 2017, Limani, 2019; Moorosi, 2010, 2020; Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989; Vella, 2020).

Some researchers have classified the causes of women's under-representation as 'internal and external barriers' (Blackmore, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1989) or 'overt and covert barriers' (Coleman, 2001). Interconnected with these factors are the internal barriers and socialization and stereotyping (Cubillo & Brown, 2003, Vella, 2020). According to these authors, there is a dynamic and potent conflict between women's traditional social role and the professional role they aspire to, and this conflict generates a raft of difficulties for career progress and leadership aspirations. They note that barriers include lack of self-esteem, lower aspirations, role conflicts, unrealistic evaluation of one's work, lack of career planning, work and family overload.

Many researchers, in their studies on education management, have analysed the internal barriers and pointed out that internal or personal barriers affect women's lives and distance them from certain jobs that are considered male, and that these barriers are deeply rooted in society's traditional and stereotypical attitudes about female traits. Internal barriers arise as a result of socialization and the roles that women are assigned as they grow up. Traditional approaches reduce a woman's confidence and "fuel" her desire to please and depend on a man. In addition to these expected behaviours, upbringing can encourage fear of success, lack of professional orientation, and misunderstanding of the "politics" of progress. Moreover, women often internalize the negative stereotypes that others have about their roles and abilities (Davids, 2018). However, some researchers claim that women are not predisposed to be non-leaders by nature, but have been severely impacted by men's dominance in leadership for generations (Oplatka, 2006; Powell et al., 2012).

Lack of self-esteem is an obstacle to women's advancement, not only discussed by Coleman (2011) but also supported by other findings (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Karamanidou & Bush, 2017). They seem to have a harder time coping with negative reactions to their work, taking it seriously and thus lowering their self-esteem, applying for employment opportunities only when they feel fully qualified, notes Coleman (2011), but at the same time women are often

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not associated with leadership (Coleman 2011). Cubillo & Brown (2003) have noted that women attracted blame for their apparent lack of ambition and seeming deficit of self-esteem in seeking management. This is echoed in contemporary studies that focus on women's personal attributes, such as lack of motivation (Martinez et al., 2020) or lack of confidence (Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Karamanidou & Bush, 2017).

However, as Moorosi (2020) explains in her study (referring also to the research of Cubillo and Brown, 2003), that the lack of confidence may be a misinterpretation of a more rational response, common to both genders – hesitation in the face of the unfamiliar. Regardless of gender, adults will always hesitate or appear fearful of 'unknown territory', and women – like men — overcome this initial response as they become familiar with 'how the game is played' (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). In other words, what some authors refer to as a 'lack of inner drive', is usually a natural and healthy response when faced with a new work environment.

Oplatka (2006), in his study provided an opportunity for the discovery of female leaders in the education system in developing countries. In this study, a systematic review of thirteen English language articles published in gender studies and educational management journals was adopted. As a result, this study has revealed some obvious obstacles that women face in career advancement in the education system of developing countries: i.e. strong family imperatives, retarded or inadequate girls' education, and the number of men in teaching positions.  Another study which tried to analyse the barriers and also strategies on how to deal with barriers was carried out by Sanchez and Thornton (2010). The strategies that the study revealed to overcome the barriers were mentorship, work and family balance and qualifications (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Research into the constraints and challenges of Kosovo women in decision-making professions provides important insights into the specific experience of education managers (Shema & Turner, 2020). Anxiety resulted from the effort to match the needs of the labour market and being conflicted by the social pressures created by commonly held gender attitudes in Kosovo. Positive changes were also revealed by the study, including greater cross-gender teamwork in domestic chores within the household and shared financial decision making, as a result of improved remuneration of women in professional roles.

Coleman (2020) in a similar study, interviewed more than ninety women in UK who were in leadership positions. The study found three dominant areas of concern in women's perceptions: barriers during the access to leadership, facilitators in the career of women and changes seen by women leaders. During the interviews the women talked most often of the competing demands of work and family life, the corrosive impact of gender stereotypes and overt discrimination, the obstructive realities of the glass ceiling and the pervasive male work culture. Although there was little reference to workplace support, the women pointed to their own determination, networking and mentoring as mechanisms to facilitate their career progress. On a positive note, some interviewees suggested that the infamous glass ceiling was moving upwards in some occupations, affording women more scope for management positions. However, other, 'male-centric' occupations afforded less vertical movement for women.

In another study, Coleman (2011) notes that the biggest obstacles to women's advancement are job requirements and the nature of the workplace. It was found that career advancement is slower and, as a rule, failed to follow a pre-defined career plan, with principals opting to go their own way, while expressing a strong tendency for progress and development, as well as ambition. A study in the Czech Republic noted similar problems that follow from a lack of proper career system and standards (Pol & Lazarová, 2019). Career interruptions due to birth and caring for a child represent a serious barrier to professional development and promotion to the position of headmistress. It is also interesting to note that the termination of women's careers due to motherhood has proven to be more of a barrier than interruption for other reasons, e.g. the departure of a man from the education system and a return to it. As also noted in a Maltese study (Vella, 2020), the research also highlights the importance of mentoring and support, wherever possible, in advancement and then leadership. The author also spoke of feelings of guilt that accompany role conflicts that they will not fulfil all their obligations and responsibilities well (Vella, 2020). The barriers women experience in their career path are mainly related to homework, childcare, role conflict, spouse career and early influences on these career paths. Role conflict arises from the difficulty of adjusting to the demands of professional work and family; it represents both an actual increase in workload and a source of stress, as women in all fields want to give what others expect (Coleman, 2001).

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), in their analysis of role coherence ('leaders and women'), indicate that a woman faces obstacles in leadership in two ways: adjusting to gender

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can prevent the fulfilment of the requirements of the role of leader, adjusting the role of the leader, however, impedes the fulfilment of the requirements of the gender role. Another author, Hall (1997), speaks of 'de-professionalization' and 'de-feminization' as obstacles, when a female leader tries to relate the two roles, especially in a masculinized environment. According to Hall (1997), many principals reported cases of sexism and the feeling that they need to prove their worth more as women, with a sense of isolation and the need to support others. She also notes that the support of partner and co-workers, as well mentoring, are extremely important sources of encouragement for women in leadership roles, and particularly the support of the previous headmaster (Hall, 1997). In their article in Harvard Business Review, Ibarra et al., (2013) argue that slow female advancement largely results from the fact that we underestimate the need for men to maintain their power, in terms of dominance and control. Therefore, it is claimed, we need rules and laws that guarantee women their rights. Noting that we live in a world dominated by male culture, Shakeshaft (1989) argues that the realization of women's equality requires both behavioural change in men and women, as well as structural and legal shifts at the level of society as a whole. Thus, it seems that exploring barriers to women's leadership, both internal and external, and systemic, can contribute to their insight and lead to change in achieving women's equality.

Research, therefore, confirms both the reality of barriers — internal and external — and their significant impact on women in education management. Moreover, the perception of external barriers can induce a range of internal, psychological barriers, that radiate out across potential female candidates to management roles. In some contexts, such as Kosovo, the external barriers lie beyond the work environment, and emanate from social and cultural forces. These potent sources of obstruction to female careers will be considered next.

### 2.4.1 Social and Cultural Barriers

In this section we explore the linkages between perceived barriers and their roots in social and cultural norms, attitudes and belief systems. In her study Moorosi (2010) explains the impact of social barriers in the management path of women leaders. She notes that the sources of workplace barriers lie deep within social and cultural norms, making it difficult or impossible to eradicate them entirely. She found that the real forces are social barriers which manifest themselves as entrenched cultural expectations of gender stereotyping, reinforced by traditional and historical and political influences. In a similar vein, Oakley (2015) found that the structuring of traditional bureaucratic organizations on the basis of physical strength and

gender differences creates a situation against women. Explanations given by women who were unable to reach the upper levels could be classified as falling within two groups. Firstly, the obstacles created by organizational practices can easily reduce gender inequalities in areas such as recruitment, retention, and encouragement. Secondly, it is the organizational causal factors such as education level, working hours, age, and marital status that play an important role in the career development process of women (Oakley, 2015).

In a patriarchal society, the paths followed by women and men are dictated by the culture's requirements. While these requirements determine the superiority of men, they put women in the second level. According to Mills (2002), organizational culture both creates and is created by assumptions about gender. Mills (2002) presents three phases that the debate on organizational culture and gender has gone through. The first involves questioning the gender-neutral approach found in many studies of organizational culture. Organizational (cultural) research is accused of being gender-blind (Mills, 2002). The second stage combines existing theories of organizational culture with feminist theories of gender processes. Here, attention is paid to deeply rooted cultural processes that, for example, give rise to special treatment in workplaces (Mills, 2002). In 2002, the debate has entered a third stage, where new methods and theories were developed to study gendered organizational cultures (Mills, 2002). A more recent study argues that feminism generates opportunities for 'distinctive knowledge production' that confronts and counters the patriarchal social norms that are found in some academic literature (Bell et al., 2019).

According to Grogan and Brunner (2005) women often have lower status as school leaders, they are both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the school organization. In the role of 'insider', they adapt to the existing school male role coded. But the social construction of the gender still leaves them outsiders because, as women, they are expected to live up to the expectations of the masculine coded leadership role. Women in leadership positions have understood that they are not 'one of the guys', not even those who intended to be, and therefore they must find new ways. Grogan and Brunner (2005) believe that traditional mother and father roles can influence expectations of school leaders. The socialization process is complicated for anyone new to the organization, but women must deal with dual socializations. They must both adapt to the leadership role and meet the demands and expectations placed on them in their capacity to be women and they are both unusual women and unusual school leaders (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Of course, that process of socialization is traditionally identified as the source of an

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often crude yet potent system whereby humans categorise those around them: stereotyping (Arar, 2019).

Social and cultural aspects have been revealed as important factors in research in many countries. Women's management paths are often "compromised by the traditional cultural value systems, and structural arrangements within the schools which are less favourable to them" (Moorosi, 2010). Lumby (2014) argues that there is mistrust in women leadership, and this is caused by a number of factors, among them culture and tradition.

According to Celikten (2010) the place of women in society is determined by the social class and the cultural values of the society to which they depend on the level of development of the countries where they live. In particular, cultural values are extremely effective in determining and adopting the gender roles of both sexes. Values related to gender roles learned within the family institution, which are effective in transferring culture from generation to generation, manifest themselves in business life as well as in every stage of the life processes of individuals. For example, in the patriarchal social structure, the woman whose main duty is accepted as mother and being a good wife is considered as an employee that will want to take a break when she gets married and wants to have children, instead of being considered as an important workplace asset with potential to become business managers (Celikten, 2010).

Cubillo and Brown (2003) refers to other stereotyping barriers to women's advancement, including risk aversion and fear of criticism, fear of failure, increased responsibility, fear of conflict and loneliness, and lack of support and subsequent self-doubt, etc. Thus, they are directly related to the psychological processes that regulate how others respond to competent women in the work process, as they represent a reaction to these responses (Heilman, 2012).

### 2.4.2 Gender Stereotyping and Prejudices

In some societies, Kosovo included, the job market is demarcated by gender. For example, it is popularly believed that women in general work in jobs that have to do with "people", such as nurse, teacher, caregiver, jobs that involve taking care of children, the elderly and domestic chores (Limani, 2019; Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009). This demarcation, which places women in occupations with less power and responsibility, resonates with the assumption discussed by Zgaga (2015) – namely, that the education of a social group links to its potential for power and responsibility in public life. In other words, a woman's employment horizon is

fixed by her access to levels of education, which in turn are determined by social attitudes about the role of women.

A large proportion of research into managerial positions and related stereotypes has resulted in a global phenomenon that is summarized in the view "when you think of a manager, think of a man" (Schein et al., 1996). Such a stereotype has long closed the door on women and probably makes them the strongest obstacle to governance, in all countries, regardless of their level of development. The characteristics of school principal to be primarily associated with men has been confirmed in more recent research (Arar, 2019, Karamanidou & Bush, 2017).

Some have identified a gender paradigm at work, one that frames men as the bread winners and women as the home makers who care for the children (OSCE, 2018). Women are burdened with unbalanced family obligations, unpaid domestic work, inadequate property ownership and pervasive gender prejudice that is cultivated within school curricula (Lazarević & Tadić, 2018). Such gender stereotyping is said to be an underlying cause of many other types of discrimination against women in the region and a major driver of their subordination (Lazarević & Tadić, 2018). Equally troubling is the evidence of biased attitudes toward women as managers in Kosovo, where 46% of a sample believe males to be better political leaders than women (Lazarević & Tadić, 2018).

As found in the Eurobarometer (2017) carried out in all EU member states, this type of gender stereotyping exists in developed countries, since most respondents think females are more likely than males to make judgements founded on their emotions. (European Commission, 2017).

According to Heilman (2012) the gender prejudices and stereotypes explain the shortages of women in more senior positions in institutions. Much of the bias is built upon assumptions about gender characteristics or traits in leadership, such as female as 'vulnerable, fragile, emotional and compassionate' versus males as 'hard working, ambitious, and decisive'. Baker (2014) states that the stereotype projects the idea that male leaders are fast, action-oriented and analytical in decision-making processes, whereas women do not want to make quick decisions but want to get acquainted with the situation. Sahoo and Lenka (2016) claim that society's view of women is well established in human attitudes that are deeply rooted and difficult to change. They go on to present an example of stereotyping of men and women that is based on erroneous assumptions that women are followers who assist males in their work, whereas men are leaders.

Furthermore, men managers perceive female staff to be less productive and hence have lesser expectations of them (Sahoo & Lenka, 2016). The view of gender stereotypes has slowly changed over time, but there are still many who believe that men have more right to leading positions (Arar, 2019, Yukl, 2012). Carli and Eagly (2016) attribute this biased view with entrenched cultural values that are nevertheless capable of evolution and change over time.

This is at odds with research carried out by Eagly & Carly (2003), who discovered that there is no great difference in the leadership skills of women and men. Indeed, these academics found the opposite results to popular prejudice: namely, that similarities outweigh differences in leadership performance of women and men, and evidence that some women may be more effective than men. They concluded that there is no basis for the claim that there are "natural" and "biological" differences between genders (idem). Yet, in many societies, there remain social order norms that are rooted in the family and imply some underlying natural or biological order. This must be examined closely as an important barrier.

### 2.4.3 Family Role Barrier

Even in developed societies, a key factor affecting the differences between the career experiences of men and women is the burden of family responsibilities. Coleman (2011) found that women experience a glass ceiling arising from gender stereotypes and the difficulties of combining motherhood with a career (Coleman, 2011). In one particular study, Oplatka (2006) observes that female managers without children do not have problems in fulfilling their duties.

Other studies show that women's and men's different conditions as leaders are based on the fact that women are in most cases more responsible for homes and children (Lu, 2020). When women attain or seek roles as educational managers, balancing work and family duties is difficult (Coleman, 2007). In Loder's (2005) research, unequal responsibilities such as childcare and housework placed on the shoulders of women emphasize that it constitutes an important obstacle for women to take part in school management. Not having support from spouse/family members affects also their decisions on principalship.

Women in leadership positions, as noted by Karamanidou and Bush (2017), have problems with balancing workplace and family obligations. They cite role conflict, lack of time for both, feelings of guilt about not being a good enough mother and wife, and a lack of emotional and domestic support from partners, as forces of conflict and failure. These forces impose an

unwelcome choice on professional women, in favour of their career or their children. These authors make the stark conclusion that motherhood must inevitably take priority over work, thereby making any effort at a balanced approach to work and family life impossible (Kaparou & Bush, 2007).

Familial expectations add to and compound the other barriers that have been explored in this section, and together they have come to known by the popular analogy of a ceiling made of glass.

### 2.4.4 Breaking down barriers

The term 'glass ceiling' has become adopted in education management as a poignant way to visualise all kinds of obstacles and injustice that women face when they move to the top position in businesses (Lockwood, 2004). This term describes the cultural barriers that block women from promoting to senior or senior management positions in organizations and are created by cultural biases in the workplace and reflect social gender inequality (Celikten, 2010, Coleman, 2011, 2020; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Wirth, 2001). At the heart of the image conjured up by the term 'glass ceiling' is the idea that the barriers are transparent, or invisible to the eye and unsanctioned obstacles, hindering or blocking the path of women in their effort to climb the organisational leadership ladder. But are the barriers so transparent and invisible to view? Oakley (2015) disagrees and claims that they are indeed 'very visible' to women who encounter them as walls in their career path. They are equally visible in the statistics that reflect the position (or absence) of women at the apex of organisational leadership. Eagly and Carli (2003) prefer the term 'labyrinth' as a more suitable and effective metaphor, one that more accurately captures the variety of challenges and opportunities that women encounter throughout their career paths. Within that labyrinth there are — in addition to hard and overt barriers – more subtle and debilitating factors that weigh against women. These factors consist of support mechanisms that are absent, such as the lack of role models and mentors to help and guide aspiring women, rather than more tangible obstructions (Martinez et al., 2020). The positive influence of these support mechanisms should be examined more closely.

### 2.4.5 Influence of Role Models

Lack of a good role model for women is another barrier that helps to prevent women from becoming managers. According to the results of the survey conducted by Vinnicombe, Doldor and Turner (2014), 81% of women believe that having a role model will increase their desire

to become managers. Moreover, it is unfortunately common for women to face obstacles at every stage of their careers, and because they do not see a woman who is able to move to higher institutions in their own institution, either they quit their careers or stop trying to advance. The presence of a role model precursor is vital to the process of promotion. In short, any given occupation must be both readily available and openly visible to a prospective entrant. Moorosi (2010) rightly points to the imbalance of male and female role models as the root cause of female impairment, when considering the prospects of gaining positions of management and policy making in education. Role models bring counsel, encouragement and socialization to potential applicants, and the lack of such female role models have a debilitating effect on women applicants.

Coleman (2020) argues that women are more often hampered by the 'occupational contingencies' generated by a working environment in which men predominate in such administrative positions, and those same men tend to grant other men rather than women opportunities to gain experience in administrative functions. Many organisations, particularly in the private sector, have recognised the merit of building on and structuring the concept of the role model, by developing mentoring schemes to assist aspiring managers and leaders.

### 2.4.6 Role of Mentoring

Research suggests that mentoring is a potent dynamic across a vast range of professions, as a gateway enabling process for selection and promotion (Vella, 2020). What is mentoring, and why might it prove so effective? According to Vella (2020) mentoring does not only refer to a connection between a superior and a subordinate. But can also prove effective when it operates between or amongst peers. However, in spite of the apparent advantages, Acker (2009) found that in too many cases men proved unwilling to mentor women because of a prior bias that saw women as generally uninterested in management, whereas in other research women in high positions were strangely unwilling to be the mentors for female colleagues. This later observation is seemingly rooted in the fact that women who view themselves as merely a token presence in a position of authority normally held by men, will consciously avoid mentoring others, since they might be threatened by those in whom they foster leadership skills. This is referred by some researchers as 'queen bee syndrome' (Sandberg, 2013).

For women, no less that for men, mentoring is often considered an essential enablers for women aspiring to leadership positions, as well as those seeking to launch their leadership

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career (Vella, 2020). Who are the effective mentors? For Coleman (2020) it is the older person, the one with expertise who guides the novice. She explores the myriad positives that accrue to career women from mentoring in a range of research papers, especially through a culture that encourages informal mentoring and active support structures, and various ways of encouraging women to seek promotion. According to Torrance & Humes (2015), mentoring is a crucial step in advancing women into management positions.

There is growing evidence that mentoring, networking, coaching and support are effective and positive forces of assistance in women's career development (Coleman, 2011, 2020, Morley, 2013, Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018, Vella, 2020). Of course, the whole concept of 'networking' has strong connotations of the "old boys' network", in which older and more experienced professionals support younger ones and encourage them toward leadership. A Kosovo study describes a popular approach to male/male mentoring, in which men meet, discuss business and make decisions in cafes, bars and other locations outside the formal setting of government buildings (Limani, 2019). As the authors point out, women must find access points to this culture. It is strongly argued by Martínez et al. (2020) that women have been pushed to the margins of such networks due to the male monopoly of this important source of influence and knowledge. There is no doubt about the crucial importance of such networks in large organizational culture, and the impact on practicing and aspiring female managers of not accessing such networks is obvious and profound.

Both mentors and role models in education management raise questions about the gender assumptions that underpin the paradigms of effective management in the literature. In other words, are there alternatives to models of management that are consciously or unconsciously suffused with male characteristics?

### 2.4.7 Gender Biased School Principal Qualities

Can research identify a difference in the way men and women manage? According to Shakeshaft (1989) there are differences that result from the lack of equality. She believes that women learn to function in the culture created by men, but women also live in another world that men do not know much about. From that world, women bring with them experiences that they can benefit from in their professional practice. Management is traditionally valued as masculine (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Marshall et al., 2017). Men are categorized as managers more often than women; masculine behaviours are judged to be more stereotypical of a leader's

behaviour. Male managers are often evaluated more positively than female ones because of the stereotype that exists around management behaviour (Rosette et al., 2015). Klatt et al., (2016) argue that men tend to take on the roles that are considered to require behaviour that is more energetic and confident. This, they argue, results in male mangers being characterized as task-oriented, which can be linked to qualities such as ambition and negotiation technique.

Similar findings are in research into the gender qualities of leadership. For example, some theories of leadership are primarily based on studies of male leaders (Lumby & Azaola, 2014; Robinson et al., 2017), and as a result, masculinity can be regarded as integrated into the concept of leadership (Wahl, 1995). Shakeshaft (1989) points out that the generalisation of research results based only on studies of males as school leaders, is wrong unless there is no female school leaders, or one can assume that there are no differences between men and women in the school leadership posts. However, according to the same author, men and women "have neither a shared history nor identical experience" (Shakeshaft, 1989). This rather dark and sombre assessment is echoed by a number of other authors who note that historically, leadership theory has been based primarily upon studies of males rather than females (Lumby & Azaola, 2014; Showunmi, 2021). Brunner and Grogan (2007) describe the experience of women mangers as 'running with the wolves', while others concur that the presence of women in this inhospitable field, although gradually increasing in number, remains marginal (Fuller, 2017). Other experts found a continuing preference for male leadership, which mostly is evident at the level of appointment. (Coleman, 2011; Blackmore, 2018).

Beneath this unfortunate data lies an important question for the purpose of the present study: is there a style of management that is essentially female, and distinct from the more dominant male approach? While Eagly and Carli (2003) agree that men and women use different types of management techniques, they controversially argue that the public expects a difference between the management styles due to gender. What might the difference in style consist of? Brescoll (2016) tells us that, in Western cultures, one of the most significant beliefs about men and women is that women are more emotional than men. Her study, in which both men and women participated, showed that women tended to be more emotional in management functions. Brescoll (2016) demonstrates that warm, friendly and caring are some characteristics that are identified with women. Aggressiveness, ambitiousness, independence and dominance are the qualities associated with what she categorised as 'the power group' and thus men. According to her research, behaviours such as dominance and determination are forbidden for

the female gender role and this means that women adopt the more democratic leadership style. However, it would be wrong to assume that one can generalise from the 'western' context to less developed societies, wherein patriarchal social factors generate a host of constraints and limitations on female managers.

Blackmore (2018) believes that the emotional rules may look different for women and men. In their study, they show that emotional rules are implicit in an organization like the school and that these rules govern which emotions are accepted and how emotions should be handled. For example, the article states that anger can be more acceptable for a man to express, than for a woman. Another study was conducted by Arar (2019) with nine Arab women principals in Israel which was focused on emotional expression in various stages of their career. According to Arar (2019), the expression of emotions of women principal changes depending on the stage of their career. They are more worried, feel more vulnerable, under duress and under pressure when they start their career. However, when they start their principalship they begin to feel more at ease, start to become more light-hearted and easy to work with. Whereas, after some years of experience, then they express understanding and concern for the sustenance of educational achievements (Arar, 2019). One cannot help but question the way in which such findings slot conveniently into the 'gentle female' stereotype, excluding the possibility that some women in management might – given the right environment – demonstrate the aggressiveness and anger that Brescoll (2016) ascribes to men.

Other experts have found evidence of similar 'feminine' management characteristics. For example, the "woman" is often associated with warmth, understanding, humanity and emotional contact in the interview response, and "the man" with rationality and de-personalized, effective handling of issues. Women work to get to know the staff of the schools they lead, to make them feel good and happy and to create harmonious relationships between people (Lumby, 2014). A study by Shaked et al. (2018) found that women principals viewed relations with teachers as important to their success in instructional leadership, whereas male counterparts thought it less important. On the basis of their own experiences of being women, sisters or mothers, they say they have an understanding of difficulties and demands based on what perhaps women in particular may experience and can therefore support people (and especially women) around them (Lumby, 2014). Chisholm (2001) notes that similar assumptions are reflected in statements made by female and male principals in one study. In a similar vein, Lee, Loeb and Marks (1995) found that female school leaders are more interested

in students' social and emotional development, are also more willing to support newly appointed teachers, and more interested in parental cooperation.

Blackmore (2018) occupies an extreme position among those who argue for distinctive and separate gender traits or characteristics, called "gender scripts of leadership". She believes that cultural and intellectual discourse is filtered through a gender grid that influences the general perceptions of men, women and the relationship between them. She lists a number of such scripts, most notable among them being the power script which is based on the assumption that women, just because they are women, have a common, cultural and collective experience (of being a woman), and the professional success script expresses gender-neutral thinking where a woman's success is entirely dependent on hard work and pure professionalism. This finds some support from research done in Israel, in which it was found that Women rely more on their instructional experience and skills as the source of their authority as instructional leaders, whereas men relied more on their decision-making and hierarchical authority (Shaked et al., 2018).

Arar (2019) reviewing the work of Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011), sees merit in the proposition that there is a distinctively 'feminine' approach to management that contrasts strongly with a more traditional 'masculine' style. Harnessing this insight, according to Arar (2019), can inform and guide leadership preparation programs, helping to create more effective ways of enabling women to capitalize on the benefits of the 'feminine' approach. While testing the same proposition earlier, Shapira et al. (2010) looked at the experiences of four women head teachers in Arab schools in Israel. While sensitive to the very significant cultural factors at play in the special national context of the women, the researchers found evidence of leadership approaches that might be characterized as 'feminine' and lean toward professionalism and an aspiration for excellence. Another key feature of the 'feminine factor', according to Shapira et al. (2010), is a desire to generate a sense of community in their schools.

One the other hand, Blackmore (2018) talks of a social male script, where a woman embraces the extremes of the male norms and becomes "one of the boys", characterised by being aggressive, dominant, individualistic, competitive, and unwilling to support other women. The question is whether such categorisations of what essentially patterns in women's perceptions help us address the real or anticipated barriers to female access to education management. Can it really be the case that all men and women fall into two distinctly separate and idiosyncratic

management styles? Other authors point out that meta-analyses in this area indicate that similarities are greater than the differences (Riehl & Lee, 1996). They point to women who are authoritarian and controlling and there are men who are soft and caring. The same expert believes that many female school leaders have reached their position by adapting to the male paradigm of power and control in the practice of leadership. Perhaps the gender difference is not as important as previously thought? Hall's Research, 'Dancing on the Ceiling, A Study of Women Managers in Education' (1996) examined the experiences of women in this work and found that the stereotype image of educational managers as typically males who do not have cooperative traits, is not well founded. This research suggests that gender is irrelevant: that is, success in educational management is more related to leadership style and personal vision of school development and expectations. Working with that assumption, the present study must now look more closely at leadership paradigms in the literature, as that component of education management that inspires others to achieve education goals.

## 2.5 Summary

Many researchers have asserted that although in most countries, women dominate the teaching profession quantitatively, they do not hold a proportionate number of management positions and they remain underrepresented. The issue of underrepresentation of women in education management has been examined by researchers all over the world: Europe (Bush, 2018; Coleman, 2007, 2011, 2020; Hall, 1997; Jones, 2017; Karamanidou & Bush 2017; Krüger, 2005; Møller, 2007); United States (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Fuller, 2014, 2017; Hoyt, 2010; Miller & Miller, 2001; Robinson, et al., 2017; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010), Africa (Moorosi, 2010, 2020); Turkey (Celikten, 2005, 2010); Saudi Arabia (Arar & Oplatka, 2015; Arar, 2019; Shapira et al., 2010), Autralia (Blackmore, 1999, 2018), New Zealand (Fitzgerald, 2006), Canada (Collard & Reynolds, 2005; Hargreaves, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2008) and in other countries.

It is shown that gender research has contributed to the school leadership discussion by drawing attention to the gender dimension. Such research has contributed to increased knowledge about how discrimination, inequality and discrimination in workplaces occur, are perceived and built into the system (Young & Skrla, 2003). It focuses also on under-representation and barriers that women may experience in their journey towards principalship. The research shows women and men in many respects relate to school leadership in different ways. This follows as traditions, cultural aspects, people's perceptions of women and men put women and men

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school leaders in different locations (Arar & Oplatka, 2015). Studies such as that of Armstrong and Mitchell (2017) showed the difficult situation that women face in a culture where men hold the majority of power positions. Female leaders working in male-dominated organizations are both "insiders" with institutional power and authority and "outsiders" as women in a male culture (Blackmore, 2018). Women's entry into the school means they also become "change agents". Blackmore (2018) believes that it is the women who receive criticism for both organizational changes and tensions within the business.

It is argued by Davids (2018) that female school leaders are seen as carriers of renewal and change in school. Their leadership qualities are highlighted as the solution to many of today's problems. They believe that the increase of women principals would "represent a new dimension in leadership as well as a structural challenge and change, which has the potential to establish a new openness in schools concerning value frameworks and remodel school cultures" (Davids, 2018). Yet Bush (2018) tells us that, so far, research on women and leadership has focused primarily on career paths and strategies for becoming leaders, as well as on the leadership styles of successful female leaders (Bush, 2018). According to this author, most people have taken a firm stand on the underrepresentation of female leaders, rather than on meaningful processes in relation to female leaders or the importance of context for how leadership is exercised. The present study extends this research to the specific context of Kosovo, exploring the experience of female leaders at the aspiration, acquisition and performance stages of their career journey.

# CHAPTER THREE: KOSOVO CONTEXT

Kosovo's education system and the role of women within that system have been enormously influenced by the country's unique history. An exploration of the experience of women as education professionals, at all levels, demands a detailed examination of the specific contextual issues that have directly and powerfully impacted that experience.

The Republic of Kosovo is a small country that lies in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula. Its geographical, geopolitical and geospatial position places it at the intersection of trade and ideas in the Western Balkans, Europe and the world. Kosovo is bordered by Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia.  Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, with an estimated population of between 1.78 and 1.79 million inhabitants (2011 census, and 2020 statistics). According to the 2011census, Kosovo population has 92.9% Albanians, 1.5% Serbs and 5.6% other ethnicities (Turks, Bosnians, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Gorani, and others) (KSA, 2021).

The recent history of Kosovo and its path to independence is intimately linked to the dessolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. However, its history of ethnic conflict reaches back further to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan Wars at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.  Historians identify it as the place in which the Yugoslav wars began and ended. During a now famous visit to Kosovo in the late 1980s, Slobodan Milosevic made a speech that signalled to the other republics of Yugoslavia, his ambitions for a dominant and overpowering Serbia. This key event was, in many ways, the trigger to reactionary forces in the other republics, and in the autonomous province of Kosovo, which became the stage for the last act of the Yugoslav wars. Throughout the 1990s Kosovo's majority Albanian population experienced a regime of separation orchestrated by Milosevic and enforced by Serb police and military forces. It was a period that greatly impaired the socio-political development of Kosovo and further exacerbated the deep ethnic division between Albanians and Serbs. This period also had a damaging impact in Kosovo's education sector (Clark, 2000).

Toward the end of 1990s the situation escalated with the formation of KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) and the start of the war.  In June 1999, after the intervention of NATO

forces, the war ended and under the Resolution 1244, UNMIK Administration was established.  UNMIK was to become the government of Kosovo, providing all aspects, through the three pillars – legislature, judiciary and administration (Judah, 2005, 2008). This international administration, comprised of UN personnel from many countries around the world, was established by a decision of the UN Security Council (Resolution 1244), and managed all aspects of public, political and social life in Kosovo.

In addition to thousands of UN staff, several other international organizations arrived in Kosovo. Over a period of eight years, new institutions of self-government gradually were developed, with a strong emphasis on mirroring recognised international standards and compliance with international laws on the rights of ordinary citizens. This successful process culminated in the declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, when a large number of democratic countries recognised the territory as the Republic of Kosovo with a Constitution that proclaimed its status as an *independent, sovereign, democratic, unique and indivisible state.* (Constitution of Kosovo, 2008).

## 3.1 Education system in Kosovo

### 3.1.1 The structure of the Education System in Kosovo

The education system in Kosovo is comprised of: (i) Pre-school education (age <5); (ii) Pre-primary education (age <6); (iii) Primary education (age 6-9, grades 1-5); (iv) Lower secondary school (age 11-14, grades 6-9); (v) Upper secondary education (age 11-14, grades 10-12) and (vi) Higher education.
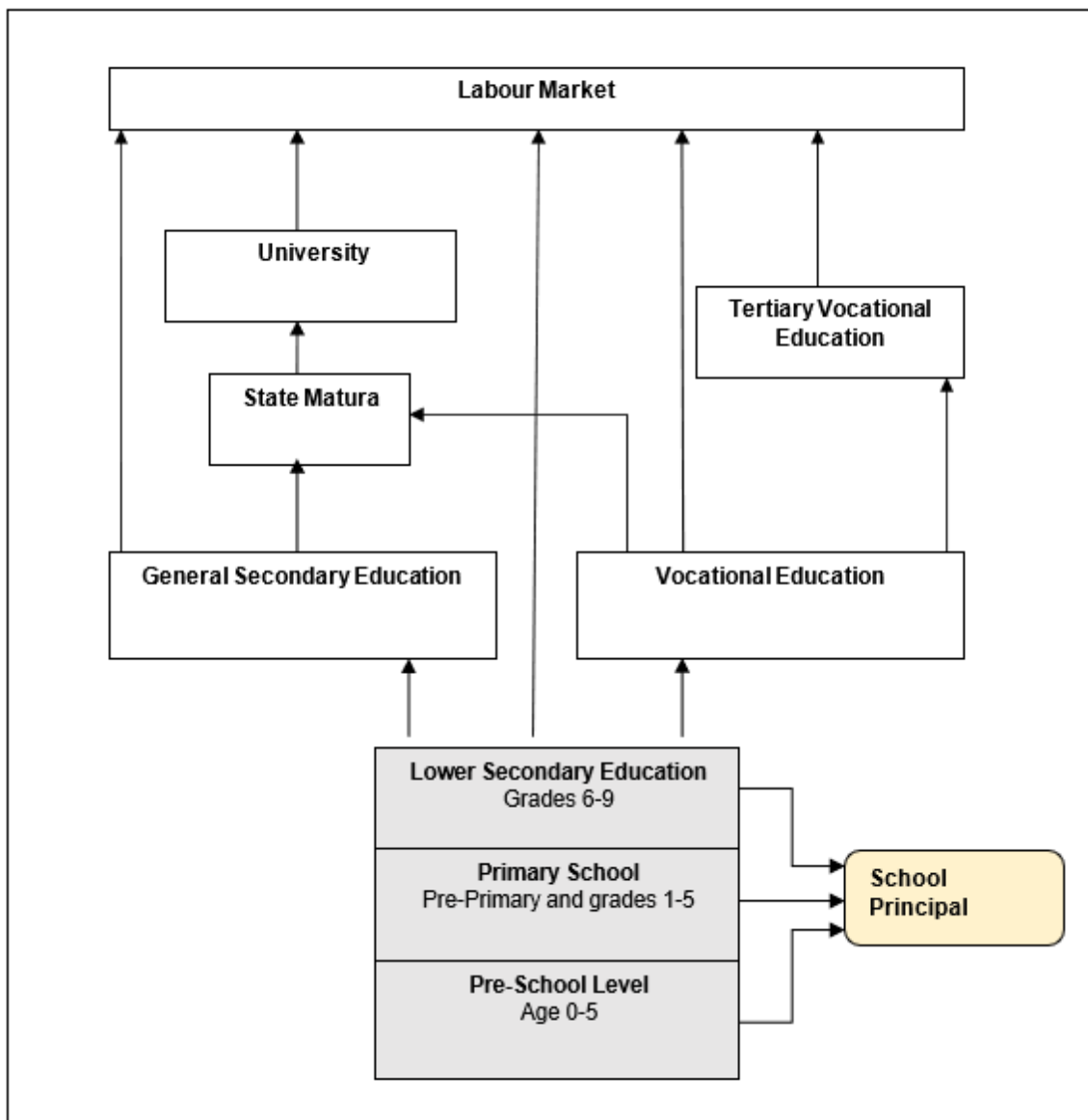
**Figure 1:** The Education System Structure in Kosovo (KESP, 2017-2021)

The pre-primary (preparatory), primary school and lower secondary school are managed by one management structure, namely by one school principal. Recently, there are cases when primary and lower secondary school are separate and have separate management, i.e., different school principal. The upper secondary school has also separate management and hence school principal. For the purpose of this study, the respondents were selected from the school principals of one institution which comprises three levels: pre-primary (preparatory), primary school and lower secondary school

### 3.1.2 Historical background of Kosovo Education System

The political circumstances of Kosovo, during 90s, influenced the education system and helped to shape it and make it quite unlike other education systems in the Balkans and Europe. Kosovo's education system was in many respects quite unique and *sui generis*, as compared with other systems in the Balkans and Europe. For more than a decade, two parallel systems have been operating in Kosovo — the Albanian and the Serbian. As a result of Serbia's policy of abolishing the autonomy of the Kosovo Province in 1989, the Albanian majority population responded by developing what became known as "Parallel Institutions", an elaborate system of public services operated independently of the centralised Serb system (Bacevic, 2014).

The parallel education system, inspired by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, was managed and financed by the exiled Government of Kosovo, while the official Serb language system operated under the Government of Serbia. The ethnic division and prejudice were reinforced by physical barriers and overt symbolism. For example, dividing school buildings with brick walls, while depriving most Albanian-language secondary schools' access to official buildings and public funding (Pupovci, 2016). This initiative of course had dire political consequences. The radical changes that took place in the education system resulted in conflicts based on ethnic identity. Students and teachers were expelled from their school facilities, mistreated, and imprisoned (Judah, 2005).

With the end of the conflict in the late 1990s, Kosovar society found itself in a dire socio-economic state and in desperate need of a broad-based recovery. In addition to thousands made homeless because of torched houses, neglected and dilapidated public buildings and infrastructure, virtually all the educational real estate in Kosovo had suffered decades of neglect and lack of investment, in addition to a total absence of professional development of its staff (Sommer & Backland, 2004). It was a period in which Kosovo underwent "dramatic changes in the political, cultural, economic and social level of its society" (Goddard, 2007). The tumultuous political events of that period dictated and accelerated many of the processes that became the trigger for a considerable number of problems, the impact of which are still felt today.

During this period, the Kosovo education system went through reform programmes that were initiated by UNMIK administration, several international and local organisations (Sommer & Backland, 2004). However, the decision to reform the education system was appropriate, not

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least because Kosovo aspired to be once more part of mainstream European best practice, not only in terms of management theory, but also in terms of teaching/learning methodology.

Having experienced so many setbacks and challenges, Kosovo society in general and the education system in particular, have entered a new era. During the post-conflict period, the international community and the Kosovo leaders worked together to reconstruct and refurbish school infrastructure, and develop organizational aspects of education, devise new curricula and arranged the comprehensive professional development of teachers and educational leaders (Pupovci, 2012).

Given that after the war, Kosovo was largely governed and administered by the UNMIK, as part of its administrative responsibilities, UNMIK established the Department of Education and Science (DES), which consisted of local and international staff, represented the highest authority on education issues in the country (Pupovci, 2012). The Department of Education and Science (DES), developed a strategy for the development of education in Kosovo, which was divided into three phases: the temporary phase, transition phase and integration phase (Daxner & Riese, 2011). These three phases encompassed the evaluation and redevelopment of the real estate of the education system across the country, giving priority to the reconstruction of schools and destroyed physical infrastructure. This work aimed at restoring the smooth running of learning and teaching processes, and the stabilization of the education system, and the reintegration of its disparate parts into a coherent provision that met with international standards (Sommer & Backland, 2004).

DES established the Education Development Offices (EDOs), which represented a newly established middle management layer of education, having responsibility for a range of functions, including: curriculum development, school inspection, teacher supervision and evaluation, quality assurance and the integration of minority communities in the education system. It was this management structure that had a direct management interface with the school principals and teachers, leading and implementing the education reform requirements (Goddard, 2007).

DES ceased to exist in 2002 with the establishment of MEST- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.  With the establishment of MEST and with the involvement of the civil sector, progress was made through planning, managing and further developing the leadership

capacities required to move the education system forward during the sensitive post-conflict years (Goddard, 2007).

In the same year, Ministry of Education of Kosovo, with the help of KEDP (Kosovo Education Development Programme) funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, established the Faculty of Education, as an institution of Higher Education for the preparation of future teachers. In September 2001, the Law on Pre-University Education and the Law on Higher Education were approved followed by the Kosovo Curriculum Framework for pre-university education. When the Curriculum Framework was developed, the compulsory education period changed from 8 grades to 9 grades in two cycles: primary education (1-5) and lower secondary education (6-9). Migrating from the old content-based approach to curriculum design, to the new results-based approach took a long time and, unfortunately, saw the repetition of past mistakes (OECD, 2002). In 2008, another important legislation was ratified, the Law on Education in the Municipalities, which regulated the education structure on all levels, central, municipal and school level.

On August 25, 2011, the Strategic Plan for Education in Kosovo (KESP) 2011-2016 was ratified and endorsed followed by the KESP 2017-2021. Through a thoroughly transparent and detailed process of drafting and finalizing this strategy, MEST reached a broad political, social and professional consensus on how best to further develop the education sector and reflect the latest European trends and developments. (Buleshkaj 2017).

### 3.1.3 Education Management in Kosovo

However, the difficult circumstances of the period 1990-1999 made the work of Kosovo's school principals very challenging (Goddard, 2007). It resulted in a severe 'lack of trained school principals' (OECD, 2004).

Nevertheless, after the period of conflict, there was a strong desire in the Kosovo education management and leadership of education, to improve the quality of the education and student performance. This strong motivation and willingness to learn was met by support provided by international organizations, such as KEDP, or in the form of individual experts with other government and non-government organizations (Buleshkaj, 2017), especially when considering that the professional development opportunities for school management personnel in 1980s and 1990s were 'few and far between' (Goddard, 2007). The school

principals were recruited from pools of educators with very limited access to professional development.

As in many other contexts, school principals in Kosovo have come from the ranks of teachers, reinforcing the primacy of the qualities of classroom and teaching experience in education leaders, and giving credence to the belief that a school can only be managed by a proven teacher (Gjoshi, 2016). Consequently, the selection of management staff has focused in the past more on the technical features of education, such as the categorization as grades, averages in studies, and levels of study, etc.  This resulted in a tendency to select those who excelled as schoolteachers and were willing to take on the managerial role. This assumption is strongly opposed by Bush (2018), who argues that the role and responsibilities of the school principal have evolved beyond the performance envelope of a teacher, however proficient she or he might be. Described as a 'traditional bureaucratic model' by Goddard (2007), this approach resulted in principals that had no access to research or data regarding past changes, were not encouraged to learn inclusive democratic processes or the leadership styles employed in western democracies. The role of school management staff in Kosovo in the past has been characteristically an administrative function focusing on the administrative features of management science.

Although educational leaders and school directors made strenuous efforts to reform the education sector, after so many years of inertia and underdevelopment, they encountered considerable problems (Buleshkaj, 2017). Progress was hampered by the fact that school principals had low salaries, worked second jobs, lacked experience of reform and had transportation difficulties, with some traveling over two hours in order to attend a training course (Goddard, 2007).

Despite the support given by many international organisations through various professional development programmes, they were challenges in this process.  As Buleshkaj (2013) notes that, although the aim of these professional development programs was to address numerous capacity and competency gaps in educational leaders in Kosovo, they were often built on insufficient research due to the dire lack of studies in this area in Kosovo. For this reason, sustainability would increasingly move to the forefront of the concerns of Kosovar leaders. As made clear in a strategy paper, simply introducing one-off fixes could not be the answer – there was a need to build in mechanisms that might ensure that programs are sustained in the long-

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term, and allowed to evolve in step with pan-European developments in educational leadership (Buleshkaj, 2017). It was recognised that a much-needed improvement in the quality of training programs in school leadership could only result from a clearer definition of the minimum standards and required competencies of the school principal function (Buleshkaj, 2013; Daniëls et al., 2010; Pol & Lazarová 2019).

### 3.1.3.1 Recruitment of school principals

Kosovo has the benefit of comprehensive and carefully designed legislation on school management. The selection of school principals of pre-university schools in Kosovo is regulated by the Law on Pre-University Education of the Republic of Kosovo, a sound legal foundation. This law is further elaborated by secondary legislation which has detailed provisions on organizing the selection process from the announcement of the competition to the final appointment by the relevant mayor.

In the first phase of development, the recruitment of school principals was regulated by the Administrative Instruction 08/2009 and later was followed by the revised Administrative Instruction 08/2014, respectively AI 15/2019 on the recruitment of school principals. This important secondary legislation specified certain criteria that had to be met in order to become a school principal. It provided a sound foundation for removing ambiguities, gaps and legal impediments, and paved the way to a new understanding of management positions in schools as professionalized and not simply technical and administrative functions. According to Administrative Instruction 15/2019, certain leadership and management training programmes are an integral part of the selection competition and not simply listed as one of several selection criteria as it was in the past with Administrative Instruction 2009. In addition, MEST had also drafted professional standards for determining the profile of the school leader-principal. There is, therefore, a dynamic process of transforming and professionalizing the role of the principal and a movement away from the perception of management as a purely administrative role, and this has been given a legal basis in Administrative Instruction 15/2019 on the standards of professional practice.

This professionalization of the function of the school principal is intimately linked to the need to focus the work of school management staff on reform measures and constant improvements in the quality of school teaching and learning, as well as other activities that might result in an enhanced learning environment for beneficiaries and practitioners alike. For this reason,

the selection of school management staff will require a broader base of criteria rather than mere reference to categorical or numerical factors. Categorical factors such as prior training and level of education, are employed as preselection criteria for entering the competition, while candidates must demonstrate their knowledge of education, leadership and the contextual features of the relevant school. It is vital that professional development and other formal education should empower candidates to prove that they know what the relevant school needs and how to realise those needs and can demonstrate the basic skills needed for such a process. According to the Administrative Instruction 15/2019, it is the local mayor that approves the selection of candidates to lead roles and functions. To avoid the mayor selecting the second or third candidate, the best candidate ought to be nominated by a professional commission. In those cases where the mayor spots a violation of the procedures or an instance of non-compliance with the basic criteria, he/she must send the report back to the re-evaluation commission. It is noteworthy that MEDs (Municipal Education Directorate) are obliged to notify the relevant department in writing and copy the person who has represented the MEST in the appointed commission. The notification must make clear that the competition and the appointment process has been completed in respect of the designated position.

### 3.2 Gender in Kosovo Society

It is broadly recognised that a system of patriarchal norms and practices have tended to characterize Kosovar society, as a dominant and pervasive determining factor of gender-based discrimination (Clark, 2000, Haug, 2015; Judah, 2008). The patriarchal gender patterns that continue to impact negatively reach back into the formative period of Albanian culture, many centuries ago. It is the product of a rural society in which social and familial organization gives primacy to men as the *pater familias* and key providers, and women have a secondary role in household maintenance, and care for offspring (Haug, 2015).

As Haug (2015) notes the issue of gender equality was interconnected and influenced by the political situation, as well as the conflict between Albanians and Serbs throughout Kosovo's recent history, and the political dispute over Kosovo's status following the breakup of Yugoslavia (Haug, 2015). It is also noted in the literature that the broader Yugoslav state reforms and improvements in the rights and wellbeing of women in society – largely influenced by the socialist political forces in the post-world war two era — had far less impact in the less developed and affluent areas of Yugoslavia. The same author notes that Kosovo in

particular, resisted the influence of these social reforms because of the deeply entrenched hold of its patriarchal family traditions (Haug, 2015).

Another aspect of that entrenched socio-cultural resistance to change was undoubtedly the powerful religious adherence to Islam among Albanians. Over many centuries Albanians were converted from Christianity (Catholic and Orthodox) to Islam, the dominant religious force within Ottoman culture and social norms which adapted to the tradition (Ker-Lindsay, 2009). Commentators observe the adverse impact on the trend toward liberal reforms in Yugoslav society, particularly those that envisaged an equal status and work opportunities for women. As Ker-Lindsay observes:

> An interesting aspect of that conversion is that religion adapted itself to the traditions and not the other way around. As such, it became cemented in the traditions….The unification of ethnicity with religion had a big toll for the Albanian women that suffered at the expense of national/religious ideals." (Ker-Lindsay, 2009)

The advent of the University of Prishtina in 1978 is widely recognised as an important factor contributing to women's engagement and emancipation (Färnsveden, 2014). This institution marked a major step forward for women, insofar as it offered a gateway to higher education for women in a context that was free of religious and familial obstruction.  Of course, the opportunity of higher education was slow to be taken up by women in the early years. One recognised barrier in those early years was transport and accommodation, and their attendant costs. Women had to get to the local school, and, in the case of university, travel a great distance to the capital city. In a rural society dominated by Islam and traditional values, it was considered unseemly and unacceptable for a young woman to travel on public transport alone, and, worse still, live in university lodgings alone (Haug, 2015). The same author also points to the conditions surrounding the disintegration of Yugoslavia, removal of Kosovo autonomy and the years of separation, as factors that regimented against women's aspirations.

In effect, the constraints of the wars and political paralysis undermined the process whereby women might have evolved into a more equal role in society. This retarding effect was further compounded by the new expectations placed on women during that critical period of the 1990s. As with their male counterparts, they were expected to put national interests ahead of

personal ambitions. That meant making further sacrifices and placing gender equality at the very back of the list of individual, group and societal priorities (Haug, 2015).

### 3.2.1 Gender in Post conflict Kosovo

In 1999, when the war ended, the UNMIK administration and, later, the Kosovo government combined to develop a comprehensive policy and legislation framework related to gender, as well as establishing mechanisms and institutions at national and local level to conduct the gender-related reforms. This work on policy was quickly translated into an impressive corpus of law.

The *Law on Gender Equality* was approved in 2004 and it was followed, in 2006, by the establishment of the Office for Gender Equality as an independent body under the supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister and later became the *Agency for Gender Equality* (Kosovo Gender Profile, 2014).

The *Constitution of Kosovo* was ratified on April 9th 2008, and entered into force on June 15th, 2008. Articles 3 and 24 of the Constitution guarantee equality of all citizens before the law, and adherence to internationally recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms. The Constitutional Framework (Article 47.2) states that "*all persons in Kosovo shall enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination on any grounds and under full equality*" (Official Gazette, 2008).

Quoting respondents of a survey carried out by SIDA in 2012, the legislative measures are good on paper, but *'lack ownership'* and are '*not a political priority*'. Women in Kosovo have not achieved equality in terms of economy, education, political participation and others sectors (SIDA, 2012). In the area of employment, the number of women that are employed, in proportion with their general representation in society, falls short of parity and the demands for equality. Young women from Kosovo are a vulnerable group in the labour market and their unemployment rate is the highest in the Western Balkans (World Bank, 2012).

Although, it is widely recognised that the percentage of women employees in Kosovo's public and private organizations is far below the percentage of women in the population, this unjustified discrepancy is not a reflection of an imbalance in education. According to Kosovo Statistics Agency women enjoy equal participation in the education system with their male counterparts yet fail to participate in the labour market in the same measure. Recent statistics paint a depressingly unbalanced picture. The official statistics tell us that 39% of men are

employed, whereas only 12% of women are in the workplace — the lowest representation in Europe (Women and Men in Kosovo, 2017/18).

The lack of gender balance also cuts across sectors. Most employed women have found work in the public rather than private sector, and education is a significantly successful area for female employment. However, as in other parts of the popular public sector, women struggle to move beyond the base categories into management and specialist functions. This is particularly the case in the education system. As discussed earlier, there is increasing evidence that the imbalances and inequalities are rooted in the prevailing socio-cultural attitudes and beliefs. Commentators have identified family responsibilities, parental care and domestic duties as powerful determinants of the low percentage of women in labour market, exacerbated by discrimination in the workplace (Women and Men in Kosovo, 2017/18). The prevailing socio-cultural dynamic in Kosovo is much like the weather: it is an ever-present determinant of behaviour that, due to its dominance, is met with acceptance and acquiescence. According to Kushi (2015), Kosovo women remain bound and restricted by the mores of patriarchal society in which men have the main role and authority to all matters and unquestioned power to enforce and maintain the traditional cultural framework, in spite of the newly introduced institutions, policies and laws (Kushi, 2015).

Joined to the UN administration's rebuilding work, has been the considerable support of international organizations but also other local government and non-government ones to the effort to improve the lot of women in Kosovo society through numerous and varied projects. These non-governmental women´s organizations have been active in the promotion of education for girls and rolling back gender-based stereotypes. In particular, the Kosovo Women´s Network (KWN) has proved both dynamic and effective drawing attention to the rights of women. Likewise, the Kosovo Women´s Initiative (KWI) has invested considerable resources to good effect by capacity building women´s groups through a network of Local Women´s Councils. The Kosovo Women´s Lobby (KWL) consists of female leaders in politics, civil society, media and the economy and orchestrates support to strategic activities on women´s issues (Kosovo Gender Profile, 2018). These initiatives have combined with other innovations in law and policy to generate a new platform for lively debate about the role of women and influenced public thinking across the board. Although the objective of full emancipation and equal status remains far off, these initiatives have taken women a considerable distance from where they were in 1999.

### 3.2.2 Women in management and decision-making positions in Kosovo

It is well-documented that gender disparities in decision-making and management positions are found across the continent of Europe, but they are particularly evident in Kosovo (World Bank, 2012). It is rare that a woman finds a position of leadership in either public or private institutions. The statistics are damning: women comprise only 9,8% of senior decision-making posts in 2017 and saw a modest increase to 11.9% in 2018. Moreover, the percentage of senior female decision-makers failed to increase in line with the contemporaneous increase in the number of Ministries (Balkans Policy Research Group 2019).

According to the World Bank Report (2012) on Gender Gaps in Education, Health and Economic Opportunities, women have more management positions in public sector than in private ones. This is demonstrated by the fact that 79% of all female supervisors and managers in Kosovo, are employed in government institutions or state-owned companies. Further evidence is provided by enterprise surveys, which find that Kosovo women account for just 0.3% of senior managers. This represents the lowest representation in the ECA, in which women account for about 20% of senior managers. (World Bank, 2012).

Research from various reports suggest that gender is a challenge to women's access to management or decision-making positions. In its 2014 study, the Agency for Gender Equity, found that the failure of women to gain access to management positions in local and central institutions is linked to two prevalent attitudes: namely, that men are better managers and that women lack the required political support. The same study found that 30% of women expressed the belief that gender is a dominant reason for their reduced opportunities for promotion. A further 54% of women expressed the belief that women are denied the same opportunities for promotion as male counterparts, while 46% believed that opportunities are the same regardless of gender (UNDP Kosovo, 2014). Likewise, Limani (2019) concluded that Kosovo women do not feel equal in society, being denied management positions and hindered in all areas of public life.

A linked issue is the role of women in Kosovo politics. A study found that, in general, women have less interest in politics and this tendency is a significant indicator of future access to decision-making positions (Office for Registration and Certification of Political Parties, 2018). Nevertheless, the last decade has seen some progress in improving the political

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representation of women. The decision to introduce a quota of at least 30% representation for each gender in the Assembly of Kosovo, has meant that women now occupy a third of the seats in Parliament. The fact that we have had two Presidents of Kosovo (2011-2016) who are female and very successful, represents a major step forward in women's access to the political realm and the highest level of decision-making.

### 3.2.3 Gender and Education in Kosovo

Haskuka et al., (2014) points to the pivotal role of education in breaking down gender barriers and empowering women in all areas of society. Kosovo's recent history has provided the benefit of a raft of modern and advanced laws and policy documents in education, driven by the standards and principles of the Law on Pre-University Education, Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2017-2021, the Kosovo Curriculum Framework (KCF) and other primary and secondary legislation.

As mentioned before, the Law on Gender Equality, and several gender-equality related policies that have come into force in recent years are sources of potential change in the educational sector. The principles of this law are complimented and extended by the Law on Pre-University Education. This ground-breaking piece of legislation ensures an equal participation of both genders in the education system. In addition, it guarantees access to pre-university education "without discrimination on any ground, including sex, religion and marital status, among others" (Law on Gender Equality, This legislation is further complimented by the Law on Higher Education, which describes the fundamentals of higher education as equality, equal opportunities without discrimination, and diversity.

The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2017-2021), adopted in September 2017, was designed by MEST in cooperation with partners and stakeholders from the education sector. Throughout the pages of the strategy, there is a clear reference to gender equality with closely linked by objectives and activities. In terms of basic education, the strategy puts forward clear objectives and activities on gender equality.

It is noteworthy that, while the Kosovo Curriculum Framework establishes the basis for a holistic and truly comprehensive reform of pre-university education, it is vital that gender is introduced as a golden thread that weaves through its implementation (i.e. through capacity building, training content, textbook language, images, inclusive teaching methodologies, etc.) by MEST and donors.

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In spite of these initiatives, problems persist in teaching materials and implementation. One revealing piece of research found that many school textbooks reproduce and reinforce gender stereotypes that mirror the traditional and rural values (e.g. "male" language, choice of photos, language stereotypes) (Kosovo Gender Profile, 2018). The same research pointed to a disturbing echo of such stereotyping in the behaviour and attitudes of teachers toward pupils in class. These observations triggered a prompt response. A first step has been a thorough review and scrutiny of textbook content, against the prism of the standards expected in the various laws and policies of MEST and other agencies. Much has been done to recognize the scale and extent of the problem but less has been done to correct it. In addition, the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies and Open Society (2018), made a gloomy assessment of the presence of gender stereotypes at all levels of education, and particularly in the content, and saw small progress in removing this unwelcome trend. However, efforts are being made to review the textbooks not only on their content but also tackling the aspects of gender equality.

### 3.2.3.1 Gender statistics in education management

Recent statistics demonstrate a clear and unwelcome lack of gender balance in employment in the higher levels of education sector of Kosovo. As indicated in Table 1, although women, from 2017 to 2020, represent almost 100% of all posts at the level of pre-school education, in higher education in that period they hardly reach 12%. However, there is progress and the gender gap of the teaching staff in upper secondary education is gradually moving toward parity, over the same period.

| | | LEVELS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0 | 1 + 2 | 3 | 5 + 6 |
| | Teacher Category | Pre-school | Primary & lower secondary | Upper Secondary | University |
| Distribution by gender in % 2017-2018 | Women | 99.5 | 53.7 | 40.2 | 31.4 |
| | Men | 0.5 | 46.3 | 59.8 | 68.7 |
| Distribution by gender in % 2018-2018 | Women | 99.7 | 56.1 | 40.6 | 33.5 |
| | Men | 0.3 | 43.9 | 59.4 | 66.5 |

| Distribution by gender in % 2019-2020 | Women | 100 | 57.5 | 41.5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | 0 | 42.4 | 58.5 | |
| Distribution by gender in % 2020 -2021 | Women | 99.8 | 59.4 | 43.1 | |
| | Men | 0.2 | 40.6 | 56.9 | |

**Table 1**: Structure of teachers by level of education (public and private) in the years 2017/18 — 2018/19 – 2019/20 and 2020/21 (adapted from KAS, 2021)

However, the data reveals a very unfortunate picture of the current state of employment trends in the management positions in Kosovo's education sector. Ukimeraj and Trnavčević (2020) observe that, despite the fact that the legislation provides equal possibilities, the gender imbalance in the allocation of position of school principalship in Kosovo remains a matter of great concern. This lack of balance appears all the more unacceptable, given that the majority in teaching positions in Kosovo are held by women. There is a pressing need for further and more extensive research into the causal factors that inhibit or obstruct female pathways into school management positions, in spite of the impressive raft of legislation and policy guidelines on gender equality (Ukimeraj and Trnavčević, 2020). Although women represent 56.16% of teaching staff in primary and lower secondary schools in Kosovo, only 17.5% of women are principals. Likewise, in higher secondary schools, women comprise 40.8% of teaching staff, but only 8.9% of school principals (KSA, 2020/2021).

| Distribution of teachers and principals by gender in Kosovo primary and secondary schools in 2020/21 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers | % | Principals | % |
| Female | 56.16 | Female | 17.5% |
| Male | 43.84% | Male | 82.5% |
| Source: National Statistical of Kosovo 2020/21 | | | |

**Table 2**: Distribution of teachers and principals by gender in Kosovo primary schools (adapted from KAS 2020/21)

As shown in Table 2, the statistics indicate that females are not properly represented in school management, in spite of the fact that most of the workforce is female, mainly as teachers. There are glaring gaps in the stated ambition of the government to achieve full gender equality

in this important part of public life. In particular, much needs to be done in respect of the imbalance for women, in respect of their access to the school principal function in both primary and secondary schools. As Limani (2019) observes, action will be harder to achieve than words, particularly since there is evidence that those who exercise political power in Kosovo tend to favour men in decision-making positions and lack the gender sensitivity written into the law.

This huge imbalance has persisted in spite of efforts to establish mechanisms to involve more women in management (KESP, 2017), by encouraging female aspiring candidates to attend trainings for school leaders (GIZ, USAID). Numerous and wide-ranging management training courses have been offered by various non-governmental organisations, in cooperation with municipalities. These laudable initiatives have sought to identify and closely assist women teachers who demonstrate a desire to pursue a career as a school Principal. The Kosovo government has not, of course, been blind to the fact of this imbalance and its consequences. MEST has sought to rectify the poor representation of women in school management, through objectives and activities in Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016 and afterwards in 2017-2021. The intention is to equate to a firm intent to significantly improve the participation of women in decision-making, as it is required by many national documents based on the applicable laws.

As a conclusion, this chapter has brought forward evidence that the condition of women who aspire to positions of authority and leadership in Kosovo's education system cannot be understood without a detailed appreciation of the socio-cultural, political and economic forces that act upon it, for good or bad. It has discovered a glaring disconnect between Kosovo's advanced legislation and policy guidance on gender equality, and the reality in the classrooms and principal offices throughout the country. It has been demonstrated that Kosovo's history prior to 1999 has been characterised by civil strife, war and conflict, and the suppression of advancements in education and public life for the majority. It has also been shown that the impact of these unfortunate socio-economic factors on education development, have been exacerbated by the negative forces within the prevailing rural and traditional culture.

In short, Kosovo has a tall mountain to climb, if it was to succeed in achieving the same gender equality in education as other European countries. The advent of UNMIK and the generous work of many international organisations, gave some immediate advantages in this

post-conflict recovery period. A raft of laws and policy guidance measures, combined with the establishment of MEST, moved Kosovo across many years of lost development in just a short period. However, Kosovo has had to learn that paper aspirations cannot be readily translated into action without transforming hearts and minds and attitudes toward the role of women in public life and education management. Thanks to the support of NGOs working with MEST, positive change has occurred. We have found that real progress has been made over the last two decades of female participation in the education sector, but much remains to be done. In particular, the role of women in school management lags far behind that of male counterparts, and there is a lack of research into the main causal factors.

# CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This chapter sets out the selected methodology starting with a short description of the corresponding objectives and related questions that are posed in the study. While exploring the relative strengths and weaknesses of various methodological strategies that might be applicable, the chapter goes on to identify and justify the chosen design and methodology. The chapter describes the procedures of sampling, the methods for data collection and the analysis. Finally, ethical considerations and the limitations of this research are discussed.

## 4.1 The objective and the research questions

It is the primary objective of this present thesis to examine the experiences of women principals in their journey to management. The objective is to conduct an academic study of this problem in Kosovo schools empirically, so as to achieve an analytical framework of the pathway that women must follow toward a career in management as a school principal. To achieve the main research purpose, the study investigates various aspects of the current underrepresentation of women and studies empirically that deficit in the context of Kosovo by examining the specific context of Kosovo's socio-political and cultural reality, through the lenses of women principals' experiences.

So, based on the objective described above, the research questions related to the empirical part of the study are as follows:

1. *What are the narratives of Kosovo women principals about principalship?*
2. *What are Kosovo women principals' descriptions of their experiences of seeking, achieving and performing as a principal?*
3. *What is the support the women principals need in their management route?*
4. *How do the participants in this study interpret the social and cultural environment in which the education leadership and management is embedded?*
5. *How do the participants in this study interpret the imbalance between male and female principals in educational management?*

**4.2 Research Design and Methodology**

Brooks and Normore (2015) state that when conducting qualitative research on educational management, it's critical to use the proper research design, which will help in the investigation of the research questions (Brooks & Normore, 2015). And according to them it is vital to carefully consider epistemological (knowledge processing) stance and the final objective when designing and implementing qualitative research on educational management. Moreover, a researcher must reflect on his or her views about the nature of knowledge, as well as categories of knowledge they intend to generate as a result of the research. Key questions must be devised and honed: 'What is the purpose? To improve an education employee, education system or school? Or is the purpose to investigate an area that is little understood?' (Brooks & Normore, 2015). Following this argument and given that the present study is concerned with finding answers to questions about the perceptions and experiences of women and other stakeholders in the education management in Kosovo, it requires the use of a qualitative research method: i.e. a research tool appropriate to the capture of non-numerical data, such as first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires that capture descriptive accounts, and focus group responses (Corbin & Strauss, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative case study offers the potential for in-depth insights in the processes that influence how female teachers in Kosovo make decisions on becoming principals and performing as principals. This methodology also provides the possibility for new insights into the challenges and incentives of female principles on their management path to principalship. This choice is supported by the findings of many researchers who state that qualitative research enables researchers to explore in depth a problem or an issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2013; Matthews & Ross, 2010). Likewise, Ravitch and Carl (2021) argue that qualitative research employs systematic and contextualised processes that can be effectively used to interpret the ways that humans interpret, understand and give meaning of their experiences (Ravitch and Carl, 2021).

There are many different approaches to qualitative research provided in the literature. Creswell and Creswell (2013) found five major types of qualitative research: phenomenology, narrative research, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. On the other hand, Denzin and Lincoln from 2011 until the updated version in 2018 have identified more types of qualitative research such as: participant observation, case study; ethnography; mixed methods, phenomenology and ethnomethodology; life history; grounded theory; historical method; participatory action research and by 2018 more types of qualitative research were added:

ethnodrama/ethnotheater, visual methods, and social justice inquiry to grounded theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Whereas, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) have identified six common genres of qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, basic qualitative research, narrative inquiry, and qualitative case. Having reflected upon the qualitative and quantitative techniques' relative strengths and weaknesses, this study employs a qualitative case study approach.

The case study is an empirical research that investigates current phenomena in the setting of actual life, particularly when the distinctions between phenomenon and context are blurred and not readily distinguishable. As pointed out by Yin (2018), the case study provides an additional advantage in research into women in management by focussing on the web of interacting forces that influence the subject, including those factors over which the enquirer has minimal or no control. Taking a lead from the observation of Creswell and Creswell (2013), it was recognised that this strategy would facilitate a detailed exploration of management path of women in primary schools, against the contextual framework of the cultural, socio-economic, historical, social, and political dynamics of Kosovo. Mindful that the primary target group of this inquiry includes women in management positions of primary schools and representatives of policy makers, it is important that the research questions are devised in a manner that elicit the *how* or *why* of the specific setting as Yin (2018) suggests. As Yin (2018) goes on to observe, such research must aim to 'understand a case': that is, examine how it works, as well as the manner in which it interacts with the actual contextual environment in which it exists.

This case study is concerned with woman as the subject of theoretical analysis within feminist framework, accompanied by an expanded definition of what can be described as 'political' or 'social' life. In addition, the case study approach has the benefit of allowing the researcher to "concentrate attention on the way individual groups of people deal with specific problems while maintaining a holistic view" (Merriam & Merriam, 2009). Moreover, a case study provides the descriptiveness that can reveal a detailed and accurate account of what has been explored, incorporating as many variables as possible and portraying the interaction between them, thereby illustrating the complexity of real-life situations (Merriam & Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Merriam & Merriam (1998) points out that a researcher should deploy a case study strategy 'to gain a comprehensive grasp of the issue and its significance for those that are involved in the

research'. It must pan out widely, that such a case study approach must do more than look at what is most immediately obvious in the context of the target group. Yin (2003) also notes that the 'holistic and meaningful characteristics' of actual events, whether singular in time or part of a more extended life cycle are important aspects. This means actively scanning the target environment for 'small group behaviours', as well as the more obvious organisational and managerial processes (Yin, 2003). Scholars use a variety of case study types, such as explanatory, exploratory and descriptive (Yin, 2003); and intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 1995). This study will employ the exploratory category.

Inspired by Stake's (1995) observations about exploratory case studies, the present research seeks to obtain an in-depth insight on how Kosovo women teachers aspire toward, achieve and later perform in the function of school principal. Yin (2003) argues that in an exploratory case study, the subject of exploration is the research topic itself: instead of hypotheses or assumptions, the purpose and criteria by which performance will be determined are highlighted. An exploratory case study must begin with some logical basis and direction, even if those starting points later prove to be incorrect.

The present research is an exploratory case study that draws on the experiences of twelve school principals and three representatives of policy makers and representatives of organisations that deal with gender issues in educational management. Inspired by the guidance of Merriam & Tisdell (2016), the study has sought to achieve 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit.' Such an 'exploratory case study' strategy is used to obtain a deeper understanding of situations from the Kosovo context, with a focus on the 'process and the circumstances' as well as the discovery itself (Merriam & Merriam, 2003). This is achieved by shedding light on the target issues mentioned in the research questions, through the experience of selected school principals in Kosovo and representatives of government and other organisations. The research realises this by taking a systematic approach to the subject matter of the research, and by collecting and analysing the data, thereby building the ground for further research and providing basis about the topic that has been unexplored in Kosovo although generally, and also through documents of international organizations, recognized as key issue in Kosovo society. The research realises this also by expanding and deepening the existing knowledge of the chosen topic that has been unexplored in Kosovo and is now recognised as a key issue in Kosovo society. The work is built on the conviction that the

resulting research reveals valuable new insights and creates the groundwork for further research in this poorly examined field.

As in any academic research, it is vital that the conclusions of the present study are validated and strengthened by drawing on more than a single source of data. The term *triangulation,* drawn from the world geometry, is used to describe the conscious use of multiple sources of data to evidence a conclusion about a specific phenomenon (Mathison, 1988). Same wise, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) define *triangulation* in research as "the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". This use of multiple sources of data and evidence is said to provide a picture of the observed situation that is more comprehensive and results in enhanced credibility (Altrichter, 2008). Following this guidance, the present study has triangulated its sources by comparing its primary interview data of four 'categories' of participants, namely three distinct categories of experience of school principals: novice principals, medium experienced principals and highly experienced or senior principals. The fourth category from the policy makers representatives. Also, Kosovo secondary data was used to strengthen and embed the primary data findings.

## 4.3 Data Collection and Analyses

Data collection occurred in three distinct phases: a demographic survey, semi-structured interviews, and secondary data analysis. In order to gain the target population of primary school principals which is unavailable in the official statistics, a carefully designed survey questionnaire was distributed across the entire target population. This allowed the researcher to demographically describe the elementary school principals (male and female) in Kosovo – something which had not hitherto been accomplished – thereby gaining additional statistical data on categories and scales of schools, and the experience, education and training of principals. It also facilitated the process of describing the sample vis a viz the entire population. This paved the way for primary data to be collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with a group of volunteers from the target population of female school principals.

### 4.3.1 Sampling

The acquisition of meaningful and relevant data is entirely contingent on selecting the appropriate representatives of the target group. Given that this doctoral research explores the challenges and incentives of women principals of Kosovo primary schools in their

management route, the target population consists of female principals of primary schools of Kosovo and policy makers of the relevant area. An important step involves selecting the participants who can best add to the phenomenon studied rather than those who represent larger population (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Ravitch and Carls (2021) state that the criteria employed to define a sample must be in line with the research problem and research questions.

In the case of this study, the sampling procedures were conducted in two main steps: the first step was a survey conducted with the population of school principals (men and women). The survey questionnaire was sent to the population of school principals of both genders, based on lists provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The questions in the questionnaire were constructed based on the key research aims and objectives. Each questionnaire contained fourteen questions regarding age, qualification, and experience, both as teacher and as school principal, as well the data about schools (i.e. size, location, etc.). A subset of questions referred only to women principals, inviting participation in the data gathering on a voluntary basis and requesting contact details.

The researcher purposely selected twelve participants from the female principals that volunteered, representing approximately 10% of women principals in Kosovo. The researcher drew on demographic data and used it to select participants from three distinct categories of experience: novice principals, medium experienced principals and highly experienced or senior principals. In order to get the perspective from the central and municipal level, three (3) more participants were included in the research, one from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), one from Municipal Education Directorate (MED), and one (1) representative of an NGO in the relevant area. The selection was made on the basis of prior knowledge of the researcher on education policies that related to the recruitment process of school principals, and their involvement in this process.

The purposive sample resulted in the identification of twelve (12) elementary school principals who were willing to participate. In addition, there were two policy maker representatives and one from civil society. With this group, the researcher was able to focus on the most knowledgeable respondents with an extensive experience on education management for a long period of time, as well as take cognizance of novices in the field (Merriam & Merriam, 2003). This method facilitates the objective of the study — to obtain the perspectives of the women school principals regarding their management path – by allowing the meaning that

emerges from the data to throw light on the career paths of women principals, as well as the barriers and obstacles, and benefits and incentives they experience.

**4.3.2 Interviews with women school principals and official representatives**

Although the research design uses multiple sources of primary and secondary data in order to strengthen the findings, the core of proposed study is based on in-depth interviews conducted with the sample group (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the study adopted semi-structured interviews with fifteen (15) women, out of whom there were twelve (12) school principals of primary schools and 3 women representatives of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Municipal Education Directorate (MED) and non-government organisations (NGO). The interview instrument was used to emphasize "the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime" (Atkinson, 2005) of women principals and representatives.

The interviewing process was organised in the following steps:

As a first step, the Municipal Education Directorates (MED) were contacted, asking their permission to send the demographic questionnaire to school principals in that municipality. In most cases, it was with the express permission of MED that questionnaires were distributed and later collected from school principals and returned to the researcher. In some other cases, the researcher was told to contact the school principals herself and the questionnaire was distributed to the school principals by mail. The letter sent to MEDs contained a detailed description of the purpose of the questionnaire. After collecting the completed questionnaires, a database was created with all responses, and those completed by women with consent to be interviewed were separated. Based on the criteria of work experience as school principal and the type of school (urban or rural), twelve school principals were identified: four with longer work experience, four with medium work experience, and four novice school principals. After identifying the candidates for the interview, each was contacted by telephone and the purpose of the interview was briefly explained, thereby ensuring that the written explanation in the questionnaire was fully understood.

During the telephone conversation the place and time of the interview was agreed with the participants. All the interviews were done at the respondent's school, usually at their office or in the library if it was quieter. Arrangements were made to ensure that there were no interruptions or disruption during the interview, thereby allowing the participant a calm and

quiet atmosphere. Therefore, telephones were disconnected to obviate any interruption. All participants proved cooperative and welcomed the opportunity to express their views in interview. A similar process was followed in respect of the participants in the second group: they too were initially contacted via telephone, and the location and time of interview was agreed at their convenience. In all cases interviews were conducted at their place of work. Before the interview started, the researcher explained the nature and purpose of the research and the use of the data, prior to asking for their verbal agreement to take part in the interview and their permission for the use of the resulting data in the manner described. Participants were assured that their anonymity would be respected, and that the interview would be terminated at any stage if they so wished. At that point they were invited to read and sign a consent form for the interview, asking their agreement to record the interview and use the data in an anonymous manner. At the same time, participants were asked to provide a suitable nickname.

The interview itself was semi-structured, meaning that the main questions were pre-prepared and, as and when required, the researcher could intervene with probing questions to obtain more information. On average, the interviews lasted from forty to one hour and 15 minutes. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participants for their kind cooperation, and informed them that they will receive the transcript of the interview and given the opportunity to alter or change the content. However, in all cases the participants accepted the written transcripts as accurate and acceptable. During the interview process, the integrity of the participating persons was protected at all stages of the study. The school principals in the study were guaranteed complete confidentiality. Their real names do not appear anywhere in the work. Instead, numbers are allocated for each participant. Nor do the names of schools or places appear in the work. Great emphasis was placed on trying to create a relaxed and safe interview situation. This was done by being careful in preparing for the interview, mentally preparing for the process and having all the equipment ready and in order. A friendly, open and serious treatment was sought throughout the interaction.

### 4.3.2 Data analyses methods

In this thesis, grounded analysis method, whereby the process of coding, thematizing and categorizing resulted in theoretically developed categories that emerged from the data, and content analysis method were employed. The categories were structured by using the management route model. The literature points to grounded theory as an appropriate methodology that has been largely applied to qualitative research in social science (Corbin &

Strauss, 1996). It employs inductive reasoning to arrive at founded conclusions and theory development. It works by reviewing the data in answer to the research question, allowing ideas and concepts to emerge, coding these ideas and concepts, then moving the cumulative coded concepts up to the level of categories that can form the basis of a new theory or hypothesis for further testing (Glaser & Strauss, 1996). Grounded theory is considered to be the type or method of qualitative research however its analytical approach to deal with qualitative data has been widely used in qualitative studies. For the purpose of analysing the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the author employed the method of content analysis, which is a recognised, empirically founded method that facilitates the structuring of the qualitative data. The method of content analysis is an analytical method, more precisely an empirically based method, which is used mostly in social sciences for textual analysis (Neuendorf, 2017).

### 4.3.2.1 Analytical Framework – The Management Route Model

The themes and categories, through the open coding, were inserted into the analytical framework that has been employed in this research as the 'management route model' which was designed by Eck et al. (1996). And later was used by others (Bonzet & Frick, 2019; Moorosi, 2010). This model is used to comprehend the complexities that can be recognised in the three important phases that shape the career journey to education management, and highlight the challenges found by women in each phase. For this reason, the researcher has chosen this model for the present study.

What are the phases proposed by Eck et al. (1996), and later by Bonzet and Frick (2019)? The initial phase is referred to as the anticipation phase, as the preparation phase for women to enter management positions or principalship. It is the primary focus of the anticipation phase to develop and mould the knowledge and skills that are required by women, if they are to achieve a management position. This process involves acquiring qualifications, participating in informal networks and benefiting from the critical help and support of sponsors, thereby helping teachers for promotion, and granting opportunities that are vital to the entry into higher positions (Eck et al., 1996)

The acquisition phase, which focuses on entry into managerial roles, is the second phase. This is the stage when women are going through the preparation and recruitment process to be appointed as school principal. This phase will obviously be most concerned with the challenges

and incentives during the preparation and recruitment process. Likewise, the support of the national legislation and policies are important features of this phase, insofar as they help determine the way candidates are assessed and either help or hinder a woman's chances of appointed in management. Due to the overwhelming perception of management as a 'male activity', organisational and social factors are no less important topics in this phase. The last phase is the period when women are performing as school principals. It encompasses all the challenges and incentives that women principals experience from the time they start to work until the time they were interviewed.

This model forms the very heart of the analysis that underpins the findings of the present study, providing structure to the organisation of the gathered data. Data gathered from the primary data sources (female school principals, MEST, MED and NGO representatives) was subjected to open coding to identify emerging themes and categories that were classified within the management route model. Within each phase, the emerging themes were subdivided according to their individual or organisational or social relevance. This use of the management route model provides an analysis of the complexities encountered under each of the stages that decide or constrain the management path, highlighting those challenges and incentive faced by women rather than men.

### 4.3.3 Ethical Considerations

Integrity is an essential and non-negotiable quality of scientific research. Research that involves the use of qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, raises special considerations about ethics if the standards of integrity of the University of Ljubljana are to be verified. Great emphasis has been placed on weighing the research requirement against the individual's requirements, ensuring their protection in accordance with the guidelines of University of Ljubljana. Therefore, the researcher followed the ethical guidelines specified and approved by the Faculty of Education of University of Ljubljana.

The study complies with the recommendations of Bell and Bryman (2007) on ethical considerations by ensuring: a) informed consent and participation that is voluntary; b) avoidance from using disrespectful or discriminatory language; c) ensuring the anonymity and privacy of the participants; d) using a proper reference system to acknowledge the works of other authors and e) being highly objective during the analyses and discussions all through the research (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

**4.4 Limitations**

While this research adds and contributes in a significant way to the field of research into education management in the context of Kosovo, there are noteworthy limitations in terms of its methodology and content.

In terms of its methodological constraints, the study has limited its case study to female principals with no reference to the experiences and perceptions of their male colleagues. The findings, in terms of patterns of experience and perceptions among women in education management, would greatly benefit from comparative data from male school principals. In addition, it is arguable that the generalisation of the findings might not be allowed from the case study at the heart of the thesis. However, the purpose was not generalising beyond the geographical borders of the case study — beyond the territory of Kosovo – and it remains a relevant and valid source of information to similar contexts across the world.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that the research is limited for the lack of empirical research and literature in Kosovo on this topic. There is a lamentably small pool of data and studies on issues of education management and gender in Kosovo. In order to accomplish the objectives of the study the author has used a variety of sources. Firstly, previous studies of local and foreign authors were consulted in order to get more data on the perceptions of school principals. It should be noted that in Kosovo information about women in leadership positions in education is extremely sparse, or even non-existent. On the other hand, the available world literature is dauntingly broad in the chosen field of study. Studies that include the perceptions of persons, scientific articles, surveys, and official sources in Europe and America are among the most diverse and rich in texture. In this context, difficulties have been encountered in selecting relevant information and data that can be said to correspond to the Kosovo context.

The use of secondary data has presented additional challenges, on the identifying contexts that are sufficiently relevant to the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of Kosovo. Although studies that include the perceptions of persons, scientific articles, surveys, and official sources in Europe and America are diverse and rich, they often diverge sharply from the traditional and conservative culture of Kosovo, as well as its socio-economic constraints.

**CHAPTER FIVE –DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION**

**5.1 Demographic data**

As explained in the methodology chapter, a demographic questionnaire was used to acquire data about the population of elementary school principals. Through this questionnaire, the researcher was provided the demographic description of the primary school principals in Kosovo which has not been done in Kosovo yet, gaining additional statistical data on categories and scales of schools, and the experience, education and training of principals. It also facilitated the process of describing the sample vis a viz the entire population. The questionnaire was sent to all municipal school principals of primary and lower secondary schools.[2] According to the MEST, the list of principals of primary and lower secondary schools, both male and female and excluding the schools of Serbian municipalities, there are 649 school principals. The questionnaire was sent to all the Municipal Education Departments (MEDs) who then distributed the questionnaires to the school principals of primary schools.

The population of school principals of primary schools in Kosovo is 649 principals, 538 male school principals and 121 female school principals. 435 (67%) school principals responded to the questionnaire.

*Gender*

Gender distribution among 435 respondents shows great imbalance as presented in Figure 2.
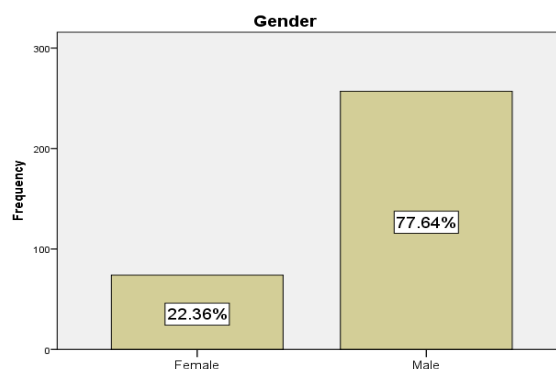


**Figure 2:** Gender distribution of respondents

Figure 3 shows that among 435 principals who responded to the questionnaire females are represented with 22,36% and male with 77,64. Because there are only 17,9% of female

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[2] The Primary and Lower Secondary Education are managed by one School Principal, except few cases when these levels are separate.

principals in the population of 649 principals it can be concluded that more female principals responded to the questionnaire than male.

*Age group*

Regarding the age group, the data from 435 respondents show that female school principals are younger than male school principals and they are quite evenly represented across the age groups.
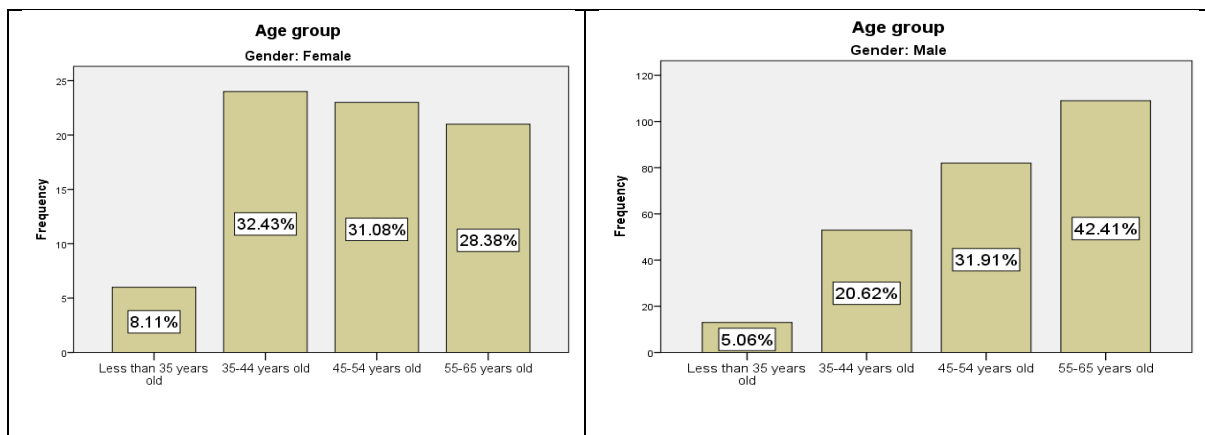


**Figure 3:** Age group of respondents

Only in the age group of 35-44 there is a higher percentage of respondents with 32.43%. Whereas most of male school principals (42.41%) are in the age group 55-65 years. This can be explained by the number of male school principals with longer work experience as school principals.

*Marital status*

Regarding the marital status, the data from 435 respondents show that the overwhelming majority of the respondents of both genders are married with relatively few single, divorced and widowed.
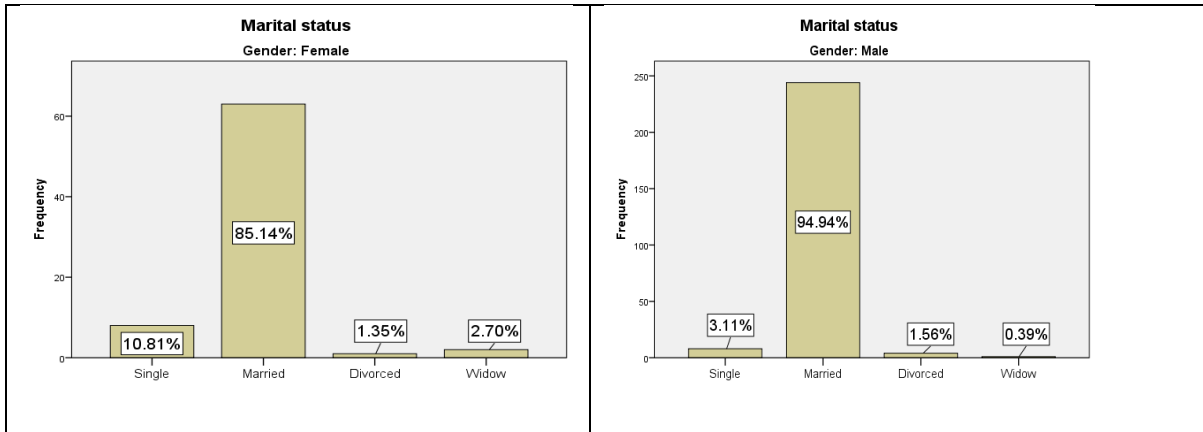
93

**Figure 4:** Marital status of respondents

However, there is a higher percentage of married male principals (94.9%) out of 317 total number of male respondents than female principals 85.14%) out of 98 of female respondents. This may be a reflection of one of the perceived barriers to female participation in education management: namely, family obligations. This might well be reflected in the higher percentage of single female school principals 10.8% with 3.1% of male principals.

### *Number of Children*

The responses on the number of children show that male principals tend to have more children than female principals whereby the highest disparity is among those with 3-4 children: almost 52% of male principals compared with 37% of female principals have 3-4 children. In addition, there are no female school principals with 5 or more children, whereas 6.48% male school principals have more than 5 children. Most notably, almost 20% of females have no children compared with 3.6% of males.
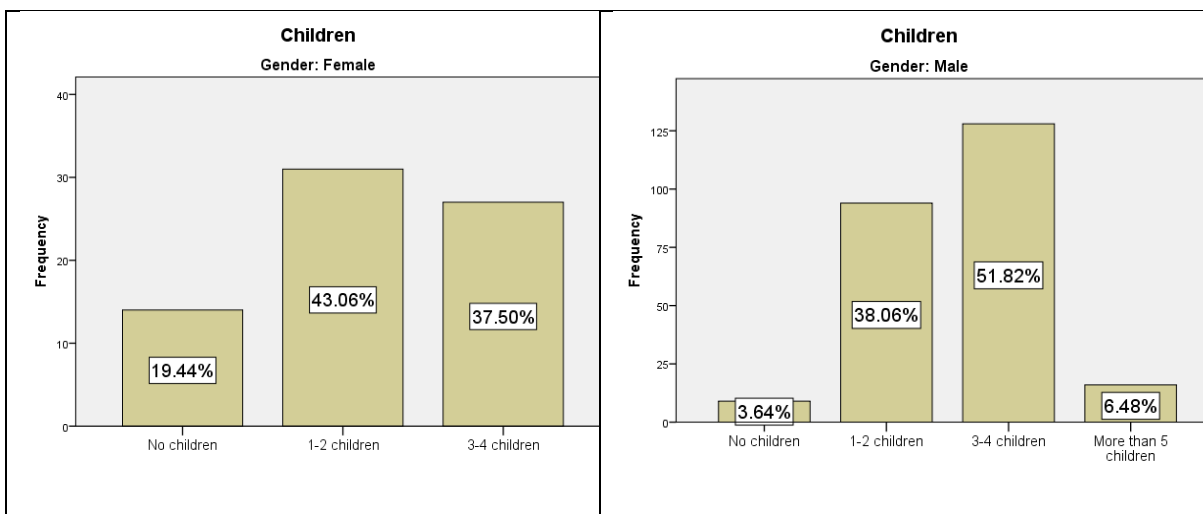


**Figure 5:** Number of children of respondents

Regarding qualification, there are no differences between female and male principals, whereby most school principals have the qualification of Faculty of Education: 58% females and over 63% males. There is no difference between female and male school principals at Masters and PhD levels. And more than 97% of both genders have completed the Training on Education Management.

*Number of students in the school*

Figures 6 shows that the majority of schools managed by school principals have populations of less than 300 students, which corresponds to the predominance of rural schools in Kosovo. However, the charts reveal that female school principals are better represented in schools with the highest number of students.
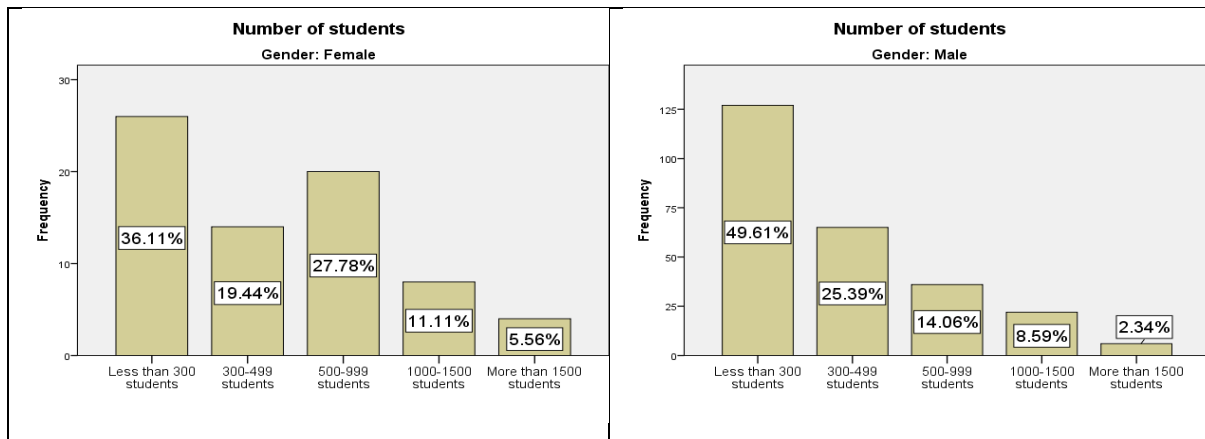


**Figure 6:** Level of Responsibility (number of students) of respondents' schools

The majority of schools (96%+) have operating School Boards, with no difference according to the gender of the principals. Over 80% of schools do not have deputy principal in primary and lower secondary schools again with no difference according to the gender of the principals.

**Years of experience as a teacher**

Regarding the experience as a teacher, figures 7 reveals that male school principals have generally more experience as teachers than females. The figure shows distinctive patterns of experience as a teacher, and notably 20.83% of female school principals have less than four years work experience as teachers compared to 4.69% male school principals.

**Figure 7:** Years of experience as a teacher

The data show that there are no significant variations between the genders on how many times they have applied for the positio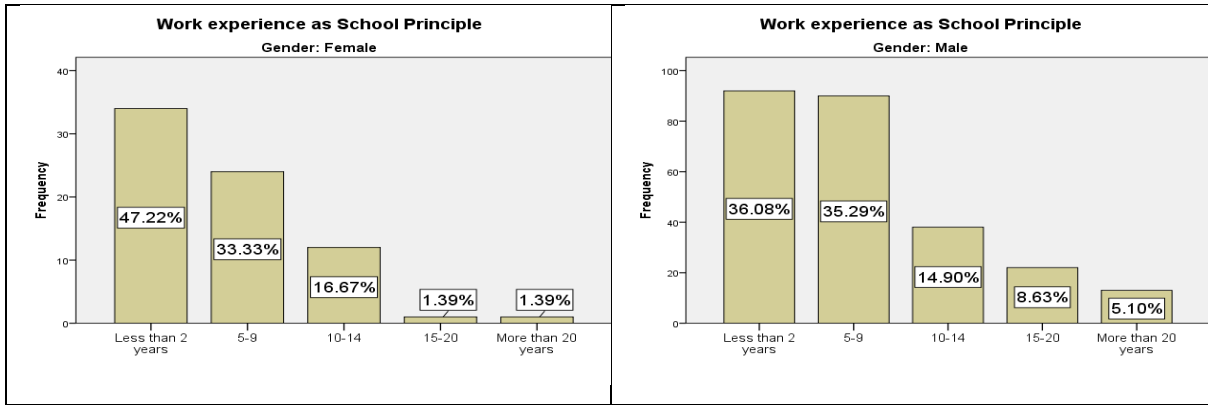n of the school principal. And the majority of both genders have applied only once – 60% female and 52% male principals respectively.

### *Years of experience as a school principal*

The question 'How many years have you worked as school principal' was most important for our study, since it was the source for selection of the potential principals in three groups: novice principals, medium experienced principals and senior principals for the interview.

Figures 8 reveals that the majority of both female and male school principals have less than two years of work experience as school principals. However, overall, female school principals have less work experience than male school principals. Only about 2.8% of female school principals have more than 15 years of work experience, whereas almost 14% of male school principals have more than 15 years' experience as school principals.
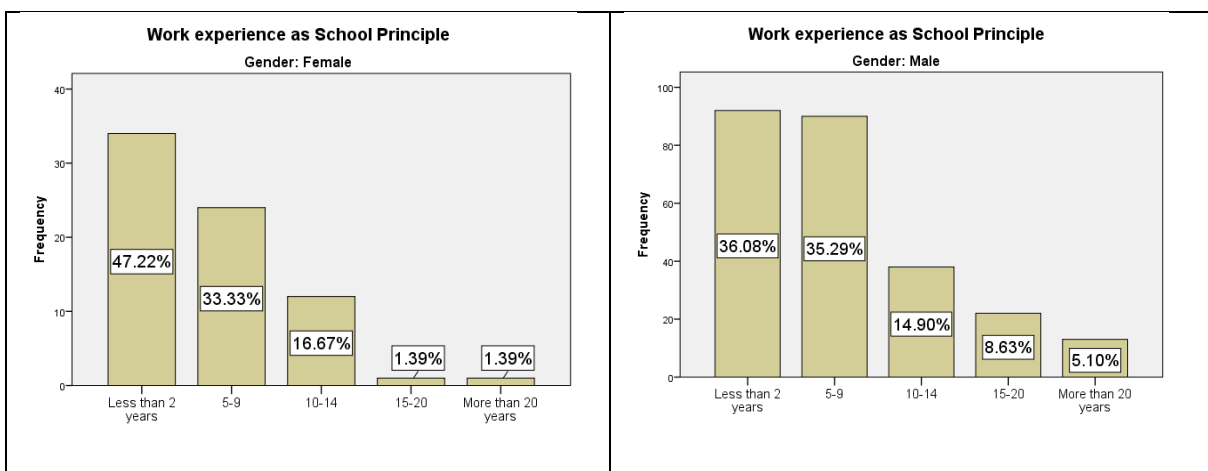


**Figure 8:** Years of experience as school principal

Almost 82% of females and 86% of males have only had management experience in their present school, revealing a policy and practice that either deters or fails to encourage rotation.

**5.2 Analyses and Interpretation of the Interviews**

This section represents the very heart of the research. It explores in great detail the relevant experiences of a group of women who have traversed, often with considerable difficulty, the distance that separates the role of women as teachers and those of school managers in contemporary Kosovo. Their evidence, so often stated frankly and courageously, paints a mixed picture of their professional careers, encountering both challenges and incentives, gender stereotyping and social norms, training support and family assistance. Most importantly, it shows their bold and uncompromising honesty that allows the present study to identify the key patterns in a system that often fails to measure up to the high aspirations of the relevant laws and policies of Kosovo, with regard to the stated equal rights of women in the education hierarchy. Based on the Management Route Model (Eck et al. 1996), which was used for data analyses, the research works through the three stages of the management route identified for women principals of primary schools, namely: anticipation, acquisition and performing. For each of these stages or phases, the perspectives, challenges and incentives that have been experienced by the interviewees on their management route are presented and examined. The results that are described in the following pages include both the contributions of the respondents and relevant findings in the literature. Analysis and interpretation are developed in unison.

**5.2.1 Sample description**

It is important at the very outset to carefully analyse the backgrounds of the respondents, comparing and contrasting their vital descriptors. They consist of fifteen (15) female respondents, out of whom twelve (12) school principals which were selected through purposeful sampling in three categories: four novice school principals, four school principals with medium work experience and four senior school principals. The division of three such categories was made according to their work experience. The aim was to group the interviewees in categories of similar work experience. Novice school principals are those who have just started their work or are still in their first mandate. One regular mandate for a school principal of primary school in Kosovo is four years. The second group of school principals are those who have completed one mandate and have started the second; whereas the third group consists of school principals who have completed two or more mandates.

The age of the school principals varies from 40 years old to 63 years old. In each group there is one school principal who works in urban school and the others work in rural schools. Only one school principal is single, and all others are married. Six participants have two children, the other three have three children and two others have one respectively four children. All the participants have university qualifications at Faculty (4-year study) level or Bachelor (3-year study) level, and three have a master's degree. They have all completed the compulsory training in Education Management. Their work experience as teachers varies from 2 – 18 years whereas their work experience as school principals varies from 2-20 years.

The other three respondents consist of three representatives, whereby one of them represents the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), the other one is from the Municipal Education Directorate (MED), and one is employed by an NGO that deals with gender issues and involvement of women in leadership positions. These sources of data are important for ensuring/increasing the credibility of the study by employing triangulation by sources. The respondents provide the perspective of central and municipal level representatives on the underrepresentation of women in school management positions, as well as the perspective of the civil society.

### 5.2.2 Development of categories

Data collection was done via the interview method. Data gathered from the primary data sources (female school principals, MEST, MED and NGO representatives) was subjected to open coding to identify emerging themes and categories that were classified within the management route model. The respondents talk about their experiences under three stages of their career path into an education management role: anticipation (the preparatory steps), acquisition (the process of application and selection) and performance (in the function of manager). These themes and categories were then inserted into the analytical framework that has been employed in this study as the 'management route model', developed by Eck et al. (1996). This analytical framework is used to bring together the individual, organisational and social factors in different phases.

What resulted from these combined processes were patterns of experiences that could be clustered together under a large number of categories. The emerging themes were subdivided according to their individual or organisational or social relevance.

As can be seen in Figure 9 below, this approach to the development of categories that capture the prevailing patterns of experience across the target group allows the study to achieve data that is both relevant and structured in a manner that can be compared and contrasted with relevant research in the literature. This approach complements the basic analytical categories that have been applied to the targeted school principals, namely: age, level of experience (senior, middle and novice) and the school location (rural or urban). It also allows the author to present the data in a manner that lends itself to the necessary academic rigour of an advanced study. It both facilitates the identification of links to other findings and points the way to further, more specific research goals within the context of Kosovo.
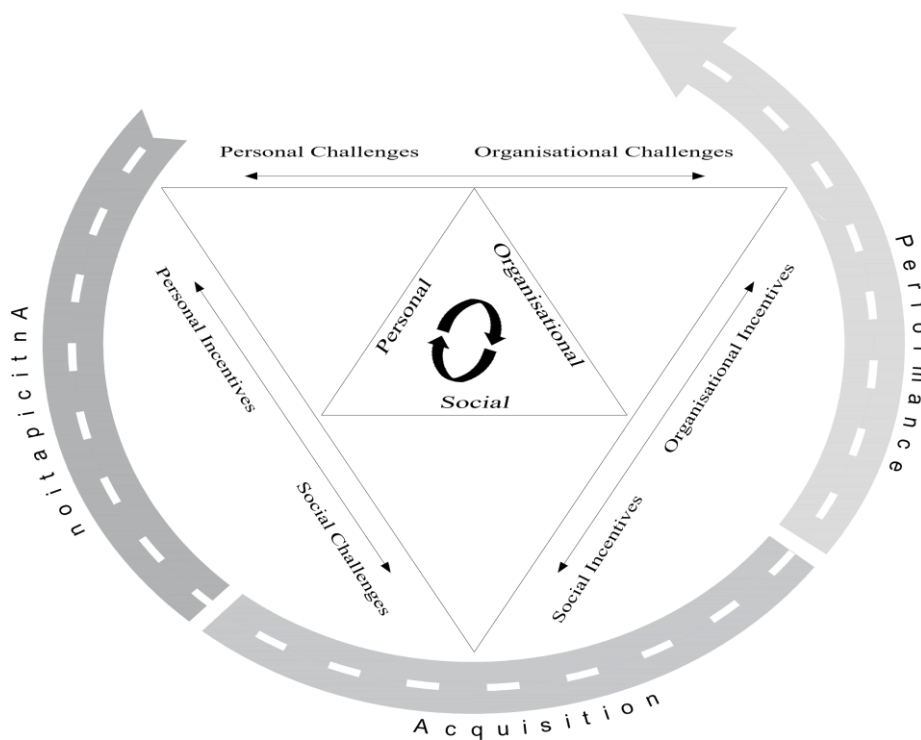


**Figure 9:** The Management Path Model

The three phases/stages of this route/path — anticipation, acquisition and performance — are influenced by what Eck et al. (1996) describes as the 'interacting factors of a personal, organisational and social nature' – dynamic and complex forces that, individually and corporately, are the cause for the low representation of women in education management. This interconnection helps us to see the complex picture that results from women's experiences in their journey to positions as school principals, acting and reacting to the myriad of interrelated factors in all three stages of the management path. Thus, we are cautioned against talk of specific obstacles or even incentives in one or more phases but reminded about the complexity

of challenges and incentives across all stages of the management path. This point is made forcefully by Eck et al. (1996) in their fascinating discussion of the power of the interacting agency of personal, organisational and social drivers, warning against the oversimplification of the reasons for the low representation of women in education management.

### 5.2.3 Anticipation Phase — Challenges and Incentives

As depicted in Figure 12 below, the anticipation stage of the respondents' career path yielded patterns of experience that were grouped under five dominant categories as in Figure 12 below
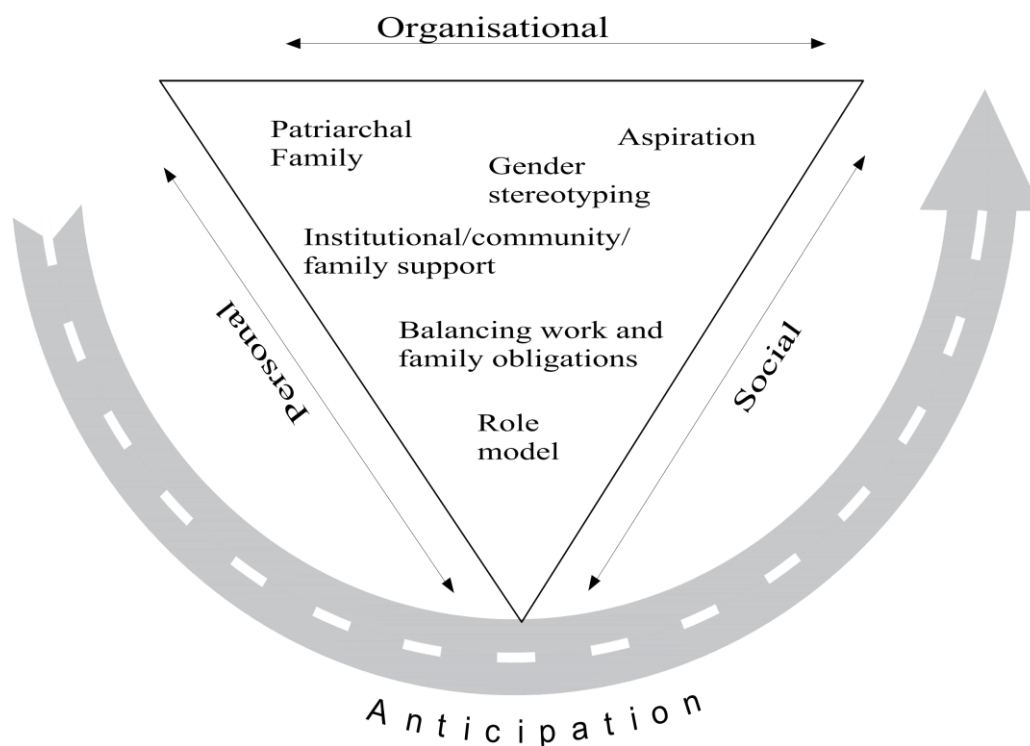


**Figure 10:** Challenges and Incentives in Anticipation Phase

The data was drawn from not only what the respondents' said about their experiences, but also their opinions of what others thought about them. The interviews contained a rich source of information, since the women proved both articulate and readily willing to talk about all aspects of their internal thoughts, the reactions of others and the unspoken yet potent social pressures that impacted on them.

#### 5.2.3.1 Patriarchal family

A number of themes emerged in the interviews about the potent forces that act upon women, constraining, limiting and dictating their social, familial and professional behaviour according

to gender paradigms. This section explores the specific nature of these forces, known as gender stereotyping, rooted in a patriarchal mentality, and how they are said to influence the respondents at an internalised level, as well as more limiting external barriers to their freedom.

For some of the respondents, growing up in a patriarchal family had a big impact on their career. The respondents who experienced patriarchal families face greater challenges from the time they start their education and during their working life and career. For the majority of those respondents, it was the father who decided that their education should continue or not, and whose permission or approval had to be obtained. As one participant explained, she lived in a family in which every important decision was made by the father as the head of the family:

> I grew up in a family where my mother was a housewife and my father was the head of the family and every decision was made by him…this affected my later belief that only men take decisions and women should have a second role. (SP5)

This statement shows that being raised by a patriarchal family where father takes decisions creates the mindset even among women themselves that men should take decisions hence they should have the leading positions. In a Riinvest Institute report in Kosovo (2017), it is noted a patriarchal mentality that exerts a powerfully negative force on women, subjugating them to male needs and authority and undermining their career potential. The paternal influence has been observed also by Cubillo and Brown (2003) who state that this influence is often linked to patriarchal societies in which the father is the head of the family and has the main role. In the patriarchal family, it is not the case only of the father but also husband or father-in-law. One of the respondents shares her experience with her father-in-law:

> My father-in-law had the main word in that family, so I had to get his permission to work. But he allowed me to work. He told me "If a place is vacated, you can go to work. People will talk, but for you this should not mind. You behave as you feel". But this created an even greater responsibility for me to behave properly…and you try to behave within moral frameworks, to have exemplary behaviour. (SP9)

So, it was up to the father-in-law to '*allow to work' and 'give permission'*. It is also interesting because it shows that women were allowed to work with the condition '*not to embarrass the family*'. So, they had to be careful and behave in a way that the society would not '*talk*'. In

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this way, it is considered that the family is doing you a big favour and not that this is your right as a free adult. Gender expectation related to the accepted behaviour is dictated by the traditional cultural beliefs, male-dominated family arrangements and antiquated social norms (Färnsveden et al, 2014). Based on that, it is expected, especially in rural areas that women should comply with the unwritten rules which are based on the tradition and women have a secondary role in household maintenance, and care for offspring (Haug, 2015).

Living in an extended family was also a challenge for women since these families tend to be more traditional and patriarchal, especially in rural areas:

> When I got married, we lived with my husband's parents. This has been a problem. It was not easy since they interfered in everything I did. (SP4)

So, sometimes, living in an extended family was even more problematic for the position of women in those families. Echoing a number of key experts, most of the respondents see the small number of females in management functions as caused by barriers thrown up by socio-cultural forces, as seen most especially in traditional and patriarchal societies (Limani, 2019). As one author notes, societies with a male superiority complex, drive the patriarchal system at home and in society, and exert huge challenges for career-minded women (Robinson et al., 2017). All this creates a 'disadvantageous situation for female principals' who struggle against patriarchal and restrictive cultural norms (Arar & Shapira, 2016). However, according to the findings, it should be noted that the patriarchal family is more influential in the case with senior principals and those from rural schools, and less influential for novice principals and those of urban schools.

### 5.2.3.2 Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotyping in Kosovo, especially in rural areas, is still a challenge faced by women in Kosovo and is one of the reasons behind the low number of female principals in primary schools but also in general. From the interviews it can be seen that the majority of respondents emphasize that gender stereotypes are among the main causes for the underrepresentation of women in management positions. According to these female voices, Kosovo is still a society where gender stereotypes exist and are embodied in culture.

Most respondents grew up in an environment in which teaching was a popular profession for women, and it tended to influence the family pressure to continue studies for that profession. There have been cases when the candidates have not been interested in teaching, but have been forced by the family, particularly by the father who would not allow another profession because 'women are suited to this profession, and a teacher should be a woman'. Another respondent explained how her family made the decision regarding which profession she should pursue:

> I started the studies in High Pedagogical School because it was the only option given by my father — either this or nothing. Teaching was considered by many parents as a woman's job. (SP8)

This concurs with Limani (2019) who found that professions such as nurse, teacher or caregiver are more suitable for women according to prevailing stereotypes. Even the respondents themselves were raised with this mentality and before working as principals, did not think they were capable of running a school and thought that the profession of the school principal is the job of a man not a woman. In this way, school management is seen more as men's work and women are not designed for that level.

> I always had leadership skills in my family, but never thought of becoming a principal. It was the fact also that at that time I thought… well, now I am married and it is ok to be a teacher, it is a job for a women but the job of the principal is a job for men. I thought so too...how wrong I was' (SP7).

One author noted a trend in society of stigmatizing women as unsuitable for management functions (Limani, 2019). Celikten (2005) draws similar conclusions, pointing out that it is expected from a woman to be a teacher and take care for children but not assume a management position. It is a dominant cultural pattern in Kosovo communities that delimits roles and functions that exercise control and management as pertaining only to men. Women are generally limited to the "care and welfare for families and household maintenance", in the social and family milieu that places "men as the main providers and heads of families" (Ukimeraj & Trnavčević, 2020).

However, the statement *'how wrong I was'* is very revealing of a general realization that women who break through the "glass ceiling" into the world of education management

demonstrate to themselves and others — male and female — that it can be done. This realization radiates out across the population of potential women managers and the wider population of sceptics and opponents. Another respondent gave her perspective:

> Sometimes the principal has to raise his voice, he has to be ready and tough for the teachers when they are late to enter the class by making small talk ...it takes a male principal to appear cool, with his hands in his pockets...it is enough to see him and teachers immediately will enter the classroom...he has authority…we say the man has a heavy grace. (SP11)

This reveals that the mindset of women not fit for management jobs is still evident even among women who are in management positions. The impact of the social norms by which they were raised has created this mindset not only among men but also women. However, it is not the women to be blamed but it is the prejudices and social expectation of female roles which has caused the *internalisation* of their perception that they are not capable of management jobs. Martínez et al (2020) concurs by stating that the lack of gender balance is more so because women internalize the dominant gender and management values, rather than the relative absence of women leaders. The same argument was provided by other researchers such as Karamanidou and Bush (2017), Oplatka (2006) and Robinson et al. (2017) who strongly contend that it is not part of the natural order that females are excluded from leadership roles, but the result of a social conditioning process over hundreds of years that places men in such roles.

Certain *expected behaviours* act as internal or personal challenges that affect women's lives and distance them from certain jobs that are considered male, and these barriers are deeply rooted in society's traditional and stereotypical attitudes about female traits (Celikten, 2005). Internal challenges arise as a result of socialization and the roles that women are assigned as they grow up. Traditional approaches reduce a woman's confidence and 'fuel' her desire to please and depend on a man (Fuller, 2017).

Progress has been made in this regard, but expectations about the role of women are still laden with a perverse belief that women are not equal to men and are not valued equally. Although according to the respondents, the situation has started to change, there is still the belief that as a woman you cannot cope in a job that is for men. One participant stated:

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> In my opinion, and I am talking about the network of women where I work, to my knowledge, 90% are reluctant to apply because they know that they will face gender stereotyping. (MED)

They tell us that men — and women in some cases — do not think that women aren't equally capable as men. Lazarević and Tadić (2018) in their recent study in the Western Balkans also confirmed that gender stereotyping operates across the region's societies as a force that persistently subordinates women and fuels discrimination.

### *5.2.3.3 Aspiration*

The following section explores several themes that emerged from the interviews that can be grouped under the category of the respondents' aspirations. They speak of a lack of confidence and a lack of knowledge as inhibiting forces that erode their aspirations toward a management career, as well as the insufficient financial gain that it would bring.

The findings from the interviews reveal that women teachers do not aspire to apply for the position of school principal. All of the interviewed respondents admitted that they never intended initially to become principals. This was also confirmed by MED representative who stated:

> 'In my capacity I have often tried to motivate distinguished teachers in our Municipality to apply for the position of the school principal but most of them do not want to…they are not interested. (MED)

The majority were encouraged either by school colleagues or family and friends and it took a lot of persistence to be convinced to consider the position of principal.

Lack of aspiration is dealt by many researchers (Arar, 2019; Celikten, 2010; Coleman 2011; Oplatka, 2006) who have identified the lack of aspiration as one of the barriers in their management path caused by *lack of confidence* which was mentioned by school principals as a challenge. According to them, women have a lack of courage to take the position of manager because they fear that they are not capable of managerial positions. Some respondents state quite bluntly that women lack confidence:

> Women do not believe in themselves that they can lead, because most do not have the courage to face the challenges of leadership…women are hesitant, they face hesitation, resistance, panic

whether we will know, are we capable…but without challenging yourself you cannot know whether you will manage. (SP4)

The following statement is very much telling of lack of confidence:

> I never even imagined becoming a school manager. I thought that to be a school principal you have to be a superman... a very big, visionary man...this is how I imagined in my mind the work of the principal. So, when my principal who had to leave proposed me to take his job, I was terrified.  It took a month of persuasion from him and colleagues and then I started to think ...if they insist maybe I am the right candidate that the school needs ...  and after a month I agreed to be a principal. (SP1).

This internal inhibitor is perfectly summed up in the sadly errant remark: 'I thought that to be a leader and a manager you have to be a superman.' The male designation, *superman*, is both telling and ironic, given that the cause of the low self-esteem that gives rise to such a remark is precisely the male-orientated and male-benefitting social structure. As Schein et al. (1996) comments, it is the prevalence of the 'think manager-think male' phenomenon that generates and empowers pernicious psychological barriers to female aspirations to management.

According to Cubillo and Brown (2003) in their study, the absence of female self-esteem and confidence is a significant and internalised challenge to their forward movement in educational management.  Kosovo is not alone in this dilemma — as observed by authors in other contexts around the globe, management positions 'belong' to men (Fuller, 2017). This has inspired Brunner and Grogan (2007) to describe the brave and reliant females who dared to enter the exclusively male domain of educational management as the ones that 'ran with the wolves'.

The lack of confidence can be related to the fact that women didn't know much about the work of the school principal, and had a *lack of knowledge* of what the principal's work entails: i.e. they did not have the opportunity to try it out and did not know what it was like to be a principal and what constitutes the job of a principal:

> If I knew then how is to be a school principal, I would not even wait for somebody to propose to me…I thought it was much more difficult, especially for a woman' (SP1).

This was because they did not have much knowledge of what the job of a school principal means. But after starting work, they realized that they can, and they actually do the job very well. As Moorosi (2010) stated '*hesitation in the face of the unfamiliar*' cannot be overstated as an internal obstacle to career development. This sentiment is echoed by Cubillo and Brown (2003) who found evidence that the lack of confidence among female potential managers was less about 'a lack of faith in their abilities' and more about 'unfamiliarity with the territory'.

One of the reasons why female teachers are not motivated to apply for the position of school principal is that there is *fear from more responsibilities:*

> I think that women are reluctant to apply in these managerial positions because it requires a much-increased commitment compared to other positions. (SP3)

Another aspect that is mentioned as a cause of hesitation, is that women avoid *conflicts and ending relations with colleagues*. According to the respondents 'women prefer to maintain the peace among colleagues…they don't like to have conflicts'. This is supported by a research on leadership styles by Bordean et al. (2020) that shows that patterns of management style that exhibit conflict are determined by gender and the research showed that male leaders tended to most clearly exhibit such a conflict domination style of management whereas women adopt the conflict avoiding management style. Some other researchers, Powell et al. (2020) stated that women are more disposed toward a cooperative approach to conflict situations, preferring to be empathetic, in order to avoid conflicts with colleagues.

The findings from interviews reveal that a *lack of financial benefit* is another important reason why female teachers do not apply:

> There is very little difference between the salary of a teacher and a principal. If I am a teacher with little experience the difference is around 50 euros only. So, why face more problems with just 50 euros... when you compare the time with financial cost… and you have the additional burden…the roof leaks, the didactic material has run out…all these is a lot of work, and it is not paid. (SP7)

The same was confirmed by MEST representatives:

The payment is not well regulated, as the difference between the primary school teacher and the principal is only about 50 euros, also the salary is the same as that of the school principal with 140 staff and over 1,500 students, as that of the one who has 300 students and 30 staff in the school. (MEST)

The lack of financial incentive to take the job of the school principal has been confirmed by majority of the respondents and it applies to both genders. This challenge is also present in many other countries. The report from National Association of Secondary School Principals in USA (2020) points out that more than 42% of school principals in USA are considering leaving because of insufficient compensation. The same issue was raised in OECD reports which tackles the issue of salary attractiveness for school principals as an important incentive (OECD, 2021).

### 5.2.3.4 Balancing work and family obligations

This section gives voice to a cluster of themes that can be collected within a dominant and topical category for female professionals in Kosovo, particularly those who are married. The respondents spoke at length about the *weight of family responsibilities* that impacted on their career at several levels, forcing on them unfair choices that did not apply to male counterparts.

In Kosovar society, despite all the progress that has been made in the gender equity, the domestic responsibilities have remained largely due to women because of expectations and gender role which challenges women with *dual family and work obligations*. The findings revealed that one of the challenges that was mentioned by respondents is the *lack of support from the family and husband*:

Women do not have sufficient support from their family, especially in rural areas although it happens also in urban areas. Therefore, there is a hesitation as a mother and the belief that they cannot do both and there is a lack of family support, in particular from the husband. (MED)

As Karamanidou & Bush (2017) explain in their study, it is women who carry the overwhelming burden of *domestic responsibilities* as a result of *cultural assumptions about gender specific roles*. An influential source of data in the Balkans found that female inactivity in the labour market is rooted in difficulties in balancing private and professional life, and that it restricts women's upward mobility on the career ladder (Lazarević & Tadić, 2018).

When asked how they are coping with home and work obligations, some respondents said that they had the support of their men, but this support was not sufficient in easing household obligations. One respondent explained:

> When I spoke to my husband about becoming a school principal, he was supportive of the idea, but he said he would not do the daily work at home and take care of children. So, I had to think hard about whether I could cope with all responsibilities at home and at school…it was not easy. (SP5).

Therefore, even though they have emphasized that they have the approval of men, they have no concrete help in responsibilities at home (Coleman, 2020). There is an important difference between mere moral support from a partner, and concrete support in domestic chores. As noted in one report, women sometimes have the support of a marital partner in their career path, but it often comes in the form of moral rather than concrete support and sharing responsibilities (Limani, 2019). Other authors observed that, too often, men do not offer support their wives, even though they give verbal ascent to a career path (Martínez et al., 2020).

The age of children was mentioned also as a challenge especially for younger respondents. Even the older respondents admitted that they became school principals only after their children become adults'. Some of the respondents admitted that they would not have taken the job or would have been hesitant if they had small children. However, against this trend and opinion, two participants became school principals when their children were young, but — as they explained — it took a lot of commitment on their part.

But in general, the findings show that if a woman does not have the support of the family, especially the husband, the career is almost impossible. Non-support of the family in assuming domestic responsibilities is also seen as an 'invisible barrier' (Kaparou & Bush, 2007).

### 5.2.3.5 The importance of the family support

According to the findings, it seems the mindset of the society regarding the support has started to change. Some respondents have admitted that they have *support from their husbands* and more often from *parents or mothers-in-law*. They further said that the family support was quite high, as was equality among family members:

> In my family we were brought up and educated equally with my brothers and fortunately I received this treatment from my husband and in the same spirit we raised our children. (SP10)

There are cases, according to respondents, when parents wanted to give women a chance for an independent life and encouraged girls to be educated, even when those parents themselves had not been educated. For example, one stated: *'My father was not educated but he highly valued the teaching profession, so he insisted that I take this course or reflected his desire for us. At that time, few women were educated. I was the first girl in the village to go to school.' (P9)*. This concurs with the findings of Shema & Turner (2020), who identified parental support as a vital factor in facilitating female aspirations, defying social norms by recognizing the rights of women to education and independence.

One school principal explained that it was the fact that her family had a long tradition in education, and this created a strong incentive for her pursuing her career in education:

> The interest in education comes from my family history. My ancestors were one of the first founders of the Albanian schools in my village where I was born, especially the school for girls. (GR)

Sometimes, it was the women in the family that encouraged the participants to get educated and develop their career:

> I initially started my journey for the teaching profession based on family experiences, in fact because of my aunts. They have been my inspiration and have encouraged me, and I have seen them as a model, that I can achieve in life following their example. (P6)

Some respondents explained that it was their husbands that encouraged them to apply for the position of the school principal. As one of them said 'I would have never even considered to take the position of the school principal if my husband didn't agree to support me'. The respondents admitted that family support, in particular the support from their husband was crucial. Support from family is a huge facilitator for women in their management route. In particular, the role of the husband is crucial in this aspect. The importance of the support from

family and husband increases in countries where women live in a hierarchal society structured by gender (Celikten, 2010).

The findings show also that in addition to family support, the *support of school colleagues* can be crucial for a school principal and even more for a woman principal. In the context of Kosovo, community support is a very important feature of recruiting women to education posts. Some of the participants noted that it was the initiative of colleagues that persuaded them to apply as school principal:

> In my decision to become a principal, I was most influenced by three senior schoolteachers. You will have our constant support for everything, they told me. They said 'we want you and not someone else who might have some another political point of view and might not fit to our community'…so it was their persistence and I agreed. (P10)

In other cases, it was the previous school principal who has encouraged the respondent to take his position due to the good performance as a teacher. Although not always obvious, that support is known to have a real and tangible impact (Chen et al., 2012).

### 5.2.3.6 Institutional support

The training on education management that the respondent attended and completed also served as an incentive for those who did not aspire for the principalship prior to the course. It increased the confidence of women that they can do the job of a school principal and helped to take the decision to apply for this position:

> The training on management made me realize that I can do the job of principal even though that was not my intention. I realised that I could do it. The training courses were very good. It was actually the training that gave me the idea of becoming a principal. (SP9)

Without training, principals feel much more stressed, less competent and less capable. Several respondents admitted that the training is very important also for those who are anxious and helps them to overcome their fear. This gives weight to the argument that human capacity building, whether formal or informal training, *builds confidence and awareness* among women who express hesitation at the prospect of moving into a management role. The mystique that surrounds the idea of being a school principal in many teachers' minds is often dispelled by

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the information about specific management skill sets and demonstrations of how they can acquire those skills (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008). Professional development allows potential applicants to overcome their hesitation and self-doubts and apply for vacant posts with confidence (Bonebright et al., 2012).

The principal who was a trainer explained the influence of the training courses in increasing the confidence of females, allowing them to believe that they can do the job of a school principal:

> The training courses have influenced the females a lot because they saw that it was a job that they can do especially when you see men there and when you see their potential not only of themselves but also of other women ... self-confidence grows by itself ... and there you see what the principal's task is and they see it is something that can be done…not like an uncut mountain. (P11)

So, from the findings it is also seen that *training* is a very important aspect in the preparation of principals and in *increasing confidence* in their work. Furthermore, the study found that the provision of quality training and professional development has helped individual women *overcome poor self-confidence*. It increased the confidence of women that they can do the job of a school principal and helped them to take the decision to apply for this position. And females will frequently defer the time of access to administration so as to ensure they are fully ready (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008), moreover females are often better prepared than male counterparts, in terms of professionalism (Showunmi, 2021).

### 5.2.3.7 Acting as role model

As in other professional categories in which women have traditionally been underrepresented, education management benefits from the presence of dedicated women who act as exemplars and role models for other women to follow. This exemplar phenomenon cannot be underestimated as a potent trigger to increased interest by a broader pool of women who might not otherwise consider a management role. Some of the interviewed principals were aware that their work could encourage other women and convince them that they can take on a management position:

> I have always taken one step more than others not to embarrass myself in front of others that I am a woman...but to be a model and a good example for other women. Of course, I gave my

best, because I wanted to leave a good impression, and not disappoint other women and I wanted to give them the message that women can do this work even better than men. (SP1)

Being a role model in schools is a factor that affects the aspiration of women to become school principals. Role models are seen as an important incentive in increasing the interest of women, demonstrating that the challenges posed can be overcome. The importance of having role models is emphasized in a study in Kosovo which states that gender inequality is maybe a consequence of not having female role models. (Shema & Turner, 2020). In addition, Moorosi (2020) rightly points to the imbalance of male and female role models as the root cause of female impairment, when considering the prospects of gaining positions of management and policy making in education.

In some other cases, it is interesting and quite disappointing the example of a female principal that creates the opposite effect to aspiring female teachers. For example, one respondent commented that:

> They are afraid to be a principal. I have served both as a positive example but also as a negative example. That is when colleagues see the pressure, the stress that I have and what I have to deal with, they do not want to experience the same situation. Sometimes, you need to be tough with a colleague and even raise your voice. So, when I mention the idea to my female colleagues they say no way...I cannot deal with difficult colleagues. That is, they do not have a problem with professional work but they fear the loss of good relations, their contacts with other people, colleagues, society…female teachers do not have the courage. (SP5)

Similarly, another respondent said:

> I have a family member and I told her to do the training for school management and she refused, saying, 'When I see what you are going through, I am about to faint' ...which means that my example is almost negative because my work is so complex, and they say you are having such a hard time that we couldn't do it. It takes a lot of energy' (SP4).

This is pointed out also by other authors who state that the examples of female principals themselves had a negative impact when they realised the huge responsibilities and the level of engagement required, resulting in a decision to stay in the 'comfort zone' of teacher as some scholars also point out (Inesi and Cable, 2014).

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In summary, this part of the study has drawn together a range of powerful voices that speak of push and pull forces that are common to the majority of the respondents in their career path toward education management. As is evident in the relevant literature, most of the themes raised by the respondents are found in other contexts, particularly in more traditional societies. For example, the *push and pull exerted by social norms on professional women* and its *dampening effect on their career aspirations* is noted by Martinez et al. (2020). Its impact in terms of unfair personal choices of career over family obligations has been discussed by Limani (2019), as a broadly-based experience of women in Kosovo. On the positive side, the pull effect of preparatory training and female role models is echoed in the research conducted by Helterbran & Rieg (2004). And lack of confidence and an associated lack of knowledge among potential women principals are found to be *potent push back force*.

### 5.2.4 Acquisition Phase — Challenges and Incentives

In this section the study presents the findings or results related to the second phase of the management path of women principals. Drawing on the rich data sourced from the experiences of the participants, whether the principals or municipal and government officials, the main challenges but also the incentives that facilitate or hinder women during the preparation, application and recruitment processes are revealed (Figure 13).
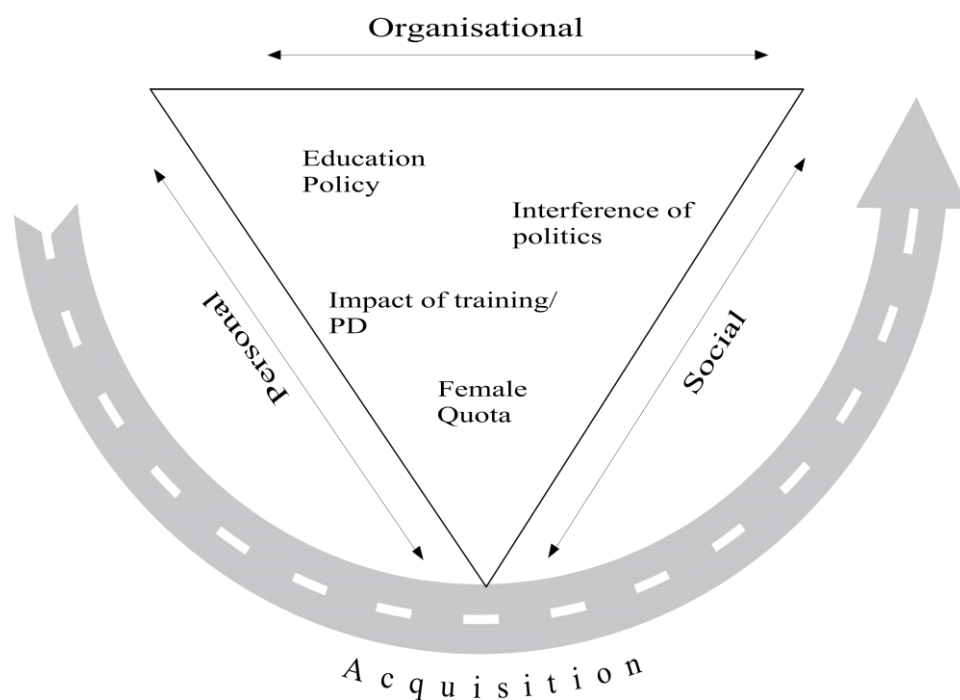


**Figure 11:** Challenges and Incentives in the Acquisition Phase

This section also includes an examination of the relevant policy and its positive and negative impact on motivation of women for leadership positions, as well as the perceptions of municipal and central government officials about the process of recruiting principals and their assessment of its efficacy. It is important to point out that, although mentioned in this phase, some challenges and incentives also relate to the first and third phase.

### 5.2.4.1 Role of Education Policy

The findings show that policies at the central level, namely those of the Ministry of Education, have had an impact on the involvement of women in management positions. The process of application and the recruitment of school principals is regulated by Administrative Instruction 15/2019, which defines the whole process from the vacancy announcement to the criteria and the final decision, as well as the bodies responsible and the appeal process afterwards. Before 2016, the Ministry approved the Administrative Instruction for the recruitment of school principals and required applicants to the post of school principal to first quit their job as a teacher. In other words, **it** was a condition of application that teachers had to leave their job.

Therefore, women teachers were less inclined to risk their current job and apply for the position of school principal. There were only a few cases where they were sufficiently confident that the school and the community would support their application and award them the position. The MEST representative explained its significance:

> This issue of classes has also been challenging, when teachers of both genders assumed the role of school principal, there has been a risk of losing the job. This has been a challenge not only for women but also for men. They had to think hard if they wanted to become principals and risk their job as a teacher. (MEST)

Although this policy affected both genders, it had a more dramatic effect on women because for them the risk of losing their job as a teacher was more problematic and the chances of finding another job more difficult. Thus, for women, this policy was a major obstacle, compounding the other barriers to female applicants by forcing women to gamble their current job. Fortunately, after 2016, the legislation changed and teachers who applied could keep their job if they were not appointed as school principal. In this way, the change of policy represented a critical change that encouraged women to consider the job of a principal.

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Another policy change that was important and helped the increase of women applying for the position of the school principal centred on the recruitment process. As mentioned earlier, the process of recruitment is regulated according to the AI 15/2019, and it ensures gender equality at every step. As it was explained by the MED representative, the MED publishes the vacancy announcement and to be eligible to be short listed you have to meet the criteria specified in the Administrative Instruction:

> The candidates that apply, have to meet the criteria, such as the qualification, work experience as a teacher, which is minimum four years for principals of primary schools, and fully completed professional training, and to develop and submit a School Development Plan…and women are always encouraged to apply. (MED)

Result and intended effect, therefore, are not always the same, as policy makers in Kosovo discovered. For example, the policy decision to have women as members of the Evaluation Commission for the recruitment of school principals, in pursuit of the aim of incentivizing women to apply for the principal's position was an important decision. However, it is noteworthy that the composition of the Commission had been mainly male until a change in legislation made a mixed composition a mandatory requirement. The MEST representative explained the point:

> The government official stated that one of the measures for an increase of female representation was to nominate women to the commission for recruitment of school principals…this has helped. (MEST)

The MED representative who was also member of the commission in the recruitment process of school principal, also explained that having women in the commission helped women candidates:

> From my experience as a member of the Commission, women feel a bit intimidated especially if the commission is all men, so the fact that women were in the Commission helped for women to feel a bit more at ease. (MED)

It seems that the inclusion of women in the selection panels has increased the opportunities for women to be selected, because applicants feel more confident and comfortable when they see women on the Commission.

The respondents found *the interviewing process* was an important aspect both as a challenge and as an incentive. For some candidates, it reveals *the lack of confidence* to perform well in the interview in the presence of the interview panel. The interview is seen as the crisis point for women who do not feel confident enough to speak in front of the panel. As the MED representative said:

> Sometimes there are women candidates who meet all the criteria before the interview and they have the best School Development Plan.  But during the interview, you can see that they are very anxious and are unable to demonstrate their skills. One said to me that coming in front of the panel is very intimidating and she couldn't say half of what she had prepared. (MED)

Therefore, lack of confidence is a problem for some candidates in the interview and results in their failure to become a school principal. Research into the psychology of selection interviews, reveals that the lack of confidence is linked to an inner belief that they cannot be as good as men before they have tried the job. However, the study also found counterweights to the argument that the interview process unnecessarily excluded women who lacked confidence. Some respondents found the interview was *a good opportunity to show their capabilities* and contradict the belief that 'she got the job because she is a woman'. One of the participants said:

> When I applied, many candidates hesitated to enter the interview, even the men were shivering, sweating. Whereas me, I was very cool and calm and convincing with my answers and people congratulated me after the interview. This has been important for me even if I had not been selected as principal, because they saw that I deserved it. Because they sometimes say 'they chose her because she was a woman, but she does not really know'. So, this was a good opportunity to show how much I know. (SP4)

This case reveals an attitude that women must struggle more to convince stakeholders that they are fit to manage a school, stemming from the age-old gender stereotyping in the workplace – i.e. some jobs are for women and this is not one of them. Over time this results in women lowering their expectations. It is interesting that Limani (2019) argues that women tend to

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*settle for less challenging and more stable jobs, avoiding executive decision-making positions.*
This is the result of the perception of the latter as being politically weighted towards men and
less secure in the long-term, due to the *overt political interference in appointments* to such
decision-making functions (Limani, 2019).

### 5.2.4.2 Role of Political Interference in the Selection Process

According to the majority of the respondents including the representatives of municipal and
central level, *the influence of politics in the recruitment process is evident and significant*. The
MED representative admitted that although the legislation has regulated the process and
ensures gender equality, it is not fully implemented. According to the legislation, the
Evaluation Commission makes the recommendation, but the final decision is taken by the
Mayor of the Municipality. She stated that she has been involved in the Commission many
times over the eight years of her service. Thus, when asked why there are very few female
school principals, she explained:

> The legislation provides and demands equality, and in fact in our vacancy we also state the
> women candidates are encouraged. But, in addition to the fact that women do not apply as
> much as men, the other problem is that of those that apply, even if they are better candidates,
> they are not always selected. The final decision, according to the Administrative Instruction, is
> not taken by the Commission but by the Mayor of the Municipality based on the
> recommendation of the Commission. And there are many cases, when the recommendation is
> ignored, and another candidate was selected. This effects women very much because the
> decisions of the Mayor are in most cases political. So, you see, the Mayor selects candidates
> that are of the same political parties or supporters…women are not involved very much in
> politics…so it is even more difficult for them to be considered. (MED)

Such experiences tell us about the highly corrosive role of politics in civil service appointments
in Kosovo. Over time such experiences build up into a general perception among women that
civil service managers appointments are loaded against them, creating a sense that
*appointments are unfair and non-merit based*.

Several respondents articulated the grave sense of the process as unfair:

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> The reason women are hesitant is that they know from the beginning that they have no chance and do not want to fight like me…they do not want to go to court because they know that they cannot win. (SP5)

> Many of my colleagues that I know have applied; they had the experience and master qualification but did not succeed because they did not have the political connections. And this demoralizes the candidates…so the recruitment process is not fair. And this causes women to hesitate. (SP2)

> When I was interviewed, everyone congratulated me because I was better but in the end, I was not selected because they said that I was politically inappropriate…so if you are capable, honest and fair but not in any political party…you will not succeed…I have to say this applies also for men. (SP4)

There have been efforts to change the recruitment process and try to avoid the political dimension, but this was not possible. The government officials stated:

> In the Ministry, we have discussed many times how to increase the representation of women. We discussed changes to the practice of recruiting principals, moving toward objective criteria alone and not without reference to the party, which would then facilitate the recruiting of women directly, but we have not managed to make the changes. (GR)

According to some respondents, it is the politics that determines successful selection during the recruitment process, and this applies to both genders:

> I have applied four times. The reasons were political. In my opinion, gender does not matter that much.  For example, when there is a vacancy for the position of the school principal, the candidates of political parties other than the governing party, or those that are not in any party, do not apply because they know that they do not stand a chance. I was told not to bother to apply…you do not stand a chance. (P12)

However, given the fact that women are less engaged in politics and the machinations of political parties than their male colleagues, the impact of the political interference is higher. An important study, when examining this question, found that women generally tend to be far *less engaged in politics due to a lack of interest*. And that this factor links strongly to female

access to decision making positions (Office for Registration and Certification of Political Parties, 2018). This perception is reinforced by evidence of cases in which women got the job because they had political support:

> When I applied for the position of the school principal, there was no other female school principal, that was in 2012, and then it was only me. I was the first one and I got there because I had political support. If you were not in a political party, there was a red line which you could not cross to get the position…and even after you became a school principal, if the Municipal government changed, your position could be changed as well. (SP10)

There were cases in which they were asked to be a school principal if they agreed to become a member of a political party:

> The appointment of the school principal was connected to the support in an election…I was told if you want to become a school principal you have to give support during the election…and I said no, I said if my performance is not a good enough criterion for me to become a school principal I will not be selected because of such support. My honesty and my principles were the reason that I was not selected…but I kept trying until I succeeded without the promise of a political party…it was not easy. (SP2)

The claims of the above respondents find echoes in a number of Kosovo studies (Aliu, et al, 2018; Anastoska-Jankulovska & Skikos, 2013; Limani, 2019; Shema & Turner, 2020). According to Shema and Turner, 2020, perhaps the most unyielding and – in the context of Kosovo –the most ubiquitous and highly potent nut blocking female aspirations is the effect of political interference. According to Aliu et al (2008), the appointments of school principals by municipal mayors has undermined public confidence, suggesting that the process of recruitment is politically motivated, and appointments are mainly based on political affiliation, favouritism, and nepotism. If this is true, the integrity of the *entire recruitment process is threatened by politicization*, adversely impacting the quality of education and school management.

A report by Anastoska-Jankulovska and Skikos (2013) points to alarming irregularities and failures to adhere to legal requirements in the process of the recruitment of the school personnel including school principals: it was found that the process was overtly politicised and under the firm control of the Municipal Directorate of Education.

*5.2.4.3 Female quota*

Some of the participants mentioned *the female quota* as an effective way of increasing the numbers of women principals in primary schools. This was mentioned as a recommendation to be considered by policy makers. The representative of the MED said:

> I think to increase the representation of women in leadership positions the quota should be introduced. Even in politics, without quotas, women would not have been involved. And when they start then they can see that they can do it. And the next term they apply themselves and then fight for their position. (MED)

Another participant explained the importance of the quota and how it helped women's involvement in politics:

> In the beginning, when there was a quota for political parties, the party begged women to participate because they needed to meet the quota…now there is competition among women (NGOR).

Moreover, a report of the Kosovo Gender Studies Centre (2017), noted that the ground-breaking decision to grant women a 30% quota of the seats in the Assembly of Kosovo and Municipal Assemblies had a radical and long-term impact on attitudes of men and women, and forced a permanent opening to decision-making by and for women in Kosovo (Zymberi & Zogjani, 2017). Does the argument from the volatile world of Kosovo politics apply equally well to the professional context of education? The MED representative believes that it does and suggested having a 50% quota for women principals:

> Women leaders or, in this case, managers of educational institutions are giving very good results in their work. I would recommend that the participation of women to be 50%, depending on the schools that the Municipality has or if a school has both the position of the principal and deputy principal, one of them should be of the opposite sex' (MED).

Although the quota principle has been discussed by many authors in Kosovo in the context of politics and parliament, it has had insufficient research and debate in the context of civil servants, including education mangers. The present study found mixed views among respondents. Some respondents expressed concerns about the impact of the wider perceptions

of a quota, with the result that it removed their ability to claim equal competence and merit to male colleagues. For example, one indicated serious reservations:

> When I hear about the quotas, I do not see it as something good. We do not need to be part of the quota but to prove our workplace skills…I wouldn't want to see myself as part of the quota…but on the other hand, it is needed because of the patriarchal mentality of men. Quota is important until the awareness is raised. Albanian men do not understand otherwise. (SP11)

Yet, some might argue that extreme problems require extreme remedial measures. Vinnicombe et al. (2014) admits that the use of quotas is an extreme solution that, far from ideal, delivers predictable and timely results in rebalancing the gender distribution in areas of professional life. While a quota regime has its critics, it was found that female participation in a management board was more readily and assuredly obtained through a quota regime. *Implementation of gender quota legislation* has opened wider possibilities for women's participation in politics and assists females in the steps they need to be involved in politics. With more women working in the public sector and acting as role models, public attitudes are changed about the potential role of women in politics. (NDI Kosovo, 2015).

### 5.2.4.4. Education Management training and professional development

One of the criteria to become a school principal, according to the legislation, is the completion of training on Education Management. All the interviewed principals had completed this training on education management, some before they became a school principal and some afterwards. The training on education management was initially organised by International Organisations such as GIZ, USAID and other organisations that came to Kosovo after the war and later it was coordinated at the central level through various accredited NGOs.

### 5.2.4.4.1 Motivation for professional development

The results from the interviews revealed that women teachers were not showing great interest to attend the training on education management. In response, the Ministry of Education made strong recommendations, through KESP 2017-2021, urging some of the international organisations together with MED-s to encourage women candidates to participate in the training on Education Management in order to increase the number of women principals. The MEST representative made the following observation:

The Ministry, cooperating with the GIZ project, proved well-coordinated and it has been clear that the training programs have a gender balance. In the educational leadership program, such training is a condition, a criterion for selection of principals. With the help of training for educational leadership we have been able to increase the number of women in these training programs. (MEST)

This training was offered in each Municipality, requiring the MEDs to contact schools and encourage women teachers to apply through their existing principals. The MED representative explained it in this way:

As MED, in cooperation with GIZ, we organized a free education management training course, with the condition that only women apply for the training..but it was very difficult and at the end we managed to have only one group with women only. Therefore, we had to include men too to become a mixed group because there was not enough competition, not enough women that applied. (MED)

Sadly, this evidence implies a *lack of interest among women teachers to attend the training*, even though offered for free.

Based on the interviews of the respondents, *the decision to attend the training was based on differing motivations among respondents*. According to some respondents, *the active encouragement of the school principal and colleagues* proved to be a key motivator for attending the training. So, some of them decided to attend the training after being encouraged by colleagues or the school principal to do so, indicating the vital role the school principal and colleagues in motivating women to join this effort. One respondent admitted:

Initially, I was not interested, I was thinking…why do I need it? I am not going to be a principal. But I was basically told by my school principal that I had to go to the training on management… and I went only because I had to. (P8)

This case shows the hesitation of women to attend the training and not considering at all the possibility of becoming a school director. And it was only *the intervention of the school director to attend the training which later proved to be an incentive.*

Another motivator was the *linkage between a licence renewal requirement and course attendance*. Thus, it was not the prospect of a management position or promotion that they were interested in, but the credits required for the renewal of their teaching licence or promotion to a higher grade as a teacher. One respondent honestly explained:

> I heard about the education management training from a friend and my interest was to gain license credits. I talked to my husband, and he agreed. He also said that if nothing it will help for your licence. (SP10)

The training requirement link to licence credits has a happy consequence insofar as it positioned many women *at the threshold of a management career* who might not have otherwise considered such a step.

Yet another motivator was uncovered in the *fundamental need for employment*, via the path of least resistance. One respondent admitted that the key incentive in deciding to be a school principal was the very basic need of '*finding a job*'. Odd though it seemed, it was easier, especially for certain academic subjects, to find a job as a school director than as teacher. This was the case, in particular when the teachers had to quit their job to become school principals.

Another important finding identified the *benign role of husbands*. In some cases, it was the husband who encouraged and persuaded respondents to attend the training or to work on their professional development. For example, one said:

> My husband pushed me to participate in the training because he thought that it would help me to find a job. Even when I was studying and I interrupted it because of children, it was my husband who persuaded me to continue. I was baking and he came and took my hand and sent me to the exam because I did not want to, I said no. Thus, I began my studies in the low cycle education... and later the training..thanks to him. (P10)

Not only husbands were found to influence career choices. On some occasions, having *a female trainer helped to increase the number of female candidates* for education management training. One of the school principals was a trainer and as a woman she encouraged female teachers to attend the training:

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Before I was working as a trainer, in education management training, the participants were mostly men. But after me and another colleague became trainers. The number of women started to increase…and even the number of female trainers…we used to talk to teachers and encourage them to participate in the training and what was more important was that eventually most of the trainers were women…I believe this has had the effect that more women started to attend the training...in this way we have played a small role in attracting the candidates…and I can say that women were more prepared than men during in training. (P11)

As in other areas of professional life, this vital influence also shows the importance of having *role models such as trainers* that help to spur and incentivize women in their career development and recognise their potential. Researchers have found ample evidence of this potent force in human resource management, stating that 'having a role model will increase their desire to become managers' (Vinnicombe et al., 2014). Another researcher echoes this point, finding good evidence that role models 'bring counsel, encouragement and socialization to potential applicants', pointing out that the lack of such female role models diminishes the aspirations of women applicants (Moorosi, 2010)

It is arguable that most potent source of motivation is that *internally sourced drive to improve*. Only a few respondents worked on their professional development as a result of their own decision and they are the ones who were self-motivated and aspired for the leadership position. One of them explained:

'*When KEDP[3] came, I was one of the first to attend leadership training. There was no selection criterion then. From the time I was elected principal, in addition to working with the construction of the school, I followed all the instructions and regulations from the MEST and researched the MEST website. I read Fullan which motivated me even more in achieving the functionality of the organs in the school and I succeeded. And in 2014 I completed the master. I always try to follow the new developments on education leadership so that I can manage the school better and better' (P1).*

This shows that both the inner motivation for personal development and also the support from the husband and both combined serve as a very strong motivator. It is perhaps obvious that

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[3] The Kosovo Education Development Programme that organized Training on Education Management in Kosovo

those women who act out of a personal drive to improve her skills and competencies and seek out career opportunities is better equipped for success to feel satisfied and be competitive with male principals. This is in line with Maslow's (1970) view of motivation as a key factor in professional advancement.

### 5.2.4.4.2 Impact of the training/professional development

When properly designed and effectively delivered, *training can have a dynamic impact of female career paths*. In general, the findings from the interviews with participants revealed that the training for education management or school principal as an obligatory criteria to be a school principal proved to be a source of *incentive and a key to increasing the motivation of women to become school principals*, as well as helping them to perform better during their work. The majority of the respondents state that the training helped either in getting the position of the school principal or in performing the job of the principal. The following statement confirms the importance of the training in the workplace:

> During my term, at the beginning I did not have any training and I learned the processes myself, but when I held the training it helped me a lot to do a better job. (P2)

The findings show that the *training boosted the confidence* of aspiring principals. One of them said that the training made her think that '*now I can be a Principal and I can perform the task*'. In addition, the training gave them an insight into what the school manager's work entails and enriched their experience. One respondent stated:

> The training taught me how to make a development plan, how to set priorities, how to make a good school. There I realized that I can do a good job for the organizational and management aspects.  I was also less stressed at work and at home with my family. (P1)

This statement adds weight to the evidence that shows that training provides school principals with the competencies which could not be acquired in their teaching functions and – of equal importance — increased their confidence.

It also demonstrated that training helped them *better cope with the stress in balancing work and family obligations*, and the increased burdens. This is important. According to Karamanidou and Bush (2017), those principals that lacked training and preparation tend to

'feel overwhelmed by the role'. The importance of training in facilitating the fulfilment of obligations and balancing family responsibilities with work supported is evidenced by the research of Coleman (2020). It is claimed that by taking part in specialist seminars women principals are empowered to maintain a healthy work/life balance, thereby improving their professional development. Moreover, training also served as an incentive for those who did not aspire to the principalship prior to the course. It increased the confidence of women that they can do the job of a school principal and helped to take the decision to apply for this position:

> What was important was that this training made me realize that I can do the job of principal even though that was not my intention. I realised that I could do it. The training courses were very good. It was in fact the training that gave me the idea of becoming a principal. (P6)

Although not a total panacea for underprivileged female candidates, the findings point to solid advantages that *professional development/training* brings, helping to *empower women and redress the imbalance of gender opportunities*. Although not completely effective, the study found that the provision of quality training and professional development has *helped individual women overcome poor self-confidence*. It increased the confidence of women that they can do the job of a school principal and helped them to take the decision to apply for this position. These findings confirm some studies (Coleman, 2020; Karamanidou & Bush, 2017) that have been done on the importance of training and professional development, emphasizing that professional development has a very positive impact on principals and especially female principals. All the respondents have confirmed this conclusion in one way or another.

### 5.2.5 Achieving the Status of Principal – Challenges and Incentives

The first two parts of the study examined the management path of the sample principals from the time and circumstances that led them to their decision to become a school principal, onwards to their preparation to become the principal and the process of their application and recruitment. In both these parts the challenges along this journey were explored, as well as the incentives that propelled them toward the status of principals. At this juncture (as shown in Figure 12), the study looks at the perceptions of the women principals from the moment they started work as a principal and the challenges at both the personal and institutional levels, and also the social factors that impacted the start of their work as principals or later in their career. It also examines their perceptions of the influencing factors that have helped them at this stage.
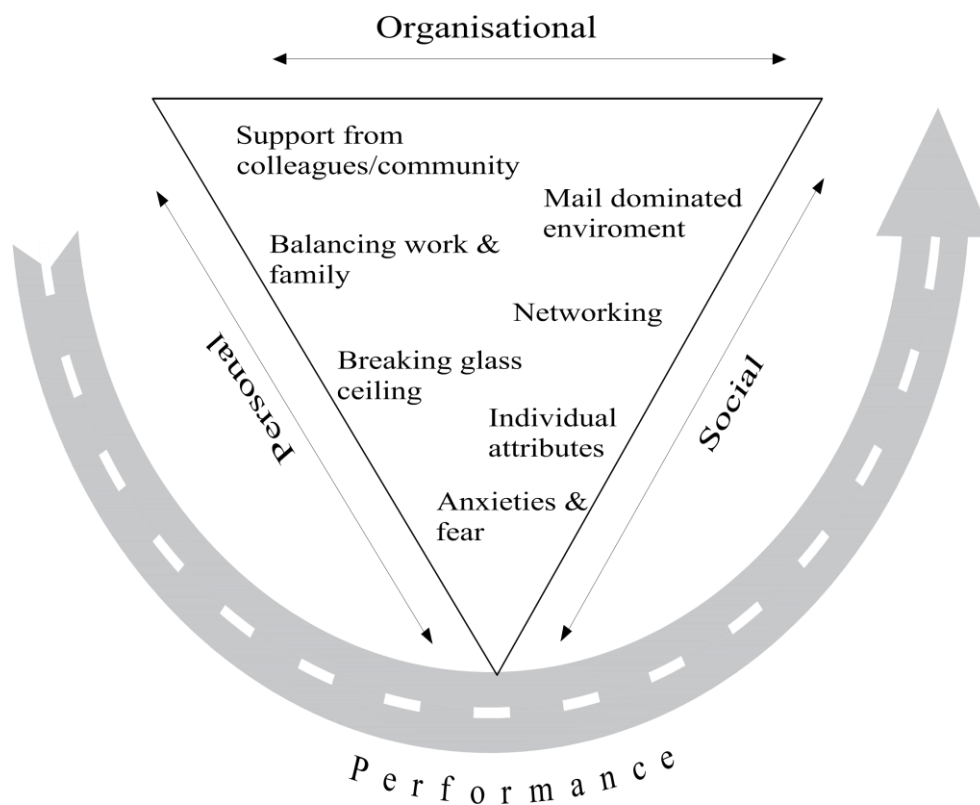
**Figure 12:** Achieving the Status of Principal

As shown in Figure 14, this part of the study seeks to reveal some of those circumstances that have influenced their performance as principals, either positively or negatively, such as family, colleagues, and the community's support or lack thereof and how they overcame and dealt with those challenges. In addition, the study reveals the challenge of balancing wok and family obligations, the importance of networking and the individual attributes that characterise women principals during their work as principals.

### 5.2.5.1 Dealing with initial anxieties and fears

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the study revealed that the women faced *anxieties and fears* when they commenced work as a school principal. Many participants admitted to having a difficult time when they started their work as a school principal. They honestly admitted that they did not sleep all night before they started work, worried about whether colleagues would welcome them.

> Before I went to work the first day as a school principal, I could not sleep all night…I was thinking can I do it, how will I come in front of colleagues…a lot of doubts. (SP1)

Some talked about being anxious about how they were going to be welcomed, or how they are going to perform, or whether they would be up to the task, or fears about the reaction of work colleagues or the community. According to some of them, after they decided to become a school principal, they found the beginning very difficult and *did not consider themselves sufficiently prepared for the job*. There were cases when the principals even regretted taking the position:

> It was very difficult and often I went home crying and telling my husband 'See what you did to me. You pushed me into this' …and then he would try to calm me down…his support was crucial. (SP10)

In the background to this statement is the presence of the respondent's husband and her perception of his critical role at this stage. This resonates strongly in other responses, in which it is made clear that women who make the decision to apply for the position of school principal *feel enabled and strengthened by a prior knowledge that they will have the support of their husband and wider family*. According to Arar and Oplatka (2015) such support is important in helping women to cope with the inevitable anxieties and deal with pressures of being a woman in education management. Moreover, Arar's later research in 2019 found that the inception stage for women on the principal career path is greatly influenced by cultural forces, particularly those characterised by traditional and conservative values.

### 5.2.5.2 Male dominated environment
#### 5.2.5.2.1  The opposing and dissenting approach of colleagues and the community
According to some of the interviewed principals, at the beginning of their career as principal, the first challenge they faced was the *opposing and dissenting approach of colleagues and the community,* especially in rural areas. The resistance from the colleagues was presented in different ways.  According to respondents, there have been cases in which male colleagues have expressed openly the opinion that they cannot accept a woman as their principal. One of the respondents described the alarming and distressing experience at the start of her work as a principal in which she was met by a rejection from work colleagues:

> In the first term, when I started working, a colleague came to the office and it was just a kind of verbal attack 'I know you are a very good teacher and a very good person, but I do not want a woman to lead me in this school, I cannot be led by a woman.  (SP5)

This statement demonstrates a sadly true example of the challenges women face in their work as principals. This is due to a bad stereotype and low expectations about women's roles in society.

This is a result of an *adverse stereotype and low expectations* about women's roles in society. According to this prevailing attitude, the principal can only be a man thereby excluding a woman from this position. Irrational stereotypes about women's role in society and in professional life have been active and potent factors in the minds of colleagues and the community. This also has to do with the way the organisational culture has a great impact on aspiring and performing principals. It is shown that schools can be overly *male-dominated environments*, wherein *direct insubordination* can make – in some cases — the work of the women principal very difficult (O'Brien and Rickne, 2016).

Sometime the resistance was not expressed directly but, as seen in the statement below, by trying to ignore her or make the work difficult. One of the respondents described the first day she started to work in the position of school principal:

> I remember the first day when I entered the hall no colleague was waiting for me, and everyone entered the class ahead of time just to avoid me. So, I went to each class and introduced myself to my colleagues in front of the students. And they realized that I would not back down. (P5)

This example showed that the colleagues tried to avoid the principal by giving the message that she is not wanted, but at the same time, it is also a laudable example of a woman who is *determined not to be blocked by irrational prejudice, and unyielding to the unlawful pressure* by the society.

The sheer depth of resentment of male principals replaced by female successors was evidenced, in some cases, by their *childish removal of computer records and other data*. Previous principals *acted spitefully* by doing everything to make the work of a female successor impossible.

> When I started, I had nothing. The former principal deleted all the data on the computer so that I could not find any material. No proof. I had to start from the beginning all over and only with the help of other principals of other schools, I re-created the system. (SP5)

Another challenge reported by one of the participants was the pressure that was exerted by colleagues who deliberately and maliciously spread rumours about the new *principal's moral behaviour* in an effort to discredit her.:

> The first day I came to the school to start my work as principal, they told me, you have two months to survive. Then they started with pressure — how I was dressed, short skirt, who came into the office with me, what they were doing inside. In this school I have my husband's family and I knew that all this rumour went back to my husband, and I can say that 70% was negative. They were just waiting to find out something dirty about me…to blemish my reputation. (P5)

Another respondent explained that whenever she had parties or guests, she always left the door of the office open so as to *obviate opportunities for malicious gossip and rumours* based on malintent. This behaviour occupies an extreme position in the spectrum of gender bias and has the potential to not only defeat the aim of the law but cause grave harm to the confidence and mental well-being of women in management positions. Heilman (2012) observes how such malicious behaviour is often rooted in the perception that women who are successful in a work function that is characterised as 'male' violate a normative social axiom, such that warrants punishment and disapproval.

Sometimes, the opposition was expressed rather indirectly. One of the principals explained that when she started work, she was treated with *mistrust* by her colleagues. She had to work hard to convince them that she could do the job:

> In our society, they do not believe that a woman can do this job properly. At the beginning, my colleagues welcomed me, but with some hesitations. In every activity or problem some showed their disagreement or hinted that they were not convinced. It was that attitude that she is not good, you know. I think that if a male principal had come, they wouldn't behave with such distrust. So, I had to be very careful not to make any mistakes and to do my job properly, otherwise I knew they would immediately react. It is a fact that the new principal does not know everything. But I was under observation and opposition all the time. They tried to make

me look bad in front of the staff and to make them think, see she cannot do this job and if it was the previous principal or any male principal would have done a better job. (P9)

Here, too, in order to prove themselves to their peers and the community, women had to work significantly harder than men. The mistrust in women was articulated in the claim that "*our society does not trust this job to women*". This is emphasised even more in schools in rural areas, where the representation of women is even more problematic. This oppressive psychological dynamic finds support in other research, which reveal an irrational mistrust in female leadership based on unchallenged cultural norms and traditional values (Celikten, 2005; Lumby & Azoala, 2014). Likewise, Limani (2019) found that women in management positions can be the object of greater public scrutiny and almost stigmatised, as a result of beliefs driven by an untested assumption that that they are unfit or unsuitable for leadership functions. As a result of this scrutiny, women are forced to run twice as hard and invest more effort in achieving recognition of their competence as mangers (Murakami et al., 2018).

Such opposition can induce real confrontation. Sometimes female principals encountered *a power struggle*, and this tended to be more prevalent in urban schools. In this scenario, it was not about opposition to a woman taking the principal's function in a school, but the struggle for managerial positions and of course gender was used and abused as a factor in that fight. Some of the respondents mentioned *the lack of support, or even a kind of jealousy on the part of female colleagues*. Perhaps ironically, some found more support from male colleagues than female ones:

> The moment I was selected, the behaviour of my colleagues changed, but especially I noticed a kind of jealousy among the women, even though none of them had applied or expressed any interest in the position beforehand. It was like a clan was created — a group of women against me. (P10)

In some cases, the power dynamic and resultant collision of expectations and aspirations, can result in female mangers adopting counter-intuitive defence strategies. For example, Derks et al. (2016) some women who sought success in a traditionally male dominated role have the tendency to somehow create a distance from their female colleagues. This workplace phenomenon is known as the 'queen bee phenomenon', since it echoes the separation of status and function of the queen bee in a hive, in which all other females are the workers.

**5.2.5.2.2 The opposing and dissenting approach of the community**

The respondents faced challenges also from the *wider community, predominantly men of the community*.  One of the participants explained the significant resistance she faced when she started her work and the way the community would not accept her because she was a woman:

> When I went to school on my first day, three men were trying to block me from entering the principal's office.  I managed to enter later but they did everything possible to make me give up.  They would write on the school walls 'you don't belong here…you are a whore…you cannot educate our children'. They broke into my office several times, taking the material and the books and throwing them in the mud.  Finally, after a long battle, I had students on my side and some parents started to change their approach and I was allowed to work in peace…I did not give in. (SP7)

This case shows the most extreme examples of obstructive, abusive and patently unlawful behaviour by males who sought to make known their opposition to women in education management. The strength of feeling and utter disregard for the law stems from the deeply entrenched value system of a traditional and conservative culture, developed over centuries of patriarchal hegemony in Kosovo. Its durability and resistance to change remain highly controversial in popular politics.

This wall of traditional prejudice was voiced by the experiences of another respondent:

> When I applied, I already expected that there would be some resistance from the village.  So, after I was appointed, I was very anxious…how they have accepted the information that a woman would become a principal? They had never had a woman, not only the village but in the whole Municipality. I have to admit, I was very anxious about how the village would accept me, that is, the men, because women never used to come to school. I was one of the most prejudiced women in this area. You cannot imagine the lobbying of the men of the village, together with the previous principal and his deputy. They had done everything possible, not leaving a stone unturned, as the expression is, to try and prevent my appointment but they did not succeed. (P3)

The above experiences, traumatic and alarming, reveal a prejudiced attitude among men that is multi-dimensional. Firstly, it feeds off and reinforces a cluster of beliefs about women in the

social order, as secondary and submissive and unsuitable as decision-makers. Secondly, it imbues and fuels an anxiety among those women who aspire to career opportunities monopolised by men, fearing that the wider community refuse to accept a woman as a school principal since it is a 'man's job'. Lastly, the pervasiveness of the belief system that underpins this prejudice gains force and some direction at the political level, particularly in local political structures.

This situation shows how much the position of the women was challenging and what they had to fight. This prejudice dynamic is not unique to Kosovo. Arar and Shapira (2016) revealed in their study other contexts that create a nexus of traditional values and conservative beliefs that actively frustrate female career aspirations and generate structural elements within school organisations that work against women. Lazarević and Tadić (2021) published research on the experiences in the western Balkans, including Kosovo, that found that gender stereotyping lay deep within the social framework, sustaining and driving numerous forms of discrimination and empowering the forces that subordinate women. Religion also has a role in the nexus of prejudice. The interviews revealed the important influence of religion, which, in combination with gender bias made it extremely difficult for a woman to perform the principal's work. One of the school principals explained that the objection from the community consisted in her being a woman and belonging to a different religion from that of the village: 'When I was appointed, they said, we don't want a Catholic woman to be our school principal' (P2). Given the entrenched and pervasive nature of these belief systems within societies, women who aspire to cross the barriers of prejudice require considerable personal courage, mental toughness and unswerving determination.

The findings from the interviewed principals are echoed by other research into the description of the 'glass window' as a 'struggle against downright prejudicial treatment' (Carli & Eagly, 2016). They show that women are challenged with a higher resistance than men when they work as school principal. A large proportion of research into managerial roles and related stereotypes has resulted in a global phenomenon that is summarized in the view "when you think of a manager, think of a man" (Schein et al., 1996). Such a stereotype has long closed the door on women and probably makes it one of the strongest obstacles to governance, in all countries, regardless of their level of development. In England, a developed country, both genders have reported discriminatory attitudes from their supervisors, colleagues and even parents and pupils (Fuller, 2014).

The findings also show that older women principals have faced more discrimination than novice principals. This is also an indicator that the Kosovo society has begun to change. Also, the rural school principals have experienced more discrimination than those from urban schools. But sometimes discrimination and stereotyping in society have proved to be incentives for some of the principals, leading them to realize that gender is not an indicator of a good performance as a school principal. In addition, discrimination has influenced women in some contexts to show a greater commitment to work, revealing that discrimination can become a powerful impetus for "someone who wishes to defy cultural norms" (Kapamarindou & Bush, 2017).

The experiences of respondents pointed to the critical role of politics, particularly at the local level, as a force for either reinforcing or breaking down the nexus of prejudice. The findings show that the *support from Municipal authorities* proved to be highly effective in countering hardened gender bias in rural settings in particular in the beginning of their job as school principal and acted to intervene and support women when facing challenges with colleagues and communities.  Sometimes the intervention of Municipal authorities was needed to be able to start the work. The following example shows that the appointed principal had to call the Municipal authorities to be able to start her work:

> When I was appointed by the Municipal authority, the village had a meeting about the fact that a woman, not from their village would manage their school.  Of course, the meeting was held only with men and I was not invited. The head of the village was more neutral and claimed that this was the decision of the Ministry, but there were some families that were very much against and the decision was made not to allow me to assume my job. I had to inform the Municipal authorities who came and started to have meetings with the heads of the village and managed to get their approval".  (SP2)

Another respondent had a similar challenge:

> It was difficult when I started to work. Men waged a war against me. This war was done by blocking my access to school. I had to wait one week to be given the key of the office, since they wouldn't allow me. I knew that the school secretary and the former principal were against me, and they influenced the others as well. He did not apply again because he did not have

qualifications…but still he did not hand over the task. The Municipal Education Directorate (MED) authorities had to intervene before he accepted the handover. (P5)

These cases show again challenges women had to face against the old mentality of men. Although institutional support cannot remedy or change the nexus of prejudice in the wider society, the study found that it can and does ease the pathway of women who enter management positions and have to confront behaviour borne of that prejudice. That support is most important in the performance stage, as newly appointed women have to establish themselves and demonstrate that they can manage a school, regardless of the doubts and opposition of staff and the community. The forward development of women is restrained by an absence of support (Showunmi et al., 2015), an issue often raised in interview by respondents.

### 5.2.5.3 Support from the colleagues and community – changing the mindset

Not all respondents met with negative attitudes and behaviours from colleagues and community. On the contrary, some encountered help and assistance in their work, especially in the beginning. In the context of Kosovo, support from colleagues and community is a very important feature for women principals and the findings show that this assistance can be crucial. From the freely articulated experiences of the principals, evidence emerged that some enjoyed community support from the beginning of their work and that support was constantly renewed thanks to their commitment and hard work: For example, one respondent spoke enthusiastically about the support of colleagues and community members:

> I work and cooperate with my colleagues every day. And if I didn't get along well with them and if I didn't have their support not only for the learning process but also for any other project or activity, I could not have done it myself. (P2)

Another one explained how the community support helped her in her work as principal:

> I have been a school principal since 2000 and I am honoured and respected in this position. I have never lacked help and support from students, teachers and especially from the community. Therefore, they have always helped me and have backed me, inspired my sense of responsibility and…the support they have given me has obliged me to act in a more responsible way at work with the children. (P2)

While the above examples suggest that assistance can be given unconditionally, in other cases the supportive behaviour results from perceptions of good performance by the newly appointed principal. One respondent explained how her good performance resulted in a greater support of the community:

> Although, the village was not very supportive when I started my work as principal, when the second term was announced again, the village changed the attitude and supported me a lot. A reference was needed, and the parents' council went to the Municipality themselves because they would not accept anyone else. I was surprised myself when I read the positive reference. (SP6)

These statements show also how the good performance of a female principal has changed the mindset of the wider community even where people had misgivings and doubts about the appointment. This is echoed in the research on how women are transformative and more engaged in rewarding behaviours (Eagly and Carli (2003).

As with male counterparts, there is often a positive feedback loop of good performance and community support, building the confidence and dedication of female principals. The study found broader indications of a positive and fruitful dynamic interaction between a committed school principal and the community that they serve through education. The findings suggest that the commitment of a female school principal can be rewarded with changes of attitude toward women in management positions in a society that is otherwise characterised by traditional values. One respondent explained how her work and commitment was appreciated by the community: "For the work I did, I had the gratitude of the community ...they said we do not want another Principal, and this motivated me even more ... to work even harder and to be in their service" *(SP7).*

Interestingly, the findings revealed that in addition to the active support from the community, respondents also indicated the way they encouraged cooperation with the community as a management strategy:

> From the beginning, I involved the community a lot and I have sincerely asked them for support in working with students. For some time, we have been united in a common consensus, that the school is our home. Many projects and activities have been done in collaboration with the wider

community, without any prejudice, and in a brief period of time, the community environment has been transformed. The school and its facilities are at the service firstly of the students but also for the benefit of the community. (SP9)

The same message can be read in the comments of another respondent who explained how, despite the difficulty, she managed to gain the respect of the family and community with her commitment:

> I was a mother, with little children. But the ambition to do something in that village gained the general approval. The moment I gained approval, I was convinced that the vast mass of the village were behind me. They waited a lot from me, and this was a great help — I also took courage from this since I was a principal who took the school from nothing and gained the conviction of the community, the villagers. (SP4)

These positive experiences of community support indicate that the broader nexus of prejudice in Kosovo society is neither insuperable nor permanent. It can be overcome and dissolved and replaced by positive values and attitudes, such that recognise the way women contribute a performance that is equal to male colleagues and complimentary in terms of female qualities. The research found evidence of an 'added extra' that women bring to the role. Throughout the many extended interviews, it became clear that the female principals encouraged community cooperation and active engagement, especially of mothers, which was a novelty until then.

> I have meetings with parents. It was clear that the meeting with the fathers did not work. So, I decided to call the mothers and sixty-seven mothers came. Then the approach started to change, and since I was a trainer, I knew how things should be developed. I started by providing them with working materials for the teachers, guiding them on how to work. A different atmosphere began. The children also felt differently, as I had meetings with the students of civic education classes, where we had debates about different issues, and this impressed the parents and especially the mothers. I called foreign organizations, especially the Red Cross and held additional trainings with ninth grade girls on various topics such as personal hygiene, sexual issues, drugs, trafficking, etc. (SP5)

These initiatives allowed the women to place themselves ahead of the less imaginative or industrious male principals that they replaced. This points to an interesting dynamic in which female mangers *are driven by a greater desire to succeed as a way of overcoming prejudice*,

in contrast to male principals who felt that they had no need to win approval after their appointment.

Thus, there is evidence that the presence of female principals triggers a new relationship with the community that is served by the school. Within this new relationship with the community the study found that female principals have positively influenced *the involvement of mothers:*

> The village where I work is very religious...and the school had become a place for teachers and students only...but not the community. There was a very little cooperation with the community. So, when I started, for the first time I held a meeting with the community, with parents. Next thing I did was to insist on meeting with mothers…because fathers were at work and mothers were always available and cared more for children. At first, they were very hesitant because they thought that the school was a place only for men…and it was obvious that they had never before been in the school building before. (SP1)

Another one mentioned: "Since mothers started to come, I could see the difference, at least with some students.  Their results had improved" (SP10). This points to another aspect of the 'added extra' that a female principal brings, namely that her presence can radically alter the parent/teacher relationship and broaden the role of women in their child's education.

This is a very important finding which throws light on an otherwise thinly understood relationship between gender diversity in education management and the depth of community involvement in the education process. This must warrant further investigation in Kosovo's education system. Some writers have drawn attention to the positive outputs that can come from parental involvement in child development, at the emotional, social, and academic aspects (Chen & Hauser, 2019). Authors point to some pragmatic reasons for the greater involvement of mothers. This has been an area of weakness in Kosovo, due to the way in which mothers were traditionally excluded from school meetings and parent/teacher interaction. Moon and Ivins (2004) found that fathers tend to be less able to commit time and energy to teacher and school interaction as a result of work patterns and Hernawati et al. (2021) found that mothers demonstrate strong motivational beliefs and a willing teacher/parent interaction and involvement.

*5.2.5.4 Balancing work and family obligations*

In a traditional society, one in which women have a pre-determined and limiting function within the family as house-keeper and primary parent, the scope for a female professional career is contingent on interrupting that domestic paradigm. During the interviews with participants, balancing work and family obligations emerged as one of the main challenges for most principals in their career development, in particular during the performance phase. With one exception, all respondents are married and during their work as principals, most of them said that their workload had increased.

> In the beginning, it was very difficult for me…the working hours were longer, and I still had to do everything when I went back home. I understand why women hesitate. It is easier for men… they don't have to worry about the time afterwork". (SP12)

Another respondent said: 'All the absences that the male principal makes in the family are filled by the wife. No man fills the woman's gaps. I have to reach all ends". (SP10)

These comments reveal a sense of frustration and exasperation in the face of the unyielding domestic paradigm that sees women hugely disadvantaged in the work/family balance. In spite of all the progress that has been made in the gender equity in Kosovo, women remain burdened with the bulk of domestic responsibilities regardless of their professional work demands. This creates a constant dilemma of deciding which should suffer more, a career or family/parental commitment. The home responsibilities also cause stress to those who want to succeed as good managers. Whereas for men, this career path is easier since they can dedicate themselves to work and not be concerned with caring for children and family demands and responsibilities (Acker, 2009).

The findings reveal that sometimes women themselves believe that the role of the mother is considered normal for women, and it is not something men can do. One respondent stated:

> I do not believe that any man would stay at home and take care of the children while his wife is at work. Men find it difficult to deal with children. We have the strongest nerves to deal with children. We were born for that. (SP7)

This statement reveals a psychology of acceptance of the traditional gender paradigm, whereby women simply accept their lot in life. It is a reminder that not all women in professional life accept the values that are more common in other parts of Europe and north America: namely, that the gender paradigm of woman as mother and home maker is not a matter of DNA but social structuring. The statements of the participants concur with other studies that claim that women are assisted in their career development when domestic chores and family are shared equitably (Turner et al., 2013), and where women are shown methods of coping with these competing demands (Acker & Armenti, 2004).

This acceptance of the traditional gender paradigm was voiced by a participant who pointed out that women are more dedicated to the role of raising and educating their children and therefore give priority to family than career:

> Young teachers, I think, want to be dedicated as a mother to raise and educate and dedicate themselves to children, which is to commit to the role of mother. And they do not see the way to do both… Albanian mothers are very dedicated. (SP2)

These findings reveal a mixed picture of the popular values and beliefs among professional women in Kosovo: while some struggle against the traditional gender paradigm, others readily accept or even embrace it as something valuable to personal and social happiness and fulfilment. Should we simply accept that reality as a sign of personal freedom of choice? Some studies see the overwhelming burden of domestic responsibilities by women as not only a negative outcome for professional women but also society (Karamanidou & Bush, 2017).

Yet another factor in the balance of family and work commitments is the personal values of each individual. Each must decide the degree of weight and commitment they give to their career, against the value of family life and motherhood. Some participants mentioned that they consider family more important than the job of a school principal, at least while the children are younger and the obligations as a mother are higher. This is also linked to the situation in their family, whether they have somebody to look after their children while working, due to longer working hours.

As found in the interviews, the burden of having dual responsibilities for women is often underestimated, especially for those principals with young children. Given that the obligations

for women are higher when their children are younger, the findings reveal that women often can only consider becoming a school principal once their children grow up.

> The time factor for me was the main one… I worked more than eight hours…sometimes even twelve hours…but I had grown up children and I could not do it otherwise… if I had had little ones, I would not be able to do this job ... so women can think about careers only after raising their children. (SP5)

This reality led one participant to conclude that the effort to include more women in education management must focus on older women whose children are grown up:

> It should be women who have the skills and grown-up children...because they are more committed at school and have less obligations at home…younger women get pregnant, have more family obligations and give priority to family not leadership' (SP12).

Another one said: 'I would not have taken the job or would have been hesitant if I had small children. (SP1)

For older principals, this challenge becomes easier since their children have grown up. This confirms the statement by Young that career women most often fall into the category of 'late flowering plants' (Young, 1994). While this consequence of matching work with family commitments seems pragmatic, it excludes young female managers unless they are unmarried or do not have children. Acceptance of this result would impoverish the depth and energy of the female contribution to education management in Kosovo. In the same manner, women are assisted in their career advancement by measures that ease the burden of family commitments and where policy design and implementation facilitate workplace flexibility, thereby increasing female representation (Oplatka, 2006).

Not all accepted this pattern though. Against this trend and opinion, two participants became school principals when their children were young, but — as they explained — it took a lot of commitment on their part. According to one of the respondents, women are much more overloaded because of the obligations they have at home:

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Even though I had the support, I still had small children, I slept less…to fulfil all the obligations, so that no one would say that now she became a principal and does not perform duties and obligations as a woman. I woke up much earlier to leave things in order. For example, when I had a child, according to the law, at that time, I had only three months maternity leave, so I had to leave the three-month-old baby at home and that was not easy…only mothers know how difficult it is. (SP6)

This is again related to the social expectations and the traditional mentality that a woman is responsible for the family and is expected to be a good principal as well as a good mother and wife. This burdens women with more responsibilities, and they should commit and make much more efforts than men who find the journey into management easier (Fuller, 2017; Lumby 2014).

When asked how they are coping with home and work obligations, some respondents said that they had the support of their men, although this support was not sufficient to ease the burden of household obligations. One respondent explained:

When I spoke to my husband about becoming a school principal, he was supportive of the idea, but he said he would not do the daily work at home and take care of children. So, I had to think hard about whether I could cope with all responsibilities at home and at school…it was not easy' (SP8).

So, even though they have emphasized that they have the support of men, they have no concrete help in responsibilities at home and this has been confirmed in other studies (Moorosi, 2020). There is an important difference between mere moral support from a partner, and concrete support in domestic chores. As noted in OSCE report, women can have the support of a marital partner, but it often comes in the form of moral rather than concrete support (OSCE, 2018). Other authors observe that too often men fail to help and support their partners, even though they give verbal ascent to a career path (Coleman, 2007). However, the findings show that if a woman does not have the support of her family, especially her husband, the career choice becomes almost impossible.

For a woman to reach the end of her mandate as a school principal she should have strong family support. She wouldn't be able otherwise because of work after hours. Sometimes you

are called after regular working hours, and you have to go to the Municipality Office, and you have a lot of obligations. You cannot destroy a family for a job. (SP9)

The statement "you cannot destroy a family for a job" is an important example of the dilemma women have when deciding to become a school principal. Where women make the difficult choice of combining a demanding professional career and family commitments, there can be an added psychological burden. Interviews revealed that some of the participants expressed strong *feelings of guilt* about the ramifications of their work as school principals. According to some respondents this is an important psychological price to pay for women who decide to pursue the onerous and time-consuming career of a school principal. Often unspoken, many have feelings of guilt about the price paid by those closest and dearest to them – their family. This should not be underestimated in a society that still values the family as a core platform of society. One of the participants stated:

> This has been a challenging period for me. My mother-in-law helped me to take care of the children and my husband was at work, but I could not provide the children with proper care at this time, and I still feel bad about it when I remember that time. (SP10)

Another respondent said:

> Like all working mothers, I have my own inner battle in the desire to fulfil my professional goals and being a "good mother" — a fight to achieve a balance between work and private life. A struggle which cannot end because the equilibrium we intend to achieve is just a myth. We cannot share time proportionately between work and family. (SP8)

According to the respondents, accepting the job of a school principal with longer working hours would be seen as neglecting the role of the mother:

> "It is not rare for employed mothers, and in particular those that have ambition and career aims, to be labelled as bad mothers who deviate from their maternal and familial role. (SP6)

This psychological burden and risk of being labelled as a poor mother is a price that male counterparts rarely experience. As Coleman (2007) states, *the feelings of guilt* accompany role conflicts in the workplace: namely, that women will not fulfil all their obligations and responsibilities well. This generates guilt in particular with some respondents who have started

working as a principal with young children. In order to fulfil their responsibilities at school and to be accepted as capable of doing the job as a principal, they have had to give up caring for children and this induces a sense of guilt (Moorosi, 2010). This consequence can only be avoided or at least made more tolerable if a female principal has the assured and concrete support of her family. *The support from family* is a huge facilitator for women in their management route. This support of family members such as husband or mother or mother-in-law and the possible access to a kindergarten acts as an incentive in some cases, easing the balance of responsibilities of family and work. In particular, the role of the husband is crucial in this aspect.

The role of a supportive husband in the background was not always obvious across the three categories of respondents (novice, mid-experienced and senior), but the third category found greater support, suggesting that attitudes are changing and that husbands have begun to be more cooperative and decisions are made jointly. This is the case more among younger respondents and those in urban areas in which men accept their share of parenting responsibilities and domestic chores. Younger respondents found that the real support of a husband goes further than just agreeing to her decision to work as a principal. One of the school principals said:

> I guess I am lucky with my husband because he doesn't mind looking after the children when I am at work. He has a part-time job and he has more time in the house and he even prepares food for them. I believe that mentality has started to change and both parents share their obligations. (SP12)

This is an important indicator that the mindset in Kosovo society has started to change and that men don't see women as the sole carer in the house. Oplatka and Lapidot (2018) found that the active and concrete support of a marital partner and family, in addition to moral encouragement, proved a pivotal factor in the coping strategy of female principals, helping them avoid physical exhaustion and mental burnout.

If such active support became more widespread, it would help a lot in giving women more space for their career development. In some cases, this approach is facilitated by having somebody who they pay to do domestic work while they are at school. Of course, this has significant financial implications, and many families cannot afford to have external help. The

lack of a nursery, especially in rural areas, is seen as an obvious obstacle that needs to be addressed by Municipalities. The representative of an NGO said:

> Kosovar mothers, in addition to having to fight the patriarchal concepts of society in a decision to start or continue a career, must also fight for a place in the Kindergarten. One of the decisive factors that would facilitate access to the labour market is undoubtedly access to children's care centres, providing quality care and safety at reasonable prices. In our Municipality it is easier to register your child in the faculty than to find a place in a public Kintergarten. (P15)

This is also confirmed by the study which states that a better care infrastructure in Kosovo would have a direct positive impact on women's labour force participation – something that needs to be addressed by the Kosovo institutions (Färnsveden et al., 2014).

### 5.2.5.5 Need for networking

The ability to build a network of professional relationships — as a dynamic way of workplace learning, development and confidence-building – is another important dimension of success for newly appointed school principals. Respondents mentioned not only the importance of *networking,* but also the difficulties women encountered with it. The findings revealed that for women in Kosovo, it is more difficult to socialise with other men not only because of the men themselves who would make the women not welcome but also the surroundings. One respondent said:

> One of the difficulties that female principals encounter is that a lot of work, obtaining information about different opportunities, projects, etc., are taken through meetings, café bars, where female principals are not usually part of. It has also been a challenge for me that I have never been to a cafe. Even though my husband often told me to go. (SP10)

Being an effective manger means being in touch with the latest developments in education science, legislation, best practice and – of course – the popular sentiments and expectations of the school community and parents. That is why it is important for women to be effective in networking, and tapping into sources of useful information. But the statement above shows that networking for women principals is quite difficult in Kosovo.

As noted earlier, the predominance of the traditional gender paradigm in Kosovo often results in the attitude that a woman who forms relationships with other men and in a purely

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professional context, are of dubious morality or unfaithful to their husband. This attitude is often malicious in both intent and effect. For example, one respondent reported that networking is overly difficult as a result of prejudices of the society:

> It is about the environment, the area where you live, because sometimes as a principal you go out and drink coffee with a colleague or you have to go to a training course or meetings. For a while I was the only woman in meetings and there were malicious rumours about the way my husband let me go alone and be among men. (SP5)

As noted by Limani (2019) such malign attitudes can be reinforced by a gender topography – i.e. men tend to meet and make decisions in places or events that *de facto* preclude women (such as cafes, bars and other 'male only' venues). Those women who are brave enough to cross the line into these male domains attract the ire or disapproval of the wider public, on the basis that such women are immoral or lascivious (Limani, 2019).

Where this attitude prevails, women principals have to 'be careful' not to give an opportunity to others to speak ill about her and impugning her moral integrity. As a result they will either hesitate or avoid engaging in such meetings and pay the price of not accessing useful information and not forming constructive professional relationships with colleagues and stakeholders. In this way they feel more isolated in comparison to men and they feel excluded from the group as men prefer to have their 'old boy's club' and women do not feel part of that. As Coleman (2007) astutely reminds us, 'old-boys clubs' are a potent barrier that women principals inevitably have to deal with in their career paths. However, younger women principals who live and work in urban areas find it easier to access the network than in rural areas.

There are opportunities that fall outside such gender topography, most notably training venues. *Training courses* were perceived by respondents as good opportunities for networking especially for those who are just starting to work as female principals. As one respondent said:

> I found the training useful. I learned a lot during the training by listening to other experiences and also, I met a lot of people, many for them already principals and we kept that connection even afterwards. (SP9)

There is support in the literature for the critical role of networking in general and training as an effective pathway to networking. Bush (2018) claims that leadership learning is rendered most effective by encouraging networking, while Coleman (2020) found evidence to support the conclusion that networking plays a fundamental role in the preparation of women principals. Training courses have also provided the candidates with opportunities to meet colleagues and strengthen the network and exchange experiences and new ideas about school management. Karamanidou and Bush (2017) provide interesting findings that support the conclusion that a training course gives trainees the possibility to connect and create networks with other school principals whereby they can share their experience and use this shared experience and successfully transfer it to problems in the workplace.

### 5.2.5.6 Individual Attributes of women school principals and their leadership style

Often the discussion of gender equality in education management builds upon an assumption that success is achieved once women arrive at a level of management competence that is measured in the same terms as that of male managers. In other words, there can be an unvoiced assumption that the qualities of a good manager are generic and based on studies of the experiences of male mangers. This of course overlooks the possibility that women bring to management qualities and attributes that are distinctly female or simply new.

The interviews revealed various individual attributes that women principals have shown during their management route, in particular during their performance phase. *Dedication and commitment* are revealed as important attributes of women principals.  The following statement of one of the respondents shows her dedication to her work:

> In my life, since I have been working for almost 40 years, I have never taken medical leave, never ever...never…I have worked in private houses during the war…in bad conditions…with doors or without doors…with windows or without windows…and never stopped. Especially in Fushë Kosovë we had problems with Serbian authorities. Every week our windows were broken, and we had to use cardboard. Then they used the school as a toilet on purpose. Every Monday, I had to clean the school once and then start teaching. Time for me was sacred…I tell my colleagues to work with dedication as much as you can…I am the first to enter the school and the last one to leave the school…I collect the garbage…I planted the flowers in the yard myself...therefore I gained respect…they did not react when I asked them to do something, and my work has influenced others to come and help. (SP2)

These experiences reveal a laudable degree of commitment to the work of principal, often going beyond the terms of reference in her job description. They result not only in an improved learning environment for students, but also a radically different appraisal of what it is to be a school manager.

Another participant explained how she changed the work culture in her school by putting herself forward as an example:

> Our school has been at an average level for work and performance, so I cannot say that it didn't work before, but there were shortcomings. For example, at the last hour, the vast majority of teachers left the class. Upon my arrival as principal, not a single hour was left without teaching provision. But of course, in the beginning, it was met with resistance because it meant more work and they were saying she just wanted to show off. How did I convince them? I came first and left the last and was present everywhere in the school, not outside the cafe or just locked in the office. I stood in the hallway, and I knew every class and where the teachers were. I knew each student and where he or she was. So, I started with myself and showed that I respected the schedule and then they could not say no to me. In this way, I was a role model with my work and then I asked others. (SP4)

In addition, *an emphasis on standards and discipline*, a notable attribute of women principals is not necessarily a road to being popular, particularly in an education establishment. Respondents found that their commitment to improve the school and its performance through stricter rules, made them unpopular:

> Sometimes, colleagues, do not like women principals because they are more demanding...and more strict and that means that other teachers cannot skip classes or avoid their responsibility' (SP4)

Another one said:

> Women principals demand more work and are more committed... male principals, some of them, do not stay in school ... they just drink coffee outside with their mates…I try to keep my school very clean, it smells of perfume…and I do not allow anybody without permission inside… I have very strict rule. (SP2)

These statements are most revealing of an attitude that is distinctly female. Women principals tend to transfer the 'home maker qualities' from the home to the workplace, thereby taking pride in the physical environment of the school as well as the education process that occurs within the school.

Although not a distinctly female attribute, *persistence* emerged as a common attitude among respondents. The MED representative commented that women principals are more persistent in getting projects completed and in obtaining additional support for the school:

> I remember one of the women principals when she started to work, she started to win grants and did the school restoration ... she was very persistent and when she came to the office she did not leave until her request was fulfilled ...all have been persistent…have fought with all their powers to get the budget and make the difference in their school. (MED)

This tenacity in seeing a job through to its conclusion is perhaps best understood as being linked to the very same attribute of maternal 'home maker', by not only desiring to improve the physical environment of the school but getting it done.

As in neighbouring states, corruption remains a considerable challenge to the development of fair and transparent public institutions in Kosovo. Sadly, schools are not immune to the pervasive and corrosive impact of corruption, whether in regard to staff appointments, service contracts or exam results. The respondents were acutely aware of the negative impact on their careers of active corruption. One participant noted that women tended to be less tolerant of corrupt practices:

> Women are more honest, they are more punctual, and they are very regular with the financial aspect. And they are not corrupt.  I for example, I save the school budget, and I know exactly how much I will spend, and everything is transparent. Also, the wealth of the diaspora has increased, they have provided financial support never seen before. They did this because they believed that I did not misuse the money. They said, we trust you. But I did everything in writing, each with a name, the amount and together with the parents' council everything was transparent. With that money, we invested in school. (SP6)

The following statement of the MED representative fully endorses these observations by the respondents:

> Women principals are much less corrupt than men, and they don't misuse the budget. They had challenges managing the budget but we provided training so they are now much better skilled. Women really protect the school property. (MED)

These statements are reassuring, insofar as they offer some hope that women principals have gained the trust of the community to invest more in the school because they are perceived to be non-corrupt. It is interesting that sometimes, in a predominantly corrupt environment, honesty and integrity bring a personal price and make one deeply unpopular with those affected. One of the participants pointed to her honesty as a barrier to her appointment, when she encountered the attitude that "she will not allow us to steal". The report of Riinvest Institute in Kosovo (2017) found data to support the more general conclusion that, on balance, women in decision-making positions tended to be less prone to corrupt practice that male counterparts.

It might be argued that the lower prevalence of corruption among female mangers is linked to a more maternal attitude toward care of the staff, students and their physical environment. The approach of the school principals and the importance of active and *participative communication with the community*, as well as the closeness to students was described as a core attribute of women principals. One respondent claimed:

> In my job, as principal, I see myself as mother to children and a colleague to the staff, with the door open to all at all times. I welcome the students nicely, the staff, the community, and this was seen as a very positive development. In my time, the communication has improved. In the beginning, the parents hesitated to come but then I was the one who would speak to them first, and encourage them to be more open and the relationship has improved a lot. Accessibility for them is very important. In a meeting with parents, I say that the school is yours, we are here for your children and you will find an open door. This was well received. I have managed to return the smile at the school and reduce the violence. (SP9)

Another participant explained how she adopted *a positive and helpful approach*, and eschewed the traditional authoritative attitude toward colleagues:

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If a staff member is late, I sit down with them and try to convince them that this is not right, and it has worked not in an authoritative manner but by convincing them. (SP9)

The findings from the interview reveal that women principals also have a wider *effect on the rights of women and gender equity*. According to one of the principals, she worked and dealt with more activities for the protection of women's rights, by having meetings with them and working with them:

I started to organise meetings with women to eradicate illiteracy because many of the women had never attended school and could not read or write. Then we had education classes with them on hygiene and on marriage …to have the right to choose their husband. (SP2)

The findings revealed a laudable attitude among participants, in their sincere belief that their position as principal was less about status and privilege and more about *responsibility and accountability*. This attitude runs contrary to the erstwhile culture of viewing such a professional role as demanding the respect of citizens because of its perceived status and regardless of the attributes and performance of the post holder. This refreshing change in direction among the women postholders is reflected in the following comments:

The position of principal was not a privilege but a responsibility, therefore we must accept it and understand it that way. We must work in the interest of the children, in the interest of the new generations, in the interest of the future, to do the best possible for them. (SP1)

In fact, that sense of responsibility was expressed as a form of maternal care for some principals. The following remarks suggest an approach that viewed the children in her care as an extended family, for which she demonstrated a maternal care:

Women are devoted mothers. I had cases in my school that when children had wet feet I myself would take out their socks and leave them so that they do not wear wet socks in the classroom. This happens because we have cases when children walk long distances up to 1.5 kilometres, because of a lack of public transport. So, I myself examine their socks or clothes to see if they are wet….so yes, women are more caring and hardworking'. (SP1)

Indeed, the analogy of the mother relationship to her children, took a broader form. The following respondent seemed to view the school building itself as an extension of her own home, allowing her to take pride in its appearance and levels of hygiene and cleanliness:

> When I started as a principal, the school building was not just old but very mismanaged and neglected. In the beginning, we could not make major renovations due to budgets, but I was able to make an impact on cleanliness. So, the first step, I hired a female technical worker knowing that women maintain cleanliness better, are more careful, especially in the toilets, offices, classrooms, the most sensitive places. So, when the evaluation by the regional inspectors for cleanliness started, our school took the first place for cleanliness, order and correctness. This success made me then feel much better. I proved that as a woman. (SP5)

In yet another case, a female school principal related the unfortunate way in which she had transformed the school, only to be replaced by a male counterpart who immediately reversed her emphasis on hygiene and cleanliness. Undeterred and undiminished by the experience, she returned and did it all again, transforming the standards once more, to the benefit of the children and staff:

> The first step, I contacted organizations, donors and former school students. I then published their contributions. The Caritas organisation has helped us a lot and last year the whole school was completely renovated. The walls, the window frames, everything has changed. Each class has two cabinets so that students do not carry all the books due to their weight. Even the schools of the big centres do not have the ones that our school has. Now I have a project for the place of the trees and green area. (SP4)

These personal anecdotes are reinforced by the firm recommendations of the MED representative who emphatically also stated:

> In every educational institution, where the principal has been a woman, there has never been a lack of success, cooperation with parents has always been at the right level, but even intercollegiate relations have always been at a level. Leading women are capable of turning visions into reality. A female principal has a clear vision for the school, she has managerial skills, love of work and a strong will. (MED)

Indeed, the governmental representative stated:

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By including more women in management positions, the school management is more transparent and the communication improves; they are more flexible and have a more attractive approach to staff, parents and children given, since a woman is a mother and understands students better. (GR)

Several respondents overtly spelled out the link between the female touch as a principal and being a loving mother toward students, the parents, the teachers. An important study points to a distinctive leadership style among women as the possible root of the above experiential statements. Shema and Turner (2020) states that the success of women leaders comes not through an aggressive, highly-directive style but, rather, through empathetic leadership with a personal touch and being 'tough' only when the situation demanded.

Developing an appropriate and effective leadership style in a traditionally male dominated and culturally stagnant environment can be a challenge for many women who enter the realm of the school principal. There is an obvious temptation to 'go with the flow' and simply mimic the traditional approaches, which tend to be characteristically male. According to respondents, male principals tend to have a more authoritative approach while female principals tend to be more cooperative. The findings show that women employ *a more democratic and shared leadership style:*

I realized that there is no authoritarian principal anymore, but the principal must be open, cooperative, one that sees the problems, discusses them together with teachers, colleagues, parents. This cooperation and the fact that I did not make divisions among teachers was my success. I did not do favours. (SP8)

Another respondent explained how she tried not to take decisions herself but would always actively consult her colleagues first and parents in the decision-making process:

For everything I first consult with colleagues and the parents' council; in the end I make the decision but always based on consultation. Without imposing an opinion on them, they usually tell me you know better…but I tell them that I want your opinion before I make a decision. (SP12)

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Another principal emphasised the importance of encouraging participation through delegating the tasks:

> As a trainer, I learned the importance of delegating tasks, so I always encourage my fellow teachers to learn to delegate tasks so that delegating the functions of a principal becomes easier. (SP11)

These claims are echoed in the findings of Carli and Eagly, 2016 who state that women are more democratic and less authoritarian in their leadership than men, but also women are more transformative and more engaged in rewarding behaviours. In a similar vein, Arditi and Balci (2009) believe that women involve others in discussions and are generally more democratic. They suggest that it explains the democratic leadership style that women often have.

### 5.2.5.7 Breaking the glass ceiling of education management

Although limited in terms of its accuracy as an analogy for the durability of the apparent barrier to female progress toward equal access to education management in Kosovo, the notion of a glass ceiling is very real. Happily, many of the respondents have not only looked through but also smashed through the glass ceiling that has traditionally barred women in Kosovo from attaining a position in education management, based on merit and ability. One of the participants explained eloquently the point that female representation in education management is improving:

> Since the post-war period, the education system in Kosovo has undergone significant changes. One of the changes is the greater representation of women in school leadership, whether primary or secondary. However, this is not at all sufficient. Women should be given more space to contribute to Kosovo education, not only as a teacher but also as a school leader. Schools where women are represented have seen a marked increase in trust and understanding between teachers and students and a positive cooperation that this cooperation affects the increase of quality in schools. History shows that women 'know, can and do succeed. (SP2)

Although there are positive signs of progress for women in management in Kosovo, the study revealed voices in support of further change. Respondents rightly question whether the conditions of employment are fairly balanced, such as to allow women to achieve an equitable opportunity with male counterparts. According to them the policies need to be amended to give

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women more flexibility and opportunity in employment and achieving leading positions: As one participant boldly claimed:

> I think that the issue of gender equality in leading positions should have greater support from the State, the Municipalities, and especially the family. Institutions need to work harder to encourage and support women in this position, but the women themselves need to be bolder and take more responsibility. Although in the near future I think there will be many more female principals than men, because schools have begun to be dominated by the female gender. (SP5)

As seen in the earlier observations, the patriarchal character of Kosovan society represents one of the most durable and resistant barriers to progress in gender equality in the workplace. The need for dramatic changes to the patriarchal mentality was emphasized by the NGO representative:

> Prejudice about the role of gender as opposed to an assessment of a woman's professional and intellectual competencies is too pervasive; insufficient space in the membership of political parties and also the possibility of gaining leading positions are common complaints, as is the dominance of the majority mentality that women should stay behind me. Such a denial of male and female gender equality in a democratic country, I think, greatly undermines democracy and the role of women in general, which is meant to be guaranteed by the Constitution (NGO)

According to some of the respondents 'the gender equality taboos have not yet been overcome, they are still present in Kosovo society'. Changes in widespread social values – particularly conservative patriarchal values – are difficult to achieve, but the study suggests that the presence of successful female leadership in schools can and does achieve a shift in such values.

With more external support he number of women in education leadership can increase. The representative of the NGO rightly admitted that more needs to be done to increase the representation of women in management positions:

> As a network we have to lobby more through gender officers, through commissions, to increase and motivate women to get involved in the management positions, not only in schools but in all areas. Since we aim to achieve an equal society, the participation of women should be equal to that of men, and in the field of education, women leaders give better results. This is

evidenced by many elements such as: they do not abuse their position, they have a very important role in educating students, they know well the nature of children. The underrepresentation of women in management is a loss to society. (NGO)

The respondents echoed strongly the findings of other research into the experiences of women in education in the Balkans and other parts of eastern Europe (Kaparou & Bush, 2007). Traditionally in Kosovar society, women have felt undervalued in their professional leadership skills. Women in the 21st century are not only part of the world of education as educators, occupying teaching posts, but also proving that the rights enshrined in law about their equal status apply to all levels of education management. Change has arrived in Kosovo, albeit slowly. Overall, the above findings from the respondents paints a mixed picture, one that indicates ongoing issues that frustrate progress for women in education, but also much to justify optimism that change is occurring.

As a conclusion, through this study, an attempt was made to obtain the opinions and perceptions of fifteen women about their journey to the job of principal and the challenges and the incentives they had during that journey and to clarify why there are still few women in managerial positions in schools. Findings show that gender discrimination is still part of Kosovo society and directly affects the perception or social norm that work in management is work for men. The findings show that the low representation of women in managerial positions is influenced by many factors that are of a personal, organizational and social nature. The lack of aspirations of women is shaped by the social stereotypes of Kosovar society and social expectations of who can do what. The findings showed that none of the interviewees even considered working in a managerial position because they themselves have grown up with the belief that the position of principal is only for a 'superman'! Even after being encouraged and beginning to believe, either through experience or training, that they could do the job, they had to fight hard against these prejudices that stubbornly preclude women from managerial positions.

From the analytical framework shown in the table in this chapter, it is seen that women have a variety of challenges but also incentives, not only to aspire to managerial positions but also during the performance of the task. Institutional support or lack of this support emerges as a very important aspect especially in the performance phase which can result in dismissal or failure. Yet other factors in the decision-making and recruitment phase are key — as the

interviews show — that among the biggest problems are that women do not apply and are not interested. Political interference in the recruitment phase also poses a challenge which then discourages women from applying for this position. Another finding is the lack of knowledge about the work of the principal and the way this has affected the trust in women; yet hard-won experience has made them familiar with the work of the principal and this familiarity is a very important factor in building trust and number of aspiring women. So even though all the factors are interrelated, a key aspect is the 'inner drive' that pushes or prevents women from aspiring to managerial positions.

**CHAPTER SIX — CONCLUSIONS**
**6.1 Unique Findings from Kosovo**

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the narratives of 15 women out of whom 12 women school principals that have entered the largely male-dominated profession of school principal in the specific context of Kosovo, as well as the informed perspective of three other women at the central level (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology/MEST), municipal level (Municipal Education Directorate/MED) and NGO level. This study has identified those challenges and incentives – personal, organizational, and social – that push back and pull forward women at various stages of the journey toward education management. In order to structure the data obtained from the participants and facilitate its analysis, the study has developed 'the management path model' that reflects the three stages of a women principals' journey, namely: aspiration, acquisition and performance.

It is important, in this concluding section, to give equal focus to the common patterns of incentives and challenges, at each level of the management path model. The study benefited from the frank and open honesty of the participants, in explaining and describing their often-harrowing experiences. Some of them have had to endure painful and even brutalising behaviours from counterparts, colleagues and the communities that they have sought to serve with dignity and respect. The data revealed a varied range of experiences among the respondents, albeit largely consistent with that of women across the western Balkans. Noteworthy, was the discovery that for some school principals the greatest challenges were in the first phase, at the point of deciding to become a school principal, while for others the problems mainly began after they started to work as a school principal. Some admitted to being challenged at every stage of the career process. What is clear is that none found the pathway easy or straightforward, for reasons related to their gender as well as those difficulties also encountered by men.

The data from interviews provided rich insights into the specific context, including the impact of social and religious gender norms, familial and patriarchal constraints, self-confidence weakened by inadequate support and, conversely, confidence enhanced by moral and practical support. Furthermore, it showed the strong social and cultural forces impact on women principals: most notably the sometimes-hostile and always dominant male culture in schools, reinforced and fuelled by traditional patriarchal values in local communities, and an intransigent gender stereotyping agenda that cuts across society and precludes women from

leadership roles. The respondents pointed to stereotyping and discrimination, fed and legitimised by prevailing socio-religious values in local Kosovo communities, and anchored to familial and domestic role expectations. At the same time, respondents gave evidence of some positive changes within schools and wider society, opening up a more inviting horizon for aspiring women.

The study found an odd mix of motivating factors working on the minds of the participants, including: a laudable desire to educate children, responding to positive role models among the teachers they have known, acting on the inspiration of a supportive family and particularly female members of the family. Against all this stood a formidable wall of reasons for women to avoid the option of a management career. Perhaps the most striking finding was the admission by all the participants that they never intended to become a principal when they entered the teaching profession. Forces worked against such ambition, from an entrenched patriarchal society that viewed the role of women as central to the family, as mothers, wives and domestic stalwarts. The research revealed some moving personal messages about the inadequacy of incentives for women who had so much to offer and indicated that the disadvantages of applying for a management position outweighed the possible advantages in the minds of many women.

Without a structured analytical model to evaluate the rich steam of data, it would be difficult to form meaningful conclusions about the relative weight of the incentives and obstacles. In order to assist in understanding the relative impact of the various push and pull factors on the female participants, at different stages of their career path, a new management path model was developed.

## 6.2 Management Path model

All the findings from the research provided an array of empirical data about the perceptions of some women who have made the career journey into the function of a school principal in Kosovo. It revealed how these women had faced a variety of significant challenges, as well as important incentives on their difficult management route journey. In conclusion, this thesis can summarise the relations and correlations between certain categories that have emerged in the data through Figure 13 (below), entitled 'Management Path of Women Principals' (MPWP).
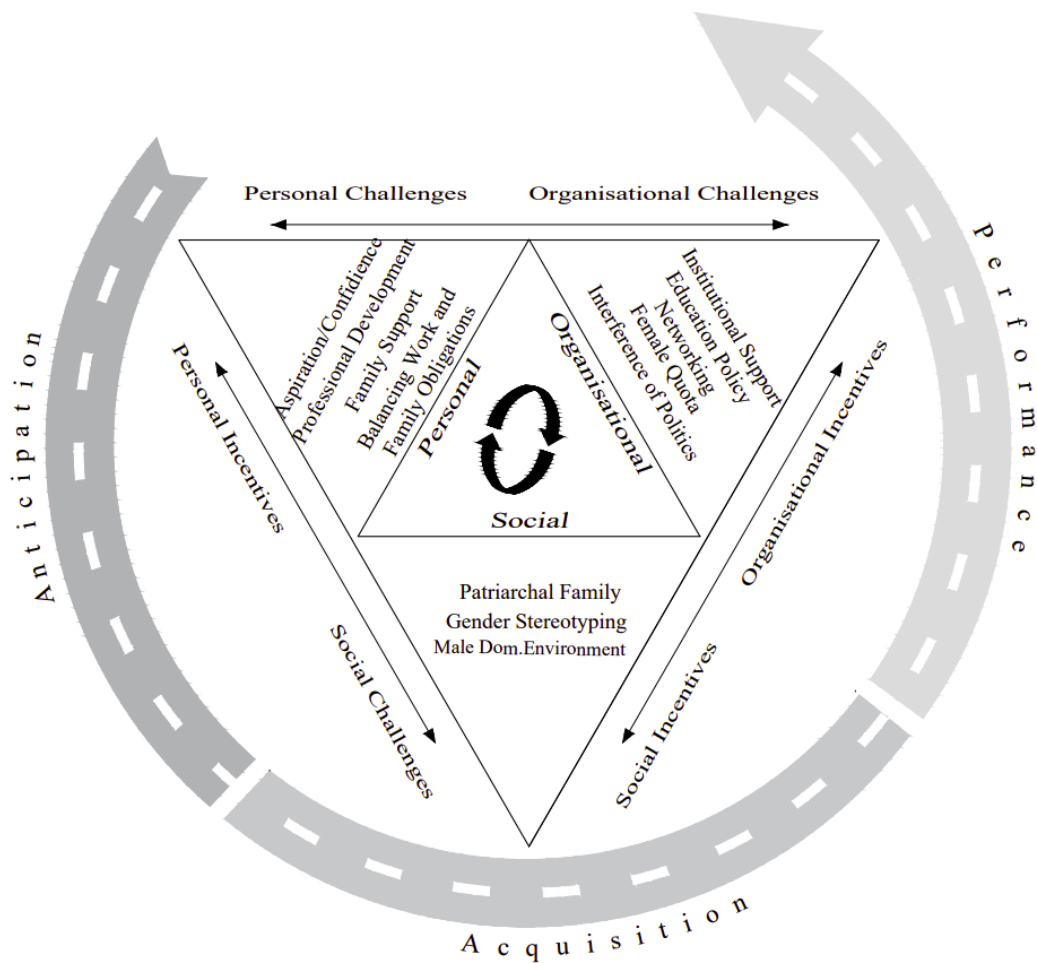
**Figure 13:** Management Path Model (MPWP)

Although partly inspired by the 'management route model' of Eck et al. (1996), comprising the three stages of anticipation, acquisition and performance, the MPWP model depicted in Figure 13 develops the analysis by depicting those additional factors and forces that have been discovered in the Kosovo case study. The new MPWP model incorporates the varied and frank accounts of experiences, positive and negative, derived internally and externally, and characterised by an interplay of personal, organisational and social factors, working in an often-complex web of overlaying causality, and directly deterring and hindering the equal access of women to education management opportunities. It incorporates the interacting challenges and incentives at the individual, social and organisational nature that refer to the linkages to the status of the women, as novices, semi-experienced, experienced and fully proficient principals. The data obtained from the respondents in the present research at each phase in their career journey, represents the central and unique aspect of its findings, insofar as it provides insights into the challenges and incentives that have acted on that career path at the individual, social and organisational.  varied and frank accounts of experiences, positive

and negative, derived internally and externally, and characterised by an interplay of personal, organisational and social factors, working in an often-complex web of overlaying causality, and directly deterring and hindering the equal access of women to education management opportunities.

The following paragraphs describe and connect the most important conclusions that are embraced in the MPWP model, in terms of the perceived impact of personal, organisational and social forces on the respondents' management path.

***Personal Challenges and Incentives*** — Less obvious, yet possibly more potent, are the personal forces that operate within the respondents. So even though all the factors are interrelated, a key aspect is the '*inner drive*' that pushes or prevents women from aspiring to managerial positions. Evidence is found to support the thesis that certain external factors – such as prevailing gender values, *insufficient knowledge* of the management function — engender powerful internal, psychological inhibitors, such as a *lack of confidence*. Entering the often male-dominated environment of a school as female principal brings *anxiety and fear*, triggered by opposition and dissent from both work colleagues and the rural community. There were also *feelings of guilt* about failing to match the expected obligations of a mother and wife. Attainment of experience and knowledge of the principal's function, *through effective training,* greatly increases confidence in a woman's abilities and helps them overcome the fears they had before starting work. The significant pull exerted by *a female role model* in the aspiration and acquisition stages, well documented in male management, calls for further research as well as policy guidance.

The study also found that support is needed to counter certain values and attitudes, such as *lack of motivation or ambition* to apply for vacant positions of principal, or the draining impact of a lack of confidence in the life of a working principal. These internally induced forces are often said to be linked to real or perceived external forces that deter or obstruct professional women in education. *Support of a spouse* and parent that goes beyond consent to an onerous and demanding career, is critical to success in each stage of the management route, especially in a gender delimited society as stated in other research (Shema & Turner, 2020). Success at every stage is helped by the support of school colleagues and community support, particularly at the performance stage. As in other contexts, women must do more than males and, in addition to carrying an extra burden of domestic demands, they must face a resulting sense of guilt where

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they feel they have failed to meet expectations within the home or work. This was echoed in other research studies (Coleman, 2020). Women require help in the process of balancing family commitments with career obligations, particularly with regard to childcare that is affordable and appropriate. They also require a level of workplace oversight that readily and energetically challenges male behaviours that are contrary to law and policy, and which deter or obstruct female participation in management.

There is also evidence of *confidence overcoming the various obstacles*. All the interviewees, in one way or another, have succeeded in overcoming the challenges, gained trust and motivated others to prove that women can manage schools, perhaps even better than men. Noteworthy is the *dedication and persistence* of women to prove that they can achieve results, despite the many challenges they have faced. This is extremely important because these role models influence others to follow the management path stages and to believe effective school management has nothing to do with gender. Evidence is found to support the thesis that there are positive linkages between the work of women principals and increased community cooperation, particularly the involvement of mothers. Moreover, the argument that women generally employ *a more democratic and inclusive leadership style*, actively consulting staff and parents, and rewarding achievement is vindicated. One case points to a possible link between female aptitude to transfer homemaker standards and discipline to a school setting and the broader claim that schools managed by women are less prone to corruption. In this way, gender is not a problem about the quality of managerial work, but it is a problem of perception of one's own managerial position and *one's view of the ideal manager as a male preserve*. The candidates themselves are an indicator of the breaking of the *'glass ceiling'* and the change of mentality in Kosovar society.

***Organisational Barriers and Incentives —*** Women's perceptions of the impact of institutional forces represent a mixed picture. Changes have occurred in Kosovo, to the benefit of those women who seek promotion. The support of the international community and the changes that took place after the war and adjusting to the EU legislation have all influenced substantial changes in the mindset of its people. Change is coming, albeit slowly, and is pushing back the tide of barriers faced by women. Education policy has advanced and refined the primary and secondary laws that would enable women to achieve an equal status to males. It has resulted in training opportunities and career development initiatives that the respondents have found very beneficial. A noted part of training and development is the invaluable *role of networking,*

building professional relationships, increasing knowledge and enhancing confidence. These positive measures must be continued and expanded. However, these efforts have not been matched by benign attitudes in the political realm, particularly at the Municipal and local level, where a male bias remains the predominant theme. This is an area of insufficient support that requires more attention. The support of men themselves in gender equality is key, as it is not enough for this imbalance to be tackled by women alone, but it must be a joint effort of both sexes. Against the pattern of push-back forces, there is evidence of pull factors, fostering and enabling women through the management path stages, for example support of Municipal authority officials and workplace colleagues who actively counter prejudice and bias.

Institutional support emerges as a very important aspect in the application phase since — as the interviews show – a major problem is that women do not apply and are not interested. While Kosovo policy and legislation reflects best practice in the facilitation of gender equality of opportunity in the education sector, the result does not always achieve the desired effect. As in other contexts, the Municipal authorities could not always be relied upon to apply the law and give real support to women principals. Although not solely concerned with gender, *political interference* in civil service appointments is a red line issue, in that it tends to favour male candidates who meet with political approval. This can be compounded by selection commissions that are often exclusively composed of male officials and has led to calls for a quota system, mirroring its success in bringing the Parliament Assembly into improved gender balance. There is the *lack of knowledge* or as Moorosi (2010) says "hesitation in the face of the unfamiliar" about the work of the principal and the way this has affected the trust in women, yet hard-won experience has made them familiar with the work of the principal and this familiarity is a very important factor in building trust.

However, pre-accession training, while not of immediate interest to some women, proved to be a source of incentive and a key to increasing the motivation of women to become school principals. It builds confidence that they can do the job and encourages applications. Training and development help women perform better as new managers, and cope with the stress induced by meeting competing demands of family and work and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

***Social Barriers and Incentives*** — At the social level, the data provides a daunting picture. The study found that, unless subject to their powerful influence, one might overlook or underestimate the influence of the *expectations and social norms* that act on women rather than

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men. Consistent with the wider regional context, external, community-driven gender norms, fuel and shape organizational structures and cultural behaviours within schools, impacting on female aspirations, acquisition and performance. There is a real sense in which the personal and organisational levels are mirrors or channels of the more pervasive and insidious source of difficulties for women – the social level. Although there are some incentives at this level, the challenges to the management route of women principals are the more obvious and are associated with *gender, social, cultural, political and traditional stereotypes*. These challenges are ingrained in the society of Kosovo and the changes are very slow. The lack of aspirations of women is shaped by the social stereotypes of Kosovar society and social expectations of who can do what.

In the context of Kosovo, the overwhelming social dynamic is rooted in *the patriarchal family*. For some of the candidates in the present study, growing up in a patriarchal family had a big impact on their career. As in other similar contexts, aspirations are constrained and shaped by a patriarchal and religious norm, in which fathers dictate career choices and fathers-in-law grant permission to work. Personal career plans are *fenced in by family and domestic obligations*. These women had the added challenge of balancing family commitments with the onerous duties of a manager, against a background of sometimes abusive and unreasonable objections from village elders and male colleagues. Thus, interviewees had not considered working in a managerial position because they themselves have grown up with the belief that the position of principal is only for a 'superman'! Parallel with similar socio-cultural contexts, women work within a lattice of entrenched beliefs that they are suitable for the role of teacher but not of manager.

Women admit that they have grown up with the belief that the job of a principal is for men, and that you have to be a *'superman'* to become a principal. The respondents who experience patriarchal families face greater challenges from the time they start their education and during their working life. This is most evident in the way that paternal support is deemed to be vital for career choices of the respondents, over and above other actors in culture or society. For many, it is the father that decides to continue her education or not, and whose permission or approval is required. The importance of paternal support is often linked to patriarchal societies – a society in which the father of the family has a supreme role. Kosovo fits with societies that are characterized by a male superiority complex, driving the patriarchal system at home and in society, and exerting huge challenges for career-minded women.

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Stereotypes and discrimination emerge as key elements within social and cultural factors that impact on individual career women. This echoes the point made by Lazarevic and Tadic (2018) that gender stereotyping is the underlying cause of discrimination against women and a major drive of their subordination.

*Gender stereotyping* is experienced in numerous forms of discrimination that subordinate women, from management colleagues, teachers, students and parents. It induces a sense of struggle at each stage of the management path model and speaks of the irrational equivalence of male gender and the management function. As in other social contexts, women encounter irrational *mistrust in female school management*, contravening a male-only axiom, and drawing strong disapproval behaviours. *Resistance, insubordination, and malicious gossip* from male colleagues — resulting from an adverse stereotype and negative expectations about the role of women in society — induce *fear and anxiety* for novice women principals.

Hard experience of the school environment as an '*old-boys club*' is not unique to Kosovo. Martínez et al. (2020) states that women have been pushed to the margins of such networks due to the male monopoly of this important source of influence and knowledge. Whereas, the added impact of community disapproval – sometimes based on false allegations of immoral and lascivious behaviour – is arguably characteristic of many of the country's rural locations. The study revealed the strength of social and cultural forces that impact on women principals.

Gender discrimination is still part of Kosovo society and directly affects the perception or social norm that management work is work for men.

The findings from the study confirm many other studies that are relevant to the same issue but also added elements that are characteristic of the Kosovo context. The purpose of the study was to understand the reasons for insufficient representation, to understand the factors that influence this and their correlation. All this was done against the backdrop of Kosovo's post war situation and the huge changes brought about by the international support was taken in consideration. Another interesting finding is that all the women interviewed, in one way or another, have succeeded in overcoming the challenges they faced and gained trust and have motivated others that women can be in managerial poses and can do this job just like men and maybe even better. Another aspect that emerges from the findings is the dedication and persistence of women to prove that they can achieve results, despite the many challenges they

have faced. This is extremely important because these role models will then influence others to take this path more easily and be convinced that a good performance as a principal has nothing to do with gender.

The experience gained and the knowledge gained about the nature of the principal's work, whether through work or training, has greatly increased their confidence in their abilities and has helped them overcome the fears they had before starting work. The findings of the study show, however, that there is progress and that a process of positive progress has been made in having more women in positions of primary schools principals in Kosovo. In this way, the study shows and demonstrates that *gender is not a problem about the quality of managerial work, but it is a problem of perception of one's own managerial position and one's view of the ideal manager that as a male preserve*. The candidates themselves are an indicator of the breaking of the 'glass ceiling' and the change of mentality in Kosovar society. The support of the international community and the changes that have taken place after the war and adjusting to the EU legislation have all influenced substantial changes in the mindset of its people. As Coleman (2011) states change is coming, albeit slowly, and is pushing back the tide of barriers faced by women.

Therefore, we need institutional work and support, but also help from the family and the community, and from both men and women together. The support of men themselves in gender equality is key, as it is not enough for this war to be waged only by women but it must be a joint war of both sexes to have success. Finally, it should be noted that gender equality is crucial for the advancement of the society in every aspect, educational, economic and social. By not leaving half the population out, society will suffer. We always aim for an inclusive education and here should be the starting point for both genders to enter this inclusion. It is the responsibility of the children themselves to grow up with the mindset that both sexes are equal in whatever quality and role, including management positions and the biggest beneficiaries are the children themselves who are our future. As Cubillo and Brown (2003) wisely observed, more women than ever before are gradually scraping a way through the glass barrier, and although this glass ceiling has proved to be deeply laminated and durable in the context of Kosovo, "the task of recognising the legal right and natural merit of female leaders in education must now begin in earnest, inspired and informed by the experience of other contexts" (Ukimeraj Harris & Trnavčević, 2020).

### 6.3 Implications for Future Research

Perhaps the most reassuring conclusions to be drawn from the research are certain 'push factors' – those perceived forces that the respondents agree upon as counter-balances to the various forces of opposition in each phase of their career path. Most notable among those push factors are the various experiences that have increased their sense of self-confidence and realisation that they can and do perform the function of principal as well – if not better – than male colleagues. These experiences include pre- and post-aspirational training, tangible (as well as just moral) support from husbands, close family, and work colleagues. Confidence was also increased by the presence of role models, women who successfully perform in the principal function, and the critical support of Municipal and political male actors. These push factors, key findings of the research, offer an insight into actual and potential developments for women in education in Kosovo, and the focus of future research.

Kosovo has moved ahead with appropriate legislation, policies and training opportunities to protect and advance the role of women in education management, but experience of participants points to a society and professional environment that is insufficiently touched by the intended reforms. Further research is needed into the cases in which positive changes of this dominant patriarchal mindset have been brought about in the internal environment of the school and the immediate external environment of the community that is served by the relevant school. Research is needed into cases where gender stereotyping has been eliminated as a cause of barriers to management accession. Evidence of push factors, encouraging and facilitating women through the management route stages, such as the active support of Municipal authorities and work colleagues demands further and more detailed research if it is to be exploited as a broader strategy. Effective and successful female principals are proving to be role models and a catalyst for change in community attitudes and beliefs about gender in school management, and there are links between active community engagement by women managers and attitudinal changes. This demands further study of the conditions and causal factors that induce change.

Male sourced data might also provide triangulation to the female sourced data. At a more ambitious level of research, the study might also benefit from data about the perceptions of other stakeholders, including students and parents. Within the data accrued in the study there are strong indications of the potential benefits of broadening the target group to include males in all stakeholder categories. Evidence, albeit limited and non-direct, of male attitudes that ran

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contrary to the prevailing culture of gender stereotyping was reported by female participants. Some reported experience of active and verbal support of husbands, partners, male colleagues, male professionals in the Ministry and Municipality, and – most intriguingly – local community members. This warrants further examination, as part of a wider data capture method.

It is readily acknowledged that future investigation should focus on the perspectives of male principals, as well as those of females. A more comprehensive description of the immediate context of the school and local community would result from the participation of relevant males and, in turn, increase the accuracy of the final conclusions and basis for a theory about the current female management route. It would also generate additional challenges in the formulation of questions and the choices of purposive sampling. Without careful reflection on these issues, the resulting findings might yield a distorted picture of the male target group. For example, if 70% of the male target group held negative views about women in education management and the sampling only gained the views of members of that group it would fail to capture the views of the remaining 30% and their impact on the female management route. In spite of these challenges, the benefits of such a broader research study are beyond dispute.

## 6.4. Recommendations for Policy Makers

Based on the above findings and conclusions, there are a number of recommendations that can be adduced, in support of the ongoing effort to ameliorate the circumstances of aspiring women in Kosovo's education management.

Alongside the deeply rooted sentiments and attitudes of rural Kosovo, the study revealed the need to ***end political interference***, insofar as it is used to defeat aspiring women. The one source of prejudice flows into the other. Local politics is predominantly male controlled and relies upon the support of families and communities in which men have a dominant role. The changes brought about in the central Parliament (through the quota system) have not been reflected in local, municipal and government level. Most respondents pointed to the pervasive and corrosive impact of overt interreference at the local government level, in which male politicians select male school principals in order to appease a largely male-focussed electorate. Breaking the linkage is a considerable challenge. A quota system may prove an effective remedy, if the central Government can exercise sufficient authority and determination against local political opposition. Likewise, the hope would be that the increasing presence of successful women principals will erode traditional prejudices.

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It is often said in the commercial sector that 'nothing breeds success like success', and the ***promotion of success stories*** about women in education management is equally beneficial. This dictum can be equally applied to the presence of women in education management: in other words, the more women that achieve positions as school principals and prove successful, the more likely that potential female candidates will be motivated to apply. The study revealed that many respondents were aware of the corrosive impact of a male dominated management sector on their motivation: the sheer presence of a male majority reinforced the male claim that 'management is a man's job'. Conversely, the presence of successful female principals acted as a draw, allowing aspirants to see management as something they could achieve and do well.

As in other sectors of professional life, the opportunities afforded by a scheme of ***internship for aspiring principals*** can make a significant impact on female career prospects over the long term. The present study revealed both the absence of such a scheme and the frequent observation that women lacked adequate knowledge and experience of education management prior to applying for a vacant position. This and the lack of female role models had a debilitating effect on the motivation of potential women candidates. A number of respondents voiced the idea of an internship scheme as beneficial platform for female aspirants.

Through the findings there was clear evidence that the role of women in family life and the attendant expectations of professional mothers, acted a significant barrier to aspiring women. A real game changer was the prospect of ***more Kindergartens in rural areas***, thereby providing aspirants who are mothers with the choice of pursuing a career while being a mother. This choice is particularly problematic in rural areas of Kosovo, where women are forced into a self-fulfilling culture of 'maternity versus career'. In other words, because women should be first and foremost mothers, the need for Kindergartens is deemed to be a low priority. This proved to be a consistent message from respondents in rural areas – without the option of affordable and reliable childcare, career choices would remain limited.

Although ***the quota system*** is viewed as unnecessary or unwelcome in some socio-economic contexts, there is reason to believe that it can be an effective tool of Government policy in Kosovo, as a way of moving cultural expectations toward a more enlightened view of women in positions of authority. The first Parliamentary assemblies of post-war Kosovo saw a risible level of female representation. However, once the Government introduced a minimum quota

of 30% women MPs, things began to change radically. In the most recent Parliament, women comprise over 40%. This example of policy changing public attitudes toward women in leadership, prompted a number of respondents to suggest that a quota system could have an equally beneficial impact on perceptions of women in education leadership, particularly in the more traditional rural communities. The idea is that, once men in traditional areas witnessed the real benefits that women leaders can bring, the prejudices and preconceptions would be gradually eroded, allowing women to compete on an equal basis.

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## APPENDIXES

## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Dear school directors,

You are kindly invited to complete this questionnaire, which is necessary for the research on the topic "Challenges and Incentives in the Management Path of Female Principals in Kosovo Primary Schools." The information you will provide will be kept in full confidence and will be used for the purpose of the study. Therefore, we would appreciate if you share a little of your time and give the answer that best represents your opinion.

Given the nature and topic of the study, the researcher should interview a sample of women school directors. To this end, would you be willing to be interviewed. If yes, please provide your name and contact information: _____

Thank you in advance for your willingness to cooperate!

| 1.  Gender: | 2.  Age group: |
|---|---|
| ☐  Female<br>☐  Male<br><br><br><br><br>(put ☑ in one of the answers) | ☐  Less than 35 years old<br>☐  35-44 years old<br>☐  45-54 years old<br>☐  55-65 years old<br><br>(put ☑ in one of the answers) |
| 3.  Civil Status: | 4.  Children: |
| ☐  Single<br>☐  Married<br>☐  Divorced<br>☐  Widow/Widower<br><br>(put ☑ in one of the answers) | ☐  No children<br>☐  1-2 children<br>☐  3-4 children<br>☐  More than 5 children<br><br>(put ☑ in one of the answers) |
| 5.  Qualification: | 6.  Have you completed the training "Management in Education"? |
| ☐  Bachelor (3 years of study)<br>☐  Faculty of Education (4 years of study)<br>☐  Master in Education field | <br><br>☐  Yes<br>☐  No |

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|  | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Master in another field<br>☐ PhD<br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* | <br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* |
| **7. School location:**<br><br><br>☐ Urban<br>☐ Rural<br><br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* | **8. Number of students:**<br><br><br>☐ Less than 300 students<br>☐ 300-499 students<br>☐ 500-999 students<br>☐ 1000-1500 students<br>☐ More than 1500 students<br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* |
| **9. Is the School Board functional?**<br><br><br>☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br><br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* | **10. Do you have Deputy Director?**<br><br><br>☐ Yes<br>☐ Female<br>☐ Male<br>☐ No<br><br><br>*(If yes, put ☑ under YES and choose one of the answers)* |
| **11. How many years have you worked as a teacher?**<br><br>☐ Less than 4 years<br>☐ 5-9<br>☐ 10-14<br>☐ 15-20<br>☐ More than 20 years<br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* | **12. How many times have you applied for the position of the school director?**<br><br>☐ Less than 2 times<br>☐ 2-4 times<br>☐ More than 4 times<br><br><br><br><br>*(put ☑ in one of the answers)* |
| **13. How many years have you worked as school director?**<br><br>☐ Less than 4 years<br>☐ 5-9<br>☐ 10-14<br>☐ 15-20<br>☐ More than 20 years | **14. Have you worked as a school director in another school:**<br><br>☐ Yes<br>☐ Less than 2 times<br>☐ 2-4 times<br>☐ More than 4 times<br>☐ No |

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| *(put ☑ in one of the answers)* | *(If yes, put ☑ under the answer YES and in one of the options)* |
|---|---|

Thank you for your cooperation!

**Appendix 2: Consent Form Signed by the School Directors**

**Title of Project: Challenges and Incentives in the Management Path of Female Principals in Kosovo Primary Schools**

**Name of Researcher**: Linda Ukimeraj Harris

I, the undersigned ........................................., school director of the (name of the school) ..............................................................., I was given sufficient information on the goal of the current study and the method by which it will be carried out.

It has been communicated to me that if I feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied with something that comes to my attention, I may withdraw from this research and not continue with this interview.

I accept to take part in the research of Mrs. Linda Ukimeraj Harris

A copy of the Consent Form has been given to me.

(One copy of the Consent Form will be given to the Respondent and the other will be kept by the Researcher)

Name of Participant: _____          Researcher:
_____

Date: _____          Date: _____

Signature: _____          Signature: _____

**Appendix 3: Interview questions for women school directors.**

**Title of study: Challenges and Incentives in the Management Path of Female Principals in Kosovo Primary Schools**

**Name of researcher:** Linda Ukimeraj Harris

**Mentor:** Prof. Dr. Anita Trnavčević

Before we begin, I'd like to express my gratitude for agreeing to participate in the interview. To begin, I'd like to reassure you that your identity will be kept private, and that only the researcher will have access to the raw data collected for the study. The interview is meant to be kept private. It should last about 60 minutes, and you have the option to turn off the voice recorder or leave the interview at any moment.

The nickname used in the study: …………………..

School: ................................. Director: ................................................

### 1. Anticipation phase

| y questions | ompts |
|---|---|
| 1. Could you tell me a little about yourself?<br>2. Can you describe the moment/time/period when you decided to pursue a career as a director?<br>3. How did you prepare yourself to achieve this goal?<br>4. What barriers did you face along the way? What kind of help did you get along the way?<br>5. Before becoming a director, did you hold any other managerial posts (e.g., deputy director, member of the School Governing Board, etc.)? | Are you married? Do you have any children? Why did you decide to become a teacher? How long have you worked in the field of education? How long have you been employed at this institution? How many years have you worked in a teaching position? What kind of teacher education did you get? Tell me your opinion about the education management training?<br><br>Before becoming a director, did you attend any management training programs? How did you get in the list for the Education Management Training?<br>Did it increase your ambition for pursuing directors' position? Do you believe you were adequately prepared for the position of director? If so, how? If not, why not? |

## 2. Acquisition Phase

| y questions | ompts |
|---|---|
| 1. Please tell me about your experiences from the time you first applied for the position of a director until you were hired.? <br> 2. Did you at any time during your efforts to become a director feel discriminated against? If yes, how? | When did you start to apply for the position of director? How many times did you apply?  How many times have you been called in for an interview? Why do you believe you failed in your past attempts, assuming you had any? Why do you believe you were successful this time? What, in your opinion, would make it easier for more women to become a director? |

## 3. The performance phase

| Sub-aspect | Key questions | Prompts |
|---|---|---|
| **Support** | 1.Tell me about the help you received from your family, school staff, and community after you acquired this position. | What kind of support do your male and female colleagues provide? Do you think your colleagues' behaviour or treatment of you is influenced by the fact that you are a female director? What kind of help (if any) do you get from your female coworkers? What kind of help (if any) do you get from your male coworkers? Do you ever feel compelled to make significant personal sacrifices in your work as a director? |
| **Leadership** | 1.How would you describe your leadership styles? <br> 2.What are your strengths as a school principal? | How do you think your staff and learners respond to the way you lead? How do you think the parents and the community respond to the way you lead? <br><br> What areas do you wish to improve upon? What are the advantages of being a woman principal? What are the disadvantages? Did you experience discriminatory behaviour in your career and as a director? |
| **General** | 1.What's your opinion about the women representation in school management positions in Kosovo? | What do you consider to be the challenges you face as a woman director? What do you consider to be the incentives you face as a woman director? Do you face difficulties between your work and family roles? Have |

| | | you ever regretted your decision to become a school director? What would you say and advice a woman teacher who wants to be a school director? |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Conclusion: I don't have any more questions. Do you have anything else you want to point out or add before the interview is complete?

**Thank you very much for taking part in this interview. Your contribution to my research is significant, and I greatly appreciate your collaboration!!!**

**Appendix 4: The profile of the respondents**

| No. | Respondents | Age | Married Children | Qualification | Years of experience (teacher) | Years of experience (School Principal) | Category |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | School Principal 1 (Shema) | 63 | Married 3 children | Faculty of Biology | 18 years | 20 years | Senior |
| 2 | School Principal 2 (Marta) | 56 | Single | Faculty of Biology-chemistry | 5 years | 18 years | Senior |
| 3 | School Principal 3 (Fari) | 51 | Married, 2 children | Faculty of History Master in Education | 7 years | 18 years | Senior |
| 4 | School Principal 4 (Marqe) | 50 | Married 3 children | Faculty of Albanian Language | 5 years | 12 years | Senior |
| 5 | School Principal 5 (Liri) | 55 | Married 4 children | Faculty of Albanian Language | 20 years | 8 years | Mid experienced 1 |
| 6 | School Principal 6 (Mali) | 48 | Married 2 children | Faculty of Albanian Language | 10 years | 7 years | Mid experienced |
| 7 | School Principal 7 (Lume) | 61 | Married No children | Faculty of Mathematics | 17 years | 7 years | Mid experienced |
| 8 | School Principal 8 (Yllka) | 40 | Married No Children | Master in Education | 5 years | 5 years | Mid experienced |
| 9 | School Principal 9 (Belkize) | 54 | Married 2 children | Bachelor in Chemistry | 15 years | 1.5 years | Novice 1 |
| 10 | School Principal 10 (Edi) | 49 | Married 3 children | Bachelor in Chemistry | 10 years | 5 years | Novice |
| 11 | School Principal 11 (Diana) | 53 | Married 2 children | Master in Education Management | 17 years | 2 years | Novice |
| 12 | School Principal 12 (Ajshe) | 41 | Married 2 children | Master in Education Management | 13 years | 2 years | Novice |
| 13 | MEST Representative (MEST) | 44 | Married 2 children | PhD in Albanian Language | 4 years | / | MEST Representative |
| 14 | Municipal Education Directorate (MED) Representative (MED) | 48 | Single | Master in Education Management | 2 years | / | MED Representative |
| 15 | Representative of NGO (NGO) | 43 | Married 1 child | Faculty of Philosophy | / | / | NGO Representative |