



BELMAS Small-Scale Research Projects 2014

Final Reports

An investigation into women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team (SLT)

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1. Background and Theoretical Framework

There remains a concern for the unequal opportunities available for women in secondary school educational leadership in the United Kingdom (see Coleman, 2005; Fuller, 2013; McNamara et al, 2008). Research that identifies considerable regional difference has informed this project (Edwards and Lyon, 1994; Coleman, 2005; Fuller, 2009, 2013).

Gender theory

Gender theory has developed considerably over the last three decades. In this project we acknowledge the complexity of multiple gender theories and draw on as:

- 1) second wave feminist theories of equality and difference (see Scott, 1988);
- 2) post structural gender theory disconnecting gender from the body as it is sexed (Butler, 1990; 2004) to acknowledge multiple femininities and masculinities (Connell, 2005) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Moorosi, 2013); and
- 3) gender monoglossia and heteroglossia (Francis, 2010; 2012) and polyglossic simultaneity (Fuller, 2014) that bring together seemingly incompatible gender theories in the discussion of gendered leadership.

The nine characteristics protected under the UK Equality Act (2010) are useful in our thinking about intersectionality. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. There is also a public sector duty to give 'due regard to the desirability of exercising [its functions] in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage' (HM Government, 2010, Part 1, 1.1).

Gendered leadership research

The literature has identified parts of the UK where women achieve secondary school headship in higher proportions than in others (see Edwards and Lyons, 1994; Coleman, 2001, 2005; Fuller, 2009; Fuller, 2013). These studies have focused on *who* does leadership and have a concern for equal opportunities for women and men. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) consider women's ways of leading, or *how* leadership is done, as leadership for learning; leadership for social justice; relational leadership; spiritual leadership (with regard to self awareness); and balanced leadership (with regard to family life). Blackmore (1989) has proposed a feminist reconstruction of leadership that has been used to think about women's and men's approaches to leadership to recognise women also do masculinist leadership and men might do pro-feminist leadership (Fuller, 2013).

Leadership socialization theory

Focusing on the SLT as a site for leadership preparation we draw on leadership socialization theory (Crow, 2006), communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and professional learning communities (Hord 2004; Stoll and Louis, 2007) to consider the leadership discourses in which senior leaders are immersed and their opportunities for leadership development as Leadership for Learning (MacBeath, 2007).

2. Objectives and Research Questions

This investigation aimed to make comparisons between women's and men's leadership preparation in senior leadership teams in six English local authorities as three pairs of adjacent authorities where the proportion of women secondary headteachers differs considerably (Fuller, 2009, 2013). Two cases were created as Case 1) authorities in which women achieved headship i.e. south west Birmingham (SWAN), Wokingham and Stockport and Case 2) authorities in which women were underrepresented in headship i.e. Sandwell, Reading and Tameside.

We aimed to discover

1. Which group(s) are being targeted or served by leadership development initiatives, and why?
2. Whether and how do leadership development activities support distributed leadership structures and processes in schools and colleges?

3. Methodology

Case 1 (authorities where women have achieved secondary school headship) and Case 2 (where women are underrepresented in secondary school headship)

Case 1 consists of secondary mainstream schools in three local authorities where women have achieved secondary school headship in relatively high proportions – south west Birmingham (SWAN), Wokingham and Stockport (n=38 schools). Case 2 consists of schools in three local authorities where women are underrepresented in secondary school headship– Sandwell, Reading and Tameside (n=36 schools). The authorities are geographically adjacent: SWAN and Sandwell; Wokingham and Reading; and Stockport and Tameside. It should be noted this research shows a reverse in the authorities Reading and Wokingham since 2010 (see Fuller 2013). The south-west area network of secondary schools (SWAN) in

Birmingham provided a sample of comparable size to Sandwell; all schools in the five other authorities were sampled.

Three stages of data collection comprised:

- 1) a telephone survey of 74 schools;
- 2) a questionnaire distributed online and by post to 506 senior leaders; and
- 3) 16 telephone interviews with self-selected respondents as SLT members.

The telephone survey identified the composition of SLTs by job role and sex in 73 of 74 schools (response rate = 98.64%). The questionnaire achieved a response rate of 28.3% (women = 68; men = 75) from a high proportion of the schools (78.4%).

Table 1 – Questionnaire responses by sex and SLT post

	Case 1 – Authorities in which women have achieved headship	Case 2 – Authorities in which women are underrepresented in headship
	Number	Number
Women Headteachers	6	1
Women Deputy Headteachers	13	7
Women Assistant Headteachers	21	14
Women in other SL roles	5	1
Total number of women	45	23
Men Headteachers	7	5
Men Deputy Headteachers	14	9
Men Assistant Headteachers	21	16
Men in other SL roles	1	2
Total number of men	43	32
Grand total	88	55

Questionnaire items asked about

- personal details using multiple choice questions used in the 2011 Household Census with respect to sex, sexuality, relationship status, age, national identity, ethnicity, religion, responsibility for the care of children, adults and elders and educational qualifications and an open question about socio-economic status in childhood;
- school details with respect to type of school, school network affiliations and pupil population by sex and age;
- work in the senior leadership team with respect to current post, years in post, years in current SLT, other senior posts in the current school or elsewhere, the composition of the SLT by job role and sex (to triangulate telephone survey findings), experience of or witnessed discrimination, from whom and support in handling it, unofficial working hours, opportunities for flexible working practices and five words to describe senior leadership as it was done in the school; and

- leadership preparation and development including leadership training, aspirations to headship and support for them; opportunities to expand the leadership repertoire; access to mentoring or coaching programmes in or outside school; access to networking with senior leaders in or outside education.

Comparisons between women and men in each Case can be made as well as comparisons between women and comparisons between men. A survey is a snapshot of a situation at a given time. We do not claim causation or association between responses to items and the (non)achievement of headship by women in each Case. Leadership preparation and development for individual women and men within SLTs is more nuanced than that. Nevertheless there do appear to be some interesting differences among the respondents' responses in each Case that might benefit from further investigation in a larger scale research project.

Telephone interviews focussed on how SLTs operated; understandings of discrimination; and the role of local authorities and/or school networks in leadership development. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

Table 2 Interview sample

	Case 1 – Authorities in which women have achieved headship	Case 2 – Authorities in which women are underrepresented in headship
Women	7	2
Men	3	4
Total	10	6

These findings will be used to inform the survey findings.

4. Key Findings

Table 3 shows women and men by current position in the senior leadership team. Of note here is the high proportion of women undertaking other senior roles such as bursar, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or roles otherwise not described as deputy or assistant headteacher. Clearly Case 2 was created because of the dominance of men in headship in these authorities. Nevertheless, this comparison shows the extent of their dominance and the relative evenness of women and men's representation in Case 1 and in other SLT roles in Case 2.

Table 3 - SLT posts by sex

	Case 1 – Authorities in which women have achieved headship		Case 2 – Authorities in which women are underrepresented in headship	
	No	%	No	%
Women headteachers	22	57.9	6	16.7
Men headteachers	17	44.7	30	83.3
Total	39		36	
Women deputy headteachers	35	53.8	34	51.5
Men deputy headteachers	30	46.2	32	48.5
Total	65		68	
Women assistant headteachers	63	48.8	50	45.5

Men assistant headteachers	66	51.2	60	54.5
Total	129		110	
Women other SLT roles	23	57.5	14	82.4
Men other SLT roles	17	42.5	3	17.6
Total	40		17	
Total women SLs	143	52.4	104	45.4
Total men SLs	130	47.6	125	54.6
Grand total	273		229	

Composition of SLTs

Table 4 below shows the composition of senior leadership teams categorised in eight ways. Excluding the headteacher the teams are described as either female dominated (FT), male dominated (MT) or evenly split (ET). The composition of the SLT was not given for one school; in another headship was being shared by a women and a man on a temporary basis.

Of note here is the high proportion of schools in Case 2 with men as headteachers leading SLTs composed mainly of women (MHFT) compared to Case 1 women and men headteachers leading teams composed mainly of women (WHFT and MHFT). This appears to suggest women achieve senior roles as deputy and assistant headteachers but do not currently go on to headship in Case 2 authorities.

Table 4 – Composition of SLTs by sex

	Case 1 – Authorities in which women have achieved headship		Case 2 – Authorities in which women are underrepresented in headship	
	No. of schools	%	No. of schools	%
Woman Headteacher Female dominated Team (WHFT)	11	28.95	2	5.55
Woman Headteacher Male dominated Team (WHMT)	5	13.16	4	11.11
Woman Headteacher Evenly split Team (WHET)	7	18.42	0	0.00
Man Headteacher Female dominated Team (MHFT)	9	23.68	16	44.44
Man Headteacher Male dominated Team (MHMT)	3	7.89	7	19.44
Man Headteacher Evenly split Team (MHET)	2	5.26	6	16.66
Man Headteacher Unknown Team (MHUT)	0	0.00	1	2.77
Evenly split Headteacher (job share) Male dominated Team	1	2.63	0	0.00
Total	38		36	

Section 1: Personal details

The majority of respondents in both Case 1 and Case 2 were white English, heterosexual, married with children, Christian and in their forties or fifties. Of the respondents describing their ethnicity as Black and Global Majority, three were mixed white and Asian; two Indian and one Black Caribbean. Very few respondents in each Case described themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. This group were currently or had been in same sex quasi-marital relationships. No respondent identified themselves as transgendered. A higher proportion of heterosexual women respondents in both Cases had divorced than men. Few respondents identified they had the major responsibility for adults and/or elders. Respondents of faith included two Hindus, one Jew and one Sikh. A higher proportion of men in Case 2

were in their thirties. Fewer women Case 2 respondents held a higher degree. More respondents in Case 2 described themselves as having a working-class childhood; however, the highest proportion was among women in Case 2.

Section 2: School details

More men respondents in Case 2 schools were working in academies and fewer in community comprehensive schools. Very few respondents were working in other types of school. More respondents from Case 1 said their schools were part of a network. More Case 2 respondents said their schools were in chains of academies. More Case 1 respondents worked in single sex schools; more Case 2 men respondents were working in schools catering for 11 to 18 year olds.

Section 3: Your work in the Senior Leadership Team

More women in each Case had been in their current post and the current SLT for longer than the men respondents. More women respondents in Case 2 schools had held senior posts in other schools.

Few respondents said they had experienced discrimination as members of their current SLT. However, a higher proportion of women respondents in Case 2 said they experienced discrimination due to disability, age and/or their personality traits. No men respondents in Case 2 said they had experienced discrimination compared with equal proportions of women and men in Case 1. A higher proportion of women in Case 2 said they experienced discrimination from SLT colleagues and teaching staff. They were less likely to say they received support in handling discrimination. Whereas more Case 1 women said they experienced discrimination from parents.

The majority of respondents worked more than 55 hours per week. A much lower proportion of men respondents in Case 2 than other respondents said they had the opportunity to attend events and meetings to support their dependents. A higher proportion of women and men respondents in Case 1 said they had multiple opportunities for flexible working practices than in Case 2.

Section 4: Your leadership preparation and development

More Case 2 women respondents said they had taken the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). Fewer women respondents than men in both Cases had taken university-based courses. A high proportion of respondents identified other leadership training that requires further analysis.

Headteachers were excluded from the item about aspiration to headship. More Case 2 women than Case 1 women said they had aspired to headship at some time; more also said they still aspired to headship than Case 1 women. The proportions were similar to the proportions of men in both Cases. However, fewer Case 2 women said their headteachers/principals supported them in their aspiration. More Case 1 women said members of the SLT supported their aspirations. There was little difference between the two Cases with regard to multiple sources of support.

High proportions of Case 2 women and men said mentoring and coaching programmes were available in school. Fewer men in Case 1 said there was a mentoring or coaching programme in school. More women in Case 1 said there was a programme outside school with fewer men in Case 2 saying there was one outside school.

A higher proportion of women in Case 1 said they had access to formal and informal networks of senior leaders in education. Most of these networks were in person. More Case 1 women and men had access to networks online than in Case 2. Fewer women in Case 2 had access to formal and informal networks. They were the group least likely to say they had access to networks in person. However, more women in Case 2 had access to formal and informal networks of senior leaders outside education. These were in person. The highest proportion of respondents who had other useful networks were women in Case 1.

5. Implications for Theory and Policy

This research outlines some variety in women's and men's experiences in SLTs as sites for headship preparation. Recommendations are made at multiple levels i.e. school level, school network level and national level regarding:

- improving knowledge about the Equality Act (2010);
- sharing an equality and diversity policy among schools in new groupings as networks, chains of academies, teaching school alliances;
- opening up a dialogue about the (im)balanced composition of SLTs;
- changing attitudes towards the appointment and promotion of younger women;
- improving knowledge about individuals' experiences of workplace discrimination;
- providing information about how to report workplace discrimination;
- providing training about how to support colleagues who have been discriminated against;
- opening up a dialogue about the dominant gendered leadership discourse of the SLT;
- opening up a dialogue about the unofficial working week;
- improving access to flexible working practices;
- monitoring access to a range of leadership preparation opportunities including accredited courses, higher degrees and workplace based preparation;
- improving headteachers/principals' support for aspiring headteachers particularly among women and potentially marginalized groups of men;
- opening up a dialogue about succession planning in school;
- opening up a dialogue about career planning with each teacher/middle/senior leader;
- providing opportunities to engage in leadership mentoring or coaching programmes in and outside school;
- developing sustainable networks of senior leaders.

6. Future Plans

Questions remain about the working cultures of senior leadership teams that make them supportive of leadership preparation and development for members of potentially marginalised groups of women and men, or less so. In order to gain a deep understanding of dominant gendered leadership discourses a larger scale ethnographic study is necessary in order to investigate gender regimes. It is likely that at least one member of the group will seek funding for such a project.

The co-researchers are member of the BELMAS Research Interest Group Gender and Leadership. The findings of this project are likely to be shared at a future event. They will seek publication of the findings in a leading peer-reviewed academic journal in the near future.

A summary of these findings will be sent to each school in the sample with an invitation to contact the research team if they are interested in attending a networking meeting in their local area.

7. Related Papers and Presentations

Fuller, K., Cliffe, J., Hammersley-Fletcher, L. and Moorosi, P. (2012) Women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team. Paper presented at the BELMAS Leadership development research group seminar, University of Warwick, November 2nd.

Fuller, K., Cliffe, J., Hammersley-Fletcher, L. and Moorosi, P. (2013) Women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team. Paper presented at the BELMAS Conference, Dalmahoy, Edinburgh 12-14th July.

Fuller, K., Moorosi, P. and Cliffe, J. (2013) An investigation into women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team. Paper presented at 4th Women Leading Education International Conference - Seeking New and Deeper Understandings of Women's Educational Leadership across the Continents, September 25th to 28th, 2013 in Apam, Ghana.

Fuller, K., Cliffe, J., Hammersley-Fletcher, L. and Moorosi, P. (2013) Women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team. Paper presented at the BELMAS Leadership development research group seminar, University of Warwick, November 1st.

Fuller, K., Cliffe, J. and Moorosi, P. (2014) Women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team (SLT) in six English local authorities – AHTs talking about the team. Paper presented at the 2014 American Education research Association Annual Meeting, April 6th, Philadelphia, U.S.

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