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GENDER TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCES AMONG WOMEN IN THE WESTERN CAPE TVET SECTOR: A NARRATIVE RESPONSE

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THE STORYLINE

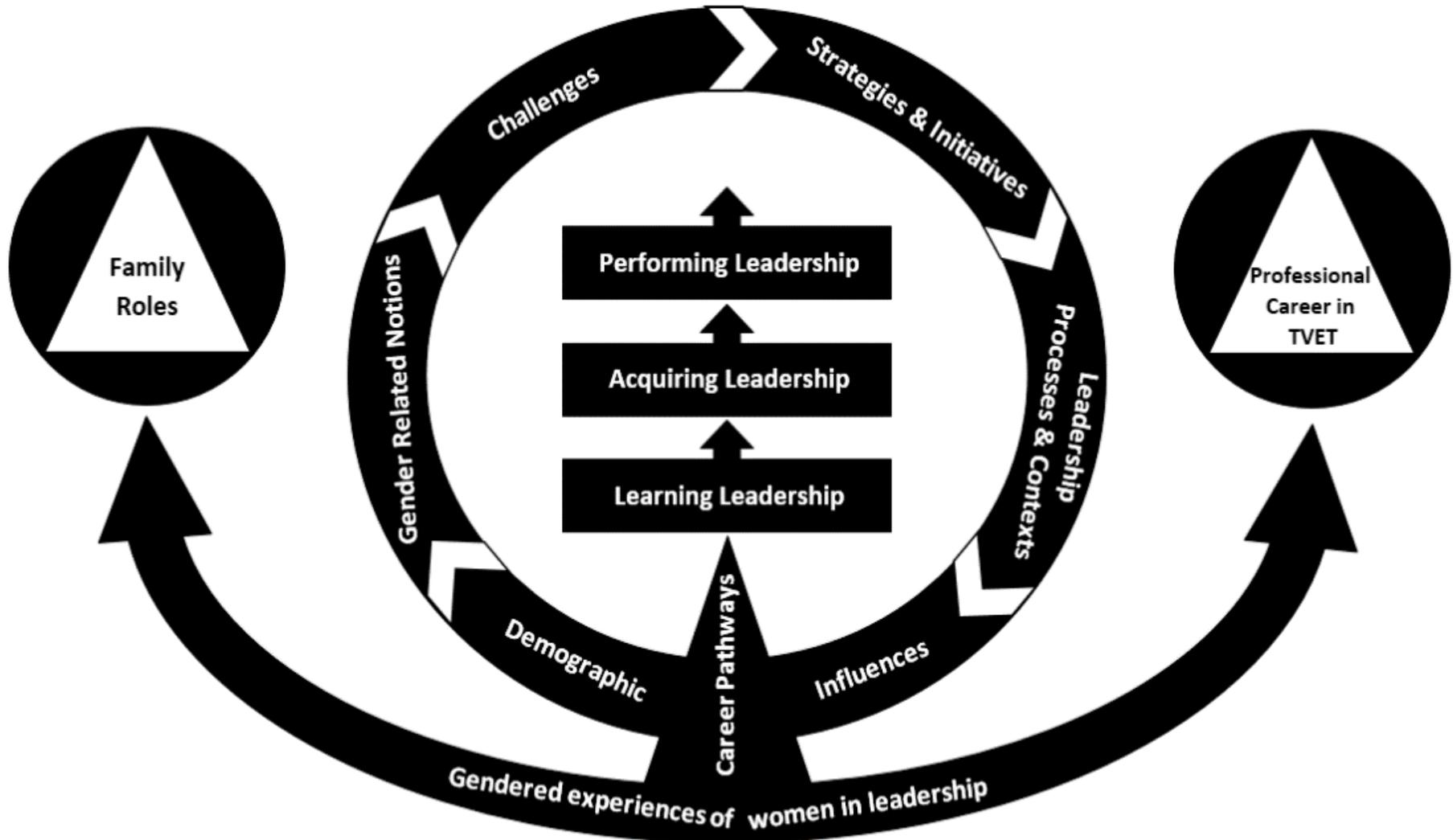
- Background and key question
- A conceptual roadmap
- Methodology
- Plot structure
- Constructed narrative
- The storied stories
- The end(ing)
- Limitations and delimitations
- Significance

“I’m not the woman president of Harvard,
I’m the president of Harvard.”

(Drew Gilpin Faust, President,
Harvard University, 2016)

- The cause of women in leadership – global significance
- Introduction of gender quotas appear to be inadequate
- Statistics / census data still indicate underrepresentation
- Scholarly attention / women leaders’ life stories are limited
- 15 out of a possible 50 TVET college CEOs are women
- DHET - gender discrimination should be eliminated
- Sample – ten women (black, coloured, Indian and white)
 - 3 principals, 5 vice-principals, 1 campus manager, 1 academic head
- **What prevents women in TVET from reaching top positions?**

A CONCEPTUAL ROADMAP (Maritz 2013)

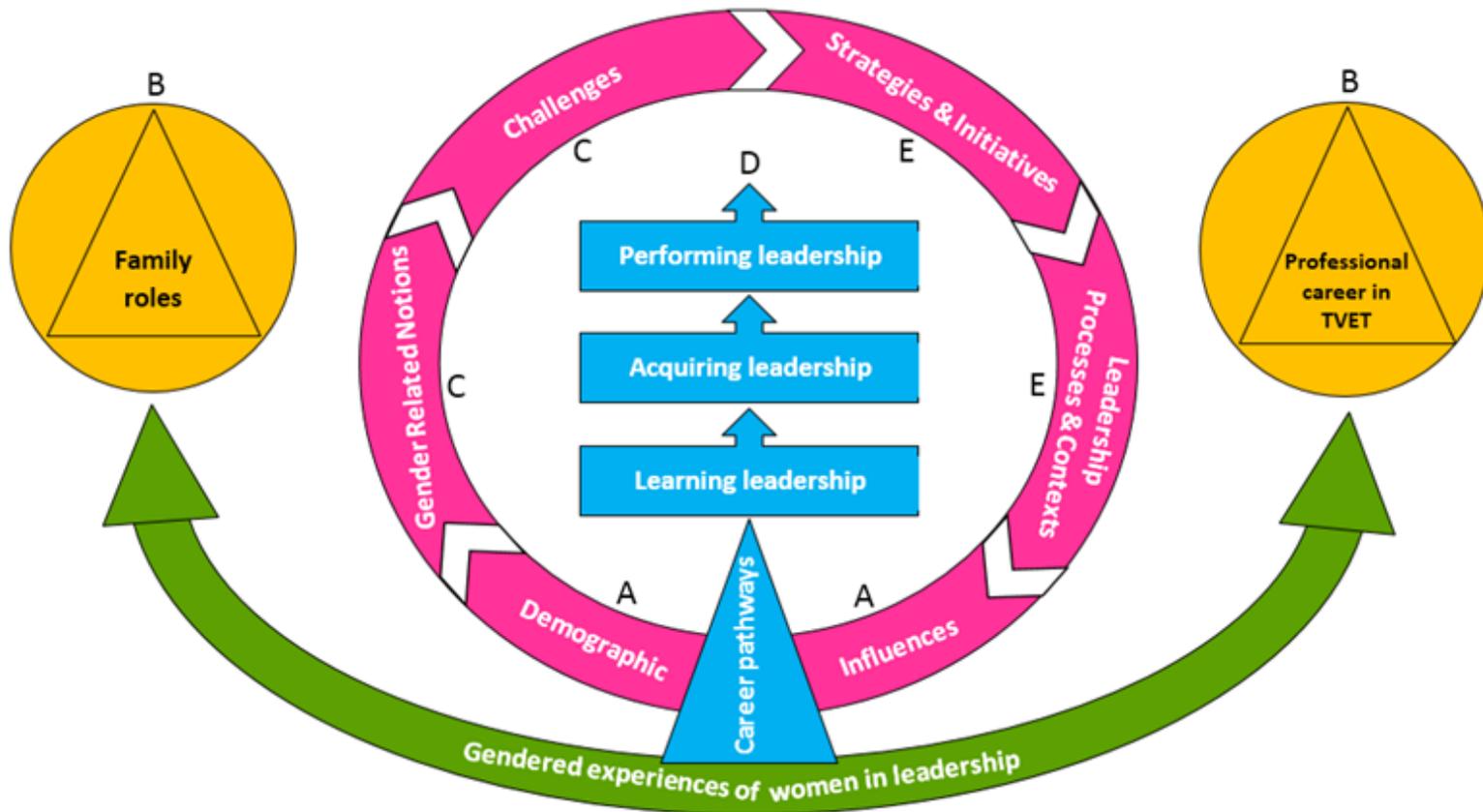


CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Gendered experiences of women in leadership

- Interpretive narrative approach
- Unstructured interviews
- Different perspectives led to a narrative construction
- Theming data according to the roadmap
- Plot structure (characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolutions)
- The two sets of data were merged yielding the analytical framework in the next slide

PLOT STRUCTURE (Saldana 2013; Maritz 2013)

PLOT STRUCTURE	Characters A	Setting B	Problem C	Action D	Resolution E
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ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: Gendered experiences of women in leadership

(RQ 1: Respondents' experiences as leaders)

- Gender transformation formally started with the passing of the FET Colleges Amendment Act No 3 of 2012
- Formalised by the White Paper in 2013
 - Each college had to design a gender equity plan
 - Each college had to renew the plan annually and
 - submit the plan to their respective college councils for approval
- This background provided the context for the constructed narrative / story

- Demographic influences moulded personalities
 - “My father groomed me to take a lead in the house; to always make sure that I take decisions, ‘cause I was the boy in the house, but I was in the body of a girl [R1].”
 - “I realised from a young age that I had something that the other children didn’t have. And that gave me the extra confidence [R4].”
 - “I married and divorced twice. Raised three children on my own. I had to stick it out for myself [R5].”

- Intricate balance in professional careers and family roles
 - “My successes came at the expense of my family. It’s hard work and sacrifices. I mean, how can you leave two toddlers with a dad and a nanny for so many months [R2].”
- Work/family conflict adversely affected most of the respondents’ health – resulted in burn-out or hospitalisation
 - “Yes. Hundred times! *Aag, as jy ‘n week in die hospitaal is op ‘n drip* [Oh, if you are in hospital on a drip for a week] [...], my stress attacks me physically [R2].”
 - “When you’re supposed to go off on sick leave, you’re still on it, until you reach a point by the end of the year where you’re just so tired, you’re just not functioning [R10].”

(RQ 2: How gender transformation affected respondents (if at all))

- Apartheid's years affected women's salaries; they had to resign when they fell pregnant; married women were not allowed permanent posts
 - “Promotion was only available when somebody dies [R4].”
 - “I had to wait for fifty years [R9].”
 - “I had to hide my engagement ring in the cubby-hole [R3].”
- All respondents alluded to men-to-women, and women-to-women discrimination, called the PHD (pull-him/her down) syndrome
 - “male chauvinist” [R5]; “treat women like dirt” [R9]; “you live invisible” [R8].
 - “I decided to quit because of this rude, aggressive woman that needed to assert herself [R9].” “I’m tired of being hurt [R1].”
- R3, R7 and R10 were quite guarded during interviews; did not describe gender-related incidents – ‘halo effect’; ‘likeable answers’

- Career paths with three different phases – gendered experiences and sexism emerged during all three phases
 - Learning leadership / 1st phase:
 - “I was the only woman lecturer on an engineering campus. Rude remarks surfaced almost every day [R5].”
 - “They only listened when I started swearing at them [R9].”
 - Acquiring leadership / 2nd phase:
 - “During my interview, the board asked me if I could handle the male staff [R7]!”
 - “If I could only crack it [the glass ceiling], so that the next person can go through, it will be fine [R6].”
 - Performing leadership / 3rd phase:
 - “Really, the men visibly switch off [R8].”
 - “When the principals meet with the regional office and a senior woman official at DHET makes a proposal, they grind her. “I find that men do not listen very well [R6].”

(RQ 3a: Strategies adopted to deal with gender-related issues)

- Work pressures – workload not restructured according to roles
- No evidence of support structures was provided e.g.
 - Family-friendly policies, flexi-time, childcare facilities on site, safety measures reducing potential sources of stress like hijacking after late meetings
- No protective strategies in place to address subtle discrimination
 - Respondents battled to provide strategies:
 - “I made peace [R1]”; “my ‘mother-hen’ tactic failed; I decided to shut up and apply the silent strategy [R4]; I surrendered to protect myself [R9].”
- Mentoring as development strategy – informally; ad hoc basis only
- No training programmes / study material in place addressing men-to-women and women-to-women discrimination
- Limited peer and supervisor support came to the fore
- No evidence of networking with business leaders emerged

(RQ 3b: Initiatives adopted to deal with gender-related issues)

- Leadership approaches and management styles that popped up
 - Authoritarian management style
 - Contingent management style
 - Autocratic leadership style
 - Mothering leadership style
 - Transactional leadership style
 - “da’ gaat hulle weer lank aan” [that got them going again for a long time]
 - Transformational leadership style

Gender transformation in the Western Cape TVET sector: A narrative response

- Gender transformation outcomes i.t.o. career progression
 - older respondents
 - progressive gender transformation late in their careers
 - younger respondents (all women of colour)
 - progressed quickly
- Gender transformation outcomes i.t.o. gender discrimination
 - subtle men- and women-to-women discrimination unresolved
 - gender stereotyping and other gender-related challenges still prevail
 - “I can’t do it anymore [R5]!”

Gender transformation in the Western Cape TVET sector: A narrative response

- Legislation failed to equip respondents with strategies
 - respondents provided insufficient evidence of coping mechanisms
 - “hard work” to “prove” themselves was given as a strategy against gender discrimination – this resulted in health problems
 - Competent, potential women leaders quit, thus aggravating the dearth of women among the pool of aspiring college principals
- “Narrative smoothing” could have occurred – untold stories
- This story does not have a “Hollywood plot” where all is well in the end

- This story was an exploration of gender transformation experiences of ten TVET women leaders in the Western Cape,
- interpreted via a conceptual roadmap;
- re-storied within the bounds of a specific plot structure
 - (characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolutions) and
- illustrated in an aligned analytical framework.
- The results show that:
 - underrepresentation still exists
 - gender transformation endeavours do not seem to permeate the education sector adequately
 - some progress has been made regarding gender equity
 - gender stereotyping and discrimination still prevail

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

- This paper is merely a point of departure in addressing all-inclusive gender transformation. However:
 - limited sample size was available, thus
 - no differentiation was made between senior/top women leaders, i.e. vice-/principals, campus/academic/portfolio/senior managers
- Boundaries that were set for the study included
 - no interpretation – other than gender – in terms of diversity or intersectionality
 - a sample restricted to TVET women leaders in the Western Cape
 - no identification of mechanisms that create gender discrimination / offer alternatives to inform, sensitise, and transform society
 - no allusion to the role of male leaders and partners who have empowered women

SIGNIFICANCE

- This paper expands the limited literature on women leaders' life stories
- For policy developers
 - strategies and initiatives might promote interest in formulating interventions to inform, sensitise, empower and/or transform men and women leaders at key stages of their career pathways
- For advisory boards
 - guidelines might assist in capacitating current and potential leaders through an all-inclusive gender transformation strategy
- The broader significance of this paper
 - still a great deal to be done - many untold stories and much scope for further research
 - point of departure in addressing all-inclusive gender transformation to the advantage of women and men in TVET college leadership

Questions?

THANK YOU

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