

WOMEN  
AND  
LEADERSHIP  
IN  
LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During the past 20 years or so Mignon and I have served Lutheran schools in South Australia and Queensland. We have also been involved in activities which have enabled us to share in discussions with a wide variety of people. Some of those activities have enabled us to step outside of the particular school in which we serve and make connections with educators from other educational groups.

Leadership issues are often spoken about in those groups, as is indeed the role of women in leadership. The fact that so few women are in leadership roles in the Lutheran network is worthy of examination. How do we compare with other groups? Why is this so? Should we be concerned about it? Is this a serious issue for the next millennium? Would specific research into the area discover other issues about leadership in Lutheran schools?

This presentation is meant to be nothing more than 'pre-dinner drinks' to a much more 'substantial dinner' which in our view should follow. We are aware of its limitations but are thankful that the topic was included in the conference program.

## **DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP**

With a title for a forum such as "Women and Leadership in Lutheran Schools", it would be reasonable to expect that there may be an exploration of ideas about models of leadership, the participation of women as leaders in a range of roles in schools and the advantages of having women involved in leadership, to name just a few. For the purpose of this very short session however, we will be looking at women involved in leadership as Principals in Lutheran schools being acutely aware that women can be and are involved in leadership in whatever role they may have in schools.

## **PLAN OF SESSION**

- Identify purposes of session.
- Examine statistics of women in *leadership* in various sectors of education.
- Examine results of survey of teachers in Lutheran schools.
- Recommendations for change.

## **PURPOSE OF SESSION**

- To raise awareness of the gender imbalance of Principals in Lutheran schools.
- To promote wider discussion about the gender imbalance of Principals in Lutheran schools which should lead to a comprehensive study.

# WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

## Comparative Analysis (Statistics refer to Principal positions only)

	<u>SYSTEM GROUP</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
1.	<b>Dept of Education S A</b> <i>Source: D.E.T.E. S A (P &amp; S combined)</i>	42.6%	57.4%
2.	<b>Catholic Schools S A</b> <i>Source: Catholic Education (P &amp; S combined)</i>	53.6%	46.4%
3.	<b>A.H.I.S.A. Schools</b> (Secondary Independent) <i>Source: Membership Profile A.H.I.S.A. (272 members)</i>	29.0%	71.0%
4.	<b>J.S.H.A.A. Schools</b> (Primary Independent) <i>Source: Membership Profile J.S.H.A.A. (300 members)</i>	49.6%	50.4%
5.	<b>Lutheran Schools</b> <i>Source: B L</i>	10.7%	89.3%
		(Primary)	
		13.6%	86.4%
		(Secondary)	
	<i>Total No. of women serving in Primary Schools</i>	<i>71.6%</i>	
	<i>Total No. of men serving in Primary Schools</i>	<i>28.4%</i>	
	<i>Total No. of women serving in Secondary Schools</i>	<i>50.5%</i>	
	<i>Total No. of men serving in Secondary Schools</i>	<i>49.5%</i>	

## **WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP SURVEY**

In an attempt to discover a little more about the issue, a short survey was produced and sent out to selected schools in each State. We were surprised to receive back some 400 responses from a possible 450. An overview of the brief survey is presented for information. We are aware that a more comprehensive instrument would be used in a purpose-driven study of this issue.

1. The school they worked in, ie. junior primary, primary, middle or secondary school
2. Their age range
3. Their sex
4. Number of years of teaching

They were also asked the following questions:

5. Have you ever considered applying for a major leadership position?  
If NO, please explain in a few words reasons for not considering a leadership position.
6. Has anyone in the Lutheran network ever spoken to you about your potential for leadership?  
If YES, what position did that person hold?
7. Have you been involved in any development activities, which may prepare you for potential leadership?  
If YES, please list them.

## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The following table summarises the results of answers to the last three questions.

*Question 5: Have you ever considered applying for a major leadership position?*

RESPONSE	PRIMARY FEMALES	PRIMARY MALES	SECONDARY FEMALES	SECONDARY MALES
<b>YES</b>	21%	55%	31%	27%
<b>NO</b>	79%	45%	69%	73%

*Question 6: Has anyone in the Lutheran network ever spoken to you about your potential for leadership?*

RESPONSE	PRIMARY FEMALES	PRIMARY MALES	SECONDARY FEMALES	SECONDARY MALES
<b>YES</b>	26%	55%	33%	35%
<b>NO</b>	74%	45%	67%	65%

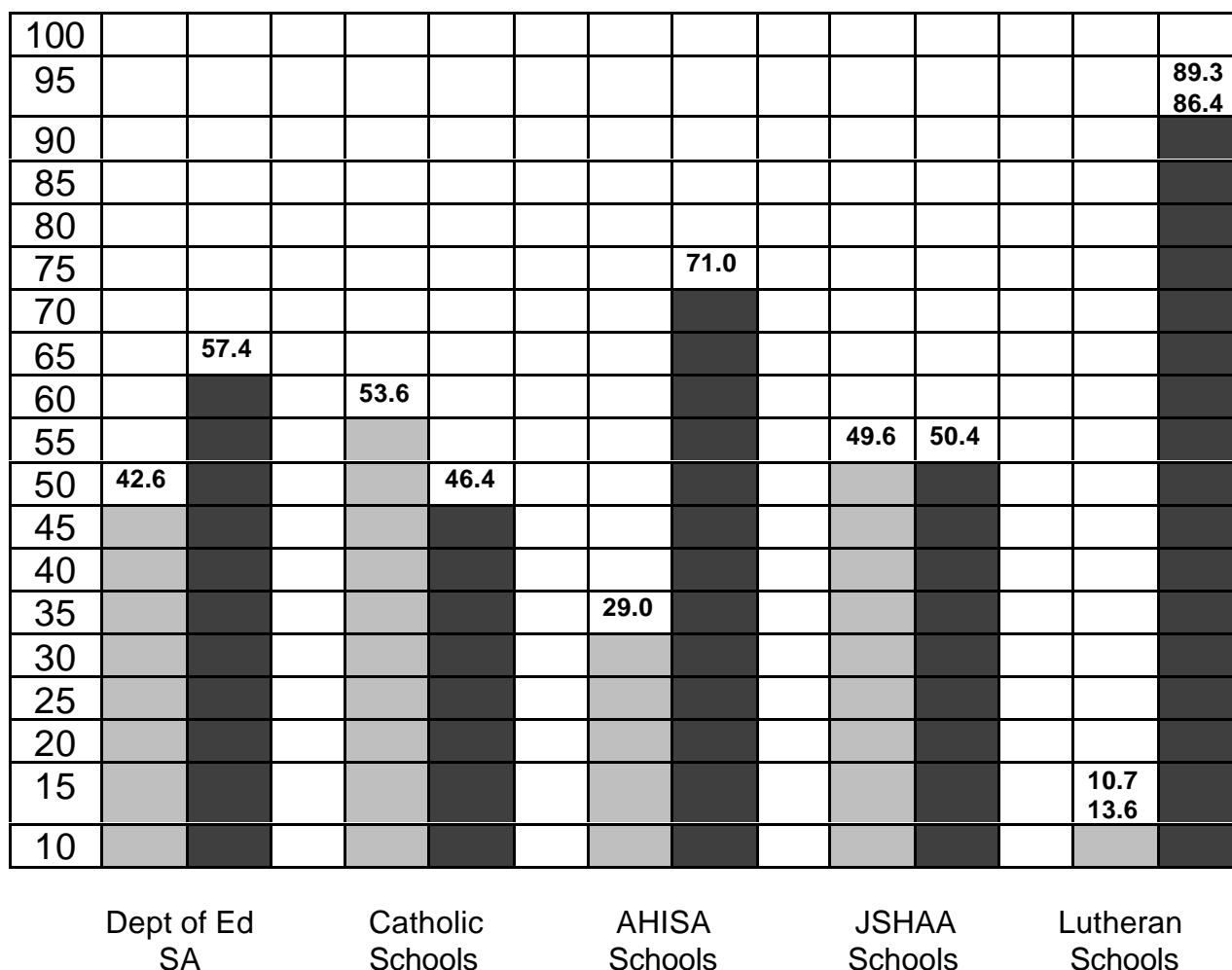
*Question 7: Have you been involved in any development activities, which may prepare you for potential leadership?*

RESPONSE	PRIMARY FEMALES	PRIMARY MALES	SECONDARY FEMALES	SECONDARY MALES
<b>YES</b>	29%	57%	51%	54%
<b>NO</b>	71%	43%	49%	46%

As you examine the **Survey Highlights** table you may wish to consider the following:

- Differences in responses of male and female teachers in primary schools. Possible reasons for these responses.
- Similarities in responses of male and female teachers in secondary schools. Possible reasons for this.
- Differences between the responses of primary teachers and secondary teachers. Possible reasons for these responses.
- Are there any relationships between 'interest in leadership' and 'being spoken to about potential leadership' or 'involvement in activities preparing teachers for leadership'?

### % OF WOMEN & MEN SERVING AS PRINCIPALS



Women  
 Men

**The following are a random sample of responses by female teachers to the second part of question 5 where they were asked to give reasons for not considering a leadership position:**

**RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION:**

***“HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED APPLYING FOR A MAJOR LEADERSHIP POSITION?”***

*Was not encouraged when I first joined the system. I am happy in my current position.*

Have never been given any indication that I would be suitable in a leadership position (teaching for 20 years).

Don't believe women's skills and talents are taken seriously – male dominance very evident – school councils, parents and the hierarchy need to be educated to reconsider.

*It is fairly clear to me that many are too busy with home duties to consider extra work. Men need to take their share of home duties/child rearing before things can change much. Educate men!*

I do not wish to be separated from my children. My gifts lie in teaching JP students.

*I've considered it, but am not really interested in a Principal's position, however I enjoy being a leader in a lesser degree.*

I was asked to be a Deputy (because my position as a Librarian meant I would “have the time to do it!”) While I tried to fulfil the requirements of the position I also learnt I was the wrong kind of person to do it. It was interesting that the male D.P. previous to me got to do a course at L.T.C. and then left the system. (He was Deputy for one year). I was D.P. for three years and was never offered the same privilege.

I'm happy blooming where I'm planted!

*Not been encouraged nor in a location/time where it was possible to attend these particular sessions of training.*

I am happy and challenged enough at the moment. I have thought about it but haven't had outside affirmation so felt it wasn't where my gifts lie.

I am happy to teach children. I'm not tempted by the administrative, economic and parental hassles that come with such positions.

*Every leadership position requires more time away from family.*

Not interested, not encouraged, didn't think I would be successful in the attempt.

*Happy in current position / male dominated hierarchy / family demands.*

In this system you need to be Lutheran and preferably male to get ahead – I am neither.

I applied for a position of Principal in a rural school. I was unsuccessful but later told by a member of the interview panel that I was well qualified and had the skills that the school was looking for. I was told however, that they couldn't employ a female because a female wouldn't command the same respect as a male.

***Summarising the main reasons women gave for not considering leadership:***

- **Happy with present role**
- **Family (no time)**
- **Inexperience**
- **Not interested**
- **Too much expected from you**
- **Not encouraged**
- **Not a Lutheran**
- **Lack of self-confidence**
- **Male dominated hierarchy**
- **Not trained**
- **Not at one school long enough**



Around 30% of female teachers who responded said that they were happy with their present role. One however, needs to examine further, possible reasons why women are not considering a role in leadership as a deputy or principal.

Possible factors worthy of consideration include:

- The patriarchal structure of our educational organisations
- The lack of women in leadership roles and therefore lack of role models
- The difference in women's style of leadership to that of men (Eagly, Karau and Johnson "Gender and leadership style among school principals" in *Education Administration Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.1, 1992)
- Society's view of what leadership is – "male, white and autocratic" (Heath "women and leadership in the 1990's in *The Practising Administrator* 1999 Vol.2)
- Lack of parity for women leaders

An example of what is meant by this, is highlighted in the following extract from a letter I received from a female principal:

*I have been a Principal now for 16 years. In that time, I have been quite 'lonely' as either a one only, or at most one of three S A women principals. As I now relinquish my position as Principal at .... one of my greatest wishes for the future is to see the role of women in the system throughout Australia be given a much brighter profile. There seems to be some level of inequity when the opportunities for study and experience are taken into account at the interview level. Women take time out for child rearing and while they are doing that, they cannot be gaining experience in the schools, nor can they devote the same amount of time to study as their male counter parts can. If there could be some assistance financially or some consideration given to the value of child rearing, then I am sure we would be on the way to opening pathways to more women in leadership positions in our schools.*

## **GROUP DISCUSSION / FUTURE PROCESS**

We could pose many other questions which relate to the results of the survey, such as: *What effect does the lack of women in leadership positions have on the students in our schools and in our community?* However, answers to these questions need to be explored in future forums.

What we would like you to do now is to work with a partner or in a small group to come up with action plans for ways of increasing the number of women in leadership (principal or deputy) roles in Lutheran schools in the future.

We encourage you to think as widely and creatively as possible and to consider the various groups this may have implications for, eg. school councils, directors of education, Luther Seminary.

We will give you ten minutes to record your recommendations and then we will spend a brief time sharing some of these with the whole group. It is our hope that these recommendations will be used as a basis for research and action into this area of need in Lutheran schools.

