Women Leading in Education:

A research briefing paper for the East Midlands

Dr Kay Fuller, Associate Professor of Educational leadership,

Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management, University of Nottingham

February, 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of UK legislation and the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, this paper provides detail about the representation of women in school leadership in England. It gives a fine-grained analysis of women's representation in secondary school headship in the East Midlands by local authority. Finally there is an overview of what the research says about the barriers and enablers that affect women's career advancement in schools.

2. THE EQUALITY ACT (2010)

The Equality Act (2010) follows historic legislation such as the Race Relations Acts (1965, 1976), the Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and the Employment Equalities Regulations (Sexual Orientation, 2003; Religion or Belief, 2003; Age, 2006). It outlines nine characteristics 'protected' from discrimination in education, the workplace and elsewhere:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Section 14 is concerned with dual discrimination which may be additive or intersectional but it does not provide for discrimination against those with more than two protected characteristics.

3. THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY (2012)

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) monitors the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED requires public sector organisations including schools to have 'due regard' to the impact of policy and decision-making on those with any of the nine protected characteristics listed above. Their duty is to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;

3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it (EHRC, 2012a: 4).

Schools are both education providers and employers. They are expected to 'remove or minimise disadvantages'; 'take steps to meet different needs'; and to 'encourage participation when it is

disproportionately low' (EHRC, 2012a: 4). They are required to demonstrate compliance with the equality duty and to publish equality objectives.

The EHRC found that, as employers, 31.6% of 390 randomly selected primary schools and 41.6% of 383 randomly selected secondary schools had published objectives that related to the three-fold general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations (EHRC, 2012b: 10). 73.3% of primary schools and almost 70% secondary schools were found to have no published objectives relating to the specific equality duties (EHRC, 2012b: 7).

Schools had published objectives relating to specific characteristics i.e. not including objectives that cover 'all protected characteristics':

- age (primary – 15.7%; secondary - 5.6%)
- disability (primary – 44.6%; secondary - 58.4%)
- sex (primary – 54.2%; secondary - 53.9%)
- gender reassignment (primary – 25.3%; secondary - 6.7%)
- marriage and civil partnership (primary – 2.4%; secondary - 0.0%)
- pregnancy and maternity (primary – 2.4%; secondary - 3.4%)
- race (primary – 55.4%; secondary - 46.1%)
- religion or belief (primary – 31.3%; secondary - 19.1%) and
- sexual orientation (primary – 15.7%; secondary - 22.5%) (EHRC, 2012b: 14).

Schools had published objectives relating to specific aspects of employment:

- applications and appointments (primary – 26.7%; secondary - 26.0%)
- pay gap (primary – 3.3%; secondary - 2.0%)
- promotions or representation in senior roles (primary – 3.3%; secondary - 4.0%)
- discrimination, harassment, bullying or grievances (primary – 26.7%; secondary - 4.0%)
- sickness absence or staff leaving (primary – 3.3%; secondary - 0.0%)
- job satisfaction (primary – 3.3%; secondary - 2.0%)
- training (primary – 66.7%; secondary - 54.0%) and
- other (primary – 33.3%; secondary - 44.0%) (EHRC, 2012b: 17).

Some of these aspects of employment have been associated with barriers to women's career advancement (see below).

4. WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

The national picture

The 2015 workforce census (DfE, 2016) shows:

Sector	women as % of classroom teachers	women as % of deputy and asst headteachers	women as % of headteachers
State funded nursery and primary	86.3	81.9	72.3
State funded secondary	64	51.3	40
State funded special/ PRU/ AP	73.4	70	61.5

Regarding Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women it shows:

Sector	BAME women as % of women classroom teachers	BAME women as % of classroom teachers	BAME women as % of women deputy and asst headteachers	BAME women as % of deputy and asst headteachers	BAME women as % of women headteachers	BAME women as % of headteachers
State funded nursery and primary	6.7	5.8	5.6	4.6	3.2	2.3
State funded secondary	9.9	6.3	6.3	3.2	4.5	1.8
State funded special/PRU/AP	5.8	4.3	3.8	2.7	3.3	2.0

The East Midlands

Women's representation in secondary school headship has changed over time:

Local authority (includes LA, academies and free schools)	2001	2005 (Fuller, 2009)	2010 (Fuller, 2013)	2015 (Fuller, in press)	Change over time (2001-2015)
Derby	14.3	28.6	21.4	37.5	23.2
Derbyshire	16.7	23.9	25.5	31.1	14.4
Leicester	31.3	43.8	50	44.4	13.2
Leicestershire	31.5	38.9	37	34	2.5
Lincolnshire	17.5	17.2	32.3	29.6	12.2
North Lincolnshire	25	41.7	36.4	50.0	25.0
North East Lincolnshire	21.4	35.7	50	50.0	28.6
Northamptonshire	20.5	33.3	40.5	42.9	22.3
Nottingham	19.0	27.8	33.3	31.3	12.2
Nottinghamshire	16.0	23.4	30.2	26.1	10.1
Rutland	0.0	0	33.3	50	50.0
Total	19.4	27.4	34.8	34.9	15.5
England	25	30.1	35.5	38	13.0

There has been considerable improvement in some parts of the region (e.g. North East and North Lincolnshire). However, there has been little change in Nottinghamshire, Nottingham and Leicester.

5. WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT BARRIERS?

Multi-level barriers

Barriers to women's advancement in school leadership relate to

1. socialization and stereotyping
2. internal barriers
3. macro (societal), meso (organizational) and micro (personal) level culture and tradition factors (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

These are complex and interacting factors. Women internalise societal, organisational and familial conditions. Education aims to break down negative stereotypes but all too often its structures and systems perpetuate them.

Systems and structures

As noted above barriers relate to systems and structures concerned with

- applications and appointments
- pay gap
- promotions or representation in senior roles
- discrimination, harassment, bullying or grievances
- sickness absence or staff leaving
- job satisfaction
- training.

Discrimination

The combination of sex with the other protected characteristics have resulted in discrimination for some secondary school senior leadership team members, though it is not always recognised as such (Fuller, Cliffe and Moorosi, 2015). In particular, survey respondents reported discrimination relating to sex and age/ sex and disability. SLT colleagues, governors, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and pupils had demonstrated discriminatory behaviour. The highest number of reports concerned parents.

Interview data identified discriminatory practices such as

- homophobic language
- racist language
- lack of diversity or tokenism in SLTs
- exclusionary behaviour in meetings
- failure to consider women of child-bearing age for promotion to middle leadership
- lack of opportunities for non-faith staff in a faith school
- favouritism for leadership opportunities
- non-retention of leadership roles when working part-time
- expectation of blurred work life boundaries i.e. answering emails outside office hours/on days off
- 'more' expected of single women
- ageism (younger and older) (Cliffe, Fuller and Moorosi, forthcoming).

Long working hours

Schools can be greedy workplaces where long working hours are the norm. Fuller, Cliffe and Moorosi (2015) found the majority of secondary SLT members in six local authorities worked more than 55 hours per week.

6. WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT ENABLERS?

Senior Leadership Team culture and working practices

An expansive leadership learning environment

A case study of a woman's successful leadership preparation practice identified an expansive leadership learning environment (ELLE) conducive to leadership development consisting of

- Close collaborative working within and beyond the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Colleagues mutually supportive in enhancing leadership learning
- An explicit focus on leadership learning, as a dimension of normal working practices including the opportunity for supported reflective practice in school
- Supported opportunities for leadership development that goes beyond school or government priorities
- Out of school educational opportunities including time to stand back, reflect and think differently about leadership
- Opportunities to integrate off the job leadership learning into everyday practice
- Opportunities to lead and participate in more than one working group
- Opportunity to extend professional identity through boundary crossing into other leadership roles, school activities, schools and beyond
- Support for local variation in ways of leading and learning for leaders and work groups
- Leaders use a wide range of leadership learning opportunities (Fuller, 2016, p120) (adapted from Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005).

This woman secondary headteacher's practices included

Working with the whole school
1. Modelling headship
2. Standardising operating principles and practices (implementing standardized operating practices)
Working with emerging leaders
3. Identifying leadership talent (initiating interest in leadership)
Working with the SLT
4. Managing the leadership of others - support and challenge
5. Convening operational meetings (daily) (SLT meetings)
6. Convening strategy meetings (weekly) (SLT meetings)
7. Rehearsing leadership conversations (coaching) (rehearsal of relational leadership)
8. Distributing leadership (project leadership)
9. Convening one-to-one reflective meetings (robust self-reflective conversations)
Expanding leadership repertoires
10. Supporting leadership learning opportunities outside school
11. Rotating roles and responsibilities
Working beyond the school
12. Mentoring formally and informally through networks (informal networking)
(Fuller, 2016).

Differences between secondary schools in authorities with high/low proportions of women headteachers

Survey findings from women secondary school senior leaders in 6 local authorities showed some differences in the experience of women working in the SLT

	Local authorities with high % of women HTs	Local authorities with low % of women HTs
Opportunities to expand the leadership repertoire	80.0	47.8
In education - Formal network access	75.5	47.8
In education - Informal network access	71.1	52.1
In education - Network access in person	60.0	39.1

In local authorities where women are headteachers in high proportions it would seem women have more opportunities to

- expand their leadership repertoire
- network formally with senior leaders in education
- network informally with senior leaders in education
- network in person with senior leaders in education.

Networking

The benefits of networking have been summed up as providing

- professional development
- information to a wider local and national audience
- an opportunity to 'voice' concerns
- a safe place in which to speak 'honestly and openly' (Coleman, 2010, p 779).

They have served instrumental and expressive functions. They could also provide opportunities for reflection on leadership practice through mentoring and coaching relationships. Inevitably they would help women to identify role models beyond individual schools.

Flexible working practices

Fuller, Cliffe and Moorosi (2015) found flexible working practices existed in some schools that included

- working from home
- working part-time
- job shares
- being able to attend events and meetings to support dependents
- maternity/paternity breaks (beyond legal entitlement)
- career breaks for study.

In some schools senior leaders benefited from combinations of the above to suggest there was a school culture that valued flexibility to enable colleagues to thrive. This was more noticeable in the local authorities where women were well-represented in secondary headship.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has provided an overview of UK legislation and some statistical analysis of the representation of women in school leadership. The representation of women in secondary school headship in the East Midlands is varied and has changed little in some authorities over the past 15 years. The barriers to women's career advancement consist of complex and interrelated societal, organisational and personal factors that are likely to differ for women depending on their circumstances and contexts. In a regional network there is an opportunity to

- connect women with one another to enable both expressive and instrumental functions
- raise consciousness about women's underrepresentation in school leadership
- gather data about women's experiences of becoming and being leaders
- identify changes that need to happen regarding individuals, practices, structures and systems in schools
- provide mutual support that enables change to take place.

Networking is not a solution in itself but it could enable women to question practice, identify the issues and solve some of the problems.

Dr Kay Fuller, Associate Professor of Educational leadership, Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management

February, 2017

Kay.Fuller@nottingham.ac.uk

8. REFERENCES

Cliffe, J., Fuller, K. and Moorosi, P. (forthcoming) Gender and leadership preparation within the senior leadership team (SLT): an exploration of discrimination. In E. Reilly (Ed.) *International Perspectives on Women in Educational Leadership.*

Coleman, M. (2010) Women-only (homophilous) networks supporting women leaders in education, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 48 (6), 769 – 781.

Cubillo, L. and Brown, M. (2003), Women into educational leadership and management: International differences?, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41(3), 278–91.

Department for Education (2016) *School workforce in England: November 2015*. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2015 [Accessed 8 February 2017]

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012a) Public sector equality duty guidance for schools in England. Available at http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/EqualityAct/PSED/public_sector_equality_duty_guidance_for_schools_in_england_final.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2016].

Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012b) Assessment of the publication of equality objectives by English public authorities. Available at http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/assessment_of_the_publication_of_equality_objectives.pdf [Accessed 30 March 2016].

Fuller, K (2009) Women secondary head teachers: Alive and well in Birmingham at the beginning of the twenty-first century, *Management in Education*, 23(1): 19–31.

Fuller, K (2013) *Gender, identity and educational leadership*. London: Bloomsbury.

Fuller, K. (in press) Women secondary headteachers in England: where are they now? *Management in Education.*

Fuller, K, Cliffe, J and Moorosi, P (2015) Women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team, *Planning and Changing*, 46(3/4): 388-415.