

Research statement

Area of focus

As a Doctorate of Education student at the University of Kansas, I am interested in contributing to the body of literature regarding women in educational leadership. There is a great deal of literature about leadership, but little on women in leadership at the level of superintendent in an educational context. While 78% of the educating population are women, fewer than 30% hold leadership positions in secondary schools and even fewer in the superintendents' role. As a result, there is a lack of gender equity in top leadership positions in public education in British Columbia, and we are missing out on talents, as a significant sector of the population is not reflected in the leadership. There are a small number of female superintendents in the Province of British Columbia and it is my intention to describe and understand the career path of female superintendents in the Province of BC. By gathering accounts of female superintendents, we can learn from their successes, identify attributes that have led to success in their careers and understand the barriers that have hindered career development

Conceptual framework

Interviews with female leaders is key to understanding the role of the Superintendent and even more importantly, insight may be provided for future educators who aspire to the role of a superintendent. The goal is to describe, understand and have insight into the leadership journey of female superintendents in the Province of British Columbia.

The study design is a qualitative design. Creswell (2014) states, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Understanding qualitative research involves using open-ended questions,

that can then be analyzed through a thematic lens (Creswell, 2014). Gaining insight to the journey and experiences of female educators, as they worked towards their role of becoming a superintendent, is best evaluated through open-ended questions.

Creswell (2014) states that “phenomenological research comes from the philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon described by the participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon. The design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews:”.

Current project

This is a proposed interpretive interview study with the intended purpose of identifying and describing the journey and experiences of female Superintendents throughout their careers. The title of the proposed study is, ‘Pathways to success: A Study of Female Superintendents perceptions of their Career Journey in the Province of British Columbia’. -The purpose of the study is to draw out common themes experienced during the careers of female superintendents who have aspired to and have achieved the role of superintendent in a public school district in British Columbia. This study will positively contribute to the literature and add to the knowledge base for females who aspire to achieving top leadership positions in education.-

Of the sixty public school districts in the Province of British Columbia, only sixteen women sit in the seat of the superintendent. The goal of this present study will be to interview a minimum of ten -of the sixteen female superintendents to learn about their career paths. Specifically, the intent is to discover leadership skills or traits that female superintendents possess that differentiate them from males in similar positions.

I propose to explore the “why and how” regarding female superintendents in the Province of British Columbia. The key research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. How do female Superintendents in the Province of British Columbia describe their experience of seeking and attaining their positions?
2. What methods, strategies and processes have female superintendents developed that has helped them achieve success throughout their career?
3. What attributes do female superintendents perceive they possess that have helped them reach success in their careers?
4. What difficulties or barriers have female superintendents faced and overcome in their careers?
5. What role has gender played in their ascendancy to the position of superintendent?

The goal of seeking answers to these questions is to contribute to the educational leadership that is of interest to the Provincial Superintendent organization. In addition, the study will make clear that gender inequity exists in top educational leadership positions in the Province of British Columbia My hope is that this research will help guide the path for women seeking to serve as superintendents in the Province of British Columbia.