An investigation into women's leadership preparation within the senior leadership team.

The Schools Census 2011 reveals the proportion of women secondary school headteachers in England does not reflect the number of women in the secondary school teaching workforce. The proportion of women teachers has increased from 58% in 2005 (NASUWT, 2008) to 61.5% in 2011 (DfE, 2012). Already significantly underrepresented, the proportion of women headteachers increased to 36% in 2011 (DfE, 2012). Across the United Kingdom there is a similar picture of underrepresentation.

However, the literature shows there is considerable regional variation in England and Wales (Edwards and Lyons, 1994; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Fuller, 2009). Findings of a survey carried out in 2010 (Fuller, forthcoming) show there are local authorities adjacent to one another that have considerable differences in the proportion of women headteachers in post, e.g. in the West Midlands - Birmingham (42.7%) and Sandwell (10.5%); in Greater Manchester - Stockport (64.3%) and Tameside (17.6%); and in non-metropolitan districts - Reading (57.1%) and Wokingham (33.3%). Analysis of authorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland reveal similar findings. In some regions women appear to be served well by leadership development initiatives, in others few achieve headship ‘against the odds’ (Coleman, 2001).

Aims

This research sought to discover which members of the secondary school SLT access in-service leadership development opportunities (as women and men; white and black and minority ethnic leaders). It investigated which women and men are faced with what sort of challenges. It explored practical measures that might be shared more widely amongst aspiring school leaders and across educational phases.

Outputs

Findings will be disseminated through conferences and a seminar series.

In addition, findings from the project will inform the BELMAS UCEA International School Leadership Development Network (social justice strand) and an international network for women in educational leadership, which is establishing links between women as practitioners and researchers in educational leadership in three African countries, the Caribbean and the United Kingdom.

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