

Rhodes University
Education Department

The role of values in educational leadership

An interpretive case study

Submitted by

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate the role of values in educational leadership. The renewed interest in values in both educational and corporate environments in South Africa places new pressures on members in leadership positions especially in school life. Schools are described as the ‘nurseries’ of values. The understanding of the abstract nature of values, as well as instrumentalising and implementing values in vision statements and organisational life, poses challenges to present and future school leaders.

This study, based in the interpretive paradigm, is an in-depth investigation into the role of values at a former model C primary school in the Eastern Cape. Through the use of observations, document analysis, focus groups and interviews as data collection tools, this research highlights the importance of values in school leadership and how this impacts the life of the school leader. This case-study research combines theoretical and contextual frameworks to question the nature of values in leadership and uses the real-life experiences of these school leaders to resonate with current understandings of values in leadership and organisational culture.

The importance of understanding these complexities in the lives and experiences of these school leaders cannot be underestimated. My findings highlight the tensions between leading successful schools (task/person efficiency) and remaining congruent with the need for leadership for social justice in post-apartheid educational institutions. The uniqueness of the school environment (‘families’ and ‘communities’) is also featured and resonates with previous literature. Through the lens of emerging leadership trends, we discover these school leaders’ understandings of values in their daily lives: they **do** what they **are** and this is reflected in this school’s unique organisational culture, which could be said to ‘transcend’ present leaders’ influence. Finally I propose that further research is necessary in order to broaden our understanding of the unique role of values in educational leadership in South Africa.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 My interest

My arrival in Johannesburg as a naïve, first-year teacher at a top private school is where this journey begins. At the time, a new head had been appointed and I was the first of ‘her’ teachers. What I gained most from that year was an overwhelming respect for her position as Head of the school and an intense curiosity for ‘educational leadership’. So many questions occurred to me as I witnessed her compelling presence in assemblies and parent evenings, the sometimes ruthless manner in which she dealt with staff, but mostly the way in which she transformed the school in a matter of months and through this process made many friends and enemies.

On returning to my home-town in the Eastern Cape and teaching at a government former model C school I witnessed a completely different style of leadership. This school leader was unobtrusive, submissive and hardly ever ‘ruffled anybody’s feathers’. The structures and procedures of this school were so smooth and well run-in that confrontation or forceful engagement from the leader of this school was unnecessary. The organisation ran smoothly, with everyone doing their bit to add to the ‘success’ of the institution. How could it be that two institutions so equal in the quality of education provided could be a result of such different leadership styles? How is it that two school heads could be so different in their approach to leadership? Why were the staff at each school so effective and efficient under such different leaders? There was no doubt that this ‘field’ would be my platform for further investigation and study.

My interest in the educational reform in South Africa post 1994 created a web of uncertainty for me, as a young teacher. While completing my P.G.C.E. I always kept ahead with the curriculum developments and national documentation on South African education, and it was here where the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (Asmal, 2001) highlighted crucial elements in educating children to meet the needs of the new national agenda. A new emphasis was placed on values, morals, rights and democracy in education for the new dispensation and this made me reflect

on the practices of school life in educational institutions and how this impacted the life of the staff and students. Mostly, the challenge this provided for the leaders of these schools is what convinced me to register for a Masters programme in Educational Leadership and Management.

Through the course-work component of the degree I became more and more intrigued by the emerging trends in leadership theory and kept reflecting on instances in my teaching career and experiences with my school leaders that resonated with these views. By means of course-work assignments I began the research journey and realised the impact research had on the institution involved (Drake, 2006). I was amazed and overwhelmed by the impact ‘data’ could have on a school and with this attitude my research for this thesis began.

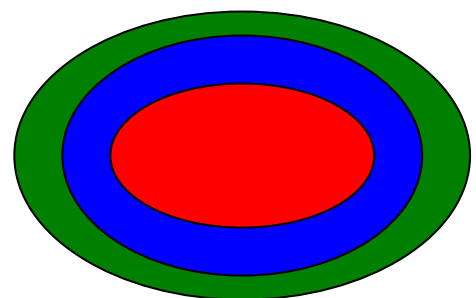
1.2 Context of this research

More and more, researchers and practitioners are acknowledging the impact of values on organisational practices. As institutions become more complex and diverse, the realisation that values influence core activities is being realised (Lazaridou, 2007:339). Researchers such as Schein (1992), Deal and Peterson (1999) and Sergiovanni (2001) have researched the role of values in organisational culture and how this impacts on leadership and in light of this study, educational leadership.

My research enquiry evolved from three ‘curiosities’ (see Figure One) regarding how values impacted the lives of school leaders:

- The **environment**, which lies outside the organisation, is concerned with how values have become an integral part of current leadership theory and how values have impacted the South African educational context.
- **Organisational culture**, which refers to the organisation itself, involves how these values

Figure One



that underpin the behaviours and attitudes of organisational life are understood and accepted.

- The **individual leader** and how he or she reflects these values in everyday life practices as a leader and how organisational values correlate with personal values.

Leadership has been described as one of the most complex and multifaceted phenomena in organisational research (Van Seters & Field, 1990:29). Through the evolution of leadership theory, values have become a crucial factor in contemporary leadership ideas. Within the emergence of trends such as servant leadership, leadership for social justice and distributed leadership, personal and organisational values have become an integral part of organisational life. This is where my research into the role of values in educational leadership proves vital in growing the field of Educational Leadership and Management and hopefully provides a platform for further investigation in the South African context: a context that is weak in the academic arena (Van der Mescht, 2007).

School life in the South African context is being transformed. Schools face the challenge of being self-managing, places of effective teaching and learning, and institutions which equip their students to be members of a diverse and multi-cultural society. Besides this, the very nature of school life lends itself to further enquiry. Schools have been described as organisations **for** people: ‘communities’ and ‘families’ (Sergiovanni, 2001) and not concerned with the elements of profits, targets and production. There is a need to recognise the importance of each individual with his/her personal background, talents and ways of understanding (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:164).

This leads to the second dimension of my research enquiry: organisational culture. The human, relational element in the leadership in these institutions creates an environment where the implementation and instrumentalisation of values can be investigated. The organisational culture of schools has been researched (Schein, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 2001) and it seems the spirit of togetherness, purpose and vision is what binds all members into one ‘community’. The impact this has on the role of the educational administrator is thus also an area for investigation and research. Schein

(1992) and Argyris (1990) portray the importance of values in organisational culture, and describe different 'layers' (implicit/explicit) of values in the culture of organisations, a distinction which provided a useful framework for this research.

Lastly, the impact these facets regarding the environment and organisational culture have on the 'person' (the leader) is where my research is brought into reality. My study investigates how the role of values impacts on the leaders of educational institutions and how this in turn affects their leadership practices.

My efforts to find current research on the role of values in educational leadership in South Africa have met with little success. I posit that further research is critical so that we can develop an understanding of how what is theorised translates into practice, and hence enhance opportunities to work and grow in this vital area of educational leadership.

1.3 Research goal and questions

Against this background this study sought to investigate the role of values in the lives of school leaders in a former Model C School in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. To achieve this goal I attempt to answer two research questions:

- How do school leaders articulate the values within the school?
- How do these values find expression in the school leaders' leadership practices?

1.4 Research methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, framed in the interpretive tradition. The reason for this is twofold. Qualitative approaches focus on phenomena that occur in natural settings, in the 'real world'. Secondly, they involve studying phenomena in all their complexity. In qualitative research the outcome is not merely to simplify or summarise what is investigated. Instead, the qualitative researcher recognises the many dimensions and layers that constitute and underpin the issue. Qualitative researchers seem to know that there is no one truth to be discovered (Leedy &

Ormond, 2001:147), and that a problem can never have one simple solution. The key lies in enabling a rich and complex understanding of the multi-faceted context and roots of social challenges, so that appropriate solutions may be found.

The epistemological orientation of my study is thus interpretive, which enabled me, as the researcher, to “understand reality and others by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us” (Terreblanche & Durrheim 1999:123). Understanding the place and role of the abstract concept of values required me to understand reality as perceived by the leaders within their environments, making sense of how they describe their situations and deciphering what I observed. My information was collected by means of a range of data collection tools and transformed into data by the process of analysis. These are described in specific stages for the purpose of facilitating understanding and interpretation.

The underlying element of studying leaders’ perceptions of values is that I am dealing with a relational issue – examining the creative process where people make sense and produce their understandings of life, meaning and values. I delve deeply into the perceptions and expressions of the role and place of values of members in leadership positions in a specific educational context. Interpretive researchers acknowledge that they are part of the research with the core task of researching people to explore meanings of events and phenomena from their perspectives (Morrison, 2002). In keeping with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of interpretive study, researchers in this paradigm insist that the use of multiple methods does not attempt to capture an objective reality, but rather attempts to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question.

1.5 Outline of this study

Chapter Two is the theoretical framework underpinning my study. I review previous and current literature related to the areas of leadership and organisational culture and emphasise the impact on the South African context regarding values in school life. I

also highlight the uniqueness of schools as organisations and draw on previous research to provide a contextual framework for my study.

Chapter Three provides the methodological framework where I present and discuss my research approach, method, sample and data gathering tools. I also address the issues of data analysis, research ethics and limitations.

The fourth chapter is the presentation of my data in the form of seven key phrases that were drawn from the raw data collected by means of documents, observations, focus groups and interviews.

Chapter Five provides a link between the data and the literature. Here I discuss two themes emerging from my research, Leadership and Organisational Culture, which facilitate understanding of this complex phenomenon and illuminate the key findings of my research.

Lastly, Chapter Six presents a summary of my findings. I highlight and critically evaluate the significance of my study, discuss the limitations and make suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature from diverse sources within different contexts to ultimately provide a theoretical framework for a better understanding of my study. I begin by looking at values within a broader perspective, specifically addressing values in the South African context by investigating the newly placed importance on values in our country.

Next, I map the place and role of values in the evolution of leadership thinking. I begin with traditional leadership theories where there is seemingly no emphasis or importance placed on values within leadership, and move through subsequent and emerging theories where values essentially appear to be the vital foundation. This becomes evident due to the relational, human aspect of leadership and organisational life highlighted in these leadership movements.

I then consider the place of values as the bedrock of organisational culture. The reason for this lies in the understanding and attempted definitions of organisational culture – the assumption that the shared *norms* and *values* of members are critical to organisational life and therefore, values are perceived as vital in the functioning of organisations and the complexity of leadership within organisations. I further investigate the different ‘layers’ of values (implicit and explicit) in organisations, to enrich my study and enhance understanding of the role of values in organisational culture and essentially, leadership.

Following this, I focus on what makes the organisational cultures of educational institutions distinctive in order to give the reader a context from which to understand the uniqueness of schools and life within school environments. Here I relate various theories to my research that describe schools as ‘communities’ and ‘unique organisations’ due to the value-laden task of leading in schools as well as the moral implications of educating children and working with people.

I conclude by referring to other examples of research in the field of educational leadership and values. These examples once again provide a context and framework for my research, and provide an argument which will hopefully facilitate better understanding of the need for further investigation into the impact values have on organisational life and leadership.

2.2 Values in a South African context

Democratic South Africa was born of a leadership with a vision for a people struggling to lift themselves out of the quagmire of apartheid, a people pitted against one another brought into the unifying streams of democracy and nation building (Asmal, 2001).

There is a renewed interest in values throughout education, business and government policies in South Africa, as illustrated in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* presented by Professor Kader Asmal (2001). The Manifesto outlines how values that drive our constitution are expected to inform value-driven, strategic planning in organisations. The strategic implementation of mission and vision statements within corporate and educational contexts awakens the question of the impact of values among members in leadership and the shared orientations of the organisation. The Manifesto recognises that values, which transcend language and culture, are the common currency that makes life meaningful, and the normative principles that ensure ease of life lived in common. Within the educational context this movement incorporates the idea that education does not simply serve the market but serves society, and that means instilling in pupils and students a broad sense of values that can only emerge from balanced exposure to life.

The formative experience of education cannot be undermined, and the values on which it rests are established, reinforced, refined and confirmed in the priceless hours of school and student life. For the past twelve years, South Africans have been engaged in a new struggle, not a contest of political opposites so much as a striving for a unity of purpose, creating bonds where before there were fractures and easing the tension of past conflicts. These goals are encapsulated in the values of the

Constitution and in the Bill of Rights. Yet, in many ways this new struggle is no less daunting than the old, bitter contest of the past (Asmal, 2001):

Apartheid had one good thing. It kept us together. We had a common enemy to fight. We helped each other. When the common enemy went, we were suddenly left alone and [now we] can't find the same powerful thing to hold us together. Each one for himself. And this has ruined a sense of community (Teacher Mamelodi, Yizo-Yizo Focus Group, 2001).

This challenge has been most pronounced in the educational context. These institutions prove to be the 'nurseries' of values. The outcomes-based curriculum commits to instilling in the learners 'knowledge, skills and values', and the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee emphasised that at the heart of the curriculum lie:

the values of a society striving towards social justice, equity and development through the development of creative, critical and problem-solving individuals (Review Committee, 2005).

To take this further, the Code of Conduct of the South African Council of Educators, defines an educator as one who:

strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with those upheld in the Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution of South Africa (Code of Conduct, South African Council of Educators, Article 3.3).

I find the difficulty in these statements is in the actual process of teaching, translating and sense-making of values within an educational context. Asmal argues that values cannot simply be asserted. The process of debate, negotiation, synthesis and modification are needed to make values real. Asmal also cautions that they should govern our lives and our relationships:

If we are to live our Constitution and our Bill of Rights in our everyday life rather than just hear it interpreted to us, we have to distil out of it a set of values that are as comprehensible and meaningful to Grade Ones and Grade Twos as they are to the elders of the Constitutional Court (Asmal, 2001).

There is no doubt that values lie at the heart of our new South African constitution. I now expand on the importance and role of values in the South African context by looking at how values have become the fundamental ingredient in current leadership thinking.

2.3 Leadership theory

Leadership is one of the most complex phenomena to which organisational and psychological research has been applied. Burns remarked that leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (in Van Seters & Field, 1990:29). In this section, I investigate how values have become an integral part of current leadership trends, due to the ‘human’, relational element discovered in leadership and organisational life.

2.3.1 Traditional View

Leadership theory has evolved out of an intense curiosity over the last century and in this section, I briefly describe the movements that preceded current leadership trends, to illustrate how personal and organisational values have become the key element in current leadership thinking.

2.3.1.1 Trait theory

Trait theory, as described in Hoy and Miskel (1996:376), perceived leaders to be born with certain characteristics that would make them leaders. This resulted in leaders being regarded as superior individuals who, because of fortune, inheritance or social circumstances, possessed qualities and abilities that differentiated them from people in general. This included physical characteristics, personality factors, needs, values, energy, intelligence and charisma. Van Seters and Field (1990) identified this era as the ‘Great Man’ Period and identified personality as being pivotal to leadership, and that leadership was hereditary. Although this movement implies the personal values of these leaders as a quality that assumes these people as superior individuals, it seems no emphasis is placed on the role of values in leadership processes and in the

understanding of followership and organisational life. This movement was criticized by behaviourists due to the over-simplified explanations of leadership.

2.3.1.2 Behaviourist movements

The work of behaviourists Blake and Mouton, Hersey and Blanchard, Fiedler and the LBDQ research (Hoy & Miskel, 1996) was instrumental in highlighting the task/person-orientations of leadership. However, there was still no specific identification of values being part of the complexity of leadership in the research of these behaviourists. The Hawthorne studies provided the fundamental basis of these further investigations into leadership understanding (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:12). The ‘task-person’ tension in fact recognises the ‘human’ element in organisational life. This is central in the understanding of values within leadership of organisations and followership, as seen in current leadership movements.

The Hawthorne experiment has remained significant in the evolution of leadership, management and organisational theory because it surfaced the relational and people-centred elements of organisational life. The goal was to create an environment where workers and management could cooperate and be productive. These studies ran for almost ten years, and addressed a number of topics. In the famous illumination studies, for example, the researchers found that workers improved their productivity every time the researchers paid them attention, and that illumination in the workplace was a secondary influence when compared to social relationships. In another Hawthorne study, researchers discovered that workers would deliberately reduce or depress their earnings and productivity to maintain positive social relations with their co-workers (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:12). The idea that *social relations* are a powerful force in the workplace seemed fundamental to understanding organisational life and therefore this remains a landmark study opposing previous thinking.

Behaviourist researchers concentrated on two basic dimensions of leader behaviour – initiating structure (task-orientated) and consideration (people-consideration). As Hoy and Miskel (1996:382) describe, initiating structure:

includes any behaviour that delineates the relationship between the leader and subordinates and, at the same time, establishes defined patterns of organisation, channels of communication, and methods of procedure.

Consideration includes leader behaviour that indicates friendship, trust, warmth, interest and respect in the relationship between leaders and members of the work group. In the Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton and Hersey and Blanchard's work over the years, task and relationships as important dimensions of leader behaviour seemed to be continuously recognised (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996:43). Further studies identified 'initiating structure' (task) and 'consideration' (relationships) as the two most important dimensions of leadership (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996:44).

Fiedler's contingency theory departed from previous thinking because it viewed the leadership situation as an arena in which the leader seeks both to satisfy personal needs and to accomplish organisational goals. In testing his contingency model from 1951-1967, he concluded that both directive, task-orientated leaders and nondirective, human-relations-orientated leaders are successful under some conditions (Van Seters & Field, 1990). The unwrapping of leadership from a one-dimensional phenomenon, to a point where several issues and processes are considered in their complexity, is highlighted by these behaviourist movements.

As I stated before, the importance placed on values in leadership theory is a recent phenomenon. Traditional approaches to leadership described above played down the human element of leadership and hence failed to acknowledge the importance of values as a driving force for decision-making and strategic planning. Simkins (2005:11) describes this 'traditional' conception of leadership by highlighting features such as hierarchy, individualism, followers and leadership. He contrasts this traditional approach with emerging views which portray leadership as the property of social *systems* (rather than individuals), and emphasise mutual influence (rather than individualism). I discuss these contemporary views in the next section, highlighting the emergence of values being at the core of these subsequent movements.

2.3.2 Emerging views

Contemporary leadership theories – such as servant leadership, leadership for social justice, and distributed leadership – are based on the uniquely human and relational nature of leadership. I begin with the transformational leadership movement, which evolved as a significant movement in leadership theory and it is here, more importantly in my research, where one begins to trace how values impact the *interpersonal* dimensions of leadership.

2.3.2.1 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership invoked inspirational, visionary, symbolic and less rationalistic aspects of leader behaviour, and represented a most promising phase in the evolutionary development of leadership theory. The basis of this movement seems to lie in the personal values and beliefs of the leaders. Transformational leaders allegedly unite followers and change their goals and beliefs to ways that produce higher levels of performance (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:393). Barnett, McCormick and Connors (2001:25) also describe this higher level mentality of transformational leadership, explaining how leaders motivate their followers to transcend their own immediate self-interests for the sake of the mission and vision of the organisation.

Bass states:

Transformational leaders transform the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization by fostering an environment where relationships can be formed and by establishing a climate of trust in which visions can be shared (cited in Stone, Russell and Patterson, 2006:350).

Huber (2004:673) describes how transformational leaders do not simply administer tasks and structures, but concentrate on people carrying these through; that is on their relationships and on making deliberate efforts to win their cooperation and commitment. Hence, the role of values emanates in this leadership movement and is perceived as playing a vital role in these relational, people-orientated issues. Leading is no longer seen as a vacuum, but rather a complex web with many agendas seeking priority. Leadership seems to become a state of consciousness, a relational mission,

rather than a personality trait or set of skills (Van Seters & Field, 1990) and assumes other intricate dimensions, such as followership, care of people and ultimately, values.

2.3.2.2 Servant leadership

Servant leadership is explained as a leadership style that fundamentally aims to serve and here again values emerge strongly in the interpersonal dimension of leadership practices. Covey (1992) said:

The servant leadership concept is a principle, a natural law, and getting our social value systems and personal habits aligned with this ennobling principle is one of the greatest challenges of our lives (p. xiv).

Greenleaf (1904-1990) inspired the servant leadership concept among modern organisational theorists (Peete, 2005). According to Greenleaf, leadership first and foremost must meet the needs of others. Servant leadership seems to be embedded in value systems and moral understandings of leaders. Servant leaders, therefore, value human equality and seek to enhance the personal developments and professional contributions of all organisational members: “Servant leaders give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others” (Wilkes, 1996:15).

Greenleaf states:

A new moral principle is emerging, in which followers will respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted servants (as cited in Gergen, 2006:54).

Values seem, as a result, to essentially serve as “prescriptive, enduring standards” (Rokeach, 1973:5) and foundational blueprints for making decisions and solving problems. Values result in attitudes that in turn affect behaviour. The values of servant leaders ultimately permeate the organizations they lead. This uniquely complex process of permeating and instrumentalising of values is a crucial aspect in my study. Servant leaders profess to shape the culture of their organisation by modelling important values such as honesty, love, trust and communication. Ultimately, values in this post-transformational movement serve as the foundational essence of servant leadership (Russell, 2001:80).

2.3.2.3 Distributed leadership

This subsequent view takes the element of social relations to its climax and hence, values are the bedrock in distributive leadership. Leadership here is seen in terms of activities and interactions that are distributed across multiple people and situations and involves role complementarities and network patterns of control (Timperley, 2005).

Distributed leadership is not seen as dividing task responsibilities among individuals who perform defined and separate organisational goals. Rather, it comprises dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers. Task responsibilities are distributed across traditionally defined organisational roles. “Decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the problem situation, not necessarily by where one sits on the hierarchy” (Copeland, 2003:378). This stretching of authority across multiple layers of the organisation requires great trust and faith in the people of the organisation. “Distributing leadership is premised on trust” (MacBeath, 2005:353), and therefore the values of trust, integrity, honesty and faithfulness of members, leaders and the organisation are by all accounts essential in providing the basis for effective leadership in this movement.

2.3.2.4 Leadership for social justice

According to Karpinski and Lugg (2006:279), leaders for social justice seek to define the theories and practices of leadership that are vital to creating greater freedom, opportunity, and justice for all citizens – citizens who are able to participate in and sustain a free, civil, multicultural and democratic society. This movement evidently emerged from a need of people being hungry for leaders who would stand with their community, and against policies that divert education and resources away from the real needs of the community. Specifically, leaders for social justice profess to ‘care’ about and be able to foster equitable learning communities by addressing inequities of race, class, geography, and gender.

As Rapp (2002:226) states:

Leaders for social justice ... resist, dissent, rebel, subvert, possess oppositional imaginations, and are committed to transforming oppressive and exploitative social relations (Gerstl-Pepin, Killeen & Hasazi, 2006:252).

Social justice leaders remain committed to their central purpose – the well-being of society. This in all ways incorporates an understanding and implementation of values across all levels of leadership within the organisation. This movement also seemingly encapsulates a higher level order of values in leadership, as its foundation is a deep understanding of community, society and ultimately people where values such as equity, democracy, fairness and justice are evidently essential.

These brief descriptions of emerging leadership theories are clearly based on relationships and an understanding of people – the very core of emerging movements. Therefore, working within the value systems of followers and understanding the impact personal and professional values of leaders have on organisational life seem crucial to leadership. These theories provide a useful, theoretical framework for my investigation into the role of values in leadership.

In the next section, I look at organisational culture and the role values play in the functioning of organisational life. Organisational culture assumes the identity of an organisation, the shared beliefs and values held by organisational members and the leaders of the organisation. This also assumes a two layered dimension, as values can be implicit (embedded in the functioning of the organisation) as well as explicit (image, public face of organisation), and I investigate this in the next section of this chapter.

2.4 Organisational culture

Organisational culture is defined in many different ways in literature. Perhaps the most typical definition is “the shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinct identity” (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:129) and this basically implies ‘how we do things around here’. Covey’s (1992:19) conceptualisation of values as

Maps [which] are not territories [but] subjective attempts to describe or represent the territory

provides a starting point for what Bezzina (2000:302) sees as the role of core values, which is to provide organisational direction particularly in times of change. Here it becomes important to consider the concept of organisational culture:

Organizations are not written in the natural order of things. They are the consequences of human action ... organizations are expressions of will, intention and value ... they are manifestations of people doing what they want to do or what they think they must do (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993:103-104).

From this information, shared values are concluded as being the basic character of the organisation and its sense of identity. In strong cultures, beliefs and values are held intensely, shared widely, and hence guide organisational behaviour (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:132). Schein's (1992:9) distinction between *espoused* values and *group norms* is a useful framework for this research. He explains how espoused values are the articulated, publicly announced principles and values that the group claims to be trying to achieve. These espoused values should therefore be evident in mission and vision statements, and in the 'image' of the organisation as perceived by outsiders. Group norms, on the other hand, are the implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups and are probably never articulated. I discuss this in detail in the following section.

2.4.1 Espoused values in organisational culture

Culture is concerned with certain values that managers are trying to inculcate in their organisations (Schein, 1992:3).

It can be assumed from the above statement that values can be and are discussed, and people can agree to disagree about them. Schein describes how all group learning ultimately reflects someone's original values; someone's sense of what ought to be as distinct from what it is. When a group is created or when it faces a new task, issue, or problem, Schein explains how the first solution proposed to deal with it reflects some individual's own assumptions about what is right or wrong, what will work or not work. He goes further to say that these individuals who prevail may later be identified

as leaders. It seems however that until the group has taken some joint action and its members have together observed the outcome of that action, there is not as yet a shared basis for distinguishing what is real from subjective experience.

It also seems that if the leader convinces the group to act on his or her belief and if the solution works and if the group has a shared perception of that success, then the perceived value gradually starts a process of *cognitive transformation* (Schein, 1992:19). It then becomes transformed into a shared value. Schein also cautions that not all values undergo such transformation. If consensus among group members is not achieved, the value may in fact not be transformed.

Therefore, espoused values are shared by the group within the organisation when members of the organisation have seen and acknowledged that these values have provided “a guide and a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events” (Schein 1992:20), or helped in achieving the targeted goals of the organisation. Schein emphasises that it is at this level that alignment between individuals’ personal systems of values and beliefs and the organisation’s values and beliefs is important, a crucial component of my research. There should be a kind of “social validation” (Schein 1992:20) of the proposed values in order for them to be “espoused” by the group.

It seems therefore, that values at this level will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at an artificial level. But if those values are not based on prior learning, they may also reflect what Argyris (1990:62) has called espoused values which predict well enough what people will say in a variety of situations but which may be out of line with what they will actually do in situations where those values should, in fact, be operating. Here, Argyris highlights a crucial factor that applies directly to my research and an issue that I must unceasingly be aware of. Contrary to this, if the espoused values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating could be helpful in bringing the group together, serving as a source of identity and core mission. It was the aim of my research to highlight these values within a specific educational institution, in order

to bring about understanding of these espoused values, before investigating the role of the leaders in influencing these assumptions (Schein, 1992:21).

2.4.2 Basic assumptions in organisational culture

The next level in understanding values within organisational culture is described by Schein as basic assumptions. Basic assumptions are the values which have been so taken for granted that members will find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable. These are the group norms described by Schein as the “implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups” (Schein, 1992:8). Basic assumptions, in this sense, are similar to what Argyris (1976) has identified as theories-in-use, the implicit assumptions that actually guide behaviour, that tell group members how to perceive, think about and feel about things.

Human beings have programs in their heads about how to be in control, especially when they face embarrassment or threat, two conditions that could lead them to get out of control. These programs exist in the human mind in two very different ways. The first way is the set of beliefs and values people hold about how to manage their lives. The second way is the actual rules they use to manage their beliefs. We call the first, their espoused theories of action; the second, their theories-in-use (Argyris, 1990:13).

These basic assumptions, or theories-in-use, are allegedly those that are neither confronted nor debated and hence are extremely difficult to change. Consequently, to change something in this realm could be intrinsically difficult because it appears that re-examining basic assumptions causes destabilizing of our cognitive and interpersonal world. Rather than tolerating this anxiety, we tend to want to perceive the events around us as being congruent with our assumptions, even if it means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to ourselves what is going on around us.

Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations (Schein, 1992:22).

Within my research these values were more difficult to uncover, due to the almost ‘unconscious’ nature of the values within the perception of leaders, members and being intricately part of organisational life.

2.5 Schools and values: Unique organisations

Schools are depicted in research as being unique organisations, driven by a central element of people-centredness. Bush (1986:5) highlights how, for example, the objectives of educational institutions are much more difficult to define than the purposes of commercial organisations. Schools evidently develop the personal capacity of individuals to inculcate desired values and beliefs and to prepare students for the next stage of education or employment. Bush (*Ibid.*) goes further to explain how children cannot be processed, programmed or manipulated. The learning process is built on personal relationships. There is clearly a strong correlation here with the ‘human element’ highlighted above in contemporary leadership theory, and the importance of the shared orientations in organisational culture. This understanding also has major implications for the role of leadership within educational institutions, and more importantly in my research, for the role of values within leadership.

Other ideas on schools as unique organisations are shared by Sergiovanni who compares schools to communities. Sergiovanni related his ideas with Schein’s views on symbols, signs and rituals being artifacts of deeper meanings and values, and considered the school culture as a metaphor which

helps direct attention to the symbols, behavioral regularities, ceremonies, and even myths that communicate to people the underlying values and beliefs that are shared by members of the organisation (Sergiovanni 2001:124).

Sergiovanni’s understanding of organisational culture is how “underlying the cultural perspective is the concept of community and the importance of shared meanings and shared values” (Sergiovanni 1986:8). Notice here the correlation to Schein’s definition of organisational culture discussed earlier. Sergiovanni defines the term ‘bonding’ as a process by which a group of people who identify themselves to their

shared values and beliefs and are gradually attached to each other, almost like a family or a community: “Communities are collections of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals” (Sergiovanni 2001:77). Here we see how Sergiovanni’s idea on organisational culture relates to his ideas on schools as communities with their complex web of culture and subcultures.

Communities are organized around relationships ... they create social structures that unify people and that bind them to a set of shared values and ideas ... that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of “we” from “I” (Sergiovanni 2001:77).

A helpful assumption to draw from the information above is that schools are people-centred and relational. They are run by people and for people who, even if they have differences, share something in common. Hence, Sergiovanni identifies a need to build a community within a school or what he calls the ‘cultural cement’ that holds diverse groups together (Sergiovanni, 1986:8). This process would surely incorporate the very essence of values as being the basis of integrity, diversity, fairness and community.

In Greenfield’s work (2004:174) two reasons are identified as to why schools are unique and value-laden as organisations. Firstly, educating of children is by its very nature a moral activity, and secondly, due to the fact that relationships among people are at the very centre of the work of school teachers and principals, school leadership is at its focus, a moral activity. It seems, therefore, that reality in school organisations is socially constructed through symbolic interaction among the parties to that social situation. Schools are allegedly nested within containing community and societal cultures, and the norms and values of those larger social spheres mediate and shape what transpires among people within the school, just as do the subcultures within the school itself. Values, in Greenfield’s view, should be a critical component in educational administration.

Therefore, it seems values as the bedrock of organisational culture and essential to the understanding of educational institutions, creates an interesting and valuable dimension in this study. To conclude this chapter, I briefly describe other research

that relates to my study, in order to provide a broader conceptual framework and understanding of the role and place of values within educational leadership, and to provide an argument for the need for further investigation into this research topic.

2.6 Values research in educational institutions

Empirical research on the role of values in leadership, especially in South Africa, is essentially non-existent. There appear to be persistent difficulties in conceptualizing and studying this domain of leadership, and recent contributions point both to specific organisational and leadership values to be explored in more deliberately contextualized studies of leaders and leading (Greenfield, 2004:178). The following examples are empirical studies cited by Greenfield which provide practical research examples of this phenomenon. Maxwell (2005:33) describes how providing a conceptual framework for your study, the assumption, beliefs, expectations and theories, to inform your research is a key part of research design. These examples provide concrete evidence of values within leadership at different educational institutions and reflect the significance placed on the role of values in leadership.

In the work of Blumberg and Greenfield (in Greenfield, 2004:179) who studied principals' conceptions of their school leadership roles, it is revealed through qualitative, in-depth interviews with eight male and female principals how these principals held a clear personal vision of what they believed was important to achieve in their schools. An important feature of these studies is the aspect of school culture and the ethical dilemmas that are part of a principal's day-to-day life: that values and valuing are central to the actions taken and decisions made by the principal. It seems that the moral component of being a principal is crucial.

Kelly and Bredeson's research (in Greenfield, 2004:179) also highlighted values as being crucial to leadership as their research was based on principals as *symbol* managers. As in Blumberg and Greenfield, in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis of the principals, teachers and other staff were done over a five month period. The study results revealed a number of values being communicated: "Educating the whole child, a notion of educational balance, authority, a treatment of

values, a sense of community and professional norms and ethics” (p.14). Values seem central in the daily lives of the principals researched in this study. Kelly and Bredeson conclude, “symbolic leadership is the integration and communication of a principal’s thoughts, words and actions ... conveying core values, images and ideologies, the symbols transmitted through words, actions and rewards served to reinforce the philosophy of the school” (p.19). Notice the prominence of school philosophy in this study correlating to the main issues of Sergiovanni’s work on schools as communities described earlier in this chapter. In both these examples we see the moral, value-laden nature of leadership in the educational context.

Greenfield (in Greenfield, 2004:180), studying the micro political behaviour of an urban elementary school principal, found that the principal used a professional style of leadership which entailed working “in a collaborative and cooperative fashion with teachers, viewing teachers as full partners in the school effort to serve children’s best interests” (p.183). The most potent sources of power Greenfield identified in this research were the shared norms, values, ideals and beliefs of the participants themselves. It seems that through this example, we directly address the issue of values within organisational culture as discussed by Blumberg and Greenfield and Kelly and Bredeson in their research findings. According to Greenfield’s research at this school, the principal highlighted as most important the shared norms and values of his/her staff members. It seems that here we once again have a concrete example of the role values play in the organisational culture of schools and the principal’s leadership style.

In the research of Marshall (in Greenfield, 2004:182), the values of what she referred to as 26 ‘atypical’ principals and assistant principals were studied. She conducted two open-ended interviews, and found the respondents referred to personal core values as key sources of guidance: “fairness, caring and openness” and “respecting the community” (p.377). This study highlights the interplay among the personal values of school leaders, and the moral dilemmas they experience. Once again, this research provides more concrete evidence as to the role and place of values, and specifically personal values, in leadership. Similarly it focuses moral and value-laden leadership styles in educational contexts, correlating with the work of Sergiovanni (2001), Schein (1992) and the previous research studies described above.

Lastly, reporting on research conducted in England Campbell, Gold and Lunt (2003) found that school leaders' expectations of both learners and staff in their schools were strongly framed by their own values which "represent their moral purposes for the school" (2003:205). Conversations with the participants in this study led to an understanding of transformational leadership being more ethically and morally aware, leading to claims that transformational leaders are more effective in developing supportive relationships with those around them and in developing a learning organisation. However, it is cautioned that existing models and theories of leadership do not fully reflect the actual practices of school leaders and that features of transformational leadership were disputable. The importance of post-transformational leadership, which is based on values-led, contingency leadership, was proposed. Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001) indicate that it is the values-based nature of leadership which is of the utmost importance in schools, and this idea was adopted in this study. "Values, more than the power of context, dictated the leadership approach adopted by school leaders in this study" (p.53). This study proposes that 'effective' school leaders demonstrate the following characteristic: "Good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school" (p.53). Overall, we can conclude from this research example how essentially the place and role of values form the basis of effective leadership, and prove to be the challenge to leaders of educational institutions.

Other research into effective school leadership in Australia, Denmark, England and Scotland describes findings of personal values being most important in leading schools:

From conversations about how principles of leadership were translated into action, it emerged that in quite self-conscious ways school leaders relied on their values to guide their actions (Dempster & Mahoney as cited in Campbell et al. 2003:206).

The examples I have described above provide evidence of values being crucial in leadership understanding and how values play a key role in day-to-day functioning of leaders in the school environment.

These studies also recommend a range of concerns and suggestions associated with studying the complexity of values within leadership (Greenfield, 2004:184). Studying leaders and leading ‘up close’, considering organisational as well as personal values, and giving more deliberate and careful attention to the global as well as local contexts in which leading and schooling unfolds, I intend to generate a vital new perspective on the role of values in leadership.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been my aim to provide a review of literature that supports my study into the role of values in leadership and to produce an argument that supports further investigation into this research topic.

By looking at the Manifesto, I deliberately placed the importance of values in a South African context. It is evident in this document, as well as the *Bill of Rights* and other documentation, that South Africa regards values as important throughout all political, educational and corporate industries. In this respect, further study and inquiry into this complex notion of the role and place of values in leadership would surely benefit the South African perspective.

Following this, I summarised a brief overview of leadership movements, beginning with traditional movements, where I described trait theory and the behaviourist movements of Fiedler, Hersey and Blanchard, Blake and Mouton and the LBDQ Ohio studies. I also described the Hawthorne experiment which is seen as a fundamental breakthrough from previous leadership thinking.

In the contemporary leadership theories discussed, I attempted to show how the ‘human’ nature of leadership emerged and where values essentially became the heart of leadership thinking. Through the movements of distributed leadership, leadership for social justice, servant leadership and transformational leadership, I described the impact values have in the relational aspects of leadership in these post-transformational movements. When several people work, communicate and relate to

each other, their value systems together contribute to organisational values which greatly influence organisational life. These notions provide a theoretical framework from which to place and understand my research.

Next I discussed the role of values in organisational culture and the impact values have on how people work together. Quoting from and discussing Schein (1992) and Argyris (1990), I highlighted the complexity and difficulty of addressing values as an essential part to organisational functioning. This then led to the uniqueness of the school environment, where I used Sergiovanni's comparison of schools as *communities* to highlight the complexities of educational institutions and organisational life within these environments.

Finally, despite the helpful studies to date, there remains a gap in the school leadership and organisation knowledge base – how it is people come to understand one another and get anything worthwhile done? The field still knows relatively little about how school leaders, teachers and students actually make sense of their worlds (Greenfield, 2004). The studies I described in the final section of this chapter make it clear that personal values of school leaders have a substantial impact on what they do, how they do it, and how well they do. They also highlight the critical influence of organisational values on leaders and teachers and on leading, managing and following.

This chapter has further argued the need for promoting research into the role and place of values in educational leadership and in the following chapter I provide a detailed outline of the methodology used for my research.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research is systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom (Bassey).

Morrison (2002:5) uses this quote as a useful starting point in understanding research. The use of the word 'systematic' implies a sense of order and structure. Research is perceived to rely on planning and integration of design, process and outcomes. 'Critical' and 'self-critical' seems to lead to the assumption that research design and methodological integrity should be open to judgement by others, and in all aspects the researchers themselves should continually assess, re-assess and reflect on the issues of research design and thinking, which I hope to present to the reader below.

I have learnt that methodology is much more than methods, techniques and tools for research, like conducting an interview and keeping a research diary. My methodological rationale is the reason why I feel an interview is most appropriate or for what purpose a research journal will aid my understanding of the phenomenon I observe. Therefore, I have become aware that epistemological and methodological concerns are critical at every stage of the research process (Morrison, 2002). Questions such as, 'What is the relation between what I see and understand (knowledge/epistemology) and that which is reality (our sense of being/ontology)?' are central to my research endeavour.

Within my research, a qualitative methodology will be the primary orientation. The reason for this is twofold – qualitative approaches focus on the phenomenon that occur in natural settings, in the 'real world', and secondly, it involves studying the phenomenon in all its complexity. As a qualitative researcher, the outcome is not merely to simplify or summarise what I observe. Instead, the recognition of the many dimensions and layers are what portrays the issue in a multi-faceted form. Qualitative researchers seem to know that there is no one truth to be discovered (Leedy & Ormond, 2001:147).

The epistemological orientation of my study is thus interpretive, which enables me, as the researcher, to “understand reality and others by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us” (Terreblanche & Durrheim 1999:123). Understanding the place and role of the abstract concept of values required me to understand reality as perceived by the leaders within their environments, making sense of how they described their situations and deciphering what I observed. My information was collected in a range of forms and transformed into data by the process of analysis. In making sense of my research information, I draw on a set of beliefs or a paradigm about how my analysis will be patterned, reasoned and compiled. This is discussed in the following section.

3.2 Research approach

Bassey (1999:42) describes a paradigm as a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and how researchers condition their patterns of thinking and underpin their research actions. My research will be carried out within the interpretive paradigm. As Cohen and Manion (2000:36) explain:

the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience.

As described above, the underlying element of studying leaders’ perceptions of values is that I will be dealing with a relational issue – examining the creative process where people make sense and produce their understandings of life, meaning and value. I delve deeply into the perceptions and expressions of the role and place of values from members in leadership positions in a specific educational context. Interpretive researchers seem to recognise that they are part of the research with the core task of researching participants to explore meanings of events and phenomenon from their perspectives (Morrison, 2002).

It seems that any attempt to understand social reality must proceed from people’s understanding of their own reality. This means that I, as the researcher, must grasp the interpretive devices by which the individual makes sense of his or her reality as these

devices provide the motivation for his or her actions (Strelitz, 2005:63). In this way, the abstract concept of values will be made real by the personal 'human' factor of researching the leaders of this school and understanding if and how values are recognised and articulated. As Maxwell (2005:22) describes, and I apply to my research context, I will be interested not only in the physical events and behaviours taking place at the school, but also in how the leaders at this school make sense of these, and how their understanding of values influences their behaviour. In keeping with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of interpretive study, researchers in this paradigm insist that the use of multiple methods does not attempt to capture an objective reality, but rather attempts to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Interpretive researchers recognise that they are a part of, rather than separate from, the research topics they investigate. As Morrison (2002:18) states, not only does their work impact on the participants but participants impact upon researchers. The core task seems to be that because interpretivists view research subjects as participants, they explore the meanings of events and phenomena from the participants' perspectives. Within the interpretivist orientation, the researcher is seen as the 'instrument' for collecting and analysing data. Therefore, I will attempt to understand how events, actions and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur. This focus on meaning is the key element to interpretive study, and this will be the approach I undertake in my investigation.

3.3 Case study

Qualitative research is described by Strelitz (2005:63) as 'multimethod' in focus. It seems that the most favoured methods for capturing the inside and 'thick' descriptions are case studies and life stories.

The method of this research is a case study. Yin (2003:13) describes case study research as:

an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used (Stake, 1995). The case is specific. As I am moved to study it, my case is almost certainly going to be a functioning specific. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories and principles (Cohen & Manion, 2000:181). As values have been described as an abstract concept, this definition of case study research ideally applies to my research goals, as it creates a level of concrete, real-life research within this specific context. The phenomenon of both *espoused* values and *group norms* will be applied to the events and behaviours of members in leadership positions at this former Model C School in the Eastern Cape. Leedy and Ormond (2001:149) describe how case study may be especially suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood phenomenon. It is also useful for investigating how individuals or programmes change over time, perhaps as a result of certain circumstances or interventions.

It seems, therefore, that case studies investigate and report the complex and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in unique instances. Also case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and to describe the participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation. An important factor Cohen and Manion (2000:182) observe is that it is important for events and situations to speak out for themselves rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher. This is an aspect I was aware of throughout my research.

Stake (1995:3) identifies three types of case study. Firstly, *intrinsic* case study which he describes as a study undertaken because first and last the researcher wants a better understanding of this particular case. The case itself is of interest. Next, *instrumental* case study is explained as examining a specific case mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case itself is of secondary interest. It plays a supportive role and it facilitates our understanding of something else. Stake explains how the case is still looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps the researcher to pursue the external interest. Here

the choice of case is made to advance understanding of that other interest. This definition of case study seems to describe my research ideally as investigating the role of values in leadership in this specific context will generate a level of general understanding of values in educational institutions and educational leadership. Finally, *Collective* case study permits the researcher to jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition.

Case study research also copes with distinctive situations in which there are many more variables of interests and as a result relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulation method (Yin, 2003). One form of triangulation in social research is the use of more than one method of investigation and hence more than one type of data. Evidence of this factor can be seen in the stages of my research discussed in detail below. Next I describe the sample used for my research and the advantages and limitations of this situation.

3.4 Sample

As Maxwell (2005:87) explains, decisions about where to conduct your research and whom to include are an essential part of research methods. Maxwell draws attention to two main types of sampling – probability sampling (a known nonzero probability of being chosen) and convenience sampling (non-probability strategy). However, as these sampling techniques are not ideally suited to qualitative research Maxwell identifies *purposeful* selection as the better option for sampling. He describes this as a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be received as well from any other choices. For example, in an interview a person will be chosen uniquely due to them being an expert in an area or a witness to an event. The school used in this study was chosen for this reason.

The reason I selected this specific school for my case study was because I am an educator at this ex-Model C Primary School. Of course this brings both benefits and limitations. My reasons for choosing this educational institution were as follows:

- Being a relatively old former Model C school this institution prides itself on tradition and ethos. Publicly announced mission statements, strict events and traditions, emphasised mottos and catchphrases create an environment for much investigation into the role of values in this institution. Hence, *espoused* values within this environment should be fairly ‘visible’ in many regards.
- As an educator at this school it was also most convenient to do my research at this institution due to practicalities of time for research and data collection. Being a member of staff at the school, it was easier to penetrate the hierarchy.
- Being a member of the staff gave me a unique membership role. Adler and Adler (1987:33) explain that to “study social life, it is incumbent upon researchers whenever possible to adopt some sort of membership role in the scenes they study.” My membership role can be described as *complete* as opposed to *peripheral* or *active*. This permitted me as the researcher to be viewed as a member who participated in routine practices and forced me to take on the obligations and liabilities of members. Having a membership role granted me access to ‘secret information’ that ratified the solidarity and continued existence of the group. Complete-member research involves gaining full acceptance of the insiders and enabled me to gain a different perspective than other researchers could obtain. I had the opportunity to acquire ‘understanding in use’ rather than ‘reconstituted understanding’. Limitations, however, included remaining objective with regard to current relationships with members of staff and leaders as well as realising that there would be no ‘disengagement’ process from my research.
- This study restricted itself to the formal leadership of the school (Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of Department and Governing Body Chairman) due to the scope and size of the study.

Bassey (2002:110) cautions how the closer one becomes to the people being studied the more the researcher must ensure that participants are willing to be studied and what they say is reported in such a way that it is not prejudicial to their best interests. This was continuously reflected on as I continued in my research.

In qualitative research it seems that researchers purposively draw samples, building in variety and acknowledging opportunities for intensive study. As a researcher and staff

member of this specific sample, I am aware of the limitations and benefits of my role in this research.

3.5 Data collection stage

As Kumar (1999:104) cautions, none of the methods of data collection provides completely accurate and reliable information.

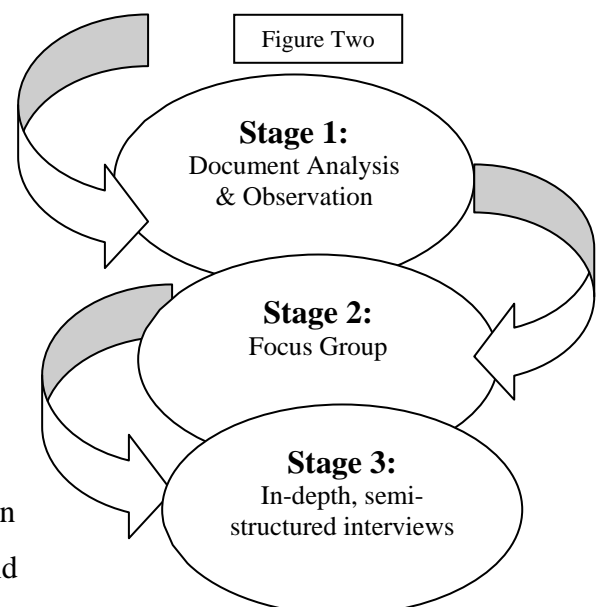
The quality of the data collected is dependent on a number of factors. My skills as a researcher lie in my ability to take care of the factors that could affect the quality of my data. Being aware of this, I deliberately chose both primary and secondary tools for my data collection. As described earlier in this chapter my ultimate goal was to obtain an in-depth, descriptive understanding of the role of values in educational leadership in this specific context. My aim was to achieve this by answering two research questions, namely:

- How do school leaders articulate the values within the school?
- How do these values find expression in the school leaders' leadership practices?

Hence I chose interviews and focus groups as my primary data collection tools. However, to ensure the quality of my data, I also employed document analysis and observation as secondary tools and I describe the use of these tools

in the specific stages of my research. Below I describe stages that I have created to enhance my data gathering in a systematic way but these are not meant to limit my research. There will evidently be times of overlap and interlocking as indicated in the diagram below (see Figure Two):

Stage 1 involved document analysis (vision/mission statements, organisation prospectuses, websites) and



observation of traditions, rituals, and symbols of the school with the intention of gaining an overall 'feel' for the organisation. Mouton (1996) maintains that we must constantly remind ourselves that our senses are the first-order qualitative data generation instrument. This in a school context specifically involved observing assemblies, special occasions, events in the school calendar, photographs and pictures displayed around the school and relationships among staff and with the pupils. Documents according to Merriam (2001:112) refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand. One key advantage that document analysis offers is that "they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the investigator might" (Merriam & Associates, 2002:13).

Maxwell (2005:94) describes how observation lets one draw inferences about perspectives that one could not obtain by relying exclusively on interview data. Also observation may highlight aspects of participants' perspectives that they are reluctant to directly state in an interview. Kumar (1999:107) explains that *narrative* observation is a valuable means of recording as the researcher makes brief notes (journal entries) while observing an interaction and soon after makes detailed notes in narrative form. I utilised narrative observation by recording weekly the interactions, behaviours and actions of the leaders of the school and how this impacted on the running of the school. I recorded this by means of thick text descriptions on my computer in folders for each month from February to July 2007. The researcher may also interpret an interaction and draw conclusions from it. The biggest advantage of narrative recording is that it provides a deeper insight into the interaction. This leads to a greater understanding of the school as an organisation and the emphasis placed on values within the school environment.

Stage 2 took the form of a focus group, structured to involve different members of the organisation and highlight the *espoused* values and *group norms* of the organisation.

A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic. The object is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton, 1990:335).

The information I hoped to gain from this stage of my research was how school leaders articulate the values within the school. Cohen and Manion (2000:71) describe types of interviews, and within this focus group I employed the *informal conversational* interview. The characteristics of this type of interview permitted my questions to emerge from the immediate context (based on the information obtained from Stage 1). This increased the salience and relevance of the questions and hence the questions could be matched to the specific circumstances observed in Stage 1. This focus group involved four members: principal, deputy, head of department and governing body chairman.

Schein (1992) cautions that identifying espoused values must be done in the spirit of joint inquiry and not as an expert conducting a content analysis of their data. Schein proposes that the question that elicits espoused values is why members do what they do and probing into the value statements that are highlighted by the members. French and Bell (1995) also describe how organisational artifacts, values and assumptions are best investigated through joint exploration. Hence, focus groups seemed an appropriate technique to employ for this stage of data collection.

Examples of questions for Stage 2:

- What do you, as members of this school family, perceive to be the most important factors in educating your girls?
- How would you describe this school as an organisation?
- What makes this school unique compared to other educational institutions?
- What are the key life-skills you feel you are imparting to your learners?
- What part do you play in the education of your girls?
- What would you consider to be your 'school values' projected to society?
- Why would you encourage other parents to send their girls to this school?

Stage 3 involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews which took place with the principal and deputy principal (leaders) of this organisation. The reason for this interview process was for more in-depth probing into the leaders' perceptions, to clear up any misunderstandings on my part, to find out what the respondents really believe in and to create an atmosphere for unanticipated responses/answers. As my ultimate

research goal was to gain an understanding of the role of values in education, my research questions in this stage investigated how the values that emerged in Stage 1 and 2 found expression in the school leaders' leadership practices. As Cantrell (1993) observed, interviews create data which is collected in the subjects' own words. The interpretive paradigm affords the researcher an opportunity to understand the situation by putting himself/herself in the shoes of his/her participants in their life world thereby, through the process of interaction, learning the participants' perceptions, interpretations and the meanings which they give to their actions (Adler & Adler 1987; Cantrell, 1993). Kumar (1999:109) describes interviews as being flexible and giving the researcher the freedom to formulate questions around the research topic. The reason for semi-structured interviews in this stage was due to the fact that I had the opportunity to formulate a pre-determined set of questions based on the data collected from previous stages. However, the main objective in this stage was to obtain in-depth information by probing, and the semi-structured questions were the means of attaining this information. This created rich, 'thick' data relating to the role of values in leadership.

Examples of questions for Stage 3:

- How would you describe the manner in which you lead this school?
- What 'legacy' would you like to leave behind at this school (be remembered for)?
- What values do you feel are reflected in all your actions at this school?
- Are there ever conflict situations regarding your leadership at the school and your own personal views and opinions?
- What specific experiences, or specific people, have impacted the way in which you lead this school?
- How do your personal experiences influence your leadership at this school?

These stages were by no means intended to limit my research. There were occasions where the stages overlapped and interconnected. These stages merely represent my intentions as the researcher. As observed by many researchers, because social phenomena tend to be in a perpetual state of flux, a pre-structured, rigid research procedure runs counter to the epistemological assumptions of the interpretive paradigm.

3.6 Data analysis

Stake (1995:71) describes data analysis as the process of unlocking information hidden in the data that the researcher transforms into meaningful and useful information. My research began specifically in the broader context; moving from the organisational, publicly announced values, to the internal perceptions of values in leadership (leaders' perspectives). This was achieved by the cyclic movement from Stage 1 to Stage 3 of my data collection. Data analysis is described by Birley and Moreland (1998:78) as the real essence of the research process. They elaborate by dealing with three tasks that confront the researcher in dealing with data: coding, presentation and analysis. Within the stages described in my data collection section I describe my data analysis steps. Once again it must be emphasised there were occasions of interlocking due to the ongoing, developmental process of analysis. The layout of these explanations in stages is intended to facilitate understanding for the reader.

Stage 1 (Document Analysis and Observation) involved analysis of pictures, posters, photographs and displays around the school as well as observations of assemblies, sports and cultural events, and behaviours among staff and girls. I analysed how values impacted these events and how values had been portrayed in physical displays as well as behaviours between staff, school leaders and students. For example, what was the general feel one gets when entering the school? These field notes (journal entries) and comments were analysed by means of triangulation. Cohen and Manion (2000:233) describe triangulation as the attempt to map out and explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and in so doing making use of qualitative data. Stake (1998:443) explains how:

Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning. But acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen.

Hence, analysis by means of triangulation made this stage of my research more 'complete' and created a more meaningful enquiry into the deeper stages of my research.

Stage 2 (focus group) consisted of coding and theme finding as analysis tools. Cohen and Manion (2000:288) regard focus groups as useful for developing themes, topics and schedules for subsequent interviews and/or questionnaires. Hence, the transcribed text from this focus group was analysed for this purpose as well as to validate my data from Stage 1. Birley and Moreland (1998:78) describe the purpose of coding to render the data into a form in which it can be analysed. They further explain how qualitative data is more difficult to code as it involves the process of identifying chunks of data and initially giving it a descriptive label. They express 'open coding' as:

the process of breaking down, examining, comparing conceptualizing and categorizing data (Strauss & Corbin in Birley & Moreland, 1998:78).

Qualitative data is rich and diverse and therefore amenable to a range of analyses. Ryan and Bernard (2000:781) describe coding as the heart and soul of whole text analysis and explains how after theme identification a lot of interpretive analysis has been done. Miles and Huberman (1994:56) simply state: "Coding is analysis." For the purpose of my study themes generated from this focus group resulted in more informed and valuable data collection and analysis in the next stage of my research.

In **Stage 3** (semi-structured, in-depth interviews) data collections were transcribed and coded. Maxwell's (2005:96) referral to coding is useful. Coding refers to

the fracturing of data and to then rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparisons between things in the same category and that aid development of theoretical concepts.

This fracturing of text and the themes and categories that arose from the coded data created useful comparisons, discussions, interrogations and hence valuable information to achieve my research goal.

Hereafter I developed themes resulting in facilitation of understanding and I present my findings in the following chapter. Once again the stages used for analysis are merely for presentation purposes. The very nature of data analysis permitted continual reflection and analysis throughout this phase of my research endeavour.

3.7 Ethical issues

A significant issue in all research endeavours is that of validity and ethical consideration. All participants of this research were informed of the nature of this study and privacy and confidentiality was assured. Written consent (see Appendix One and Two) was obtained and analysis of data was made available for viewing/comment. Due to my consideration of the quality of my research, member-checking by the participants themselves was encouraged during the interview/focus group stages of my data collection.

3.8 Limitations

The validity of research is not guaranteed by following some prescribed procedure. Maxwell (2005:105) explains that the viewpoint that methods could guarantee validity was characteristic of early forms of positivism which held that scientific knowledge could ultimately be reduced to logic that was securely grounded in 'real' data.

In my research an aspect that I needed to be extremely aware of was researcher 'bias' as described by Maxwell (2005). I needed to be aware of my existing theory and preconceptions and the selection of data that 'stood out' to me not only as a researcher but also as a staff member of the school. Being a staff member within my research context had both advantages and disadvantages as discussed earlier in this chapter. This also created an awareness of the second threat Maxwell cautions to researchers expressed as 'reactivity'. This is generally understood as the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied. Hammersley and Akinson (in Maxwell, 2005:106) describe how eliminating the actual influence of the researcher is impossible and the goal of qualitative research is not to eliminate this influence but to understand it and to use it productively.

The lack of rigour is also a concern of research of this nature. Yin (2003:10) encourages every case study investigator to work hard to report all evidence fairly. Bias can enter into the conduct of experiments and scientific methods but in case study research it seems more frequently encountered and less frequently overcome. Member-checking by the participants involved in the stages of my research enhanced the rigour of my study and ensured that evidence was presented accurately. With regard to generalisability Yin comments that case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. As Yin comments the goal is to do a ‘generalizing’ and not a ‘particularizing’ analysis.

3.9 Summary

The focus in this chapter was to place myself and my research within a particular paradigm which answers the questions, ‘What is the relation between what I see and understand (knowledge/epistemology) and that which is reality (our sense of being/ontology)?’ Through an in-depth description of my research approach, my data collection stages, my analysis techniques and understandings as well as my awareness of limitations and ethical considerations, I have made clear my path in this research endeavour. In the next chapter I present my data to the reader in an attempt to facilitate understanding.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Data

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the methodological aspects of my research endeavour and this chapter presents my data. Working within the interpretive paradigm affords me the opportunity of creating meaning from the research participants' experiences and 'telling the story' from their view point and opinions. Bellavita (as quoted by Ely et al. 1997:17) describes data generation in the following way: "meaning has always implied a sense of wholeness. The whole may be and usually is made up of interconnected parts. And meaning for me, cannot be separated from context." This has been an enjoyable section of my research endeavour and seeing the 'real life' implementation and articulation of values in this school and from the leaders' perspectives, has brought my theoretical understandings as described in previous chapters into a 'human' reality. My aim in this chapter is to let the data 'speak' in order to provide a human perspective.

The manner in which I present this data has evolved entirely from my experiences with the participants, and themes have been created through my observations and interviews. I present the data under seven key themes drawn from the raw data which embrace the views and opinions of members in leadership positions at this school. The aim of this manner of presentation is to facilitate the understanding of these values in lived experience to the reader.

4.2 'We value each child here...'

I mean we don't just strive for each child to reach their full potential, we strive for them to develop their **core** potential (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

This phrase encapsulates much of what this school is about and the values that are held by members in leadership positions. There is a distinct view from the leaders of this school of whole child development and this filters through to all levels of the school. These leaders refer to core potential as the innate talents and abilities of the girls who attend their school.

This core value of the school is expressed by the emphasis on counselling, encouragement and nurturing of all the students: “Education is not about curriculum and knowledge only” (Principal, Focus Group). The Principal explained the many facets to education at her school from the music department, sports facilities, Arts and Culture programmes, computer laboratories and the library, which in her opinion embrace this value of education being more than just content knowledge. Within the school’s mission statement this core value is made visible:

The school philosophy is a very simple, yet vitally important one, namely, to give an excellent all-round education to each pupil, encouraging academic excellence, emphasising traditional values, nurturing talents and developing potential (Mission Statement).

My observations and journal entries (March and April, 2007) illuminated the commitment to this value at this school. Each week educators take turns to run the assembly and promote values such as friendship, caring for others, responsibility, and self awareness (Journal entry, March 2007). A tool that illustrates this is the CABIN (see Figure Three), a special room in the school in which teachers counsel children with problems (Journal Entry, April 2007). This room is open all day and on various occasions I observed teachers taking groups of girls as well as individual girls there to talk and be counselled. A specific incident I noted was that of a child who arrived at school completely distraught due to issues of divorce in the family. The Deputy Principal arranged substitution of her classes for the morning and called on the professional assistance of a psychologist who arrived at the school within half an hour to help with this situation. Incidents such as these bear out claim made by the HOD: “We never write off a child, even the most difficult child. We call in help, we try everything, whatever to help and assist the child, to get to the root of what the problem is rather than give up” (HOD, Focus group, 2007). The Deputy Principal explained why ‘care and concern’ was a feature at this school:

I think one of the things we have above other schools in town is that we are small enough, yet large enough. It is a bit of a magic number (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

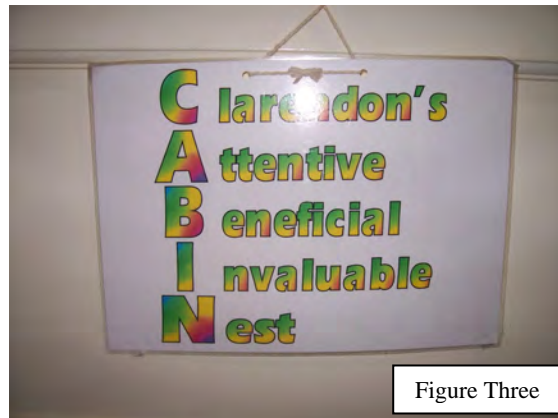


Figure Three

The Deputy Principal explained that she had seen schools in the past that had been too big or too small and that parents wanted to feel that their child was not just a number: “Parents want to know that people in the school know her, genuinely love her and interact with her. That is our advantage” (Focus Group, 2007). The Principal also shared her view:

We are small enough to be individual, but big enough to be a community, with a heart, and a school that does not have a heart is not there (Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The Principal commented within the focus group and the personal interview that when parents approached her or she had interviews with prospective parents, ‘community’ and ‘heart’ were the reasons she gave to why children should attend her school above the many other excellent institutions in the city.

Within my journal entries and observations (Journal Entry, March 2007), I reflected on instances of general ‘concern and love’ for the children at this school. For example, the weekly school newsletter always reflected on celebrations of families’ news (births, engagements) as well as shared condolences with family bereavements. Also girls’ achievements in any area (non-school related e.g. modelling, surfing) were highlighted and emphasised in the newsletter. The HOD (Focus Group, 2007) commented: “if a child is not academically strong but extremely musical, we strive to develop them in that specific area, and not just her Mathematics and English.”

The interview participants took this subject further by illuminating the issues of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the children at their school. I was sufficiently intrigued by this aspect to enquire into how this affected their leadership practices. The leaders recognised this as a challenging aspect in the values the school embraced:

You have got to be careful of not becoming too clinical. We have a wide diversity of children here, with parents earning different incomes. We strive to treat each child the same, from those who come from poor backgrounds to the children whose parents are well off. We need to provide the same services to all our children, regardless of culture or wealth (Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The Governing Body chairman (Focus Group, 2007) also concurred with the fact that children came from different home environments, and in order to provide the same opportunities and services to these children the leaders had to be aware of cultural value differences and be sensitive to these needs. Although the participants did not openly discuss their awareness of the demographic representation of the learners at their school their reference to 'culture' and 'socio-economic' differences highlighted their awareness of these elements. This had an underlying impact on their understanding of 'valuing each child' and incorporating this value in their leadership practices.

These elements of 'valuing each child' and 'developing her to her core potential' as well as being sensitive to the needs of each child were evident as values the school leadership members expressed and lived out.

4.3 'Good, old fashioned...'

The 'traditional' aspect of education (rules and regulations) at this school had an impact on the understanding and emphasis of values at this school and in the school leaders' lives. The chairman of the Governing Body argued that this was a reason why his daughter attended this school:

Things like good old fashioned manners, respect, dress code I think is important, the pride the girls take in their school and themselves. These are important things that come through and we saw this at Founders Day so many people making the effort to come back (GB chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

The chairman of the Governing Body continued by emphasising how he was employing school leavers and found that many of them did not know how to dress appropriately, had no concept of time management, cleanliness, presentation and just general life skills:

So much so that I have threatened to open a basic training camp to teach these kids things that were taught in the good old days, manners. That is seriously lacking in schools because I do not think parents care enough

about these anymore and schools are lacking in this basic skills development (Governing Body chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

The Principal agreed with this statement and developed the argument further by stating that her perception was that parents sent their children to single-sex institutions because of this fact. The Deputy Principal argue: “I think very often we say that these things should be done at home and the reality is that it is not. I mean when we were at school we never had life skills teaching” (Focus Group, 2007). It was also evident in my observations (Journal Entry, April 2007) that the school implemented a Life Orientation programme in the curriculum that addressed these basic skills. The leaders expressed that these skills were something that the teachers felt was important and they implemented these in the everyday running of the school to ensure effective functioning. This was evident in my observations of children: greeting adults in the corridor, leading into the hall quietly for assemblies, stepping aside for adults to walk first (Journal Entry, April, 2007).

It was articulated by the leaders that they felt this was important not only for the children and their lives after school but also in the daily running of school life:

Our own well-being depends on these values. The parents can abdicate their responsibilities but our classrooms will be chaos without these values. So it is in our best interests to teach them to strive that they are transferred from this generation to the next. Our survival actually depends on it (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).



Figure Four

A character has been created at this school that stimulates awareness of these basic skills each day, at break times, in their classrooms and in the passages of the school building. ‘Clarrie’ (see Figure Four) is a symbolic representation (cartoon character) of a little girl that reminds them of the values of the school.

Phrases I have recorded in my journal (April-May 2007) include: ‘Remember to greet visitors’, ‘Are you wearing the correct hair accessories?’, ‘Have you smiled at someone today?’, ‘Good luck for exams’. This reinforcement technique is meant to enhance awareness of these basic skills and values the staff and leaders focus on in their classrooms and assemblies.

Once again an issue highlighted during the discussion of ‘good, old fashioned’ values was that of ‘cultural’ differences in the girls attending this school. The panel showed awareness of this aspect and how it impacted on their views of these ‘rules and regulations’ of school life:

There are a few instances of cultural value differences that one needs to be sensitive to and understand. For example, in one culture where a child has been taught to never be (physically) higher than the adult you are speaking to this child may just come and plonk down in the chair opposite you. This may come across as being rude but they have been told to never be higher than a superior and others may perceive this as bad manners and consider this rude (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

The Governing Body chairman also commented on this aspect of ‘good, old fashioned’ values being misinterpreted in his corporate experience as the leader of his organisation. He reflected on instances where he was not sensitive to ‘cultural’ value differences in his own business and concluded by saying that through relationships and conversations with his subordinates he became aware of many ‘small’ things that he had misunderstood. The HOD (Focus Group, 2007) also found difficulty in holding this value true in her experience:

I think there is a lot of tolerance of different cultures because although we **do** acknowledge cultural change because of our strong Westernised cultures, many cultural values have been lost or pushed aside in order to adopt our values. So I do not think we are totally right in that, that we totally understand tolerance with regards to this.

She expressed awareness of whether the school truly embraced ‘cultural diversity’ (racial issues) in the essence of the South African context or merely created frameworks and structures that portrayed tolerance and acceptance as her comment above illustrates.

However, the Deputy Principal (Focus Group, 2007) explained that she thought there was much to be said for ‘diversity, unity and cultures’. She said that in her experience the ethnic evenings and culture awareness programmes run in the past promoted understanding in this regard. But she felt that at this school there should be a different tolerance:

Here at this school we are all part of this school family. It does not matter what culture you are or what your background is. We are not saying it is not important. But we are saying that you are at this school all in one school, with a sense of belonging and of family. It is fantastic to see. Each year we have different girls excelling from every colour of the rainbow (Focus Group, 2007).

These school leaders value the ‘good, old fashioned’ school life regulations in an attempt to build a school that they feel works effectively. They try to create an environment where every individual is happy and safe. The element of preparation for ‘life beyond school’ is also illuminated by their emphasis on these values.

4.4 ‘Our feet are solidly rooted to the ground, but we reach for the stars...’

The Deputy Principal (Focus Group, 2007) used this phrase to describe how the traditional values embraced by this school (described above) were the ‘soil in which they sow’. She described how these foundations created an environment where the school could ‘reach for the stars’.

The members of the focus group were educated in ‘traditional’ educational settings. When I questioned them on the ‘solid grounding that rooted them into the soil’ there was agreement from the participants on what these core values were. “I was educated by nuns in a convent. No one can be more traditional, more dogmatic, and more autocratic than a nun but they had some good values that have impacted my life” (Principal, Focus Group, 2007). The Deputy Principal expressed how she carefully reflected on these foundations that are described by her as ‘solid foundations’ and how she compared these to petty traditions which she felt were irrelevant:

For example, walking in lines. Why should we walk Gestapo style, like in the old days? We want happy children because children that are happy learn better. The goal is to make them self aware and responsible. And if we have to sit them in the hall and punish them for bad behaviour then we do that. So I think one has to remain open and you have to question and allow yourself to be questioned (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The leaders felt that tradition for tradition's sake was something that they continually needed to reflect on. They also felt that traditions and values were not the same things:

We must not get confused. We have to constantly reassess and ask ourselves are traditions fitting into our values and the future. I mean in years when girls were reprimanded for skipping a step on the stairs, these were highly important at the time. We are past that now. Those kinds of traditions do not have a place here anymore. But if there was a free-for-all and total chaos in the school then we would need to bring that back as an exercise, as training perhaps. The challenge in the traditional school nowadays is not to be bogged down by traditions, those things that perhaps need to be changed (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

It was evident that these values guide these leaders' leadership practices. They expressed how they continuously reflected on and questioned these values (Journal Entry, May 2007). The leaders relayed how the school offered many opportunities as a result of these core values that they embraced. "We cling to these important foundations that work, and that gives us the opportunity to fly" (Deputy Principal, 2007). These 'opportunities to fly' were described by the members as their achievement in all areas of education and their ability to be innovative and forward thinking in their approach to teaching and learning.

They articulated how keeping up with global trends in education was one element in their institution which they stressed and which they felt illustrates the 'reaching for the stars' dimension of their school. This is evident in the school's overseas exchange programme. The Deputy Principal reflected with pride on this subject (Deputy Principal Interview, June 2007):

We open up another world for these girls and the school also benefits from global connections and the relationships we build up and this allows us to benchmark ourselves against 'world' schools.

The Deputy Principal remarked on the difference she noted in the girls on their return, that they were more mature and that she felt these girls then really added a special dimension to the school. She relayed how their younger 'sisters' at the Preparatory School looked forward to similar opportunities. She also displayed an awareness of the problems with the system:

I am aware that it is not perfect. It is great pity that there are girls who would benefit greatly from the experience but due to finances are not able to use this opportunity. This is a real drawback (Deputy Principal Interview, June 2007).

Figure Five



I observed evidence of the pride the school takes in this opportunity for the girls and staff in the entrance of the school where girls have displayed their experiences on overseas exchange notice boards (see Figure Five) which cover the walls (Journal Entry, March 2007). The leaders expressed how this display is often used for parent interviews,

visiting schools and open evenings and they felt this was one of the ‘chimneys’ of the school (Focus Group, 2007).

Student Leadership is another area where the school leaders have placed emphasis and focus on achievement and embracing change. They articulated how the school had implemented a new system where each girl in Grade 7 got an opportunity to learn about leadership and practise leadership skills through committee tasks and assessments (Journal Entry, March 2007). This replaced the previous prefect/councillor system which is the system used by most schools in the city. The leaders discussed how this new system had provoked discussion and attention from other schools, businesses and the media:

I think if you take for example the new student leadership system we have implemented. Many of the parents I speak to have said thank you. This is what our girls need. They don't want them to be little police women. They want them to learn about leadership and practise the skills as much as possible. This is one of the things we value here (Principal, Focus Group, May 2007).

The Principal felt that this highlighted the school's ability to hold onto the traditional values that have prevailed for many years but also proved that they were not afraid to try different things and embrace change. The members in leadership positions felt that they were open to change. They described this as a value that was held in high regard:

These values are everlasting. If these foundations are absent in society, society will crumble. Can we be innovative if we not letting go of the old?

I think we are an example of we can (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

4.5 'We get the right people...'

The Governing Body chairman articulated that the values of this school were a result of leadership and management as well as the staff. This was evident in the school's mission statement:

A team of dedicated and enthusiastic teachers cares for the children and encourages them in all aspects of school life (Mission Statement).

The leaders emphasised that they felt staff relations were a top priority at their school (Focus Group, 2007). Expressions such as 'development of staff', 'dedication, enthusiasm and care for one another' and 'passion for teaching and children' highlighted this aspect. They described the environment in the staff room as one of 'warmth and genuine love'. The principal expressed appreciation of this value:

I think the greatest compliment I was ever paid was one year when I went to the Grade 4 camp. These girls were used to seeing me in the office mostly but we came back from the camp and a little girl came up to me to let me know that all of a sudden she realised I was **human** (Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The Governing Body chairman (Focus Group, 2007) expressed this as an important part of the school's educational philosophy. He reflected on his school experience and explained how 'boring' it was when teachers just read from books when he was at school but he felt that his daughter had a much more 'balanced education' with the teachers at this school being dedicated to enthusiasm and innovation in their teaching. "It filters through to the children when the staff are enthusiastic and inspiring" (GB Chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

The Deputy Principal explained how they tried to employ staff who embraced this value and kept being innovative and excited about teaching.

It all comes down to what you really teach them. They may not remember all the facts about world wars in history but they do remember one philosophy of life that you imparted to them, with them and that made an impact on them (Focus Group, 2007).

The Head of Department articulated the importance of this value at the school. She explained how after school it was seldom that a child remembered the facts or content that she taught them:

They are going to remember something far more personal. The teacher's sense of humour, their personality, and the times the teachers took them on excursions and outings. These are the things that actually matter (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

I enquired how the leaders of the school ensured they got the 'right people' and the Principal explained that it was 'gut feel'. She explained how speaking to people always helped and that she had made mistakes in the past:

I like to think that nine times out of ten we get the right people and if perhaps someone is not what they cracked up to be what we thought we can believe in and help that person. The staff together are extremely caring (Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

4.6 'Leading by example is critical...'

Leading by example is the most important thing. You cannot moan at other people for being late for work when you yourself are. Leading by example is critical (GB chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

This view on leadership was articulated by all leaders at this school. Several comments were made by the participants of the focus group on how values were filtered through by themselves as members in leadership positions at this school. For example, the GB chairman said:

I think these values filter through from the top just by mistake from the person in charge like if the person is dishonest and uncaring, these values will filter through management till they affect the staff and girls. However, if the leader is caring and ethical it will naturally filter through and even if you have a bad apple on the staff, they will pick up on these values from everyone else and a lot of the time they eventually come right (GB chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

The Deputy Principal (Focus Group, 2007) expressed that she viewed leadership as 'modelling behaviour' to the members of her staff. She reflected on her many years of

teaching and described how she learnt the most from her colleagues and superiors when seeing values ‘modelled in their behaviours’. She adopted this principle as a leader of the school but also as a teacher in her classroom: “it becomes much easier to see how it is done rather than to be told” (Focus Group, 2007). She reflected on an instance of this in her experience:

It is all very well to say we must respect other people’s property but if you see a teacher modelling that behaviour and doing it themselves and questioning them in a situation and encouraging them to change their behaviours it is much easier to change your behaviour (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

She also reflected on an experience when she caught a child stealing. Instead of negative punishment she tried to make the child see that it was in fact disrespecting someone else’s property and she reinforced that it was not the right way to behave. She relayed how she got the child to verbally state that next time the child would ask the teacher to help her find her own item instead of being too scared that she lost hers and stealing someone else’s. This emphasis on ‘modelling behaviour’ was an aspect the members of the focus group articulated regarding their leadership practices. The Principal also felt this had great impact on how she viewed the values and leadership at the school. She described it as the “biggest role in leadership: Do not ask anyone to do anything that you yourself are not prepared to do. If you are not prepared to do it you cannot expect that of another” (Focus Group, 2007).

Within my own observations (Journal Entry, April 2007) I noticed how the staff related to the leaders of the school as a result of this value. On one occasion when the staff were asked to assist with the annual Music Eisteddfod by baby-sitting the 120 student choir for an evening during the week it was the Deputy Principal and HOD who volunteered first. Other staff members agreed to assist thereafter. I also noted on several occasions how the staff responded to situations when they witnessed ‘modelled behaviour’ from the leaders (Journal Entry, March and May 2007) from giving up weekends to help at Derby Days to the staff development programmes held after hours.

4.7 'We take pride in our school...'

As one enters the school there is a sense of 'pride' and 'care' for the school reflected not only by the physical aspect of the school grounds but also by the ethos and pride associated with being affiliated to this school. These girls seemed to be part of a 'special culture or group' because of being schooled at this specific institution (Journal Entry, May 2007). After observing the seventieth Founders Celebration (Journal Entry, May 2007) there was a sense of 'family and sisterhood'. From the many guests that attended the service, to the cards and emails sent from all over the world wishing the school a happy birthday, 'pride' in this school was an evident value.

The Principal expressed how she felt that this was an important value in running (leading) a school:

And I think it comes down to pride. And I think this is still not happening in rural schools generally, they do not have pride in their schools because they do not feel they own their schools. We need to provide students with something that makes them proud of their school which is what we try to do here (Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The Deputy Principal said that the changes in South African democracy influenced these values within the school environment. She reflected that teaching today is "far richer, more colourful and more meaningful" (Focus Group, 2007) and added:

It was very rigid when we first started teaching, what schools looked like, government schools, to what ours looks like today. I mean you had to fill out a form for a red pen - you know there was so much bureaucracy, you would never think of putting a carpet in a classroom. Why? It was not ours; the school never belonged to you. It belonged to the department (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The leadership members also felt that teaching and leading in this environment was "more rewarding and interesting than before" and they felt this was due to the multi-cultural dimension that the school now has (Focus Group, 2007). However, this again illuminated the issues of the 'cultural diversity' at the school as the Deputy Principal reflected:

At the time of 1994 the difficulty lay in the fact that children from different backgrounds were being brought in at Grade six and seven level. This proved very difficult and many support structures needed to be put in

place. I remember having many run-ins with girls from different cultures about what was acceptable and what was not. For example, one of the rules is that we do not wear nail polish with our school uniform. This seldom happens these days but girls coming in at that stage could not comprehend why I had a problem with this. The students thought I was mad (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The ‘community and family life’ that this school adopts is something which the members in leadership value. The discussion on this matter further displayed the importance of this value from the Deputy Principal’s perspective (Focus Group, 2007). She made reference to the violence in schools as was seen by the Virginia Tech incident in America where a student brutally killed many of his peers at the school. She regarded this event as being due to the lack of ‘community and family feel’ in schools today and felt that her school embraced this value:

It sounds like the attacker had been crying out for years as he was just a number and there was no identity for him. His fellow pupils could be blamed as there was definitely bullying and emotional abuse. I am not absolving him from his own responsibility but the community is responsible for that. At this school we try to ensure that children feel they have the support, the emotional back-up required to deal with stresses in life. This is something we can be most proud of I feel (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The leaders further expressed that this sense of ‘family and community’ was not felt only at this school. They described how all three of the sister schools that educate the girls from Pre-Primary up to Grade 12 create a “distinct sense of belonging” (Focus Group, 2007). I observed this in the term newsletter called *The Connection* displaying all three schools events over the term with photographs and captions of stories reflecting the terms work (Journal Entry, May 2007). The ‘loving messages and speeches’ given by the ‘sister’ schools at special events like Founders Day also illustrated this. When I investigated this with the leaders of the school it was clear that they valued the ‘pride’ in the school name and ‘family’. The HOD further explained this:

I think there is a unique ethos at each of the schools but the basic values and principles we hold dear to educating these girls runs through from the Preparatory School through to the High School. Our goals are the same and this is something to be proud of (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

The Principal (Focus Group, 2007) also communicated that all three schools created a 'family' and although each institution was unique due to the different age groups of the girls, she felt that the overall education that was provided by the family of schools was something she could be proud of.

4.8 'Everyone is keen, proactive and wants to be involved...'

Mutual support from the parent is valued as it is essential for achieving our twofold aim of educating the girls for life and maintaining the ethos and high standards of school life (Mission Statement).

The interaction of the Governing Body and teachers was an element of this school that the school leaders valued. I observed at the time of my data collection the new structures being implemented to further improve the relations between the parents, Governing Body and teachers (Journal Entry, May 2007). According to the newly set procedures Governing Body meeting minutes were available for all staff to read and the Chairman would attend one staff meeting a month to bridge the gap between the staff and the Governing Body.

I questioned the members with regard to interaction and support from parents. There was agreement that the leaders felt their school displayed good parental support. The chairman of the Governing Body, who had been newly elected, commented:

I am still getting to grips with what my proper role is and what I must and must not do but I have certainly gathered from meetings the buy-in is there and everyone is very keen and will be proactive and be involved and what amazing support (Focus Group, 2007).

The Deputy Principal (Focus Group, 2007) added that when there were times of difference of opinion, which of course there were, she felt it was not something that caused division. It was "accepted after much discussion and the support was always there" (Focus Group, 2007). The HOD described a situation where she felt this was evident when the principal was challenged on a sensitive subject:

I mean if we look at the last meeting we had and the difficult issue that was there, the Governing Body without hesitation wanted to be there for

the Principal. She never needed to handle it on her own. They wanted to step in and deal with it as well (Focus Group, 2007).

I also noted within my observations (Journal Entry, April 2007) that the support from parents at events and special occasions was evident. The annual 'Fathers and Daughters breakfast' event (Journal Entry, May 2007) was well supported with fathers who had taken the morning off from work to spend with their daughters. The mothers who organised the catering, the setting up and the clearing away were in the background due to the nature of the event (Fathers' and Daughters' time) but it was an event that was well supported by the parents.

With regard to why these values of "involvement, encouragement and support" (Focus Group, 2007) were important to the leaders of this school, the Deputy Principal commented regarding tension and conflict with the parent body:

Never in my time. The approach from the parents and Governing Body is that we are the educators, we are the professionals. Often they will say that they are not teachers. They are doctors or lawyers or artisans so they don't know better. That is what I have really appreciated. You feel secure because you have backing so you can test a suggestion or you are not afraid to risk asking something. You are also happy if they turn it down because you know they have given it serious thought and reflection. There has never been an instance of the Governing Body and teachers in conflict (Focus Group, 2007).

The HOD added:

Society will change and life will change. We have to keep coming up with ways to deal with that to educate and inform our parents to keep up with these values. Everyone must be involved (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has been presented by means of themes drawn from the raw data that incorporate this school's sense of values and the impact the leaders of this school have on these values. Specific quotes and issues have been presented in such a way that the reader has been informed of the aspects regarding values and leadership practices at this school and has created the space for the data to 'speak to the reader'.

The next chapter displays how the distilling of this information and my continuous reflection on this generated data has highlighted issues that have led me to a new understanding. This will bring together the many aspects of my research and ultimately paves the way for elaborate discussion of my findings. In order to articulate this I present specific topics of discussion as ‘themes’ which will incorporate the many facets of my research, data, literature, methodology and understandings.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the data I collected through my observations and journal entries and the focus group and interviews held with the leaders at this school. I showed this by using seven key themes I depicted through their experiences and stories that describe specific values as being vital to the understanding of their leadership at this organisation. In this chapter I discuss my findings as answers to my research questions, which were

- How do school leaders articulate the values within the school?
- How do these values find expression in the school leaders' leadership practices?

In answering these questions I draw on previous literature discussed in Chapter Two as well as the data from the previous chapter. As within any research endeavour the importance of the data cannot be undermined, and within letting the data 'speak freely' I have developed two themes which "signal meaning to the reader" (Ely et al. 1997:162) and this ultimately informs discussion of my research questions. These are 'Leadership' and 'Organisational Culture', each with a set of sub-themes that enhance the discussion of these themes. I add a marginal amount of new data to this chapter that resulted after personal interviews with the Principal and Deputy Principal which, as the reader will see, belong in the discussion of my data and elaborate on the overall understanding of the role of values in educational leadership.

I begin by presenting a brief overview of these two themes and then move to sub-themes that enhance discussion and understanding of my research questions.

5.2 Overview

The picture of leadership that emerges from this study confirms Van Seters and Field's (1990:29) observation that "Leadership in one of the most complex and multifaceted phenomena to which organisational and psychological research has been

applied”. Within that complexity emerging trends in leadership theory place a premium on the role of values. As Lazaridou (2007:339) puts it:

More than ever before theorists, policy-makers and practitioners acknowledge the impact of values on organisational practices. They have come to realise that, as institutions become more complex and diverse, they must be sensitive to value issues and how they influence core activities. As a result, the contemporary organisational literature reflects widespread acceptance of the crucial role that values play in various aspects of organisational activities such as organisational culture, mission, styles of leadership and individuals’ commitment and vitality.

In light of this statement I find that my two themes of ‘Leadership’ and ‘Organisational Culture’ resonate with current leadership research and literature and will ultimately highlight issues and permit discussion of my research questions in an attempt to better understand the role of values in educational leadership in this school. I believe this provides a framework in which to explore the phenomenon of leadership in this specific case.

5.3 Leadership

Chapter Two provided a basic overview of leadership movements and described how values have become an integral part of leadership understandings. For the purpose of discussion in this chapter I attempt to use these understandings as a ‘lens’ through which to see and understand the leadership styles and behaviours of the leaders in my particular research setting. Within my research context my aim is not to identify specific leadership styles to understand the leaders at this school but to understand the participants’ views of leadership in light of contemporary theory.

5.3.1 Task and person orientation

As described in Chapter Two the tension between relationship and task orientation of leadership has characterised leadership studies for centuries. The Hawthorne studies (Hoy & Miskel, 1996:12) remain significant in the evolution of leadership, management and organisational theory because they surfaced the relational and

people-centred elements of organisational life. The task/person lens illuminates the real-life issues of my research participants' experiences and behaviours.

My participants displayed a distinct sense of understanding leadership in these two dimensions. Their deliberate emphasis on task aspects, such as striving for excellence, implementing support structures and programmes and the focus on educational achievement in their educational philosophy statement (Chapter Four) illustrate this fact. However, equally important to these leaders are the human, relational aspects of leadership. When I questioned the Deputy Principal as to what she hoped her legacy would be she answered:

I think it would be someone who always had the interests of the school at heart and by the school I mean the people, as well as the programmes. Someone who cared about the people, the staff, parents and the girls and then wanted to ensure that this school could be the best it could be (Deputy Principal, Interview, 2007).

The Principal shared a similar view on leadership and her understanding of her role:

Definitely someone who is a people's person. Someone who is tactful and someone with a big heart. Someone who inspires vision in their staff who sees where this school could be, and not only where it is now. If you have these things you can face the challenges that come with the Education Department (Principal, Interview, 2007).

Behaviourists focused on this tension and devised graphs and continuums on which these different dimensions of leadership could be displayed. These theories are useful in highlighting these dimensions of leadership but fall short of accounting for the more nuanced and subtle elements embedded in values. My focus on this aspect is due to the nature of teaching and learning at this school: both the task and the 'care' elements are highly developed. But the environment in which schools operate is more complex and some would argue difficult to define. Simkins (2005:15) captures this complexity in posing questions about the nature and purpose of a school; is it:

- A branch office of the national educational system, delivering a specified set of products to specified standards?

- A participatory community, responding to the expectations and demands of key stakeholders as expressed through the governing body and other mechanisms of involvement that might be developed?
- A competitive business, seeking to attract parent-consumers who wish to purchase its products?
- Or what?

This school maintains structures that address all the elements Simkins describes above and achieves in the academic, cultural and sporting aspects of school life but also creates an environment for “care and concern” for the individuals of the organisation as seen in Chapter Four: “Here at this school, we are all part of this school family” (Focus Group, 2007) as well as “A team of dedicated and enthusiastic teachers cares for the children and encourages them in all aspects of school life” (Mission Statement). Greenfield (2004:174) describes similar findings as he states that at the very centre of the work of teachers and school administrators are relationships with people. On the other hand research has shown that contemporary educational leaders face pressures for accountability and efficiency in the growing national and international preoccupation with standardizations and measurements of outcomes (task). The leadership at this school reflects these dimensions and I feel this is where I need to move beyond combining these dimensions of leadership and focus on how values inform these behaviours.

These school leaders achieve both the task and person orientations of leadership effectively and their values seem to be the foundations of their leadership. This brings into question the phenomenon of school leadership. Van der Mescht (1996:158) claims that school leadership is different from organisational leadership due to the likelihood that school leaders are more able to be “themselves” in their leadership:

But in order to make this suggestion one would have to submit that education is, somehow, different from business; that schools, colleges, NGOs are driven by different needs and goals, different, that is, from those that drive profit-making organisations.

Bush (1986:5-7) similarly argues that school management is different from management of other organisations. Bush isolates areas in education management

such as difficulties in measuring outcomes, defining objectives, children being the outputs, fragmented decision making and planning. These difficulties are a direct consequence of schools being essentially about and for people. The Deputy Principal (Focus Group, 2007) illustrates the people dimension of leadership in the statement below:

For me part of the mission statement is developing each person to their full potential and I don't think that is just the girls. It is each member contributing to the success of the school. Parents, teachers, maintenance staff, administrative staff are also addressed in the mission statement. I hope I have played a part in making the staff members here be the very best they can be. I have a genuine desire for each of them to fulfil their own dreams and goals and if it surpasses mine then that is fine, that's wonderful.

The underlying element in these statements is that schools are unique; they are for people, they involve people, teach people, change people and therefore essentially are people-centred. Lazaridou (2007:348) also relates the distinct value of 'care' as being discussed extensively in codes of conduct and ethics in teaching and administration. She refers to Burns (1978:70) who claims that beyond financial reward, status, security and the prospect of career advancement, people value work that enables them to contribute to a worthwhile purpose and that gives them a sense of having made a significant contribution. Within this realisation, looking even more specifically through contemporary views, we see then how leaders play the role of "nurturer of values" as recommended by Greenfield in Cahill (1994:258): "Leaders provide the glue which unites individuals as a group ... transcending all other factors involved in organisations". The leader becomes the "entrepreneur" for the values to be observed by individuals in organisations: "I think these values filter through from the top ... from the person in charge ... everyone picks up on these values" (GB Chairman, Focus Group 2007).

Therefore in this context we see how the values that inform the behaviours and actions of these school leaders transcend the rigidity of a task/person orientation and create an environment for great achievement in these important aspects of leadership, especially school leadership which has been discussed as being different from leadership in other organisations.

5.3.2 'Faith' influences and role-modelling

Under this sub-heading I argue that personal faith plays a significant role in the lives and leadership practices of these school leaders. I also consider the place for role-modelling behaviours and actions from these school leaders' experiences with the leaders that influenced them. Van der Mescht (1996:162) comments on this aspect in leadership understanding: "Whilst role-modelling ... on mentors seem to have received considerable attention as subjects of enquiry, the notion of leaders being influenced and driven by examples provided by larger-than-life heroes seems to be largely unexplored". I begin by discussing the faith influences in the lives of these leaders.

The personal faiths of these school leaders inform much of their leadership behaviour in this school environment.

Thank goodness we are allowed to embrace the Christian foundation at the school (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

If we were not allowed to hold Christian foundations, it would be a huge challenge for me (HOD, Focus Group, 2007).

I would be very against dropping the Christian format (Chairman, Focus Group, 2007).

As illustrated in the research of Jean-Louis (2005:27) "following Jesus" and being as "Christ-like" as possible resonates with recent trends of servant leadership, particularly Greenfield's moral leadership which is based on Burns' transformational leadership. She found in her research that values such as love, peace, justice, compassion and respect are promoted by religions and Christian faith but that these could be seen more as human values which are universally accepted as societal principles. This finding resonates strongly with my research:

My personal faith has been an incredible rock for me and I have learnt so much through church activities because a lot of my personal growth has been through developing my relationship with God and I have also been on lots of church seminars which have been incredible with regards to personal growth. I hope that the value I portray most in my leadership would be caring. I have had people confirm that for me which is good because you are not always sure your actions demonstrate your intentions

all the time. So there have been many people in my church who have modelled leadership for me who have been incredibly helpful in my own personal life and especially in the difficult times. I try to see leadership from a biblical perspective (Christ-like) rather than from my own personal perspective (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

It is helpful here to emphasise the universality of these values described in this research (Chapter Four). Although we see the ‘hero’ mentality of Jesus Christ as being a distinctive role-model for these school leaders we also need to look beyond the religious influence and acknowledge the universally accepted human values that guide behaviour:

You know when I was in Australia about five years ago they were strongly onto virtues as opposed to values due to the fact that values are generally culturally and religion based. That is why virtues were used by them as they almost incorporate a societal aspect; universal and humanistic. Although we still refer to the term values I think what we try implement here is similar, trying to provide foundations for our girls that will aid them in society and humanity (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The HOD and Principal agreed with this stating that they felt these core values of the school would in fact serve the girls in a greater environment, aiding them in being outstanding citizens and members of society (Focus Group, 2007). Cahill (1994:257) citing the Congregation for Catholic Education states that “each member of the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of value in which he believes” (Jean-Louis, 2005:68). Thus even if one is not a Christian these values can be understood as underpinning the leaders’ behaviours and actions in their routine school leadership practices: “Our well-being depends on these values ... without these our classrooms would be chaos ... our survival depends on it” (Deputy Principal, Focus Group 2007). This of course has implications for the organisational culture of the school as these leaders’ ‘faith’ drives their approach to leadership, and I discuss this later in this chapter.

Not only has the personal faith of these leaders impacted their leadership practices but my research illuminates their relationships with their leaders throughout their personal lives and professional careers.

I think the previous headmistress was someone who I learnt a great deal from. Not only because of who she was but also because of where I was in my life at the time. I personally and professionally owe her a great deal. When I arrived at this school I was at my very lowest and she believed in me. She saw something beyond the specified requirements as a teacher. So I learnt a great deal from her, most important being empathy for people which she modelled for me and I try incorporate in my own behaviours. Then also striving for excellence and trying to be the best you can be in all areas and making other people into the best they can be. She was an incredible role model for me (Deputy Principal, Interview, 2007).

The idea that these school leaders model their behaviours on past leaders highlights the aspect of role-modelling in leadership. Kauria (2003:65) describes role-modelling as an important aspect of leadership as the followers learn important values and beliefs through the 'being' of their leaders and also identify themselves with the leaders. This idea emerged during the focus group with my participants: "I learnt most from my colleagues and superiors when seeing values modelled in their behaviours" (Deputy Principal 2007). My participants showed a real understanding of being 'moulded' by their experiences with educational leaders and I have argued that the school environment proves to be the 'nurseries' of values (Chapter Two). This applies to the educational administrator as well. Thus role playing and role modelling influence the development of effective leadership in these school leaders' lives. The evidence of this in my research is the reflection of these school leaders on their experiences and how they have chosen to model and subvert the real-life leader roles and models:

I am the kind of person that hates to be told what to do. And that is what happened in my school life. When I arrived at this school the members in leadership used to tell us exactly what to do from the page numbers and specific exercises to cover in my lessons. I then went to make an appointment with the Principal and asked her please to not put me in a box. Allow me to do my thing and I will cover what is necessary. That is how it has always been with me. The previous Principal was an amazing leader but you played to her fiddle and I always thought that one day if I was ever able to change something that would be it (Principal, Interview, 2007).

This resonates with Sergiovanni's argument that the school learning community as a whole aspires to reach for an ideal or a sense of purpose in order to convert followers

into leaders and leaders into moral agents (in Greenfield 2004:176). These leaders were once followers and these experiences have modelled their behaviours with regard to their leadership practices today.

5.3.3 Reflective practices

I think it is important to question everything and that is something I hope that I motivate in girls and in staff. We do not need to just accept things as they are. We need to question. So tradition for tradition's sake I am not really into at all. If it is something worthwhile then that is totally different. I think there is a place for tradition but it must be worthwhile and be adding a special dimension to the school and the life of the girls (Deputy Principal, Interview, 2007).

Schön (1983:62) in *The Reflective Practitioner* suggests that when a phenomenon eludes the ordinary categories of knowledge-in-practice, presenting itself as unique or unstable, practitioners may surface and criticise their initial understanding of the phenomenon, construct a new description of it, test and experiment with the new description and then arrive at a new theory of the phenomenon by articulating a feeling they have about it. This 'lens' illuminates these leaders' commitment to change and their task as educational leaders. It provides another understanding of leadership in these school leaders' lives. This research resonates with Woods (as cited in Campbell et al. 2003:205) as it reveals the extent to which school leaders' values and reflectivity influence their actions and perceptions. The Deputy Principal's emphasis on 'care' has emerged from what she has learned and reflected on in her personal life. She applies this in her leadership role at this school:

I think I have a real concern for people whether it is staff or children. You know I have been through my own difficult, personal times and I remember one of the things that struck me was that there was not really anyone who could help enough. So I have made it my personal goal to help people better, to care enough, to understand. People need coping skills and someone to help them in times of difficulty. Life is difficult (Deputy Principal, Focus Group, 2007).

The leaders' reflectivity in their leadership practices influences their lives and shapes the foundation of values that inform their behaviours. Huber (2004) highlights how school leaders have to realise the complexity of the system along with the different

individuals and groups involved as well as the interactive and collaborative relationships between them. This provides an understanding of how my participants deal with the “complexities” of the system in which they lead and as described above, achieve success in the relational and task elements of school life.

Simkins (2005:20) uses the term ‘knowledge-in-practice’ as more than just an effective application of known solutions: “It involves a kind of artistry and it emerges primarily from practitioners reflecting on and enquiring into their own actions.”

Heifetz (1994:252-3 as cited in Simkins 2005:23) argues that:

Leadership is both active and reflective. One has to alternate between participating and observing ... To discern the larger patterns on the dance floor – to see who is dancing with whom, in what groups, in what location, and who is sitting out what kind of dance – we have to stop moving and get to the balcony.

Stewart (n.d.) describes a ‘school development’ approach which further helps to illuminate the leadership practices of my research participants. Principal development must focus on the acquisition of the ability to be “critically reflective”. This is encouraged by analysing the key processes within the school that arise from the prevailing values and norms of its population. Thereafter change and school renewal are likely to be constant and steady and to incorporate existing effective practices. Lazaridou (2007:354) similarly argues that “more and more the leadership literature presents the need for leaders to become reflective practitioners ... as it is not enough for school principals to merely follow a prescribed set of values ... because of the context-specific character of school leadership.” In light of this we see the change and renewal of many structures in the school of these school leaders from the new student leadership system, to the overseas exchange programmes (Chapter Four) which ‘allow’ the school to ‘reach for the stars’. As the Governing Body chairman (Focus Group, 2007) stated simply:

When you do innovative things like our new student leadership system that does not do anything to traditions. It is simply innovative and in our institution we have those core values in our traditions that allow us to fly.

5.3.4 Servant leadership and beyond

Through my data analysis, it became evident that these leaders' values were underpinned by distinct elements that resonate with emerging leadership views. In this section, I use servant leadership and distributed leadership to illuminate these facets which emerged in their leadership practices and enhance the discussion by questioning the discourse of these post-transformational leadership trends and the impact they have on the role of values in educational leadership.

Servant leadership seems an appropriate lens through which to understand the leadership practices of these leaders. The data (as seen in Chapter Four) showed that the leaders' emphasis on the care and concern for the members of their school correlate with the principles that govern servant leadership views. Russell (2001) explains that servant leaders develop people and help them strive and flourish. The servant leader's primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership (Stone et al. 2006:353). The distinct values my participants describe as being critical to their leadership are those of "love, care, concern and development of people" (Focus Group, 2007) which are key elements in servant leadership trends. The moral purpose of the school and personal faith influences of these leaders form the foundations of the values that underpin their actions and behaviours (as presented in Chapter Four). Huber (2004:675), in commenting on moral leadership, describes how this type of leadership is underpinned by the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations and values of the followers. Servant leadership:

is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that shape the school as a covenantal community ... (Sergiovanni in Fullan 2000:280 as cited in Huber, 2004).

But is the human-ness and people-orientated focus of servant leadership enough? Does it adequately encompass the kind of leadership needed in South African schools? The functionality of the school has been described as a place of effective teaching and learning. I argue that servant leadership trends address one dimension of leadership and a critical dimension at that. However, for these leaders to run an effective school

there are other dimensions to leadership that need equal emphasis and attention. One becomes more aware of the complexity of leadership and although servant leadership is helpful in reminding us of the essentially human-ness of leadership, the emphasis on quality assurance measures, developmental appraisal systems, evaluation and assessment policies, and most importantly accountability highlights the need for these leaders to focus on the *task* of the educational institution in which they lead. Primarily ‘serving’ the followers beneath them (focusing on people-orientation) would generate tensions in facing the pressures in their daily tasks of meeting the national agenda for South African schools. This complexity lends itself to examination of distributed leadership and the values that undergird this trend.

Distributed leadership provides a framework for further discussion. As discussed in Chapter Two distributed leadership is the idea that leadership is a shared phenomenon. As Timperley (2005) explains, distributed leadership is seen as interactions with many people across many situations, and the values of trust and relationship building are held at the forefront. This idea emerged from the interview with the principal:

I think that I have made a difference in that I let people in, give them rein to do their own thing, I believe you have to give people a chance, and I think I have done that. And where people have made a mistake to help them. You know my motto; dust yourself down, get up and try again. I’m not autocratic. I am the complete opposite. People must be given the opportunity to take the reins and lead. If you don’t give people the opportunity you don’t know what they are capable of or what they can achieve (Principal, Interview, 2007).

Research has highlighted that schools need to be effective (Bush, 1986). To be effective there is a need for structures such as timetables, programmes, registers, assessments and the like. Although accountability did not explicitly emerge in the data, an awareness of the leaders’ sense of responsibility was always present. The emphasised hierarchy of class teachers, grade heads, heads of departments and deputy heads stresses responsibility to all stakeholders. I observed many instances when these leadership roles in the school were utilised for problem solving, resolving conflict, issues with parents and disciplinary situations (Journal Entry, May 2007). MacBeath (2005:353) explains how exploring the language of leadership and distribution brings to the surface conceptions and misconceptions, understanding and misunderstandings

and many examples of dilemmas faced by leaders. He describes these as dilemmas of trust and accountability and of a balancing between ‘holding on’ and ‘letting go’:

Head teachers profess their need to be in control, on the ready to intervene and to meet the expectation that they will exert their authority to solve problems and make life easier for their staff ... Heads admit to the anxiety of not being in charge and they worry about too much surprise (MacBeath, 2005:354).

Simkins (2005:16) emphasises the new ‘spin’ on leadership [distributed] when describing levels of leadership in schools:

These [leadership] roles are predicated on an organizational structure where accountability rests in the last resort with individuals located in formal positions of delegated authority, and those individuals are expected to manage both people and resources in ways which ensure efficient and effective contributions to the performance of the organisation as a whole.

Once again this highlights the complexity of leadership and although the Principal (as seen in quote above) embraces the idea of leadership being shared and “giving [her staff] the opportunity to take the reins and lead”, she also showed an awareness of ultimately being accountable and responsible as the school principal. The leaders of this school all shared this view and felt responsible and accountable to the many stakeholders in their leadership practices. This responsibility is illustrated in the following incident:

During the strike action the Governing Body chairman attended many staff meetings and was permanently at the school. The Principal stated that the Governing Body members were taking turns to drive around the city throughout the day to make sure the safety and security of the girls and staff was not in question. The chairman was willing to give up days at his own business to be at the school all the time, taking care and ensuring the well-being of the staff and girls. During this time it was evident to everyone that this man supported the staff and the school throughout this difficult strike time. Letters went home to all parents from the Governing Body informing them of the structures put in place to deal with the uncertainty and potential danger of the strike action. Communication lines were open and a sms phone tree was put in place to contact parents at all times (Journal Entry, June 2007).

The leaders of this school are aware of the need for effective leadership in the educational context. Schools have been described as unique organisations, as

discussed earlier in this chapter and the leaders realise their role in meeting the objectives and reaching the outcomes. Jean-Louis (2005:71) produced similar findings in her research: “In such a competitive context sometimes leaders are torn between achieving the task and staying faithful to the school’s organisational values such as compassion and empathy.” These leaders cannot compromise the basic functionality of their school, and although the values of people development, care and concern and relationship building provide the foundations for their behaviours and actions (leadership practices) they also realise that schools need to have structures and need to operate within these frameworks. Hence, distributed leadership is useful in understanding these values of faith, trust and relationship building with the members of the organisation, but is not sufficient in meeting all the needs of leadership in unique organisations such as schools. The phenomenon is more complex.

These leaders’ practice is strongly governed by their accountability to their personal and organisational values. Servant leadership and distributed leadership bring important leadership dimensions to light and provide a framework for understanding the role of values in educational leadership. These views provide a lens through which we are able to understand the values that inform these leaders’ behaviours and actions. However, these emerging leadership views are not enough. The role of values in educational institutions and understanding leadership in the school environment must be further investigated. In the next section, I delve into the critical perspective of leadership for social justice and question the role of values in the South African context.

5.3.5 A critical perspective: Leadership for social justice

In the previous section I have argued that although emerging leadership views allow for reflection and understanding of important leadership components, they are not completely sufficient in addressing the complexity of leadership in educational environments. These emerging trends have been used to highlight the dimensions of leadership that affect these leaders’ everyday leadership practices and to highlight the values that undergird and inform these behaviours.

Leadership for social justice brings to the fore a more emancipatory and critical perspective to my research. The reason for this section is due to the renewed emphasis on values in the South African context (as discussed in Chapter Two). Social justice in this context is not used as a benchmark against which this school should be compared or criticised. Rather, it allows for discussion as to the role of values predicated by the Manifesto and the real-life implementation and instrumentalisation of values in the organisational culture of schools.

In an attempt to address the inequalities of the past values have been emphasised in all academic and organisational contexts in our country. The Manifesto (Asmal, 2000:2) dictates:

Here was born an idea, a South African idea, of moulding a people from diverse origins, cultural practices, languages, into one, within a framework democratic in character, that can **absorb, accommodate and mediate** conflicts and adversarial interests without oppression and injustice.

If we consider the Manifesto in this context, the leaders of this school fulfil the requirements of the ‘diversity’ and ‘culture’ of their students (Chapter Four):

The Life Orientation and Personal Life programmes implemented at this school seem to embrace a much bigger picture than just life at school for the girls. Aspects of discrimination, equity, racial and gender injustices are focused on and in all ways seem to inform the values that are upheld by the leaders of this school (Journal Entry, June 2007).

It seems they feel their values reflect a common understanding and desire to embrace the changes of South African education and create a ‘family’ where everyone is treated equally and fairly: “Here at this school we are all part of this school family. It does not matter what culture you are or what your background is ... you are at this school all in one school with a sense of belonging and of family” (Deputy Principal, 2007). This is what is required of schools: “absorb, accommodate and mediate conflicts and adversarial interests without oppression and injustice” (Manifesto, 2000). This resonates with Deal and Peterson’s (1999:8) description of school culture where a collaborative environment is provided which is transformed into a school

community or ‘family’ spirit and thus such an atmosphere brings more commitment and motivation.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, leaders for social justice according to Larson & Murtadha:

seek to define the theories and practices of leadership that are vital to creating greater freedom, opportunity and justice for all citizens – citizens who, through public education, are better able to participate in and sustain a free, civil, multicultural and democratic society (cited in Karpinski & Lugg, 2006:279).

But Karpinski and Lugg (2006:279) go further, showing how a social justice approach is a striking departure from historic practice in public schools because it acknowledges that public schools can and frequently do reproduce societal imbalance. Tyack and Hansot elegantly observed that educational administrators were to be the ‘Managers of Virtue’ and ‘virtue’ could be equated with upholding the social expectations for polite compliance and acquiescence (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006:282).

Surprisingly, the HOD showed an awareness of Karpinski and Lugg’s acknowledgment of the social justice leadership approach:

I think there is a lot of tolerance of different cultures because although we do acknowledge cultural change because of our strong Westernised cultures, many cultural values have been lost or pushed aside in order to adopt our values (HOD, Focus Group 2007).

“Tolerance of different cultures” suggests an attitude that promotes unity, ignoring difference, and working towards harmony across racial and ethnic barriers. My research participants felt they addressed ‘difference’ through ethnic evenings, cultural dress days and life orientation programmes (Chapter Four). These activities suggest tolerance, and indeed promotion of all cultures, including those which may be minority groups in the context of the school. However this seems more of a former Model C ethos – a desirable culture for schools that are well-resourced, functional and achieve on all educational levels.

As the HOD mentioned “pushing aside” and “losing” (Focus Group, 2007) cultural values is not intended, but is what happens. The values that have prevailed and result in the school’s efficiency need to be focused on in order to keep achieving and educating their girls for the future. “It does not matter what culture you are or what your background is ... you are at this school, all in one school with a sense of family” (Deputy Principal, 2007). There is colour blindness and children from diverse backgrounds, cultures and races are ‘moulded’ into a former model C school ethos, rather than be allowed to embrace and support their unique cultural values and backgrounds.

As noted in the Manifesto (2000) ‘moulding a people’ and ‘absorb, accommodate and mediate’ conflicts and adversarial interests still do not address social justice in light of the critical perspective of this emerging trend. The problem is more complex, especially in our newly democratic South Africa. The result of these ideas put forward from the Manifesto is that a subtle and unpremeditated ignorance of difference is the outcome. Authentic social justice dimensions in leadership suggest a critical and emancipatory view: Difference should not be **ignored**, but rather **noted** and leadership should work towards true equality. As the HOD mentioned, these leaders are aware of this, but are unsure as to how to truly address these issues without sacrificing the effectiveness of their school and losing the values that form the foundation of their school’s success.

Leadership for social justice has brought a critical perspective to my research. This trend has illuminated the complexity of values in educational leadership. My argument is not whether these school leaders live up to social justice leadership. This school epitomises what the Manifesto dictates for South African schools. These leaders’ attitudes towards tolerance and promotion of multiple cultures are liberal and humanistic. However, my aim in this section is to highlight the difficulty of leading in post-apartheid South African schools and remaining critical in the implementation and instrumentalisation of values in school cultures, as these leaders are aware. Social justice leadership trends suggest that difference should be **noted** rather than **ignored**

and in light of my research, this once again highlights the intricacy of leadership in educational institutions.

5.4 Organisational culture

This theme is drawn from my second research question:

- How do these values find expression in the school leaders' leadership practices?

In order to discuss this element in the role of values in educational leadership the organisational culture of this school needs to be discussed. I begin by looking at the two level meaning of values in organisational culture as described by Schein (1992) as 'lenses' through which to illuminate my findings, and then move to a critical perspective in order to address the issues highlighted. Schein (1992:5) speculates that leaders shape, manage and change the organisation's culture in order to contribute to the organisation's success. Along with Schein, Deal and Peterson (1999), Sergiovanni (2001) and Bezzina (2000) also claim that organisational culture influences leadership and, as described in the 'leadership' theme above, school environments being unique, generate interesting observations.

5.4.1 Espoused values in organisational culture

As I described in Chapter Two Schein (1992) defines culture as concerning the values that managers try to inculcate in their organisations. These can be described as the publicly announced values that the organisation embraces. He also then explains how until the group have taken some joint action there is no shared basis for determining what is real and what is factual (Chapter Two). Espoused values are shared by the group when members of the organisation have seen and acknowledged these values and they have provided a means of dealing with uncertainty and difficult situations.

Within my research endeavour this aspect of organisational culture was most evident. The school prides itself on providing a set of values that filter from leadership to the publicly announced educational philosophy and mission statements (see Figure Six) provided to the parent body at the beginning of each academic year. Observing this

aspect of organisational culture at this school was a valuable way in which to see the real-life ‘workings’ of these espoused values and observing how they add to the general functioning of school life in this organisation. The means used to sustain the organisational culture were evident in symbols (educational philosophy statements, codes of conduct, mission statements, the CABIN room, ‘Clarrie’ symbolic representation), rituals (assemblies, Fathers/Daughters breakfast, Founders Day ceremonies)

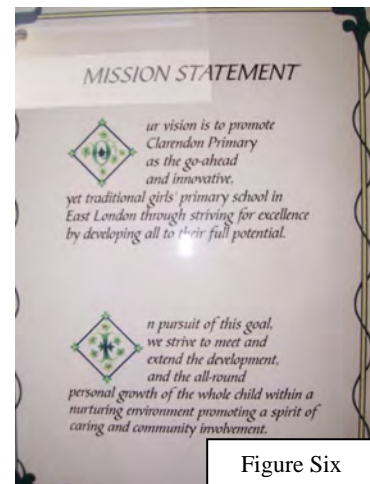


Figure Six

and language used by the leaders, staff and girls (“School with a heart”, “Education is not about curriculum only”, “careful of being too clinical” and “family and sisterhood”). This is characterised by the warm, caring aura felt when entering the staff room. Staff members are welcoming and friendly and there is a sense of nurturing and care especially from the older staff members. Together with this element is a distinct concern for ‘getting the job done’ and being effective and efficient in order to achieve success in their educational institution.

It is useful here to draw on Deal and Peterson (1999:115) who provide an outline for school leaders to create a successful school culture:

- Develop a student centred mission and purpose that motivates the heads and hearts of staff, students and community
- Strengthen elements of existing culture that are positive and supportive of school core values
- Build on the established traditions and values, adding new, constructive ones to the existing combination
- Recruit, hire and socialize staff who share the values of the culture and who will add new insights and skills to the culture
- Use the history of the culture to fortify the core values and beliefs; and
- Sustain core norms, values and beliefs in everything the school does

These are most observable in this school context. The aspect of social validation (Schein 1992) of these values in order to be espoused is evident at this school. These values are announced and implemented at the leadership level, but filter through to the

staff, parents and girls of this school: “I think these values filter through from the top just by mistake, from the person in charge ... it will naturally filter through” (GB Chairman 2007). The values of care, honesty, openness, integrity and development of people infiltrate all levels of this organisation and serve as the blueprints of the philosophy of education at this school. There is a definite atmosphere of personal and relational development in this organisation correlating most profoundly with organisational culture and espoused values described by Schein (1992) and Bezzina (2000). In difficult situations these values are held at the forefront of the problem-solving process and provide the basis for any decision making at all levels, as could be seen by the measures taken during the Strike action and dealings with individual children (Chapter Four).

Stewart (n.d.) provides interesting insight into this aspect of organisational culture as he focuses on the aspect of community: “It is in this concept of community that trust, optimism and shared delight can exist.” Community members welcome the skills, knowledge and inter-dependence of each other and work as a group to achieve the best for all. Stewart posits that principals are therefore both leaders and participating community members. He adds that one of the prime functions of the principal is to continually interpret actions in the light of the core culture that the community has established. The leaders of this school embrace this idea and it becomes vividly evident in staff meetings and assemblies where these rituals, symbols and the language used reflect this acknowledgement.

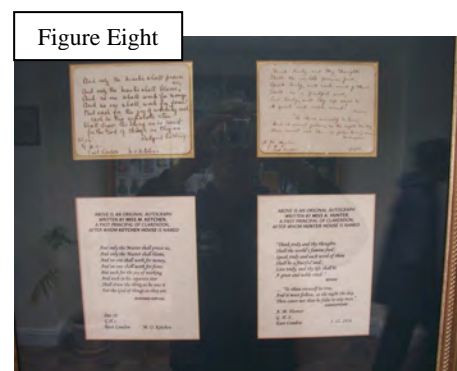
5.4.2 Basic assumptions in organisational culture

Basic assumptions are the values which have been so taken for granted that members will find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable (Schein, 1992:8). As described in Chapter Two these basic assumptions are allegedly those that are neither confronted or debated and hence are extremely difficult to change. Schein posits that these basic assumptions are different from the espoused values described above.

What was most interesting for me while observing and trying to analyse these basic assumptions is that the values these leaders embrace, articulate and express in their



actions and behaviours are deeply rooted in the organisational culture. What became evident was that these basic values that the school cherishes have evolved over generations of staff and school leaders. As described earlier the leaders' emphasis on 'role-modelling' illuminates this fact. As one enters the school the entrance foyer is the display area for pictures of past leaders (see Figure Seven), copies of the evolution of the school mission statement (see Figure Eight) and the distinct appreciation of the history of the school (Journal Entry, April 2007). This has been an interesting dimension to my research endeavour. Although these leaders articulate and express these values in their leadership practices, the values that underpin the organisational culture have evolved over decades of time, under the leadership of many past principals, who in some regards are held as 'hero' characters in the school history, as discussed previously.



As described above there is a culture, an aura, an atmosphere at this school that transcends any present human influence. It is evident when walking around the school building, when passing girls in school uniforms in the shopping centres, when seeing articles in the paper about the school's achievements (Journal Entry, May 2007). This is my understanding of what Schein describes as the basic assumptions in organisational culture. As Argyris describes (see Chapter Two) these theories-in-use are the actual rules we use to manage our beliefs. Lazaridou (2007:341) highlights within her research factors that resonate with my findings. When leaders are faced with difficult situations values acting as "preferences" dictate school leader's actions. However in light of the basic assumptions Schein describes, Lazaridou also explains how the indirect influence of values acts as a filter that determines the problem solving process. Leithwood (in Lazaridou, 2007) also found "that when experts solve

ill-structured problems they use values to compensate for insufficient information or to deal with excessive amounts of knowledge”.

Within this view of organisational culture the chosen language used by the leaders of this school illustrates and resonates with previous literature on the basic assumptions of this school and is a very powerful symbol of their school culture. Within their educational philosophy, statements such as “extending the development and all-round personal growth” underpin the idea of task and relational achievement for this school. The wording of “striving for excellence in developing all to their full potential” provides the foundation for the Deputy Principal reflecting on this discussion:

Quite interestingly I have a younger cousin who really struggled in her personal life as an adult. She came from a good family and had a wonderfully stable home. When I analysed this situation the only thing I could put it down to was the school she attended. And that really got me thinking. She chose friends from the wrong side of the tracks. I am not analysing it from a snobbish point of view but just the environment did not aid her. And I believe that if she was at a different school, her life would have been different. So I have realised that this is really important. To give your child the best school experience you can (Deputy Principal, Interview, 2007).

These basic assumptions of what education is and should be are so deeply embedded in the lives of these leaders that conceiving any other view is impossible. These leaders so firmly believe in their “achievement” and “success” in education that they feel they ultimately hold the recipe for ‘ideal’ education. Also within school life and in the lives and leadership practices of these school leaders, the task and relational achievement balance is so deeply grounded in the foundations of the values of the school that statements such as “to encourage confidence, self-discipline, responsibility and consideration for others” (Mission Statement), “good old fashioned manners” and “developing the core potential of each child” illuminates these fundamental, core values that are so profoundly embedded in the culture of the organisation. Van der Mescht (1996:159) highlights how there is no way in which a teacher or educational leader can escape daily dealings with values. The need to engage with values lies at the heart of education. With this in mind I critically reflect on the two value levels described by Schein (1992).

5.4.3 Critical reflection on organisational culture

Sergiovanni (2001:100) suggests that thinking of a school as a “community” emphasises the importance of shared values, commitments and interpersonal relationships. The literature on schools as “communities”, “unique organisations”, and “nurseries of values” has been discussed in this and previous chapters.

It has been noted that my discussion on the two levels of values described by Schein (1992) seems to portray many parallels and similarities to my observations. Schein (1992:3) defines culture as concerning the values that managers **try** to inculcate in their organisations. The ‘espoused values’ have been described as the publicly announced values that the organisation embraces. The basic assumptions, however, have been defined by Schein as the values which have been so taken for granted that members will find behaviour based on any other premise inconceivable. These should be seemingly different and relatively distinct from each other due to the complex nature of values in organisational life.

It is here that I posit that the similarities of these proposed different levels of values within this school are so connected and intertwined that they are inseparable. Burns (1978:67) found that in the workplace people value most of all those assignments that enable them to contribute to worthwhile purposes that challenge their creativity and that give them a sense of accomplishment and pride. This illuminates the intentions of these school leaders. Their purpose is to enable effective teaching and learning in their school. There is no hidden agenda, no financial draw card, no profit-driven motivation. They are who they are because of their intention: to lead an effective school. These leaders are so assured of their position on the values of their school that there is only a strong root system of the values influencing their leadership practices, no distinct or subtle difference in the espoused values and the basic assumptions of the organisation. I feel this is due to the nature of this educational institution. The educators and leaders of this school identify with the culture of this school: “Everyone is keen, proactive and wants to be involved” (GB Chairman 2007). They are so certain of their role that they **do** what they **are**. They embrace the values and live them out in their daily school practices without hesitation or debate. They form and are part of the school culture; they live out these values without questions or uncertainty both in the

publicly announced values (the rituals and symbols evident in school life) and the basic assumptions of the organisation (foundations, unseen/unspoken truths). Here again the literature on school environments being unique and different to business-like organisations and the job of the educator and administrator in this school illuminates the possible reasons for this finding.

5.5 Summary

Using the themes of ‘Leadership’ and ‘Organisational Culture’ I discussed the data presented in Chapter Four and encapsulated the results of my data by considering previous literature, the frameworks provided to enhance understanding, the data and interpretation and reflection on the data.

Under ‘Leadership’ I explained how the task/person orientation in leadership facilitates an understanding of my data and brings into question the contemporary theories of servant leadership, leadership for social justice and distributed leadership in this school environment. I also discussed how role-modelling and faith have influenced the leadership styles of these school leaders and the element of being reflective in their practices enhanced the implementation and instrumentalization of values in their organisation.

Following this the theme of ‘Organisational Culture’ created discussion based on the different dimensions of values described by theorists (Schein, 1992 and Argyris, 1990). I reflected on Sergiovanni (2001) and Deal and Peterson’s (1999) ideas on organisational culture to highlight the uniqueness of the school environment, the complexity of values in these organisations and their impact on leadership in these institutions.

Within both these themes I incorporate a critical perspective where I argue the uniqueness and complexity of my research. In Chapter Six I highlight means by which my findings can be disseminated to a wider audience and enhance further study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this chapter I highlight the main findings and discuss the key issues resulting from my research endeavour. I also discuss the limitations of my study and the features that lead to rigorous findings. Finally I discuss the potential value of my study and provide recommendations for further research into the impact of values in educational leadership.

6.1 Main findings

My research investigated the role of values in educational leadership by studying the experiences of school leaders in a former Model C School. These leaders provide a human perspective on the abstract and complex phenomena of values in leadership. The three key issues I highlight in this section are the following:

- Collapsed levels of values in school leadership
- Leading for social justice in the South African context.
- Culture and leadership

6.1.1 Collapsed levels of leadership in school leadership

Schein (1992) posits that values can be investigated on two dimensions. Firstly, espoused values, which are the publicly announced values that leaders try to inculcate in their organisation, were most evident in my research sample. In this school, these were observed in the symbols (mission statements, codes of conduct, the CABIN room and ‘Clarrie’ cartoon character) and rituals (assemblies, Fathers and Daughters breakfast, and Founder’s Day celebrations) of the school. These espoused values were evident in all forms of school life, from the language used in focus groups and interviews with the leaders, to the physical evidence of displays and pictures around the school building. Secondly, the basic assumptions are those values that are neither confronted nor debated, those values that form the basis for all decision-making and problem solving and lie deeply embedded in the school culture.

Previous research (Deal and Peterson, 1999 and Sergiovanni, 2001) suggests that school organisational culture is unique due to the “community” and “family” feel in school environments. I have argued that a reason for this is the human element in educational institutions. Van der Mescht (1996) and other researchers have shown in their studies that leadership is a profoundly human phenomenon. The other dimension to my argument is the evidence that schools are the ‘nurseries’ of values. Values are at the forefront of school life and are described as the common currency that makes life meaningful. This is also emphasised in the South African Manifesto on education: “we have to distil out of it [the Constitution] a set of values that are as comprehensible to Grade Ones as they are to the elders of the Constitutional Court” (Asmal, 2000). Codes of Conducts for educators and review committees stress how values should lie at the heart of education.

Reflection on the place of values in educational research and reflecting on my data has proven that values form a critical part of school leaders’ lives and leadership practices. However the fundamental finding here is that these values that inform leadership attitudes and behaviours are not limited to the dimensions of leadership described by Schein (1992) and Argyris (1990). These school leaders’ purpose is to enable effective teaching and learning in their school. There is no hidden agenda or profit-driven motivation. These values are the “cultural cement” that holds the school together (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986:9). These leaders with their personal values embrace their role to such an extent that it becomes part of who they are, from what they publicly announce (explicit values) to the unseen/hidden truths (implicit values) of their organisation. They **do** what they **are** and embrace these values in their daily practices without hesitation or debate.

6.1.2 Leading for social justice in the South African context

The crippling legacies of South Africa’s past have hugely influenced current educational policies as illustrated in the Manifesto and the Bill of Rights (2000). The renewed interest in values in education is a means to manage these inequities and provide hope for the future. There seems to be a frantic race to provide some kind of

‘ideal’ that addresses the cultural, historical, political and social issues in South African society.

This was highlighted in my research as the participants of my study often portrayed awareness of these issues. Terms such as ‘cultural difference’ and ‘ethnic backgrounds’ eased the tension for them as leaders of the school and their confidence in reporting on ‘ethnic evenings’ and ‘cultural dress’ days produced courteous acquiescence with what was required of them as leaders in South African schools today. However, the leaders of this school showed an awareness of not critically addressing these issues and that these values were sometimes “pushed aside” in order to maintain the organisational culture that leads to effectiveness in their institution. Tyack and Hansot observed that educational administrators were to be ‘managers of virtue’ and ‘virtue’ and this could be equated with upholding the societal expectations for polite compliance (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006:282).

In light of leadership for social justice views, my research sample and the Manifesto predicates a more liberal and humanistic view. Terms such as ‘moulding a people’ and ‘absorbing and mediating conflicts’ does not truly address the critical discourse of social justice in educational leadership but rather results in a level of colour-blindness and ignorance of difference, cultures, races and ethnicity. Leadership for social justice suggests that difference should be noted rather than ignored.

6.1.3 Culture and leadership

Sergiovanni and Corbally (1986:106) posit that school leaders embody the values and beliefs of the school. Research has shown that understanding the relationship between the school’s culture and its leadership starts by valuing the importance of the individual leader who is at the heart of the leadership.

My findings illustrate a different dimension to what previous literature suggests about leaders and organisational culture. This school has evolved an organisational culture over decades in response to the influence of many school leaders. There is an aura, an atmosphere that transcends current human influence. It is evident when walking

around the school grounds, at shopping centres where girls in uniform meet for coffee, and when past pupils and teachers attend special ceremonies (Founders Day) and reflect on their time at the school. The history, experiences and ‘stories’ of this school form the blueprints for the foundation and values of the organisational culture. Unlike other research the leaders are informed by this almost ‘spiritual’ dimension of this school’s life and as Argyris (1976) argues these ‘theories-in-use’ values are the actual rules that manage these school leaders’ beliefs.

Once again this highlights the inability of this research to ‘fit’ into the dimensions of values in organisational culture and organisational leadership presented by prior theorists and researchers (Schein, 1992; Argyris, 1976). This school reflects and embraces what Lazaridou (2007: 341) argues: “as institutions become more complex and diverse, they [policy-makers and practitioners] must be sensitive to value issues and how they influence core activities.”

6.2 Limitations

Working within the interpretive paradigm and conducting a case study with an individual school results in limitations in the potential value in the overall impact regarding the study of values in educational institutions. The nature of interpretive study does not suggest solutions and answers to overwhelmingly complex research questions. The scope of this case study was small (one institution) and the findings not generalisable in the traditional sense of that notion. Yet Kaufman (as quoted in Smulyan 2000:43) explains:

By viewing social change through the lens of individual experience, we are able to move away from infinite generalizations and abstractions and into the realm of individual constructions of meaning.

The advantage of this approach to my research is that the abstract concept of values in leadership has been made ‘real’ through empirical data collection and study. This was achieved through the in-depth and focused attention given to the role of values in the lives of these school leaders and the implementation of values in their school leadership practices. Through gathering rich data by means of interviews, focus groups, observation and document analysis this study was able to access the lived

experience of educational leaders, and to bring the issue of values into focus. As Deal and Peterson (1999:115) argue, promotion of the creation of an effective school culture is one of the means of improving school administration and building motivation among the staff and students. My research has highlighted the crucial factor of values being foundational in creating and maintaining effective school cultures. In light of this statement the type of school chosen for this research also proved challenging regarding the generalisability of my findings. This former model C institution prides itself on traditions, values and a history, providing the foundations for their success and achievement in different aspects of school life. Researching the impact of values on leadership at this type of educational institution was enriching and very useful. However to address the South African context and the problems South African education faces, research and investigation into more 'typical' school environments (historically disadvantaged, rural/farm schools) would provide useful information to disseminate across the diverse milieus of education in South Africa.

My role as the researcher also posed limitations due to the nature of my being personally and subjectively involved as a staff member in this educational institution. As discussed in Chapter Three the difficulty was highlighted by what Adler and Adler (1987) describe as a *complete* membership role which forced me to take on obligations and liabilities of members and to be viewed as a member participating in routine practices. This required continuous reflexivity in the research process as well as the complexity of no 'disengagement' process from my research. This membership role did nonetheless give me the unique opportunity to acquire 'understanding in use' rather than 'reconstituted understanding' and opened a new dimension to my role as the researcher and the overall validity of my findings.

Bassey (2002:110) cautions that the closer one becomes to research participants, the more the researcher must ensure the willingness of the participants and that the findings are reported in such a way that it is not prejudicial to their best interests. This encouraged me as the researcher to implement steps to strengthen the data. Methods such as triangulation and member-checks (as discussed in Chapter Three) of the raw data were established to ensure validity and neutrality of the data. This is illuminated in my attempt to provide rigorous and valid findings adding to the field of education

and management research in South Africa. As Van der Mescht (2007:6) argues regarding educational leadership:

The need to advance knowledge, to contribute to healthy debate and *grow* the field [educational leadership and management] into an intellectually vibrant one – is relatively weak in South Africa.

6.3 Potential value

My exploration into this phenomenon has highlighted the lack of current research in this field most especially in the South African context. Research is limited and seemingly non-existent in South Africa. I maintain that in order to help meet and exceed the requirements of the Manifesto and similar documents provided from government on education and democracy, my research provides a starting point for further investigation.

My research elucidates the complexity and uniqueness of school environments and the challenges facing school leaders in this diverse matrix. This study questions the notion of leading for social justice and exposes evidence that blurs the vision of truly accommodating social justice leadership in our unique South African context.

This study also highlights the complexity of values in organisations. It enhances the discussion of the core functions of implementation of values in organisational culture and the difficulty of understanding values in practice in lives of leaders. This is emphasised in the school environment where values are seen as the foundation for leadership behaviours and attitudes due to schools being deeply ‘people’ orientated. Educating children is founded in the values and moral principles of society and this has profound implications for those in leadership positions in educational institutions. My research has provided landmarks for further enquiry into this intricate and complex field.

6.4 Recommendations for practice

Incorporating the understanding of organisational culture and values implementation and instrumentalization in educational institutions seems vital for school leadership and management courses/diplomas/degrees. These practical recommendations are made in order to meet the needs of leading and managing South African schools:

- Present and future leaders need to develop their awareness of organisational culture and the unique role of values in leadership.
- Vision and mission statements need to be adopted in a joint enquiry environment. All members of the organisation need to be aware of the vision of the organisation and need to assess and become aware of existing values, both implicit and explicit.
- Regular staff development workshops need to be in place in order to regularly focus on and emphasise values in everyday organisational practices.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

After much reflection and questioning of the data from this research, I make the following recommendations for future research:

- Studies of the impact and role of values in educational leadership seem vital in illuminating the 'human' element in educating and leading in schools. My research has shown the uniqueness and complexity of leading in the school environment and resonates with emerging leadership trends to highlight the core function of values in this phenomenon. This research must be continued to further the understanding of these practices in organisational life and educational leadership.
- A need for further investigation into more typical South African school environments (historically disadvantaged) would prove valuable and could result in vastly different findings.
- The issue of social justice in not only school environments is a subject I recommend more research and study be applied in order to enhance progress in addressing the inequalities of the past. Further investigation into how documentation such as the Manifesto and Bill of Rights is applied in school

environments and influences the values implementation and understandings of school leaders is vital in order to successfully progress in South African education.

- I also recommend alternative views of leadership in the school environment. Embracing true social justice dimensions in leadership permits a move from traditional leadership practices in schools as seen in previous research. In an organisational development survey-data-feedback intervention (Drake, 2006) a school adopted a new student leadership system based entirely on data provided from the students themselves. This has led to a new enquiry into student leadership at other educational institutions with schools collecting data (parent surveys) to implement systems that accommodate their specific needs. Smith (2003:6) discusses the view of Weisbord who found in his experience that:

People benefit most from talking with one another and deciding what to do. We change as we have face-to-face contact with others and get new information. We change when we listen and respond in new ways, listening to our own inner voices, hearing ourselves say things we never said before.

Here again we see how a critical dimension in educational leadership is needed in order to bring about change in organisational life and to challenge organisational members to reflect on and incorporate change in their everyday lives.

This once again illuminates the uniqueness of the school environment and the importance of the people-centred nature of schools. Change is vital in accommodating leadership for future educational environments and for the needs of children as our members of society. In the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt: We cannot build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

6.6 Conclusion

This study has revealed a new level of thinking and postulating regarding the role of values in educational leadership and management. The 'person' element in these practices has highlighted the uniqueness of school life and the impact values have on all areas of organisational life, especially leadership. I have thoroughly enjoyed this

research experience and hope my aim in disseminating this research to the wider South Africa creates further investigation and enquiry into this complex phenomenon.

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APPENDIX ONE: Information and consent letter

School Address and Details

Friday 11 May 2007

Dear (Leaders of the school)

Focus Group for Research Project

Thank you most kindly for giving up your time to be involved in my research project. My fascination in educational leadership and management has led me to investigate the role of values in leadership for my research project this year, in order to complete my Masters degree. With this in mind, I would sincerely appreciate your thoughts and reflections on the practices of your school.

Schools are unique organisations due to the value-laden and moral implications of educating children. This places emphasis on the role of values in the leadership of educational institutions and more interestingly, in the lives of the school leader. My interest lies in how school leaders implement and articulate values in their school, from assemblies, classroom practices, school notices, discipline structures, staff relations, SGB involvement etc...

Examples of the questions I would like us to discuss are:

- What do you, as members of this school family, perceive to be the most important factors in educating your girls?
- How would you describe this school as an organisation?
- What makes this school unique compared to other educational institutions?
- What are the key life-skills you feel you are imparting to your learners?
- What part do you play in the education of your girls?
- What would you consider to be your 'school values' projected to society?
- Why would you encourage other parents to send their girls to this school?

The aim of my research is to gain an understanding of the role of values in educational leadership. I was hoping that before our meeting (Monday 14 May, 14:30-15:30) you could keep these thoughts in mind. I am absolutely sure your input will be most beneficial, as highly regarded school leaders in the (city) community.

I am most grateful for the opportunity of interviewing you for my research. If you have any queries with regards to the above information, please feel free to contact me before our meeting.

Kind regards

Melanie Drake
Masters Student (ELM)
Rhodes University
Grahamstown

I agree to participate in Miss Drake's focus Group as part of her data gathering for her research. I acknowledge that anonymity is ensured and that I may view her transcripts from these interviews at any time.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX TWO: Interview consent letter

31 May 2007

Dear (Principal and Deputy Principal)

The focus group interview was most successful and I once again thank you for your consideration and involvement. In order to obtain more in depth and rich data I would like to interview you once again at you convenience.

Please let me know when you have time in your busy schedule for me to interview you. I look forward to you sharing your experiences and stories with me.

Examples of questions I would like to discuss with you are:

- How would you describe the manner in which you lead this school?
- What 'legacy' would you like to leave behind at this school (be remembered for)?
- What values do you feel are reflected in all your actions at this school?
- Are there ever conflict situations regarding your leadership at the school and your own personal views and opinions?
- What specific experiences, or specific people, have impacted the way in which you lead this school?
- How do your personal experiences influence your leadership at this school?

Many thanks

Melanie Drake
Masters Student (ELM)
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
