RHODES UNIVERSITY

A phenomenological study of leadership in the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project (RUMEP)

By

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Abstract: *Few terms in organisational studies inspire less agreement than leadership. It is a slippery concept and much that is written on the subject is confusing and contradictory. Early theories of leadership have, generally, reduced leadership behaviour to a concern for task balanced against a concern for the well-being of employees. This two-dimensional approach has proved to be a limited conceptualisation of leadership. In response, over the past thirty years, researchers have tried to highlight the less rationalistic, more intangible, aspects of leadership. However, there is still very little in leadership research that conveys a sense of the leader as a person. I have argued, in this study, that the reason for this lies in the fact that most leadership research has been conducted along positivistic lines and, therefore, cannot take into account the values, feelings, morals and life experiences of the human beings being studied. Thus, for the human being to take centre-stage in leadership enquiry, a different research paradigm needs to be explored. I have chosen to use phenomenological enquiry as an avenue for examining how John Stoker, the leader of the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project (RUMEP), experiences being a leader. This is because phenomenology, in both theory and practice, privileges the nature of the meanings that people construct in their lives and that guide their actions. In adopting such a methodology my research findings have examined a number of issues that are of interest to current leadership researchers, however they have also highlighted a number of concerns that have not been explored thoroughly in the leadership literature. These include the importance of the individual leader's action, intention and will in shaping an organisation, the complex nature of a leader's creativity within the organisation and possible differences between educational leaders and business leaders. In adopting a phenomenological perspective the eccentricity and fulness of an individual leader's action is expressed through the research, however, the research also focusses on how the researcher translates and evolving philosophical understanding into sound methodology. Therefore, interwoven into the discussions on leadership there are reflections on how I applied phenomenological theory. The purpose of these reflections is to deliberate on the appropriateness of applying such a methodology to the eclectic field of leadership and to show how my own developing philosophical attitude has transformed into practice.*

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

1.1 The roots of this study

This research springs directly from personal experience.

I joined the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project (RUMEP) after only two years of teaching high-school Mathematics. I had thoroughly enjoyed my experiences in the classroom. I loved the children with whom I worked, I found them stimulating and challenging on both a professional and personal level. I developed a small network of fellow colleagues with whom I could share my professional experience, something that, as a junior teacher, I greatly appreciated. However, I did not enjoy working in, what I experienced, as an extremely rigid bureaucratic environment. I hated the endless staff-meetings, the planning meetings where certain ideas were forced upon the staff, the constant berating of the staff to adhere to timetables, rules and regulations and the hierarchy that prevented me from (in my opinion) doing my job properly.

Working for RUMEP was certainly a liberating experience. There was freedom to explore and play with what I was doing. I was free to try out new ideas. There was also constant support from John and my fellow colleagues. What was different? I was still teaching, although not children. I had moved from secondary to primary Mathematics which, although not an insignificant move, could not entirely account for my sense of liberation. I had, once again, a network of supportive, reflective colleagues. I was still having to meet deadlines and, to some degree, conform to rules and regulations. Nevertheless, something was fundamentally different and this difference I attributed to the organisational context.

I have, probably since my early teenage years, been fascinated by organisations. I think it started when my Father lead a team of engineers and other professionals in building transmission lines all over the country. During the long drives of the annual family vacations he and I would talk about the different lines we passed, where they were going, how they got to be there and the inevitable problems of making this happen. Family dinner times were full of discussions on the problems of

putting up transmission lines - most of those were not technical. It was perhaps these early seeds that lead me to choose to do an Honours in Business Management a number of years later. However, much of what I learned seemed very theoretical and slightly removed from my own experience of organisational life. Perhaps this was due to the fact that much of the theory had been based on research conducted in large organisations rather than the small ones to which I was accustomed. Perhaps it was due to the fact that the research was business orientated rather than education orientated. Perhaps it was due to a number of other factors of which I could not even think. Nevertheless, as I prepared for my final exams I learnt lists of characteristics of transformational leaders, memorised the five (or is it six?) steps for action research, drilled the definition of a Learning Organisation into my head and promptly forgot most of it after the exam was written. Although I believe that I benefited from being exposed to the large body of theory about organisations it did not make much of an impression on me as a person. I was, essentially, unchanged.

In my second year of working at RUMEP, and after much convincing, I decided to enrol for a Masters in Educational Leadership and Management. I knew that much of the theory that I had learnt about organisations did not address some of the unaccountable elements in my own experience of organisational life. I therefore chose to study leadership in RUMEP because it was something in which I was involved and was, as an organisation, totally different to my previous experiences. I also chose to conduct a phenomenological study not only because it seemed appropriate to my research question but also because I wanted to learn about this particular research method. As I will explore in Chapter 7, most of my own research experience has been quantitative rather than qualitative.

The question that I chose to ask was simple: what is John Stoker's experience of leadership at RUMEP?

1.2 How this study is structured

Chapter 2 is a selective overview of leadership literature in which I argue the point that much research has overlooked the leader as a 'person'.

In **Chapter 3** I look at the theory and practice of phenomenological research and justify its use for this study.

Chapter 4 presents a situated general description of John Stoker's experience as leader of RUMEP.

In **Chapter 5** I have justified the formulation of a situated general structure for this study and then presented that structure.

Chapter 6 presents the discussion of my findings.

Chapter 7 examines my opinion about and experience of the fruitfulness of phenomenological research into leadership. It also takes a brief look at suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

The literature

2.1 "Here be Dragons"

Many commentators have noted the fact that leadership is a slippery concept (Benis & Nanus 1985, Bass 1990, Heifetz 1994, Hoy & Miskel 1996 and Van der Mescht 1996). There are certainly no all-encompassing definitions, neat formulas or all-embracing theories. In fact Robbins (1998: 347) has observed that "the leadership literature is voluminous, and much of it is confusing and contradictory" and Benis & Nanus (1985: 4) have remarked that "never have so many labored so long to say so little". There seems to be a sense of frustration amongst scholars about this state of affairs. Yukl (1998: 493) has lamented that most of the widely know leadership theories are conceptually flawed and lack empirical support. Both Bass (1990) and Robbins (1998) have echoed this view with Bass (1990: 912-913) acknowledging that "an enormous amount of original, creative research [has been] coupled with a wasteful repetition of shopwom hypotheses and a general disregard for negative results". Benis & Nanus (1985: 4) almost seem to bewail the fact that:

> Multiple interpretations of leadership exist, each providing a sliver of insight but each remaining an incomplete and wholly inadequate explanation. Most of these definitions don't agree with each other, and many of them would seem remote to the leaders whose skills are being dissected...They don't always reflect reality and sometimes they just represent nonsense.

Despite the dissatisfaction of those who continue to "...bemoan the supposed unknowable, elusive, mysterious nature of leadership" (Bass 1990: 914) the topic continues to fascinate both scholars and practitioners. Perhaps this is precisely because the research does not provide neat, easily defined answers but constantly raises new questions that seem unanswerable. It is, I believe, through this confusion that new ways of thinking and talking about leadership arise to be explored.

In the quest to explore new ways of thinking and talking about leadership, the seeker needs to heed an ominous warning:

> The first hard fact that the prospective student of leadership needs to accept is that he or she is setting off on an unusual kind of journey. In one sense the territory is known: who, after all, does not (intuitively) know what leadership is? The traveller may be excused, therefore, for striding out with a degree of confidence. But the moment he or she begins

> to consult the maps left behind by those who have gone before, that confidence is likely to be replaced by confusion and frustration...(Van der Mescht 1996: 7).

This sounds like the warning written on the ancient maps of Wales: "Here be Dragons". And in many senses there are dragons lurking in the study of leadership. The scholar cannot assume that there will be an explanatory order for things, cannot believe that she or he will stumble across a law-like interpretation of the complex social phenomenon called leadership and cannot hope for "...a mechanistic or quasi-mechanistic system of interactions which can be managed, directed, planned and, above all, comprehended" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: xi). However the maps that are left behind, although confusing and even contradictory, need to be consulted for two reasons. Firstly because they point toward possible areas of exploration and secondly because if the explorer ignores what other people are thinking she or he is in danger of going in circles, happily talking only to herself or himself (Popper 1959: 17). Nevertheless, in a sense, each new researcher steps out into the land of dragons to chart her or his own path, to attempt to answer a number of questions and, hopefully, to raise a few more. The challenge, as I see it, is to explore new ways of thinking and talking about leadership and I trust that this process will not only be entertaining but also illuminating and will carry within it the possibility of developing new and deep insights (Wheatley 1999: 15).

2.2 The way of classical sciences

Before I launch into discussing some of the literature available on leadership, it is important to examine the scientific paradigm in which many of the studies are located. Science, since the seventeenth century, has been dominated by the view that:

> The scientist must...be concerned to understand the world and to extend the precision and scope with which it has been ordered. That commitment must, in turn, lead him (*sic*) to scrutinize...some aspect of nature in great empirical detail. And, if that scrutiny displays pockets of apparent disorder, then these must challenge him to new refinements of his observational techniques or to a further articulation of his theories (Kuhn 1962: 42).

This understanding has profoundly affected the way in which organisations and the people within organisations have been studied. Wheatley (1999: 29) has argued that researchers and organisational theorists have focussed their attention on, among others things, structural and organisational design,

on gathering extensive numerical data and on developing sophisticated mathematical formulae which people can use to make accurate predictions and decisions. There has been a preoccupation with whittling organisations and the people in them down to small parts so that these parts can be minutely studied. All this in the belief that knowledge of the whole can be reached by studying the parts (Wilber 1996 and Wheatley 1999).

One of the consequences of this thinking is that human experience is removed from the scientific world view. The concern of science is no longer "the problem of understanding the world - **including ourselves**, and our knowledge, as part of the world" (Popper 1959: 15, emphasis added) but rather simply understanding the world unconnected to human experience. Thus, the world or the phenomenon being studied becomes the object of science and is independent of the scientist (Hoyningen-Huene 1993: 31). The product of thinking in this manner is that researchers, particularly in the social sciences, attempt to devise complex theories that explain what they observe in the world. This results in the employment of research methodologies that will, inevitably, push researchers further from the experience and understanding of the everyday world (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 11). Argyris (1976: 151) has suggested that this is because these research methods require that the researcher dominates subjects "...resulting in the alienation of subjects, and a hindrance of information flow". Thus, a silent world is discovered, nature becomes dead and passive, responding like an automaton which, once programmed, just follows the rules (Prigogine & Stengers cited in Wheatley 1999: 31). Individual leaders also disappear "..and with them human agency, responsibility, and morality" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 145), the very stuff that makes individuals, leaders.

This view of scientific enquiry that I have described has, in my opinion, until recently dominated the study of leadership. Researchers and theorists seemed to be concerned with reducing leaders to the sum of their parts and then finding formulas to explain and, I suspect, predict their behaviour. Elaborate models abound which contemplate increasing numbers of variables and created more precise forms of analysis of leadership (Wheatley 1999: 29). This has, some what inevitably, lead to the proliferation of leadership definitions and theories, many of which are contradictory (Bennis & Nanus 1985, Hoy & Miskel 1996 and Van der Mescht 1996). Schein (1996: 60) has argued that

the problem lies in the fact that:

> ...different researchers focus on different elements. At one level all of these theories are correct, because they all identify one central component of the complex human situation that is leadership, analyse that component in detail, and ignore others.

I would propose that the problem is deeper than this; put simply the problem is that many researchers have not viewed leadership as a "complex human situation" at all. They have viewed it as a phenomenon that can be dissected, component for component, because it is part of a reality beyond human control and therefore outside the will, intention and action of the individual (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 123).

I believe it is time for a different stance, one that recognises that human beings are in relationship with their world (Polkinghorne 1989: 42). This stance would require that central to the study of leadership would be how different people interpret the world in which they live. It would, therefore, not regard as critical the discovery of "the universal laws of society and human conduct within it" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 7). In contrast, it would necessitate a recognition that different people interpret their worlds differently. The world thus becomes a messy place where complexity, ambiguity and idiosyncrasy are celebrated rather than lamented. It is, therefore, my conviction that phenomenological enquiry is an appropriate theoretical tool with which to explore leadership. Several researchers have pointed out that it could prove valuable for leadership studies (Bass 1990 and Greenfield & Ribbins 1993) however I have only discovered one such study by Van der Mescht (1996). It is therefore necessary to trace the key developments in leadership theory in order to show how phenomenology can build on what has gone before as well as show how it has the potential to make a valuable contribution now and in the future. I do this with the understanding that new theory always evolves as individuals recognise and grapple with the limitations of current theory for, as Ken Wilber (1996: 50) has so aptly stated, "no epoch is finally privileged".

2.3 Trait Theories

Although leadership has proved fascinating to people throughout the ages, the rigorous study of the phenomenon was only begun early in the twentieth century (Bass 1990: 3 & Yukl 1998: 1). The early theories that these studies generated were known as Great-Man theories (despite numerous

examples, great women were mainly ignored) and espoused the belief that a leader was a unique individual who possessed special qualities that were able to capture the imagination of the masses (Bass 1990: 37). The underlying assumption made by the theorists was that leaders had to have some "special qualities" that their followers did not possess. The research question was, therefore, clear: Discover these "special qualities" (Bass 1990: 38, Hoy & Miskel 1996: 367 and Robbins 1998: 348). This was done by asking people in positions of leadership to compile lists of what traits they believed to be essential to leadership. These leaders were further subject to personality and intelligence tests, various questionnaires, rating scales, interviews and even physical examinations all in an attempt to isolate their collective "special qualities" (Bass 1990: 60 and Yukl 1998: 235). The result of all this effort was less than startling (Robbins 1998: 348) and provided an insufficient basis for understanding leadership (Schein 1996: 60). In fact Stogdill after reviewing some 124 trait studies concluded that "a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" (Stogdill 1948 cited in Yukl 1998: 236). So, rather than seek the secrets of leadership through the traits that people possess, researchers shifted their studies to what leaders...*do*" (Makin *et al.* 1996: 175, emphasis in the original).

2.4 Behavioural theories

The Ohio State Leadership Studies and the Michigan leadership studies were conducted in the late 1940's and early 1950's (see Vroom 1976:1530-1532, Hoy and Miskel 1990: 382-383, Makin *et al.* 1996:175-178 and Robbins 1998: 349-351) and have left an indelible mark leadership theory. The aim of both studies was "...to locate behavioural characteristics of leaders that appeared to be related to measures of performance effectiveness" (Robbins 1998: 351). In presenting their results they both collapsed leadership into an interaction between two categories of behaviour. One dealt with how a leader defined his or her role and those of subordinates and the other dealt with the quality of the leader's job relationships (Hoy & Miskel 1990: 382 and Robbins 1998: 350-351). Both studies, as Vroom (1976: 1530-1532) has noted, made extensive use of questionnaires. However, he implies that the questions themselves were inappropriate to the study of leadership as they did not refer to "...the situation in which the behavior is exhibited" (*ibid.:* 1531). He has further stated that:

> Aggregations over behavior and situations simplify the measurement problem by permitting the reduction of all subtleties of differences in leadership style to two dimensional space (*ibid.:* 1534).

One of the beauties of reducing what leaders do to a two-dimensional point of view is that it is easy to conceptualise. Blake and Mouton (1964) have done just that by graphing leaders' concern for people against their concern for production. They hoped that such a representation would provide "...a useful framework for analysing production-people problems and for suggesting effective solutions for them" (Blake & Mouton 1964: xi). There is also, of course, the added advantage of making the complex process of leadership predictable - a simply case of finding the right balance between concern the two dimensions (Van der Mescht 1996: 23). It also implies that there is one best way of leading, both a high concern for production and a high concern for people (Blake & Mouton 1964 and Robbins 1998). However, as Robbins (1998: 351) has noted, there is little substantive evidence to support the conclusion that a "high-high" style of leadership is most effective...". Vroom (1976: 1533) concluded about behaviour theories that:

> Broad principles of leadership have the advantage of not having to deal in any precise way with the complexities of situational differences and their import for leader behavior. However, the more broadly stated the principle, the greater the risk that it will be empirically vacuous and prescriptively useless. It is possible to state principles of leadership in such a way that they are true by definition, incapable of empirical refutation and which elicit immediate acceptance by persons with drastically different leadership styles.

2.5 Situational theories

Situational theorists built on the study of traits and behaviours by proposing that "...situational factors determine who will emerge as leader" (Bass 1990: 38). Several approaches to isolating key situational variables emerged.

The first comprehensive model was developed by Fred Fiedler (Robbins 1998: 354) and took into account "...the personality of the leader as well as aspects which affect the leader's behaviour and performance" (Fiedler 1974: 408). The main purpose of this theory was to develop an explanation of how a leader's behaviour influences the satisfaction and performance of subordinates (Yukl 1998: 265). It relied on an instrument, the 'Least Preferred Co-worker Questionnaire' (Robbins 1998: 354), to determine whether a leader was relationship or task orientated. He then isolated situational criteria that he believed impacted upon a leader's behaviour; The task, the influence the leader had upon the working environment and the characteristics of the leader's subordinates (Robbins 1998: 355 and

Yukl 1998: 267). Once these variables had been isolated, the leader's behaviour was matched to the situation to achieve maximum leader effectiveness (Robbins 1998: 356). Although Fielder had considered the added dimension of the situation, like the trait theorists and behaviourists, he had reduced leadership to predictable, controllable variables.

There are several other models that consider the impact of situational variables on leaders. They include the Leader-Participation Model which took leadership behaviour and related it to decision-making (Robbins 1998: 363-366 & Vroom 1976), Leader-Member Exchange Theory that focussed on the way in which leaders interacted with the different groups within an organisation (Robbins 1998: 360) and Leadership-Substitute Theory which focussed on situational variables that nullify a leader's actions (Yukl 1998: 273). Possibly the best known model is the Hersey and Blanchard model where a different pattern of leadership was required depending on the needs of a leader's subordinates (Robbins 1998: 357, Bass 1990: 488-489, & Yukl 1998: 270). The researchers identified three competencies for leadership:

a) diagnosing - being able to understand the situation you are trying to influence,
b) adapting - being able to adapt your behavior and the other resources you have available to meet the contingencies of the situation, and
c) communicating - being able to communicate in a way that peoples can easily understand and accept.

(Hersey & Blanchard: 1988:5)

Leaders, therefore, had to blend these competencies to meet the needs of their subordinates.

All the models described above reduce leadership behaviour "...to styles which were determined by the manner in which leaders balanced the concern for task on the one hand, with concern for the feelings and well being of people on the other" (Van der Mescht 1996: 19) despite recognising the importance of the situation. Furthermore, there is very little evidence to suggest, in spite of frequent, rigorous investigations, that these models were valid (Van der Mescht 1996 and Robbins 1998). A new way of looking at leadership had to be found.

2.6 Transformational leadership

Schein (1996: 60) has noted that:

> One of the most consistent findings by historians, sociologists, and empirically orientated social psychologists is that what leadership should be depends on the particular situation, the task to be performed, and the characteristics of the leaders' subordinates.

This conceptualisation is very limiting since it ignores factors that fall outside of these boundaries such as organisational culture or the leader's own values (Senge 1990). Over the past thirty years, new approaches to leadership have emerged that have focussed on the less rationalistic aspects of leader behaviour (Hoy & Miskel 1996: 392) and, according to Robbins (1998: 369), "...they all de-emphasize theoretical complexity and look at leadership more the way the average 'person on the street' views the subject".

The first such approach was pioneered by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 who first looked at transformational leaders (Hoy & Miskel 1996). His work was developed by later theorists, particularly Bass (1990: 53) who has noted that the transformational leader:

> ...asks followers to transcend their own self interests for the good of the group, organization, or society; to consider their longer term needs to develop themselves, rather than the needs of the moment; and to become more aware of what is really important.

Although the study of transformational leadership is problematic in terms of both quantitative and qualitative research instruments (Yukl 1999: 327-341), research in this area has offered valuable insights on leadership. Arguably the most important of these insights has been to highlight the intimate connection between organisational culture and leadership (Van der Mescht 1996: 25 and Yukl 1999: 328-329). Once the leader is reconnected, as it were, with her or his organisational context it becomes necessary to look at how concepts of the organisation have developed (Van der Mescht 1996: 25). For, as Sergiovanni (1984: 115) has said, "leadership and its organisational context are inseparable and thus one is difficult to understand without the other."

2.7 The organisation - the context of leadership

Organisations are not a new invention, they have been around for thousands of years (Haralambos & Holborn 1991). The organisational capabilities of pre-industrial societies are legendary. The building of Egyptian pyramids, the construction of Roman roads, the control the Catholic Church exercised over the Western world during the Middle Ages and the Ancient Chinese system of civil service are just some of the examples that students of leadership and organisations can study (George 1972). However, it was only during the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America that large industrial concerns of unprecedented size and complexity emerged (Haralambos & Holborn 1991: 405) and it was in the process of trying to find a way to manage, control and lead these organisations that organisational theory was born.

Hughes (1985:4) has noted that the pioneering work done in the field of organisational theory was mainly carried out by engineers and other people who were involved in the practical, day-to-day running of large companies. Their two main concems were:

1. Standardizing work, which meant the determination of the "one best way" of working; and
2. Controlling so extensively and intensively as to provide for the maintenance of all these standards (Kakar 1970: 3).

Wheatley (1999) has argued that these concerns continue to dominate understandings of organisations. There is an:

> ...emphasis on material structure and multiple parts. Responsibilities have been organized into functions. People have been organized into their roles. Page after page of organizational charts depict the workings of a machine: the number of pieces, what fits where, who the most important people are (Wheatley 1999: 29).

Machines are, after all, easy to control and understand. One can develop a "best practice" for machines. Furthermore, in a world that is increasingly becoming less predictable and certain, theories and activities that are precise, predictable and unambiguous may prove very attractive. Trait, behaviour and situational theories of leadership are appropriate to 'the machine' conceptualisation of organisations. This is because they are simple, provide clear and unambiguous guidelines and have a strong intuitive appeal (Van der Mescht 1996: 23).

A further point that needs to be noted is that these theories were developed during a time when bureaucratic notions of organisations were predominate. The sociologist, Max Weber (1864 - 1920), is credited with making the most influential statements on the essentials of a bureaucracy (Hughes 1985: 5). According to Haralambos & Holborn (1991: 407), his view was that:

> ...a bureaucratic organization has a clearly defined goal. It involves precise calculation of the means of attaining this goal and systematically eliminates those factors which stand in the way of the achievement of its objectives.

Thus a bureaucracy is organised along rational principles where there is work specialisation, a clearly defined hierarchy, a system of rules and regulations that govern decision-making and appointments and advancements are made along objective lines (Coser 1977: 230 and Hughes 1985: 5 - 6).

The strength of the bureaucracy as an important part of the organisational landscape is summed up by Mintzberg (1979: 333) when he argues that organisations structured along these lines:

> ...are the prime manifestations of our societies' high degree of specialization, moreover, they are the major contributors to our high material standards of living...No structure is better suited to mass production and consistent output, none can more efficiently regulate work. Our society simply could not function without these structures.

Thus models of leadership that made these structures possible and increased their efficiency were promulgated. Perhaps leadership theorists should have taken note of Weber's warning about bureaucracy and applied it to their own theories:

> ...the more fully realized the more bureaucracy 'depersonalizes' itself, i.e., the more completely it succeeds in achieving the exclusion of love, hatred, and every purely personal, especially irrational and incalculable, feeling from the execution of official tasks (Weber as cited in Coser 1977: 231).

Bush (1986: 22 - 23), in synthesising what he called the 'formal' models of organisation which include "...structural, systems, bureaucratic, rational and hierarchical elements" (Van der Mescht 1996: 26), has noted that these theories all emphasise official and structural elements of organisations. These theories assume that all decision-making is rational and authority rests in formal positions rather than in individual competencies. The early theories of leadership certainly

complement this thinking, succeeding in taking the person out of the theory and reducing leadership to a mechanical function which begins to feel distinctly anti-human (Wheatley 1999: 31).

Fortunately, organisational thinking has developed beyond the barriers imposed by the machine metaphor (Van der Mescht 1996: 26). The most severe challenge to this metaphor came from Thomas Greenfield who argued that

> The drive to see the organisation as a single kind of entity with a life of its own apart from the perceptions and beliefs of those involved in it blinds us to the complexity and the variety of organisations people create around themselves (Greenfield cited in Bush 1986: 90).

According to Cahill (1994: 251), Greenfield called for less emphasis on the science of organisations and more on human needs, desires and values. Bush (1986: 89 -93) asserts that these beliefs have evolved into an understanding of organisations that focuses on individual beliefs and perceptions. It also stresses the different meanings placed on incidents by individuals due to their different backgrounds, experiences and values. A key point that needs to be made is that organisational structure "...is essentially a product of human interaction rather than something fixed or predetermined" (*ibid.*: 91). This view, in my opinion, effectively smashes the belief that there is one best way to structure an organisation. It also challenges the widely held belief that there is only one best way to lead people. It even challenges the widely held view that "...the problem of organisation entails implementing...techniques that enable the organisation to meet its goals" (Guillén 1994: 76). As Greenfield (cited in Bush 1986: 92) argues "what is an organisation that it can have such a thing as a goal?"

Although, as Hughes (1985: 18) has put forward, Greenfield's thinking was "...a land mark in theory development", little cognisance has been taken of his contribution (Van der Mescht 1996: 34). Perhaps this is due to the fact that Greenfield's postulants explicitly state that there is no "one best way", there is no master map of organisational reality that is waiting to be discovered and followed. Perhaps, as Theobald (1999: 6) has suggested, human beings are not able to cope with this uncertainty.

However, Van der Mescht (1996: 36) has suggested that there are encouraging signs:

> As more scholars and leaders insist on upholding the primacy of personal values, of individual choice, of the human spirit's will and imagination, so the individual in all his and her complexity may gradually begin to occupy centre-stage in organisational and leadership enquiry.

Researchers are, therefore, challenged not only look at individuals but also to examine how and why these individuals construct specific types of organisations. This mode of enquiry recognises that people have their own characteristics, structures, development and history which ultimately shapes what they will see and what they **can** see (Wilber 1996: 60). It frees leaders and theorists to explore possibilities, in both organisational and leadership theory, that do not require them to find a "best practice" or a single theory that ultimately explains the whole universe. It further allows them to incorporate personal perceptions, values, attitudes and experiences as a legitimate part of theoretical dialogue.

2.8 The learning organisation - a different metaphor

Greenfield & Ribbins (1993: 92) have posed that:

> The basic problem in the study of organizations is understanding human intention and meaning...Action flowing from meaning and intention weaves the fabric of social reality. It is true that organizations appear to be solid, real entities that act independently of human control and are difficult things to change. Yet the paradox is that the vital spark, the dynamic of the organisation is made from nothing more substantial than people doing and thinking.

I believe that researchers are beginning to find ways of allowing that 'vital spark' to find its way to the centre of both organisational and leadership theory. A good example of this would be the current, wide spread interest in the idea of a learning organisation. Simply stated, a learning organisation is one which has developed the capacity to adapt and change (Senge 1990, Kofman & Senge 1993 and Robbins 1998). However, in line with Greenfield's thinking, the theorists have noted that:

> ...there is no such thing as a 'learning organization'. 'Learning organization' is a category that we create in language... .When we speak of a 'learning organization', we are not describing an external phenomenon or labelling an independent reality. We are articulating a view that involves us... (Kofman & Senge 1993: 16).

Therefore it is no surprise that central to this view of organisation is the idea that an individual's mental models of the world impact on how an organisation functions (Senge 1990). Senge (1990: 8) defines mental models as "...deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action". Therefore the individual, and what the individual thinks believes and values, becomes central to the understanding of how an organisation functions. De Gues (1997) re-enforces this idea by explicitly stating that only living beings learn. Thus a critical area of study is not only how individual mental models affect organisations but also how individual learning impacts on the organisation (Kim 1993).

If this is the conceptualisation of the organisation, then it demands a different view of leadership to those derived from the machine metaphor (Senge 1990: 339).

> In learning organizations, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for *building organisations* were people continually expand their capacity to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models - that is, they are responsible for learning (*ibid.*: 340, emphasis in the original).

It would certainly be a challenge to try to reduce these activities to a two-dimensional grid.

A valuable contribution to our understanding of both leadership and the organisational context in which leadership is exercised has been made by those studying organisational culture. In fact, Schein (1992:5) has argued that the concepts of leadership and culture are so intertwined that one cannot be studied without the other. He has defined group culture as:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (*ibid.*: 12).

Leaders, thus, have an important role to play in creating and maintaining and, where appropriate, changing, organisational culture. They have an important role to play in helping other people learn. Thus the key aspect, as Van der Mescht (1996: 27) has argued, is that there:

> ...is a renewed interest in the human factor, not the simplified notion adopted by continency models, but the involvement of the whole person. Hence the emphasis on values, on world-view, on 'perceptions, language, and thought processes'.

The emphasis on the human side of the organisation is not something new. The Hawthorne Studies of the late 1920's and early 1930's inadvertently stumbled onto the more irrational elements of the organisation. The researchers wanted to"...assess the effect of illumination upon the worker and his work" (Mayo 1933: 55). The underlying assumption being that there was a best way of illuminating a work place to produce maximum efficiency and productivity. However, "somehow or other that complex of mutually dependent factors, the human organism, shifted its equilibrium and unintentionally defeated the purpose of the experiment" (*ibid.*: 56).

What the researchers discovered was the spontaneous formation of informal groups within an organisation (Henderson *et al.* 1936). Thus, researchers came to realise that there existed informal groups within the structure of the formal organisation. There was increased recognition that:

> ...social organization is, in fact, a human need; it is, in some measure, necessary and inevitable. Its mere existence disciplines the members and gives rise to sentiments, often very strong sentiments of loyalty, of personal and group integrity, and not infrequently of pride (Henderson *et al.* 1936 :157).

The researchers pointed to idea that "...logical factors were far less important than emotional factors in determining productive efficiency" (George 1972: 137).

Morgan (1986: 41) suggests that the Hawthorne studies heralded the development of research interests in human motivation, relationships between individuals and groups, group morale and the relationship between the formal structure of an enterprise and the informal groups working within it. He goes on to state that these studies have sharpened the idea that the social aspects of work exist within and are influenced by the technical aspects of the work and *vice versa* (*ibid.*: 44). However, informal groups seem to have been regarded as a necessary evil in some quarters. Hughes (1985: 7) in commenting on Chester Barnard's (1938) *The functions of the Executive*, noted that Barnard suggested leaders should manipulate the informal organisation in order to strengthen the influence of the formal organisation. The primacy of the formal, rigid organisation was not disputed until the 1970's when several theorists articulated understandings that Bush (1986: 108) has named 'ambiguity' models.

One of the basic assumptions of these models is that organisations are fragmented. Groups exist within the organisation which have "...internal coherence based on common values and goals" (*ibid.*: 110). However the links between these groups are tenuous and unpredictable and do not conform to the dictates of the formal organisation. The term coined for this is 'loose coupling'. Weick (1976, cited in Bush 1986: 110) has argued that, for different groups within organisations:

> ...their attachments may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond...Loose coupling also carries connotations of impermanence, dissolvability, and tacitness all of which are potentially crucial properties of the 'glue' that holds organisations together.

Although Weick's notion of 'loose coupling' emphasised the irrationality and disorder characteristic of organisation (Van der Mescht 1996: 28), it still focussed on the **structure** of the organisation. The organisation was still assumed to be a "...not only real but also distinct from the actions, feelings and purposes of people" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 1). However, by introducing the irrational, the disordered and the complex into the debate on the nature of organisations, the foundations where being laid for theories and understandings that not only considered the 'actions, feelings and purposes of people' as part of organisations but fundamental to the existence of organisations.

2.9 Has the person returned to leadership theory?

The concept of transformational leadership has certainly revived interest in the leader as a person (Van der Mescht 1996: 29). Furthermore, an enriched understanding of the context of leadership, has lead researchers to focus on the emotional, symbolic and less rational aspects of leadership (Yukl 1998: 324). There is renewed understanding that leadership is a dynamic process that can be separated neither from the people who lead nor from the organisations in which leaders find themselves. The focus is increasingly shifting from the qualities of leadership that can be measured and graphed to things more intangible. As Bolman & Deal (1994: 85) have highlight, people are increasingly interested in "...leadership qualities such as ethical commitment, risk-taking, self-knowledge, character, courage and a long-range view".However, there is very little in contemporary leadership literature that conveys a sense of the leader as **a person** (Van der Mescht 1996: 31). There is almost a dis-ease among researchers with respect to the less rational, more idiosyncratic aspects of leadership.

Nothing, in my opinion, conveys this dis-ease more than the research surrounding the idea charismatic leadership. Once again, this is not a new concept, it featured strongly in the work of Max Weber. However, as Van der Mescht (1996: 29) has noted, "...what seemed to preoccupy Weber was not the nature of the charismatic personality itself so much as the need for the 'routinization' of charisma". For Weber, the charismatic leader inspired the creation of the organisation but the organisation, once established, would have to be bureaucratically managed (Bass 1990: 186 and Yukl 1998: 310). The role of the charismatic leader would then be reduced to that of figure-head, with severely curtailed influence and little involvement in the day to day running of the organisation. Perhaps the desire to, in some way, harness the charismatic leader in the chains of bureaucracy lay, essentially, in fearing what a charismatic leader could do within an organisation. As Eileen Barker (cited in Storr 1997: xv) has commented:

> Almost by definition, charismatic leaders are unpredictable, for they are bound by neither traditions nor rules; they are not answerable to other human beings.

The research on charismatic leadership seems to reflect, not a desire to understand charismatic leaders, but rather a desire to find a way to explain and therefore control their behaviour. Lists have been compiled, using MLQ, as to exactly what the key characteristics of charismatic leadership are (Robbins 1998: 371). Several empirical studies have been done, comparing the charismatic and the non-charismatic leader (Bass 1990: 189). Attention is currently on trying to determine how charismatic leaders actually influence followers. This process has been reduced to the following steps by Robbins (1998: 371):

> The process begins by the leader articulating an appealing vision. This vision provides a sense of continuity for followers by linking the present with a better future for the organization. The leader then communicates high performance expectations and expresses confidence that followers can attain them. This enhances follower self-esteem and self-confidence. Next, the leader conveys, through words and actions, a new set of values, and, by his or her behavior, sets an example for followers to imitate. Finally, the charismatic leader makes self-sacrifices and engages in unconventional behavior to demonstrate courage and convictions about the vision.

I do not dispute the importance of any of the actions in this understanding. What I do dispute, however, is the belief that what leaders do **can** be reduced to a simple list of 'if, then' statements, rather like a computer programme. The theory then becomes little more than a recipe for success

(Van der Mescht 1996: 33) and the person is lost in amongst the ingredients.

2.10 How to respond

It is clear, in my opinion, that future research in leadership cannot simply rely on the gathering of empirical data "...in the rigorous sense of methodically categorizing and selecting cases on which to examine and test the full range of possible hypotheses" (Heifetz 1994: 7). Researchers cannot remain fixated with numbers (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 13), hidden behind their correlation coefficients and survey data results. Although, it must be acknowledged that these types of studies have contributed to our considerable body of knowledge in the field of leadership, they have also succeeded removing the person from leadership studies. I, therefore, believe that there exists a need for alternative approaches to leadership research that seek to allow the person to emerge.

Phenomenology has been suggested as such an approach (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993 & Van der Mescht 1996) as it privileges the value, meanings, intentions, morals, feelings and life experiences of human beings (McPhail 1995: 2). Van der Mescht (1996: 38) has remarked that very few studies of this nature exist and, at the time of his writing, none on leaders in educational contexts.

This study is, therefore, a small attempt to address this lack. I have focussed on John Stoker, the current leader of RUMEP, in such a way as to provide an understanding of how this leader, through his own feelings, actions and values, works out his own meaning in his environment. The following chapter provides a discussion of the methodology I have employed to do this. It also provides a justification as to why I believe such methodology is appropriate for this particular study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Rationale

Greenfield (1984: 160) has written that:

> ...in the study of organisations, we are apt to remove the personal element and to speak of faceless ciphers who "perform a leadership function" and "manage the human resources of the enterprise". What happens in organisations and what leaders do in fact can thereby be reduced to fit the assumptions of a science that removes eccentricity and fullness of individual action to reduce it to a grey universality.

As if to underscore this sentiment, Van der Mescht (1996: 37) notes that few studies on leadership have focussed on leaders as **people** and thereby do not recognise the importance of how individual leaders perceive and conceptualise their world (Bargal *et al.* 1992: 4). This has lead, as I have argued in Chapter 2, to neat theories and conceptually attractive models which have failed to capture the complexity of leadership as a human activity. I have also argued that enquiries that treat "...human beings as complex physical systems differing from the rest of nature not in kind but perhaps in degree" (Cantrell 1993: 82) cannot, by their very nature, adequately describe the essential phenomenon of the human world (McPhail 1995: 2). My position is that leadership is one such essential phenomenon and therefore a methodological approach that privileges "...the meanings that people construct in their lives and that guide their actions" (*ibid.:* 2) is necessary for this study. Phenomenology is therefore an appropriate method to adopt because it insists that the focus of the enquiry should be on concrete, lived human experience in all its richness (Van der Mescht 1996: 36 and Moran 2000: 5).

"It would go too far to say that there are as many phenomenologies as there are phenomenologists. But it is certainly true that, on closer inspection, the varieties exceed the common features" (Spiegelberg 1960: xxvii). This is the challenge that greets the novice researcher in phenomenology. Firstly one has to come to grips with a philosophical tradition that stretches as far back as the mid-1800's (Spiegelberg 1960) and secondly one has to translate the developing philosophical attitude into practice (Stones 1988: 141). Thus, this Chapter will concentrate on my own emerging

understandings of phenomenology that have guided my research as well as proposing how I will put these into practice. However, phenomenological inquiry insists on the "interrelatedness and interdependence of people and their lived world" (Van der Mescht 1999: 2) and therefore a dialogue between myself, the methodology and its underlying philosophy must necessarily occur throughout the study.

3.2 The phenomenological approach

> Phenomenology is the study of phenomena as experienced by man. The primary emphasis is on the phenomenon itself exactly as it reveals itself to the experiencing subject in all its concreteness and particularity (Giorgi 1971: 9).

Phenomenologists therefore appear to be obsessed by the concrete, the minute and the private, essentially all the experiences that shape human behaviours, values and attitudes (Von Eckartsberg 1998). However, there is also recognition that human experiences are shaped by personal values, attitudes and behaviours. There is an ongoing dialogue between concrete, lived situations and the internal private spaces of the human person. Thus human beings are understood to be context bound, always "...making meaning of their world and being endowed with meaning in turn" (Van der Mescht 1996: 40). Therefore, the researcher has to turn away from a "...preoccupation with concepts, symbols, theories, and hypotheses" (Spiegelberg 1975: 58) and towards the lived-world (or *lebenswelt*) of the individual. *Lebenswelt* is the world as lived by the individual and not a world that is separate or independent from her or him (Valle & King 1978: 10).

3.2.1 Intentionality - a life condemned to meaning

A key concept in the understanding the *lebenswelt* of an individual is the idea of intentionality. Intentionality, first articulated by Franz Brentano, is the tenet that every mental act is related to some object (Moran 2000: 47). The implication is that an individual's mental activity, whether it be imaging, thinking, remembering or any other mental experience always goes "...beyond itself, aims at and contacts something other than itself (Wertz 1989: 85). For example, "...in presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on" (Brentano cited in Moran 2000: 47). However, intentionality does not refer to a purely intellectual process that connects a thinking human person with objects outside her

or his understanding, perception, knowledge or vision; but is understood to be a fundamental part of every human person's relationship with the world they inhabit (Pollio *et al*. 1997: 7). Intentionality is, therefor, an action of the mind reaching out to objects, whether real or imagined, and in doing so the objects are transformed into meaningful experience (Van der Mescht 1996: 40 & Von Eckartsberg 1998: 5). Thus, because human beings live and act in the world they are "...*condemned to meaning*, and...cannot do or say anything without it acquiring a name..." (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1962: xix).

Thus the key feature of the *lebenswelt* is the constant dialogue between each human being and the world which they inhabit, a "...relational dynamic of self-other interaction" (Von Eckartsberg 1998: 11). Therefore, as Von Eckartsberg (1998: 11) contended:

> Persons are not selves separated from a world that is presumed to exist completely independently of them. Rather, they are personal involvements in a complex totality network of interdependent ongoing relationships that demand response and participation.

With this understanding in mind, the focus of research is clearly delineated for the researcher - the dialogue between the human being and the world that is inhabited (Van der Mescht 1996: 41). The researcher cannot simply focus on individuals as this would imply that they were somehow separate from their world. On the other hand the focus cannot be solely on the human world as this would deny the understanding that individuals take an active part in the illumination and creation of their own world (Von Eckartsberg 1998: 11). It is therefore fitting that the intricate web of meanings that each human consciousness calls into being is the focus of study.

3.2.2 The unique nature of the *lebenswelt*

If the focus of the research is the web of meanings of the human consciousness then it is vital to realise that no two individuals will have exactly the same web of meanings. Therefore they cannot experience their worlds in exactly the same way (Van der Mescht 1996: 42). Even the simple act of observing a table will differ, however slightly, from person to person. Husserl attempts to explain this reality by differentiating between two parts of intentionality: the act of thinking about an object or *noesis*, and what is thought about the object or *noema* (Moran 2000: 155). The *noetic* focus is

therefore embodied in acts of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering or judging and is responsible for forming the meaning of what it grasps (Moustakas 1994:69 and Moran 2000: 156). The *noema* is "...that which is experienced, the what of experience" (Moustakas 1994: 69).

It is important to understand that these two parts of intentionality are not separate but, due to their corresponding and complementary existence, each individual interprets the same experience in a unique manner (Van der Mescht 1996: 42). Another way of conceptualising these two concepts is to distinguish between two types of interrelated experience: the immediate experience, "...unmediated by language and the gap of reflection..." and the reflective experience where individuals formulate meanings "...according to the categories of the culture and its language" (Keen 1978: 245). The *lebenswelt* is, therefore, made up of direct and immediate experience (pre-reflective experience) and is the foundation of reflective thought (Valle & King 1978: 11). Furthermore, as each individual reflects on the experience, the experience itself becomes filtered by cultural and linguistic frameworks (Van der Mescht 1996: 42). These frameworks, each have their own characteristics, structures, development and history and will ultimately shape what meaning individuals will make and **can** make out of their experience (Wilber 1996: 60). Thus experiences are only partially sharable with others (Van der Mescht 1996: 42). However this does not imply that individuals cannot and do not share their unique experiences. There are definitely shared experiences "...particularly where people have common cultural and linguistic roots" (*ibid.*: 42).

3.2.3 Perception - a strange power

Human beings "...never cease living in the world of perception, but we go beyond it in critical thought - almost to the point of forgetting the contribution of perception to our idea of truth..." (Merleau-Ponty cited in Moran 2000: 419). This statement implies that at the heart of an individuals *lebenswelt* are perceptions, which exist prior to reflective thought. Valle & King (1978: 11, emphasis in the original) have argued that:

> Hypotheses, theories, and the casual thinking on which they are based are, therefore, *not* the subject matter which constitute the life-world *per se* as they are not given in direct and immediate experience. They are higher order, less basic, derived notions; they are (like all ideas) *derivatives of the life-world.*

This makes the point quite clearly that the data, with which the phenomenological researcher is concerned, has to be the perceptions of an individual, any thing else would not involve a study of the individual's *lebenswelt.*

Perceptions are neither complete nor finite views of reality but are constantly shifting as individuals attempt to make meaning of the emerging, changing and vanishing world to which they are intimately bound (Wertz 1989: 96 and Van der Mescht 1996: 43). Therefore, the importance of perceptions does not lie in whether they reflect reality precisely but in their power to shape our reality (Van der Mescht 1996: 43). Thus whether or not an individual's perceptions of reality accurately reflects that reality is immaterial to the researcher. The task instead is to:

> ...understand the reality claims (or non-reality claims) precisely as they are made by the research participants. In other words, it is the perceived reality that phenomenologists are interested in, and often 'distortions' are more vital than veridical perceptions (Giorgi cited in Van der Mescht 1996: 43).

Perceptions not only shape an individual's reality but **are** reality. This implies that there is no world that is ordered and structured with the mind making no contribution to experience and "...merely passively mirroring the natural order" (Polkinghorne 1989: 42). Furthermore it implies that there is no independent reality that accounts for or explains experience. Thus it is only the perceptions of an individual's world, the perceptions that come to mean reality itself, that can be the subject of scrutiny (Van der Mescht 1996: 44).

3.2.4 The phenomenological paradox

The focus of a phenomenological study is how human beings perceived their lived-world. However, this is problematic particularly as the researcher aims to scrutinise pre-reflective experience. Polkinghorne (1989: 45) highlights one of the difficulties for researchers:

> Consciousness is always filled with contents and is an integrated ensemble of modes of presentation... It is present to us as a complex of interacting strata - levels of abstraction, awareness, and control...We have direct access to the finished work of our conscious processes, yet in our everyday existence we are not aware of the operations that make up that integrated flux of experience.

Herein lies the paradox, to gain access to the everyday experience of things, the pre-reflective experience, the researcher has to rely on a verbal or written report, a culturally determined system of signs that can only point to the pre-reflective reality (*ibid.*: 46). The researcher cannot avoid engaging in a scrutiny of the individual's cultural and linguistic filters, which are not part of pre-reflective experience. Furthermore, the researcher only has direct access to one *lebenswelt,* her or his own.

Van den Berg's (1972: 75) answer to the paradox is to "...make the problem speak for itself". This involves the researcher actively engaging in an interrogation of her or his own presuppositions and biases towards the topic under consideration (Polkinghorne 1989: 46 and Van der Mescht 1996: 44). Van der Mescht (1996: 44) has argued that "it is in this process of acknowledging and setting aside such preconceptions that the real rigour of the phenomenological method lies". Therefore, the researcher has to turn away from a "...preoccupation with concepts, symbols, theories, and hypotheses" (Spiegelberg 1975: 58) and towards the lived-world (or *lebenswelt*) of the individual.

3.3 Approaching the data

3.3.1 Entering the *lebenswelt*

Entering the *lebenswelt* of another individual is always a complex process. Essentially, the interaction between research subject and researcher is a meeting of two lived-worlds and the researcher must take great care not to impose her or his own perceptions of reality onto the descriptions of the participant (Polkinghorne 1989: 46). This is, obviously, not entirely possible. However it is imperative that the researcher attempts to engage with the participant "...from a position of conceptual silence, in order to open himself [or herself] to perceiving the emergent dimensions" of the other's lived world (Stones 1988:142). This lies at the core, in my opinion, of the phenomenological notion of bracketing or reduction.

Bracketing, simply stated, is the "...attempt to put all of one's assumptions about the matter being studied into abeyance" (Von Eckartsberg 1998: 5-6). It involves the researcher in suspending the commonsense thesis that there is an independent reality that explains experience (Polkinghorne 1989: 41). In so doing all scientific, philosophical, cultural and everyday assumptions have to be put

aside so that the phenomena being investigated can be attended to in all its givenness (Moran 2000: 11). Moustakas (1994: 85) writes quite lyrically about the benefits of bracketing:

> I see it as a preparation for deriving new knowledge but also as an experience in itself, a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again as if for the first time. This is not only critical for scientific determination but for living itself - the opportunity for a fresh start, a new beginning, not being hampered by the voices of the past that tell us the way things are or the voices of the present that direct our thinking... Whatever and whoever appears in our consciousness is approaching with an openness, seeing just what is there and allowing what is there to linger.

This, necessarily, involves the researcher in a rigorous and continuous process of self examination so that any presuppositions, assumptions and values about the phenomenon being studied are constantly being examined and then put aside (Spiegelberg 1975: 58 , Van der Mescht 1999: 3 and Moran 2000: 11). The putting aside is not so much to negate those realities but to put them out of court. The object of doing this is to make a conscious effort to walk with the individual, to restrict oneself to observing what is really happening and to "...refrain from quickly pronouncing judgement on the situation..." (Van den Berg 1972:63).

Another way of understanding bracketing is articulated by Buddhist philosophers when they describe a state of mindfulness:

> ...a clear awareness of what is happening each moment...Mindfulness, sees clearly what is happening in the present moment. It is observing and experiencing without reacting...it allows us to notice what is just here...without analysis, comparisons, or interpretations (Goldstein & Kornfield 1987: 62).

The irony is that in spiritual practice the increasing mindful the practitioner becomes the more fully the "demons" of the mind show themselves (Kornfield 1993: 98). The same is true for the phenomenologist, as one preconception, assumption or value is interrogated and bracketed so a new one emerges in a continuous, dynamic cycle (Valle *et al.* 1989: 11). Thus, complete reduction is not entirely possible. However, as Van der Mescht (1999: 3) has argued, it is a goal worth striving for as it is precisely through this rigorous examination of the researcher's own presuppositions that a high degree of objectivity is obtained.

A further note needs to be made that by employing a mindful stance toward the data, by avoiding the urge to analyse, compare or interpret, the researcher is prevented from imposing a hierarchy on the data before a holistic picture of the experience has been reached (Van der Mescht 1996: 46). This is known as the process of horizontalization in which the researcher acknowledges that she or he can never exhaust the experience of things no matter how many times they are viewed (Moustakas 1994: 95). The importance of horizontalization is that it:

> ...urges us to avoid placing any initial hierarchies of significance or importance upon the items of our descriptions, and instead to treat each initially as having equal value or significance (Spinelli 1989 cited in Van der Mescht 1999: 4)

3.3.2 Communicating the *lebenswelt*

Once the researcher has entered the *lebenswelt* of the participant and has embarked on the journey of phenomenological reduction the next challenge is found in presenting the essence of the phenomena being interrogated. Van den Berg (1972: 63) gives a seemingly simple method: "...to describe, then to judge. To describe is the most important".

An argument for the primacy of the descriptive approach in phenomenological inquiry is given by Giorgi (1992) in which he notes that description and interpretation are different activities. Giorgi (1992: 122) has pointed out that:

> ...interpretation is the process of clarifying meaning, and phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with the bestowal, passively or actively, or genesis of bestowal, of meaning. Following this distinction we would say that description is the clarification of the meaning of the objects of experience precisely as experienced.

Giorgi (1992) has also written about the descriptive attitude where the researcher endeavours to describe what presents itself, exactly as it presents itself. This does not imply that the descriptions of experiences by the subject and the description of the meaning of the experience as grasped by the researcher are one and the same thing:

> The two, in principle, do not have to be identical because the experience of the situation as described belongs to the subject, but the meaning transcends the subject and is available to others once it has been expressed. The experience takes place prereflectively, but the discovery of the meaning requires reflection (Giorgi 1986: 21).

The result, therefore, of the researcher's reflections should result in a text rich in ambiguity, complexity and multiplicity, the very stuff of human experience. In contrast, if the researcher adopts an interpretive stance, she or he is forced to "...sift and choose among the meanings and construct the best possibility" (Giorgi 1992: 125). This compels the adoption of a preconceived theoretical framework so that the data can be ordered in some fashion. The researcher, in this instance, cannot adopt an attitude of mindfulness or bracketing as she or he will, of necessity, have to clarify meanings in terms of her or his own preconceptions, presuppositions and theories.

The researcher must acknowledge that there is no such thing as a perfect description. However, descriptions do not have to be perfect, only adequate (Giorgi 1992: 129). They are used, according to Spiegelberg (1975: 58), to counter-act the over-simplifications which have "...distorted and impoverished the picture of our experienced world". The result is that:

> ...style, elegance of expression, simplicity of presentation, tension of plot and narrative, and seductiveness of content become important features in our knowledge (Feyerabend cited in Shapiro 1986: 171).

3.4 Developing method

Van der Mescht (1999: 5) warns the phenomenological researcher:

> ...that there is no single, generally accepted research strategy. Nor should there be, since it is the phenomenon itself, the data generated through the enquiry, and the problem to be addressed or the question to be answered that should determine the methodological procedure.

This implies that the method, and thus the researcher, and the data are in constant dialogue with the intention of the research being "...the emergence of an essentual (*sic*) description of the phenomenon without distorting the essential meaning of the original data" (Stones 1988: 150). However, several practitioners of phenomenological research have articulated methodological guidelines which can be used when carrying out research.

3.4.1 Data gathering

3.4.1.1 Selecting participants

The purpose of phenomenological research is not to describe the characteristics of a group of people who have had a particular experience but to describe the structure of the experience itself (Polkinghorne 1989: 48). Therefore the choice of participants does not depend on whether or not they form a representative sample but on whether or not they are able to "...generate a fund of possible relationships that can be used in determining the essential structure of the phenomena" (Polkinghorne 1989: 48). Both Stones (1988) and Polkinghorne (1989) give clear guidelines for selecting such research participants: the subject must have experienced the topic under research and must be able to provide full and sensitive descriptions.

My interest is on how John Stoker, the leader of RUMEP, experiences leadership within his organisation. He meets the criteria mentioned above. Furthermore, John was particularly supportive of the study as it was the first to focus on leadership within RUMEP. All previous studies conducted have had the purpose of evaluating the impact that the various projects offered by RUMEP have on teachers and learners.

3.4.1.2 The interview

After selecting the participants, they need to be interviewed. Pollio *et al.* (1997: 29-30) have stated clearly the nature of the phenomenological interview:

> Since the goal of any phenomenological interview is to attain a first-person description of some specific domain of experience, with the course of the dialogue largely set by the respondent, the interviewer begins with few prespecified questions concerning the topic: All the questions flow from the dialogue as it unfolds rather than having been predetermined in advance. It is not uncommon for experiences and issues discussed at an earlier stage of the interview to reappear at a later point. An implicit assumption is that central or personally relevant issues will emerge repeatedly throughout the dialogue.

With this in mind I therefore started out with one question: How does John Stoker see himself as leader of RUMEP? This question had two areas of focus. The first was John's own experience of leadership and his perception of those experiences. The second was an attempt not only to have

described leadership experience in a general context but for it to be focussed on RUMEP. By deliberately limiting the context I hoped to get rich descriptions of John's experience within this particular organisation itself.

During the interview I tried to follow the advise of Polkinghorne (1989: 50) who has suggested that the researcher ask questions that help the participant to report her or his experiences rather than to give "worldly depictions". I was conscious, during the interview, of restricting my questions to "can you give me an example of that" and "what was that like for you" and trying to resist my own natural inclination to ask "why did you do that". This was in an attempt to avoid John's own interpretations or theoretical explanations of his experience and to keep the focus of the interview on non-theoretical descriptions of his experience (*ibid.*: 49).The interview was then transcribed and forms the essential raw material of this study.

3.4.2 Data analysis

The purpose of this phase of the study is to "...derive from the collection of protocols, with their naïve descriptions to specific examples of the experience under consideration, a description of the essential features of that experience" (Polkinghorne 1989: 50). So as not to limit the emergence of the phenomenon under investigation, a methodological framework cannot be imposed, at this stage, on the data as to do so would be phenomenologically unsound (Stones 1988: 149). Thus the procedure of analysis outlined below is not a method of investigation *per se,* but rather a guideline as to how the researcher can allow the essential meaning of the phenomenon to emerge without distorting the data (*ibid:* 150).

3.4.2.1 Natural meaning units

Giorgi (1975) has offered phenomenological researchers a set of steps to take to produce a description of the phenomenon under investigation. The first step is to read through the transcribed interviews to get a sense of the whole. The next step is to try to determine the natural meaning units as expressed by the subject. A natural meaning unit is a statement made by the subject "...which is self-definable and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognised aspect of S [the subject's] experience" (Cloonan 1979 cited in Von Eckartsberg 1998: 41). Natural meaning units,

therefore, "...are constituents of the experience, not elements, in that they retain their identity as contextual parts of the subjects specific experience" (Polkinghorne 1989: 54). It is important to note that developing natural meaning units requires maximum openness to the phenomenon as experienced by the subject and should not be imposed by the researcher's theoretical position (Giorgi 1975: 87 and Polkinghorne 1989: 54).

However, the researcher cannot ignore the problematic nature of determining a natural meaning unit. As Von Eckartsberg (1998: 41) has noted: "What do you consider to be an aspect of an experience? Is it a unit of the behavioral act-intention? Is it a psychological act? What kind of event is a 'meaning unit'?"These questions, I believe, form part of the dialogue between the research data and the researcher and need to be considered throughout the data analysis phase. The researcher needs to be particularly careful to capture the essence of the subject's experience and not to reduce it in any way (Cloonan 1979 cited in Von Eckartsberg 1998: 41).

Once the natural meaning units have been determined the researcher then "...tries to state as simply as possible the theme that dominates the natural unit" (Giorgi 1975: 87). The researcher uses her or his own words to describe the essence of the experience for the subject. Once this is done both the natural meaning unit and its accompanying theme are interrogated in terms of the specific purpose of the study (Giorgi 1975: 87 and Polkinghorne 1989: 54), in this case in terms of leadership in RUMEP. The counsel given by Giorgi (1975: 88) is that if there is nothing explicit in the natural meaning unit and its theme then the researcher simply passes it over. The researcher then works on synthesising and tying the transformed meaning units into a descriptive statement, giving a sense of the experience as a whole, without losing the situatedness of the experience (Polkinghorne 1989: 54). However, this is not the end of the process. Giorgi (1975: 88) has recommended that a second description is also written in which the particulars of the specific situation are left out and the focus becomes aspects of leadership which are trans-situational or descriptive of leadership in general. In this case the description cannot claim to be universal but it does claim general validity beyond a specific situation (Polkinghorne 1989: 55). My research is different in this respect. I only have one research participant, therefore I cannot develop a general structure that is trans-situational. However, as I have explored in Chapter 5, this does not negate the need for writing a situated general structure

which brings together the significant themes uncovered in the long and rigorous process of identifying meaning units (Van der Mescht 1996: 99).

3.4.2.2 Transformed meaning units

Something further needs to be said about transforming the natural meaning unit into the language of the researcher. Polkinghorne (1989: 55) has suggested that:

> Transformations are necessary because the original descriptions given by the subjects are usually naive regarding psychological structures and often include multiple and blended references.

The task of the researcher, therefore, is to tease out the "multiple and blended references" so that the essence of the phenomena can be described. In doing so the researcher is not imposing her or his own theories, values and biases on the research but is involved in transforming the naive descriptions into a dialogue between the subject, the researcher and the intentions and aims of the research (Giorgi 1975: 101). This involves 'going through' the concrete expressions of the experience to the experience itself. The researcher does this through two processes: reflection and imaginative variation. Reflection involves a careful and sensitive reading of a meaning unit to answer the questions: What is being described, what is essential to understand the dynamics operating here (Polkinghorne 1989: 55). Intentional variation "...is a type of mental experimentation in which the researcher intentionally alters, through imagination, various aspects of the experience" (*ibid.*: 55).

In doing so she or he is attempting to test the limits within which the experience will retain its essence. Von Eckartsberg (1998: 7) uses an apple to explain this process:

> ...one may begin by modifying its various aspects in our imagination so as to engender a manifold of imaginary apples. Although some will be red...others will be green, and even a purple apple could be imagined. That we don't find purple apples in actual experience is irrelevant at this stage, for what we want to discover is the essential structures and the essential constituents of an apple...Already we can see that redness does not belong essentially to apples, although a skin that may be of any various colors does.

The purpose of both processes is to produce meaning transformations that capture the essence of the experience (Polkinghorne 1989: 56). The meaning units are therefore not an *ad hoc* creation by one researcher. Rather, they engage in a dialogue in which other researchers will agree that the transformed expressions do describe the experiences of the original (*ibid.:* 56).

3.5 A precarious position

Before looking at the description of John's experience of leading RUMEP it is important to note my own precarious position within this research. It is a subject that I will expand on in later chapters but it is important to note that I am part of RUMEP. I have my own perspectives, opinions and attitudes both towards John and towards the work of the organisation. Thus, the bracketing imperative is particularly challenging. I, therefore, agreed at the start of the research to share the descriptions that I had written with John in order to ensure that what was written was an adequate description of **his** experience and had not been distorted by my own perceptions, attitudes and opinions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Working with the data

4.1 What kind of event is a meaning unit?

The question, 'what kind of event is a meaning unit?' (Von Eckartsberg 1998: 41) came to haunt me as I attempted to formulate the meaning units. Transforming the raw data obtained from the interview with John into a coherent, meaningful and vibrant collection of natural meaning units was not an easy task. As a whole the interview protocol provided a rich and eclectic view into how John sees himself as leader of RUMEP as well as how he sees the organisation itself. With this said, the question for me was, 'how do I impose order on the data in such a way that the experience of leadership is illuminated and none of the richness of the experience lost?' Furthermore, as a phenomenological researcher, there is the added understanding that the data must speak for itself. This, for me, has meant looking for the order within the data and deliberately refraining from imposing my own preconceived ideas. Thus the task of delineating the meaning units became a crucial part of my own self reflection and examination. I found myself constantly asking questions like "what is John trying to say here, is this an important in terms of illuminating his experience of leadership, does this add to my understanding of the way he views the organisation" and so on. I also found the idiosyncrasies that inevitably presented themselves in the interview protocol particularly challenging to break into meaning units that captured their essence in a compelling way.

4.2 Parts and wholes

In wrestling with the question "what kind of event is a meaning unit?" I was, perhaps inevitably, confronted with the question "why is determining a meaning unit valuable?". At first it seemed that this was merely a way of studying the parts so that knowledge of the whole could be reached. Ostensibly, a return to the classical science paradigm, which, as I have already argued, is inappropriate for this study of leadership. I became concerned that in breaking the protocol into meaning units, I would be destroying the "wholeness" of John's experience of leadership. Furthermore, I would be marring the interconnections, idiosyncrasies and webs of meaning that are so integral to John's understanding of his experience.

In grappling with these concerns I came to understand that the meaning units are complete within themselves **and** an integral part of the protocol. This may seem like an obvious statement but it has certain important implications. The phrase coined for this concept is holon (Wilber 1996:20-21) which simply means that an entity is a whole within itself and **simultaneously** a part of a whole. For example atoms, which are legitimate entities in their own right, are simultaneously components of molecules which make up cells which make up organs - and so on, up and down the scale of complexity. Furthermore, each holon is as much influenced by other holons as it is an influence on others. Thus meaning units are complete within themselves and need to be interrogated for their unique essence. However the researcher cannot lose sight of the fact that the meaning units are always in relationship with one another and those relationships also need to be interrogated.

A further fundamental characteristic of holons is that they are self-transcending - they have properties which are more than the sum of the properties of their components. Water, for example, has properties which neither hydrogen nor oxygen individually possess. Wilber (1996: 24) captures this idea eloquently as the drive that produces "...life out of matter and mind out of life". In terms of meaning units, I found this idea particularly intriguing. Obviously the protocol will always have properties that the individual meaning units do not possess. However, the descriptions that arise from the weaving together of the meaning units have properties that neither the meaning units nor the protocol, individually possess. As the description is worked into existing leadership theory, new understandings of leadership emerge. These new understandings could not emerge unless they are nested in the description, the protocol and the meaning units. Thus, the derivation of the meaning units is an important generative step in developing new understandings.

4.3 Synthesising the meaning units

4.3.1 The theory and the practice

It is very easy to theorise that meaning units should be both part and whole as described above. It is also easy to say that they should be "self-definable" and "self-delimiting" aspects of John's experience (Cloonan 1979 cited in Von Eckartsberg 1998: 41). However it is another matter altogether to attempt to do this in practice. In terms of explication my first attempt was very wooden and static. I tried to render the experience being described, perceived or felt by John purely in my

own words. By doing so I lost most of the uniqueness and complexity present in the protocol and I recognised that only boring descriptions would result. It was only after realising that when the meanings were "...particularly strongly locked within the participants' words..." (Van der Mescht 1996: 62) that I not only could but **should** retain those words. Once I had come to this understanding I began to dialogue with the data more fully and render explications that attempted to capture the phenomenon being experienced and that attempted to retain the authenticity of John's voice within the phenomenon.

4.3.2 Shifting sands

After having written the meaning units I became involved in "...tying together and integrating the list of...meaning units into a consistent and systematic...description..."(Polkinghorne 1989: 56) of leadership within RUMEP. One of my underlying expectations of writing the description was that I had completed interrogating the data. The meaning units had been written and I could use them as the strong rock on which to build the tower of my 'systematic description'. I, unwittingly, assumed that my dialogue with the data had come to an end. I was quite shocked to discover that, as I began to write the description, my supposed rock was more like shifting sands.

I returned again and again to the raw data. I rewrote and reconstituted the meaning units several times, often several times a day. As I wrote the description I remembered things that John had said, things that I had discarded in formulating the meaning units that were, in fact, of import. I continued my interrogation of myself, constantly uncovering assumptions, perceptions and understandings that I had imposed on the data. The challenge, I had assumed when embarking on the research, was to render a neat and plausible description of a specific phenomenon. However, as I wrote, I discovered that, for me, this was not the challenge at all. The challenge was to bring some sort of union and harmony between two currents of thought that were both of equal value. The first current being John's. It became increasingly important to me that his voice be heard within and through the description. I, therefore, tried to use his own words as much as possible in rendering the description. However, I could not lose sight of the fact that it was **I** who was creating a description out of his experience. Therefore, the second current of thought that had to be acknowledged was my own. I came to appreciate and celebrate that one voice could not exist without the other. The data could

not speak for itself **and** the researcher could not speak without the data.

4.4 The Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project

I believe that leadership takes place within an organisational context and thus one cannot be separated from the other (Van der Mescht 1996: 25). Therefore, before embarking on the description of John's experience of leadership I believe it is valuable to give some background to the organisation that John leads.

RUMEP is an independently funded education project that is attached to Rhodes University. The project works with teachers from the former homelands of the Ciskei and Transkei, which has a legacy of poor infrastructure, limited employment opportunities and chronic poverty as well as a large and youthful population (Ota and Robinson: 1999). In the Schools Register of Needs Survey 40,5% of schools in the Eastern Cape did not have water available to them, 76,7% did not have electricity and 80,6% did not have any form of telecommunication (Hartley *et al.* 1998: 15). However by merely concentrating on the physical resources of schools there is a danger of neglecting the important role teachers have to play in mathematics education (Review Committee 2000). The Mathematics Education Community of South Africa acknowledges that "the majority of our teaching force (through no 'fault' of their own) is poorly equipped to perform their role..." due to poor mathematical content and pedagogical knowledge (Adler *et al.* 2000: 4).In the Eastern Cape alone it is estimated that 42% of teachers are underqualified (Ota & Robinson 1999). Thus focus for RUMEP is on the professional development of teachers from disadvantaged, rural schools with the specific aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning mathematics in primary schools.

However RUMEP does not only focus on developing better mathematics teachers but also on developing teachers who are able to reshape their own schools so that learning for understanding becomes the norm rather than the exception. The project expects the teachers with whom it works to begin to build school environments that provide positive learning experiences for all who participate within them (Darling - Hammond 1997). It does this in a variety of ways: it offers a Further Diploma in Education course for in-service teachers, it has a Farm Schools Project which

gives support to teachers in farm schools and the project develops mathematical materials to be used specifically in rural schools.

RUMEP has been working with teachers and learners in the Eastern Cape for nine years. During this period the organisation has impacted on teachers and, through the teachers, on learners themselves. Teachers who have attended the RUMEP Further Diploma in Education (FDE) have improved mathematical knowledge and employ teaching strategies that encourage learner participation in and construction of mathematical knowledge (Long 2000). Furthermore, assessment conducted with learners taught by these teachers show significant improvement, above that of learners not taught by RUMEP teachers (Mboyiya 2000). John Stoker has been the director of the project for all of its nine years of existence. How he perceives his experience of leadership and how he works out his own meaning within this context is the focus of the description which follows.

4.5 Description

4.5.1 *"we sort of sit in-between"*

> *...being an NGO attached to the University, makes us a different sort of unit, we're not just an NGO and we're not a University department, we just sit in between as an Institute, as a self-funding Institute. And so therefore we, we have a different role to play in some respects. We're not a research Institute as, as are the other Institutes and we're not a teaching department as we would say the English department. So we sort of sit in between that and we* ***do*** (emphasis in the original) *a little bit of research to determine impact. And we do teaching but not of undergraduate students. Or, have I got that right? The FDE I suppose you would call them post-graduate students, not the typical under-graduate students I think that's, that's what I'm trying to say* (M5).

John has deliberately chosen to make RUMEP a different type of organisation to those generally found within the structure of Rhodes University. He sees it as neither a pure research institute nor as a traditional teaching department. In John's mind, therefore, RUMEP *"...just sit(s) in between..."*, doing some of the work expected of both types of organisations. However, in choosing to *"just sit in between"*, John is, of necessity, involved in a constant dialogue over what type of organisation RUMEP actually is. He is very aware of *"other people"* who think that *"...well if you are a, an Institute of the University shouldn't you be doing University type things which is research and developing policy"* (M56). He has always been strongly opposed to these opinions. This is because

doing either research or developing policy would prevent him from doing the "*hands-on, hard-work, exhausting work, difficult work"* (M54) that he believes is required in education. It would also keep him from meeting the needs of the teachers (M56). Rather, he conceives RUMEP as a *"Professional Development Unit"*, an organisation that is completely distinct from either a "*Policy-making Unit, or just simply a researched-based Unit*"(M50).

The way that John views the students with whom he works is a vital component that goes into making RUMEP a *"Professional Development Unit"*. He describes them as being neither undergraduate nor postgraduate but rather "*...experienced adults, mature adults...leaders in their own field"* (M32, M35). There is an implication that the University may not see the students in the same light. Although John does not give a direct opinion on any current view that the University may have of these students, he does believe that, when RUMEP first started running residential courses, the University authorities *"...were totally inexperienced in handling this type of student"* (M32). They are clearly *"not typical"*. Thus, if the students are different, they have to be treated differently and this can only happen within an organisation that is, itself, *"not typical"*.

In John's opinion, a further ingredient that makes RUMEP unique, not only within the University structure but nationally, is the type of FDE that is offered (M47). It is offered exclusively in Mathematics Education. This contrasts with many other academic institutions which offer FDE's which mix Mathematics with other subjects. The students are also required to do a certain amount of work with their colleagues. This involves them in running workshops for their colleagues on various aspects of mathematics education. It is this element of the RUMEP FDE which contributes, in John's opinion, to the qualification being singular. This in-service work re-enforces the fact that RUMEP is not simply a traditional teaching department and is not a *"Policy-making Unit"*.

There is obviously a strong anti-traditional element to what John does, however he does not dispense with tradition altogether (M36). In fact he is particularly proud of his organising of a graduation type ceremony for a group of students with all of the finery and none of the "stuffiness" of a traditional graduation (M38). As he says, *"it was a blend of sort of Western and, and, and the traditional African approach, you know the enthusiasm, you know the Chapel was full, was absolutely full"* (M37). This blending of traditions to create something totally unique seems to lie at the heart of John's view of RUMEP.

4.5.2 *"to make RUMEP know by delivery"*

It is important at this point to return to the issue of building RUMEP's reputation as it occupied most of John's time and energy in the early years of the organisation's existence. Furthermore, these early years firmly established RUMEP as a *"Professional Development Unit"* rather than a *"Policy-making Unit"* or Research Unit (M14). The most important task of those early years was *"...to make RUMEP known by delivering workshops"* (M6). The result was that John and Rose Spanneberg, the current co-ordinator for the FDE, blanketed the Eastern Cape with workshops for teachers and education officials (M7). They travelled as far afield as Kokstad, Bizana and Humansdorp with prophetic zeal, proclaiming that there was *"...a different, a transformed approach to the teaching and learning of Mathematics"* (M8).

Teachers flocked to these workshops. It was not unusual for a workshop meant for fifty people to turn into a workshop for one hundred (M10). Pictures of these workshops line John's office wall and as he talks he gestures to them saying *"...if you look at these photographs, they're packed"* (M10). John recognises that it is through these workshops that RUMEP established its reputation, with the people on the ground. The photographs are constant reminders of the hard work, dedication and commitment that went into building that reputation. They are also reminders of the success of these workshops not only in terms of the number of people who attended but also in terms of the impact that was made on their lives (M11). Even now, John will be going about his daily business and a stranger will recognise him by name because of one of those early workshops (M12). However, the workshops not only established RUMEP's reputation but, through interacting with the teachers, John's sense of responsibility towards the teachers also evolved.

4.5.3 *"you've got to do something about it"*

To understand the genesis of John's sense of responsibility towards teachers, particularly teachers in the rural Eastern Cape, it is essential to focus on the period during which he worked in the Rhodes University Education Department. During that time he worked with:

> *... privileged, white students...they were girls from very privileged backgrounds that didn't know anything about the other side of education in this country. And when I introduced them to People's Education and Black Education, some of them went straight home in a state of despair...Now this is a cultural shock for many of the white students, you know their whole lives have been in a protected home environment, a secure school environment...well looked after and then come bang up against the reality of what education is for most people in this country* (M51).

John had two important insights during this time. The first was that the students he was teaching wanted to *"...go back into the system exactly"* (M52), even though he had made them aware of the realities of *"what education is for most people in this country"*. Thus, none of the skills that he was teaching his students would impact on the lives of the children who needed those skills the most. Implicit in this understanding is that he himself had become part of a system that was not addressing the needs of *"most people"*. RUMEP, therefore, was started from his own desire to do something about the *"tough, underprivileged, disadvantaged"* (M53) nature of Black education. This need still provides a key motivating factor in the work that John does because, unlike his *"privileged, white students"*, he never describes the nature of Black education in the past tense.

Once John had decided that he should take responsibility for doing something, he had to decide on the nature of that responsibility. As has already been described, John never wanted RUMEP to engage exclusively in developing educational policy or conducting high-powered research because that was not what he believed that teachers and children needed (M56). However, the question remained, and still remains today, what do teachers and children need? He knows that the schools in general and farm schools in particular are places where there is *"absolutely nothing"* (M57), where there are *"...no ceiling(s), dung floors, no panes in the window, rural setting, a nice rural setting"* (M58). The obvious course of action would appear to be to remedy those needs; To repair and replace buildings or to organise transport for the children to and from school. Nevertheless, this is not John's point of focus, he wants to go deeper and help teachers do *"...the right sort of things"*

to help children learn mathematics that is meaningful to them (M59).

4.5.4 *"it evolved from the perceived need"*

Once this is established as a clear responsibility, it is important to examine how John's understanding of this responsibility has translated into action over the years. In the early years when workshops were the main focus of activity, John believed that RUMEP should supply the expertise in Mathematics education while the government should back this up by supplying the necessary teaching and learning materials (M9). Two conflicts arose out of this view. The first emerged from *"other people"* believing that workshop delivery was the responsibility of the government (M55). This, as has already been described, contributed to the debate over what RUMEP was to become within the University structure. *"Other people"* did not believe that workshop delivery was the responsibility of an institute attached to a university. However, as John says:

> *...in those early years there was nothing going on, by the government. Very little going on, in fact the government officials all those people in that photograph up there are subject advisors, said they would like us to do the work. Because we had the expertise and the experience and the know-how* (M55).

The implication is that if he failed to make his expertise and experience available to teachers in *"tough, underprivileged and disadvantaged"* situations then he may as well have continued teaching *"privileged, white students"*.

The second conflict came about during the first workshops when he and Rose made use of several different teaching and learning aids but did not make those aids available to teachers (M9). He regarded this as the responsibility of the government. However the government did not act upon this and he realised that without the materials, classroom practice would not change. Therefore he began to design materials that would go with the workshops and would be given to all the teachers attending.

Intimately connected to John's sense of responsibility is his desire to respond to the perceived needs of teachers. Developing materials for teachers, for example, presented a dilemma for John. He realised that effective workshop delivery depended on quality materials but delivery would suffer

if the staff at the time had to put energy into developing that material (M15). He was very aware that RUMEP did not have the internal capacity to meet the responsibility he had embraced of supplying materials with the workshops. He, therefore, had to employ a materials-developer to take on the task. However, his focus was not solely inward, he also realised the local farm schools needed someone devoted to their development on a full-time basis. Thus he employed a farm school facilitator to work exclusively with these schools (M13).

Balancing the perceived needs of teachers with RUMEP's own, internal needs and the expectations of other people has not been an easy task. Nowhere has this been more evident than through the evolution of the FDE. Once RUMEP had established its reputation through workshop delivery John realised that he had to build more than an organisation that delivered workshops. There are two clear desires that provided the necessary impetuous for this movement. The first was that teachers wanted the work they were doing to be formally acknowledged in some way (M26). The second was that offering an accredited course would bring in funding for RUMEP (M27).

The first accredited course was offered in 1994 through the University of Cambridge. In offering the course, John had to confront the reality of being a *"different sort of unit"* who dealt with students who were *"not typical"* in a whole new way. This was the first time that the students, instead of being 'out there' where they only had contact with RUMEP staff came within the direct influence of the University authorities. There was, inevitably, conflict as the authorities *"were un-used to having a large group of black students on campus"* (M31). John responded to this conflict with a mixture of pragmatism and dogged determination. He "*badgered"* the University into letting the students stay in the residences (M29), despite the problems this would cause. He was adamant that they had to have the total university experience (M33). He appealed to the *"the power of money"*, constantly reminding the authorities that these students were paying residential fees at a time when student numbers were dropping (M30, M33). He also hinted at the damage putting these particular students in a hotel might cause to Rhode's reputation in a transforming South Africa (M33). John was prepared to deal with this conflict because he *"was convinced that this was the route to follow"* (M34).

The course was a success on many levels. The staff learnt a great deal since John was adamant that the teaching of the course would not be out-sourced even though no person on the staff had any prior experience of offering such a course (M27, M28). The students were able to go back and work in their different areas (M38). John is still particularly proud of an outside evaluation that found that *"wherever the RUMEP teachers were doing something, they did it well"* (M39). It only enhanced RUMEP's already good reputation for delivery. John, however, realised that there was something missing, because the course was accredited in England, it was not recognised by South African authorities. He knew that:

> *...the students want something that they can take away and it's portable and it counts. It's got to count, not just the experience alone...we've got to acknowledge that teachers want recognition for the work they're doing, and that recognition can be transformed into something tangible. It's either promotion or salary increase* (M40).

Once again, it is important to notice that John does not describe the needs of the students in the past tense. He knows that teachers still want *"tangible"* recognition for the work that they do.

4.5.5 *"I stuck to my guns"*

The development of the Further Diploma in Education (FDE), a South African accredited course, was *"exactly the route"* that John wanted to follow (M28). This was because it would offer the students a tangible reward for their work **and** it would provide financial security for RUMEP through the government subsidy that would come to the University (M44). However, it was an uphill battle getting permission to do the course. Although dealing with government officials was not easy (M41), the bigger problem, in John's view, lay with the Faculty of Education and how they viewed RUMEP (M42). Once again, John had to deal with the fact that the University did not view RUMEP as part of the academic structure of the institution (M42). Therefore, for RUMEP to offer an academic course did not fit with their conceptualisation of the role that RUMEP was playing. There was severe resistance to John's desire to offer an FDE (M43). Nevertheless, John was determined that he would get the right authorities to sanction RUMEP's offering of an FDE. He was *"going to get this through come hell or high water"* (M44).

Eventually, John convinced the Faculty of Education to allow RUMEP to offer the FDE. This event

caused him, once again, to reappraise his responsibilities. He came to the realisation that it was his *"moral responsibility to look after the people in our own province"* (M45) rather than make the FDE available to teachers from all over the country. He recognises that this was also a pragmatic decision, as it costs too much to have staff visiting students all over the country (M46).

A further responsibility was to decide on the nature of the qualification. It is clear, all through John's experience, that he wants to *"do something"* about the *"tough, underprivileged, disadvantaged"* nature of Black education. Therefore, it was essential to him that the RUMEP FDE was not simply a paper qualification but a qualification that made *"a difference in the classroom"* (M48). Part of making that difference is ensuring that teachers are supported in their classroom because if this is not done RUMEP would only be *doing half the job"* (M49), something that would be anathema to John.

4.5.6 *"nurtured into the way of RUMEP"*

The quality of the RUMEP programme obviously depends on the calibre of the staff and thus John takes his responsibilities of staff development very seriously. He sees his primary responsibility towards his staff to nurture them into the RUMEP thinking and approach (M17) so that they are able to understand why the rest of the staff do things in certain ways as well as sensitise them to what is expected in terms of attitude and approach (M18, M22). Therefore new staff spend a lot of time experiencing the context in which the teachers work(M19), attending workshops given by other staff members (M18) and talking to John about their experiences (M19) before they actually embark on the job for which they were hired. Even when new staff begin to tackle their responsibilities they do not do so alone, they always have John to guide them as to what is appropriate and inappropriate (M20, M23). They also have the support of other members of staff (M21). John comments that it is *"...not like give a lecture and OK it's up to you"* (M21), once again signalling that even on the level of staff development RUMEP is different to the traditional university departments.

Giving staff members the required support is obviously important to John, however that support is given within a context which encourages people to do things for themselves and to try their ideas out with teachers and children (M23). John talks of providing a scaffold (M22) and a framework

(M24) for staff on which they can build their thinking, approach, commitment and work ethic. He believes that if these elements are in place people will often out-perform expectations (M24). It is within this environment of support that people are encouraged to take initiative and experiment with different ideas. If these ideas are not successful, they are regarded as opportunities for learning rather than failures. John would rather have ideas tried and have them fail than not try them at all (M25).

Linked to the idea of providing a scaffold is John's own view of himself as a role model. He wants to provide a model that other people can respect and is, therefore, conscious of doing what he would expect his staff to do:

> *I expect others to work hard, to do what they're required to do, to do more than they're required to do. But er, I'm inclined to do that myself, so I can say I do it, it's what I expect of you too. And I think in many ways it works, everybody works hard in this unit, there's no denying it* (M66).

However, he acknowledges that one of the most difficult things that he tries to do is *"...to get productivity and cohesion and co-operation from people"* (M70). He therefore tries to foster two things within the organisation; collegiality amongst the staff and good communication between himself and his staff.

Fostering an ethos of collegiality is critical to John (M61):

> *People support, work together and share ideas and have a common view all the time, a common view, a collegial view of what we're doing and why we're doing it. And there's a certain dynamic to this you know when there's a tough nut to crack, people support each other* (M62).

He believes that each member of the staff has a unique contribution to make (M63) and that contribution needs to be encouraged not only privately but also in the public arena (M64). As part of that encouragement he deliberately refrains from dominating important meetings with funders (M65), he allows others to speak about what they are doing. He believes that this motivates people to take *"...responsibility for what they're doing and the contribution that they are making"* (M65). Coupled to this is his belief that the staff should have a clear idea of their role within the

organisation (M16) so that they *"...know what contribution they have to make*, [and] *what responsibilities they have to take*" (M3). However underlying all this is the understanding that working at RUMEP is not just a job (M68). Each individual staff member has to be committed to what they are doing and make RUMEP a priority in their lives (M68).

The second element in getting *"productivity and cohesion and co-operation from people"* is open communication with staff. John prefers communicating with them informally so that he can *"...sensitise people to things all the time"* (M60), which contributes to his capacity to nurture his staff and enhances his ability to be a role model worthy of respect. Furthermore, talking to people is an integral part of his problem solving strategy (M67). When a problem arises he always gets to the bottom of it by talking about it. In fact he becomes incredibly frustrated with people who are unwilling to talk to him (M69). This is evidenced by a conflict he had with a former secretary where:

> *...I couldn't tell her anything, nobody could tell her anything. So she would just um, live and work in her own little world, without much being done* (M69).

John relies on his staff to keep him up-to-date with all their various activities. He believes that, as a leader he should know exactly what is happening in all areas, all the time (M2). He also feels strongly that it his responsibility to keep staff informed as to what their future looks like in terms of contracts and funding (M4). Enmeshed in his desire to communicate is his understanding that whatever decisions are made, everyone must have their input (M1). They need to be as involved as he is in the decision-making process (M1). However he is very clear that he takes the final responsibility for decisions (M1, M71).

CHAPTER FIVE

Situated General Structure

5.1 The foci of phenomenology

> Lived experience is a holistic phenomenon in consciousness...Because there is no way of attaining a stance outside of experience to attain understanding of human life, all attempts to penetrate the meanings of human life must be situated within the flow of natural life experiences. Thus, phenomenologists do not construct in authentic, laboratory situations for the study of the structures of life, but rather, situate their investigations of consciousness within the everyday world. It is in the everyday world that human beings constitute the meanings that guide their actions (McPhail 1995: 5).

The description in Chapter 4 was clearly situated 'within the flow of natural life experience'. It has, I believe, retained the concreteness and the specifics of the experience of leadership for John within the organisational context of RUMEP (Polkinghorne 1989: 54). Giorgi (1975: 88) advocates that once this has been done the researcher needs to move onto a general statement that leaves out the specifics of the situation. The focus then becomes aspects of the phenomenon which are trans-situational or descriptive of the phenomenon in general. Thus Giorgi (1985: 19) has recommended that:

> One would rarely conduct research of this type with only one subject. It is important to realize this because it is most difficult to write an essential general description of the situated structure with only one instance. The more the subjects are, the greater the variations, and hence the better the ability to see what is essential.

However, for my particular research interest, only one person has experience of leading RUMEP, therefore only one person can answer the question "what is leadership within the organisational context of RUMEP" from the perspective of a leader. This is, obviously, not the only research question on leadership that can be asked within this specific organisational context and I will certainly discuss some further possibilities in my concluding chapter. Nevertheless, this does leave me with only one protocol from which to draw an 'essential general structure'. I have, therefore, decided to refer to the structure which follows as a **situated** general structure, thereby acknowledging my limited ability 'to see what is essential'. Furthermore, in retaining **situated**, I prevent myself from, in any way, believing that what I have to say is the final word on the matter.

I was encouraged by Van der Mescht's (1996: 99) conceptualisation of the general structure:

> A general statement is, of necessity, a cryptic summary, a crystallised bringing together of the significant themes uncovered in the long and rigorous process of identifying meaning units and creating situated descriptions. To obtain an understanding of the true richness if the phenomenon one would have to read the entire research account.

Thus, my own situated general structure does not stand alone but forms an important part of the process, heavily dependant on what has gone before. The dialogue between the original data and the researcher, I found, was neither as intense nor as immediate as it was for the initial description. There was a familiarity with the data which seemed to preclude the agonising, yet valuable, struggle which was my constant companion as I wrote the initial description. However, if this had not taken place, I do not believe that a situated general structure could have been written. This situated structure is, essentially, a summary of what has gone before (*ibid.*: 99). A summary, that in the case of this research, retains the immediacy of John's experience of leadership within RUMEP. It, therefore, does not provide an easy means of comparison to other findings in the field of leadership as would a general structure derived from multiple protocols (*ibid.*: 100). This is not to suggest that such an exercise would not prove valuable in illuminating possible connections and avenues for further research. The situated general structure, as offered here, should provide a deeper and clearer understanding of how one leader has experienced leadership within RUMEP, thus leading to a deeper appreciation of the views, values and understandings that created RUMEP in a particular time and place. In addition, I believe that this study has the potential to be an important compliment to the historical artifacts that such an organisation tends to accumulate. The inevitable institutional paperwork, minutes of meetings or photographs of long forgotten events, although valuable, may result in understandings of the past that separate the organisation from the actions, feelings and purposes of the people who have contributed to its existence (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 1).

5.2 Issues surrounding the situated general structure

Polkinghorne (1989: 56) has made the point that "in phenomenological research, the researcher has the freedom to express the findings in multiple ways". This is both a blessing and a curse. Blessing, in that the researcher can allow "...style elegance of expression, simplicity of presentation, tension of plot and narrative, and seductiveness of content..." to become important parts of knowledge

(Feyerabend cited in Shapiro 1986: 171). This, in my opinion, can illuminate issues previously concealed by statistical data, elegant mathematical proof or neatly conceptualised graphs. However, the question of validity is, inevitably raised. Other researchers, through their own work, have looked at the issues around validity in phenomenological research (Giorgi 1975, Polkinghorne 1989: 57 and Cantrell 1993) and, therefore, I do not feel compelled to enter the debate here. Nevertheless, drawing from Polkinghorne (1989: 57), it is essential to say that the phenomenological researcher needs to provide conclusions that inspire confidence because the argument in support of those conclusions has been well documented and persuasive.

The other side of being able to express the findings of the research in multiple ways is that it offers limitless possibilities for description. This can be a very daunting task especially for the novice researcher. However, there are several boundaries that the researcher deliberately places around the study. The first is obviously the process of bracketing (as described in Chapter 3), intentionally refraining from imposing preconceived ideas and theories on the data. The second, stemming from the first, is the immersion of the researcher in the data and, through that immersion, generating an initial description that balances the voice of the researcher with that of the participant (as described in Chapter 4). This initial description provides the backdrop for the situated general structure, a constant reminder to the researcher that she or he can never go beyond the data (Van der Mescht 1996: 101). An added, and rather surprising, boundary for me has been the sense of loyalty I developed towards John. I would be loath to betray that by rendering a description that does not truly reflect his experience. I recognise that this loyalty may not develop for all researchers but it has played an important role in setting the boundaries for **this** research. With these boundaries highlighted the researcher returns to the meaning units to identify 'dominant themes' that can be used to formulate, in this case, a situated general structure.

Before I move onto the situated general structure itself, it is necessary to touch briefly on what I mean by 'dominant themes'. Commonality may seem the obvious criterion for choosing 'dominant themes'. I, however, did not go and count up the number a different times certain ideas appeared in the protocol and only included those that meet a certain numerical criterion of significance. That would, I believe, not only have been a grossly inappropriate use of numerical analysis but it would

also have destroyed the vital uniqueness of John's experience. As I have argued in Chapter 2, leadership research to date has not focussed on the leader as a **person**, therefore to destroy the uniqueness of John's experience would defeat the purpose of this research. It would also, I fear, have lead to a rather prosaic 'how to' guide to leadership. Van der Mescht (1996: 100) has counselled the following:

> I would suggest that there are several criteria for significance, of which frequency of occurrence is only one...The qualitative researcher needs to be open to the demands of other, less measurable criteria, such as whether a theme, regardless of the number of times it occurs, resonates with what the researcher knows to be generally valid and true in terms of the phenomenon. Or whether a theme, which may occur once only, is clearly an integrated element in the participant's *lebenswelt*, and therefore significant.

I have also used another criterion suggested by Colaizzi (cited in Polkinghorne 1989: 53), I returned to John with both the initial and the situated general structure and asked: "How do these descriptions compare with your experiences", "Have I failed to include anything of import" and "Does what I have written 'ring true' for you". This not only aided in my own process of bracketing but also ensured that I had captured the essence of John's experience.

5.3 Situated general statement

5.3.1 Thoughts

I do believe that the general statement which follows captures the essence of how John sees himself as leader of RUMEP as well as how John perceives the organisation itself. I have debated whether or not to deal with these to issues in separate categories. I have decided to keep them together for two reasons. The first is that I believe that to separate them would undermine my own position that RUMEP as an organisation is **not** a single abstraction but rather "...varied perceptions by individuals of what they can, should, or must do in dealing with others within the circumstances in which they find themselves" (Greenfield & Ribbins 1993: 6). Secondly, John himself did not separate his role as leader of RUMEP from his understanding of RUMEP as an organisation. His original narrative interweaves the two seemingly separate strands of enquiry together and therefore to separate them would, in my opinion, reduce the uniqueness of John's experience. It is the focus on this uniqueness that I believe is a central feature of this study. To determine whether or not the following statements have broad or general applicability I have left to the reader to decide.

5.3.2 How John Stoker sees himself as leader of RUMEP

The key element in John's perception of himself as leader is his **sense of purpose** within the South African educational environment in general and the mathematics education environment in particular. There are several factors that contribute to this sense of purpose.

Firstly, John's sense of **moral responsibility** is an important element in determining how he acts within his context. There is a definite belief that he has to do something constructive about the poor state of Black education because no one else is willing to take on that responsibility. He has, therefore, specifically designed RUMEP to be an organisation of **action** rather than one of words. However, he realises that nothing will happen in education if he does not have the full cooperation of teachers and government officials. He, therefore, works hard at maintaining RUMEP's **reputation for delivery** so that these stakeholders want to be associated with the various RUMEP projects.

In maintaining RUMEP's reputation for delivery, John has to continually assert that RUMEP is different from the more traditional structures within the university structure. He is prepared, therefore, to deal with a fair amount of **conflict** and **resistence** in order to ensure that the organisation remains focussed on action.

He is concerned that this sense of purpose be **communicated** to his staff. He, therefore, takes on the responsibility of **nurturer, guide and teacher** so that people are clear about what they need to do, why they need to do it and how they have to do it. This common understanding creates a particular ethos within the organisation that John believes furthers his direction for RUMEP, to **help teachers teach better mathematics**. John expects his staff, within this environment, to take responsibility for what they do and to help each other when necessary.

Mathematics is a very **concrete** subject for John. He wants to develop way in which this can be communicated to teachers and, through teachers, to learners. He, therefore, places a lot of emphasis in **responding to the needs of teachers** rather than dictating what their needs should be. In doing so, John is a **pioneer** as finds new ways to respond to these needs.

The process of **decision-making** within RUMEP is an important part of realising John's sense of purpose. Although he wants and needs input from his staff as to the direction that RUMEP should to take he is quite clear that, as a leader, the final responsibility for any decisions must rest with him. This gives unity to RUMEP's activities and ensures that everyone in the organisation stays focussed on John's chosen purpose.

To fulfil the purpose of the organisation John has to constantly balance his desire to help teachers teach better mathematics with the constraints imposed by the context in which he finds himself. He is a **strategic thinker**, always prepared to take advantage of any opportunities that will benefit the teachers and provide RUMEP with financial security. In taking advantage of these opportunities he does not avoid the conflicts that may result.

John is **passionate** about what he does and how he does it. This passion is expressed through his hard work and dedication and through his enjoyment of and pride in what he does.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion of findings

6.1 A confession

> *I want things simple...I want them cut and dried. I want to draw lines that no-one thinks of crossing. I want an end to the play when sometimes it's only an interlude in the action* (Elizabeth George 1994: 680).

At this point in writing up my research the above sentiments echo my feelings. I want to make statements that will be cut and dried, draw lines that no-one will dare cross and end my often agonising debate with the data. However, there are several reasons why this cannot happen. Firstly, my research findings need to be integrated into the vast body of leadership research that already exists. If this is not done, as I warned in Chapter 2, I would be in danger of wondering around in circles, happily talking only to myself. This, I believe is not only a massive waste of paper but does grave disservice to the data themselves. It is, I believe, one of the tasks of the researcher to engage in a dialogue between the data and the body of research that already exists as the data cannot speak for themselves in this milieu.

The second reason that I cannot make statements that are 'cut and dried' is because of my adoption of phenomenology as a research methodology. It deliberately exposes the researcher to the chaotic, idiosyncratic world of an individual's *lebenswelt.* Therefore, the questions raised and the answers given through this research methodology will naturally reflect this chaos. Once again, the researcher would be doing a disservice to the data if she or he attempted to conceal this behind neat conceptualisations or 'cut and dried' statements.

6.2 Individual action, intention and will

Greenfield (1984: 152) has asserted that leadership rests upon the will and the imagination of the person who leads. This is a seemingly obvious statement; however, as I have argued in Chapter 2, much leadership research ignores the person who **is** the leader and separates leadership from the person who leads. Bennis & Nanus (1985: 86), for example, have argued that:

> ...nothing serves an organisation better...than leadership that knows what it wants,

> communicates those intentions, positions itself correctly, and empowers its work force. But though these laws sound simple, their implementation requires certain skills.

At the risk of paraphrasing Greenfield (cited in Bush 1986: 92), "How can leadership know what it wants, or communicate or empower?" Only people can do these activities. Only people have values, goals, ambitions, visions, and the need to communicate with others. Only people serve - not leadership.

In this study it is very clear that leadership is not an abstraction, a list of 'how-to's' or a set of skills. For John, leadership flows from who he is as a person. The acts of leading are rooted in his own values and perceptions of the world he inhabits. The strongest example of this is his insistence that RUMEP should be an organisation of action rather than one of words. This insistence flows from his own belief that there are too many people talking about what changes should be happening in education and not enough doing something to make those changes a reality. Furthermore, it is clear, throughout the description, that John shapes and directs what the organisation does and how the organisation does it. He knows that RUMEP is founded on his moral purpose. He knows that he actively imbues this purpose into the organisation. He knows that he makes choices that determine what the RUMEP staff do and how they do it. In fact his narrative is full of expressions like *"it was what I wanted", "it was exactly the route I wanted to follow", "I believed that was needed"*, making it clear how strongly he believes that he shapes, not only the course of the organisation, but the very nature of the organisation itself.

This raises, in my opinion an interesting question: What are the driving forces that harness individual will and intention and transform them into organisations? Greenfield (1984: 153) has contended that:

> ...the ideas in our head are not so much models of the world as models for the world. We believe in the ideas in our heads. We trust our models for the world so deeply that we make them true. We will them to be true.

However many people have ideas in their heads that they never make true, that they never will into being. Why is that so? With these questions in mind I believe it is important to examine the space

between the ideas and the action, the space in which leaders create.

6.3 Creativity

6.3.1 Creative space

The creativity of leaders has received limited attention in leadership literature. *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* (1990), a truly mammoth review of leadership research, has only two passing references to the issue. The primary focus for many researchers seems to be on how leaders foster creativity within organisations rather than how leaders, themselves, create (Peters & Waterman 1982 and Bass 1990:618). Even when leaders and how they create are the focus of enquiry the result seems to be the inevitable list of personal characteristics that leaders should have to be creative. For example, according to Klem (8 December 2000), creative leaders are well informed, have modest intelligence, are original thinkers, ask the right questions and are prepared to be creative. In compiling such a list two core ideas about creativity are lost. Firstly, creativity is regarded, by many of the researchers in the field of human creativity, as a puzzling, paradoxical and even mysterious process (Boden 1994: 75). Secondly, creativity is considered to be a deeply human process. Beeman (1990: 10) has described it as "...the voice of the human spirit - the heartcry of a living being coming to terms with itself [and] its place in the order of things". Thus, reducing any form of creativity to a list of attributes is simply nonsensical as both the process and the person behind the process are lost. Furthermore, it will never be exhaustive or offer a basis for predictability as the unpredictability and novelty inherent in any form of human creative activity will constantly defy any systematic explanation (Boden 1994: 75).

Senge (1990: 150-155) is one of the few organisational theorists who has attempted to focus on creativity within organisations as a human process rather than a set of skills that leaders need to acquire. He has spoken of creative tension as the gap between an individual's vision and current reality. The role of the leader, therefore is to ensure that reality is pulled toward the vision and that the vision is not eroded. Even though Senge (1990: 150) recognises that creative energy flows from the gap between vision and reality, he does not elucidate what happens in the gap. It is precisely this gap that I would like to explore as I believe it is an important aspect of the essence of John as a leader and lies at the core of RUMEP as an organisation. It is the generative system that underlies

the creative act and defines a certain range of possibilities (Boden 1994: 79).

For John, there is obviously a clear gap between his vision of all learners in the Eastern Cape being able to do mathematics that is meaningful and the reality of the situation. However, there are several constraining forces that impact on his ability to make the vision into reality. Firstly, John works with limited financial resources and scarce human skills. Secondly, he has located RUMEP within a wider organisational system that may whole-heartedly support the vision but not the methods John choses to attain that vision. Quite paradoxically, these constraints do not work in opposition to creativity but make creativity possible (*ibid.*: 79). This would imply that the creating of RUMEP was and continues to be possible only because of the dynamic interaction of John's vision and the constraints imposed by time and place. However, this is not the only dynamic that operates, creative spaces are generally shared by many individuals (Gardner 1994: 151). Unfortunately exploring how the creative space is shared in RUMEP's case goes beyond the scope of the research. However, there are a few glimpses in John's interactions with others that testify to this shared space. One such glimpse is John's insistence that the staff continually talk to him about what they are doing. This not only ensures that he knows exactly what is going on but also gives him information with which he can make decisions. A second glimpse is his desire to meet the needs of the teachers. He, therefore, has to take their wishes and desires into consideration as he makes decisions. Another glimpse is his interaction with the Rhodes University administration. He constantly has to justify and clarify RUMEP's position and function within the university structure. All these interactions point to a creative space that occurs within a social context, influenced by the times, the environment and a community of colleagues, supporters and detractors (Beeman 1990: 17). A creative space that flows from human interactions and relationships.

6.3.2 The leader as creator

6.3.2.1 The relationship between charisma and community

Gardner (1994: 156) has pointed to two tendencies that are present in creative people. The first is that they question every assumption, reject current styles of thinking and attempt to strike out on their own. The second is that they exhaust a domain, they probe it more systematically, deeply and comprehensively than anyone has probed before. This would suggest that the creator needs to

balance two needs; the need to strike out on one's own, to be a pioneer and the need for a community in which and with whom one is able to probe deeply.

These two tendencies are certainly present for John. The first is embodied in the following examples: his constant challenge to University authorities to think in a different way when they deal with RUMEP, in his pioneering of new ways to respond to the needs of teachers and in his introducing new ways of teaching and learning mathematics. However, these pioneering and, in some ways, rebellious acts cannot be sustained unless he is part of a supportive community. As I will discuss later in this chapter, John has created a culture within RUMEP that is supportive and collegial. Furthermore, it is a culture in which learning is encouraged, not only for students but for staff as well. In addition, by making responding to the needs of the teachers an important part of RUMEP's activities he is constantly being made aware of the realities within which he must work. He has located himself within a community and it is from within this community that John is able to probe and explore the domain of mathematics education in the Eastern Cape. It appears as if John is constantly and actively engaged in scrutinising the 'mental models' he has and opening them to the influence of others - a topic that has received much attention in current literature on Learning Organisations (Senge 1990 and Fulmer & Keys 1998: 34).

Working with individual and organisational 'mental models' is considered essential in building a Learning Organisation. Senge (1990: 8) has described mental models as "...deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action". This process is vitally important because, as Greenfield (1984: 153) has asserted, human beings will the models in their heads into being. John has gathered around him people with whom he encourages - perhaps even demands - communication on several levels. There is the obvious insistence that people keep him informed of what they are doing. However this probably does not have much impact on John's 'mental models'. I would argue that the interactions that impact on John the most take place as he guides, nurtures and teaches his staff. The reason being that to perform these roles successfully he must be open to being guided, nurtured and taught himself. He must be open to learn and he must be open to change. Furthermore, gathering information from teachers as to their needs possibly provides added opportunity for him to scrutinise

his ‘mental models’.

The literature on charismatic leadership, in my opinion, comes closest to capturing the need that many creative people have to strike out on their own. The literature suggests that charismatic leaders are pioneers, people who are ‘larger than life’ and ‘blaze trails’ for others to follow. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, there is also a tendency to view charismatic leaders as set apart from their followers and as people who are “...not answerable to any human beings” (Barker cited in Storr 1997: xv). I believe that this may be a distorted view of the charismatic leader. John, for example, certainly exhibits some of the characteristics of a charismatic leader as listed by Robbins (1998: 371). He has a vision which he articulates clearly, he has strong convictions about the vision and is, therefore, committed to working hard to make that vision a reality and he is sensitive to his environment. However, he does not see himself as set apart from the people who work in and with RUMEP. He is part of that community and is, therefore, answerable to the people in the community for his actions. In fact the community are an important part of the creative space from which his pioneering ideas and actions are generated. Perhaps it is not true to say that charismatic leaders are not answerable to other people, rather they chose the people to whom they are answerable and this choice may not always be obvious. Thus, creativity involves a large amount of courage.

6.3.2.2 Creative courage

Courage, as defined by the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, is the “readiness to face and the capacity to endure danger or difficulty”. John certainly exhibits a fair amount of this courage, particularly in resisting attempts by others to make RUMEP a traditional University Institute. Leadership literature, especially that focussing on the more idiosyncratic and less rationalistic aspects of leadership, is full of references, mainly implicit, to the need for leaders to have the above type of courage. Bennis & Nanus (1985: 89), for example, have stated that leaders need to expound a vision that “...articulates a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization” and then ensure that the people in the organisation attain that vision. It takes courage to articulate and then commit oneself to a vision particularly in the face of opposition. Covey (1989:216) has argued that it takes courage for leaders to create situations that are mutually beneficial to themselves, their organisations and their staff. Yukl (1998: 438) has pointed out that one of the most important leadership responsibilities is

to lead change within organisations. This requires courage as the leader often needs to deal with a large amount of resistence to change. However, I believe, that simply viewing courage as the ability to endure difficulty in the face of opposition may be limiting, particularly in leadership studies.

MacKinnon (cited in Beeman 1990: 9) has, in my opinion, conceptualised the courage required by creative people very well. He notes that:

> The most salient mark of a creative person, the central trait at the core of his being is, as I see it, ...courage. It is not physical courage...rather it is personal courage, a courage of the mind and spirit, psychological or spiritual courage that is the radix of a creative person: the courage to question what is generally accepted; the courage to be destructive in order that something better can be constructed; the courage to be open to experience both from within and from without; the courage to imagine the impossible and try to achieve it; the courage to stand aside from collectivity and in conflict with it, if necessary; the courage to become and be oneself.

John has made himself open to the experience of others through his desire to communicate with both staff and teachers. In addition he has been open to his own experience. This is demonstrated through his leaving the Rhodes Education Department and starting RUMEP so that he could make a difference to the teachers whom he believed need support. He has imagined what for many is certainly an impossibility - teachers teaching better mathematics and children learning mathematics which is meaningful. He has had the courage to become and be himself.

6.3.2.3 Being oneself and playing a role

There seems to be a paradox in saying that John has the courage to be himself when there are obvious roles that he plays. Role-playing is regarded as adopting a personage which is essentially not oneself (Van der Mescht 1996: 132). John is very aware that he has adopted the complementary roles of nurturer, guide and teacher. These roles and the incumbent responsibilities are obviously very important to him and he takes them extremely seriously.

Role theorists, in the leadership literature, have argued that leadership is, itself, a role and therefore the person occupying that role is expected to behave and act in a more or less well defined way (Bass 1990: 16). Bass (1990: 17) has commented that "of all the available definitions, the role

conception of leadership is most firmly buttressed by research findings". However, as Van der Mescht (1996: 133, emphasis in the original) has pointed out, "such research seems always to have proceeded from the assumption that leadership **is** role-playing". In reading John's protocol there is a sense that the roles that he has adopted are part of who he is as a leader **and** as a person. For him, the two are not separate as the literature may suggest.

Van der Mescht (1996: 133) has advocated that educational leaders are possibly more able to be themselves as leaders. His argument is that educational institutions are different from organisations that are profit driven. They have different goals and the people who are part of them have different needs. Schmuck & Runkel (1994: 11-13) have suggested that the following two factors set educational institutions apart from profit driven organisations. Firstly, educators are concerned with trying to make human beings humane. They do not produce or manufacture products and the outcomes of the services they offer are seldom concretely defined. Secondly, educational institutions are particularly vulnerable to social pressures. Both these reasons suggest that educational leaders need to be constantly involved with other people's value systems (Van der Mescht 1996: 134). I would also argue that, for John, the nature of primary mathematics education itself also plays a part in his integration of the roles he adopts as leader with who he is as a person.

John sees mathematics not as a collection of abstract concepts to be mastered but as a concrete reality, part of human sense-making and problem-solving. If this is so then the object of mathematics education is not the passive and decontextualised absorption of mathematical knowledge but the active construction of mathematical understanding by a community of learners (Carpenter *et al.*: 1999). This impies that mathematics educators have to engage with students on a personal and intimate level. Educators have to be involved in the world's of their students so that mathematical reasoning is embedded in real world experiences that have personal meaning for those students. Furthermore, educators need to create supportive and collaborative classroom environments where that active construction of mathematical knowledge is fostered and encouraged. Mathematics educators, therefore, cannot teach effectively if they are not engaged with their students' value systems (Van der Mescht 1996: 134). Thus the roles that mathematics educators assume in the classroom have to be embedded in who they are as people. For John, this means that the roles that

he choses to play need to flow out of who he is as a person. If this is not so then getting children to learn mathematics which is meaningful would, at best, be a pipe dream and, at worst, be no dream at all.

6.4 The community

I have argued that an important component with which and in which John works, is the community of RUMEP. I have chosen to use the word community rather than organisation since, as I have already argued, educational institutions are not like profit-making organisations, they have different goals and different needs. As a result of these different goals and needs Sergiovanni (1994) has put forward a convincing argument that educational institutions are more like families and small communities than traditional formal organisations. He has proposed that such institutions are ones in which "...members are part of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships" (*ibid.*: 4).

I believe that the above statement is an accurate reflection of how John views RUMEP as an organisation. There are certainly no rigid hierarchies, explicit management structures and procedures which are obvious characteristics of formal organisational structures. In fact the RUMEP structure is particularly flat; staff talk directly to John and do not need to go through various channels to get his attention. However, to examine whether or not RUMEP is a 'tightly knit web of meaningful relationships' it is necessary to look with more depth at the RUMEP culture.

6.4.1 Creating culture

Schein (1996: 61) has articulated two key processes in which leaders are involved so that organisational culture is created. The first is that "...they indoctrinate and socialize subordinates to their way of thinking". John certainly does this. He ensures that all staff are "*nurtured into the way of RUMEP thinking and RUMEP approach*". He also insists that new staff members spend a lot of time working with the teachers before they can begin the work for which they were employed. He wants them to become immersed in the RUMEP ethos. The second process in building organisational culture is that leaders use their own behaviour as "...a role model that encourages subordinates to identify with them and thereby internalize their beliefs, values, and assumptions"(Schein 1996: 61). I have already examined the nature of the role-playing in which

John engages, therefore, it is appropriate, at this point, to look the values that are embedded in the RUMEP culture.

6.4.2 Values

Deal & Kennedy (1982: 21) have asserted that "values are the bedrock of any corporate culture". They are the indispensable guides to making the choices that face any organisation. However, there seems to be some confusion as to the nature of values. Deal & Kennedy (*ibid.*: 22) have argued that due to the fast-paced world in which organisations operate it is often difficult to know 'what's right'. They argue that ultimate values are illusive, and therefore cannot play a role in leadership (Van der Mescht 1996: 145). Rather, it is particular values, held in common by members of an organisation, that are important. Schein (1992: 9) defines these as 'espoused values' that are articulated, publically announced principles that the group claims to be trying to achieve. However, all these conceptualisations miss a key point about the nature of values. They are far more than 'publically announced principles' or commonly held beliefs, or even the bedrock of any corporate culture - they sustain our lives as human beings (Fowler 1981: 4).

Fowler (1981: 4) has stated that:

> The 'god values' in our lives are those things that concern us ultimately. Our real worship, our true devotion directs itself towards the objects of our ultimate concern. That ultimate concern may centre finally in our own ego or its extensions-work, prestige and recognition, power and influence, wealth. One's ultimate concern may be invested in family, university, nation, or church. Love, sex and a loved partner might be the passionate centre of one's ultimate concern. Ultimate concern is a much more powerful matter than claimed belief in a creed or a set of doctrinal propositions...It involves how we make our life wagers. It shapes the ways we invest our deepest loves and most costly loyalties.

In thinking of values in the above terms two implications are clear. Firstly, corporate values arise from personal values because values are, by their very nature, deeply personal and sustain our lives as human beings. I believe that the 'espoused values' of RUMEP are rooted in John's own values and, although not part of this study, the personal values of the staff and teachers with whom he works. He believes that it is his moral responsibility to help teachers teach mathematic better. This

is a life-sustaining ambition. He, therefore works hard and dedicates time and effort to achieve this goal. Another clear 'ultimate concern' for John is the sustainability of RUMEP as an organisation. He has fought very hard for the project to become not only financially viable but to maintain the image of a Professional Development Unit.

A second implication that Fowler raises about values is that there are no hard and fast rules as to determine what is the 'right value' to have at any given moment. This understanding would dispute Covey's (1989: 35) idea that there are principles for human conduct that are proven to have enduring, permanent value. Determining the 'right' way to do things depends on an individual's 'ultimate concern' rather than universal laws. Perhaps educational leaders are in a unique position to appreciate this. They are constantly faced with decisions that need to considered not in the light of organisational values, or universal principles but in the light of personal values (Van der Mescht 1996: 146). For example John's choice to make RUMEP a Professional Development Unit was a personal value choice. When he made this choice, he was very aware that the organisational culture of Rhodes valued research and teaching rather than professional development. Perhaps another leader would have chosen to make RUMEP a Policy Unit or a Research Unit specialising in mathematics education. Be that as it may, the point is that *'doing the right thing'* for John as leader of RUMEP would be different from doing the right thing for someone else as leader of RUMEP. The difference would be due directly to different 'ultimate concerns' of the leaders themselves.

6.4.3 Sharing values and creating community

Although, as the above discussion has suggested, values are unique to individuals they are also, at least partially, sharable. Although to what degree John's values are shared with the other RUMEP staff goes beyond the scope of this study, what is important is to look at how John communicates these values to his staff.

The leadership literature pays close attention to the importance of leaders instilling values into the organisations they lead. Senge (1990: 339-360) has stated that one of the primary tasks of leaders is to develop the vision, values and purpose of the organisation. Deal & Kennedy (1982: 22) have urged leaders that their most important task is to shape and enhance values. Furthermore, there is

recognition that the vision, value and purpose of the organisation are not formed solely in the minds of leaders and then imposed onto followers, "rather the leader senses and distills values that run deeply within the context of the organisation" (Bolman and Deal 1994: 84). The question is, therefore, how do leaders do this? There are obvious answers to this question, in the case of this research John, through his activities as nurturer, guide and teacher, communicates his values to his staff. Furthermore, by encouraging informal chats, reports after activities and talking through problems, he can foster his values in his staff members. However, if Fowler's assertions about values are to be believed then the task of developing and shaping common organisational values is more complex than just following a certain set of behaviours.

Kofman & Senge (1993: 5) have argued that the only place in which values can be shared, developed and enhanced is within a learning community. They do not, however, define what this learning community is. Rather, they point to several characteristics that all learning communities share. When these characteristics are in place 'ultimate values' can be shared. This would imply that, in order for a leader to develop and enhance organisational values she or he must be engaged in the task of building a community in which this can happen. The two characteristics that I wish to discuss in relation to how John leads are collaboration within RUMEP and his long term view of problem-solving.

In my opinion John strives to create a community where the RUMEP staff can talk to each other, help each other, learn from each other and develop a sense of shared values. An important part of creating this space is his desire not to have the RUMEP staff isolated from one another and from the students with whom they work. He describes the ethos of RUMEP as one of collegiality, which he deliberately fosters. Interestingly, he contrasts this to the isolation that he believes other academics feel within the University structure. There is always an understanding that RUMEP is different and therefore the people who work within it must behave differently. In addition, John fosters a RUMEP community by encouraging his staff to talk about their ideas with others, to experiment with teachers and to learn from their failures. This does away with the need to compete with the people with whom the staff need to collaborate (*ibid.*: 9) and thereby enhances the learning community.

Kofman & Senge (1993: 9) have also argued that one of the beliefs that break down community within organisations is the belief that individuals must find 'quick-fix' solutions to problems. John does not have a 'quick fix' attitude towards the problems in Mathematics education in the Eastern Cape. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, in my opinion, anyone who works within the education system in South Africa is faced with problems that are so broad and have been perpetuated for so long that 'quick-fix' solutions are not only impossible but are also highly undesirable. John recognises the many problems facing teachers in the Eastern Cape, for example, he has experienced the poor infrastructural conditions at many schools. However, he does not want to address these particular issues. Not that these issues do not need to be addressed. However, it is easier to throw money at the infrastructural problem in schools rather than addressing improving the quality of teaching and learning. In my opinion in choosing to focus on improving the teaching and learning of Mathematics education in rural Eastern Cape schools, John actively rejects the idea that the problems, deeply imbedded in the education system itself, can have 'quick fix' solutions. Secondly, he believes that Mathematics is an individual, constructive process rather than a decontextualised set of facts, which implies that he is committed to a long term involvement with the people that he teaches and, therefore, the organisation of which he is apart..

John's long term commitment to teachers and to RUMEP is demonstrated in the way in which RUMEP has evolved over the years; simple workshops growing into workshops in conjunction with materiels delivery, growing into a Farm Schools Project, growing into an accredited course. Each evolution, while incorporating previous needs, addressed different needs, both for the teachers and for the organisation. The evolutionary nature of RUMEP, by implication, impacts on the staff as they have to always be aware of the long term needs of teachers, they have to be prepared to grow and adapt to change and they need to learn to rely on each other. Thus, they do not have to focus on short-term, measurable results. According to Senge (1990: 210), this encourages people to develop a long term commitment to what they do.

Before moving from John's creating of a learning community it is important to scrutinise the way in which he views information as it has a profound impact on the learning community of RUMEP. Wheatley (1999: 99) likens information to a form of nourishment. She argues that information

affects an individual's ability to do good work and therefore honest meaningful information is an organisational necessity and forms an essential part of a learning community. John is information hungry. He insists that he is informed by each individual as to the work in which they are involved. He is constantly talking to his staff to gain from their insights and perspectives. However, information is not solely channelled towards John but rather flows between all members of the organisation so that they are clear about their various responsibilities.

Treating information as a flow rather than as a commodity has a profound impact on organisation. Firstly, the leader is no longer solely responsibly for problem-solving or decision-making. Everyone is involved in the process since everyone has a valuable input to make. John appears to realises this as he believes that although the final decision rests with him, everybody needs to be involved in the decision-making process. This sounds like the process known of in the literature as 'participative decision-making'. It has, particularly in recent years, been proposed as a panacea for all ills (Robbins 1998: 209). Although this has been disputed, Robbins (1998: 209-210) has suggested the following reasons for leaders to share decision-making power:

> As jobs have become more complex, managers often do not know everything their employees do. Thus, participation allows those who do know the most to contribute...The interdependence in tasks that employees often do today also requires consultation with people in other departments and work units...Participation additionally increases commitment to decisions. People are less likely to undermine a decision at the time of its implementation if they shared in making the decision.

The above list certainly captures some of the elements of John's experience at RUMEP. Due to the organisations different projects there are certainly things that he does not know about what his staff do and due to the interdependent nature of the projects various staff members would need to be consulted when decisions are made. Furthermore, John recognises that involving people in the decision-making process increases their commitment to the decision. However, he does not want simply increased commitment he wants the staff to be *"as involved as I am"* in the decision-making process. This suggests that John's use of participative decision-making is not simply a management tool but rather arises out of his belief that personal involvement on the part of each individual in the organisation make for good decisions.

The second implication of treating information as a flow is that "it is no longer the leader's task to move information carefully along restricted pathways, shepherding it cautiously through channels, passing it on guardedly to someone else" (Wheatley 1999: 102). I would suggest that in treating information as a flow, John fosters and enhances collegiality within the organisation since no one has to expend time and energy protecting their information. Once again, competition amongst people is reduced and communication between people has the potential to be personally transforming.

On a final note, in writing the section on sharing values and creating community I relied heavily on some of the literature surrounding the concept of a Learning Organisation but have not addressed the question "is RUMEP a Learning Organisation?" This has been a deliberate choice since I do not believe that this question can be adequately answered using only John's perspective. The research would have to incorporate the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of other people involved with RUMEP to give the answer to such a question justice. Certainly, from John's point of view, there does exist a shared vision, individual and group mental models are constantly being scrutinised and there is open communication between people, all characteristics of a Learning Organisation (Senge 1990 and Robbins 1998: 649). However, this may not be true for others involved with RUMEP.

6.4.4 The impact of teachers on the organisational culture of RUMEP

John, through the interview protocol stresses that he is responding to the *"needs of the teachers"*. From its inception John wanted RUMEP to respond to the needs of teachers. The various RUMEP projects have evolved specifically to meet the needs of the teachers. He ensures that his staff spends time with teachers so that they experience the needs of the teachers first hand. The whole focus of the organisation is on the needs of the teachers.

The focus on the needs and satisfaction of customers is central to the thinking around Total Quality Management (TQM). In fact, it is this imperative that has lead to the development of the theory tools and applications that have become known as TQM (Carlson 1996: 14). Practitioners are urged to set challenging goals, design organisations around teams and apply effective tools for measurement and feedback to name but a few (Murgatroyd & Morgan 1992 cited in Carlson 1996: 23). Although these are important activities an organisational culture that values innovation, makes

status secondary to performance and contribution, encourages team work and helps staff to develop themselves (*ibid.*: 23), supports the more visible activities such as goal setting and evaluation. John, in my opinion, has developed an organisation that follows these principles. Improving the quality of Mathematics teaching and learning in the Eastern Cape is a challenging if not an outrageous goal, he views the various RUMEP projects as a team effort rather than individual effort and he encourages his staff to constantly evaluate what they do. In addition, he has encouraged, as described previously, a culture that mirrors the one recommended by Murgatroyd & Morgan (1992:65, cited in Carlson 1996: 23).

It is important to note that although the literature recognises that focussing on meeting the needs of customers is a driving force behind the culture of an organisation adopting a TQM approach, it does not seem to explore how the customers as **people** impact on the organisational culture. A very strong feature of John's experience of leadership is his personal interactions with teachers. He talks with them, he is challenged by them, he respects them as *"leaders in their fields"* and he remembers them through the photographs on his walls. He interacts with them as individuals and it is through this personal interaction that he assesses their needs. Although it is difficult to determine the exact impact that these relationships have on the culture of RUMEP there is no doubt that they do. For example, John enjoys blending the traditional African approach to occasions with his own, Western understanding. This is perhaps, once again, due to the nature of leading an educational institution since the work of that institution is almost entirely people-centred rather than profit-orientated.

6.5 The strategic leader

Although educational institutions are almost entirely people-centred, organisations such as RUMEP have to raise their own funding. This can often lead to a tension between meeting the needs of the customers and keeping the organisation financially viable. John has certainly experience this tension and has had to make some tough choices because of it. A prime example was his determination to run a course for teachers accredited through the Rhodes University Education Faculty despite the heavy opposition that he received. He knew it was what the teachers wanted but he also knew it was what RUMEP needed to sustain itself.

The literature seems to regard strategic thinking and planning in organisations as a highly structured process (Gordan *et al.* 1990: 141-162). Perhaps this is because most of the literature is concerned with large multi-layered enterprises rather than small organisation. John does not seem to be involved in a structured process as he makes decisions that influence the future of RUMEP. The projects have evolved over time and this trend will probably continue for as long as he is at the helm. He has seized every opportunity that has come his way to offer teachers what he believes that they need to teach better Mathematics. He has been very shrewd in developing both the accredited courses and RUMEP's reputation for delivery.

6.6 The transformational leader

I have left the discussion on whether or not John is a transformational leader for last due to my own growing reluctance to answer the question "is John a transformational leader?" There are two reasons for this reluctance. Firstly, it is my opinion that at the heart of transformational leadership lies the quality of the leader's relationship with the people who are lead. Robbins (1998: 374) has provided a list of the characteristics that a transformational leader should exhibit when dealing with employees. These include: gaining respect and trust, giving personal attention, coaching and advising, communicating high expectations and providing a vision. John certainly believes that he exhibits these characteristics, in fact he identifies the roles of nurturer, guide and teacher as key elements of his leadership experience. He also wants to be a role model which his staff can respect and, in his opinion, they do just that. He believes that it is through his own hard work and dedication that the staff in turn work hard. However, I am reluctant to state conclusively that John is a transformational leader because this research does not include the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of the RUMEP staff. Only they are in a position to judge whether or not John has been a transformational force in their lives.

The second reason that I have in trying to avoid stating whether or not John is a transformational leader lies in the nature of the research itself. In Chapter 3, I pointed to the imperative that a phenomenologist has not to classify and categorise the raw data but rather to suppress that desire until repeated readings of the interview protocol reveal a more holistic sense of the experience (Van der Mescht 1999: 4). Nevertheless, even at this point, where classification and categorisation is, to

a degree, a necessity, I feel reluctant to classify John as a transformational leader. This is due to my belief that the richness of John's experience transcends the boundaries that would naturally be imposed on his experience if it were to be categorised as transformational.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

She climbed the scaffolding of loneliness
not to escape from the living, but to gain
a perilous glimpse into the universe;
and tunnelled down into the mind's dark mine,
and through tortuous shafts descending to obtain
its flawless fragments, glittering, crystalline.

(Elizabeth Eybers 1948)

7.1 Personal reflection on phenomenological method

This study has been as much an exploration of research methodology as it has been of leadership and, therefore, it seems suitable to reflect on my own experience of doing phenomenological research and applying it to the study of leadership. There are two inseparable strands to this reflection; the first, as expressed by Van der Mescht (1996: 183), is to reflect critically on "...the appropriateness of applying a phenomenological methodology to such an eclectic field of human endeavour", the second is to reflect on the process at a more personal level. This involves asking question How have I experienced the process? In my opinion this question is not simply self-indulgent navel-gazing, but serves to map "*the mind's dark mine*", making the path that the research has taken clearer, both for the researcher and those who read the research.

I have already looked at the characteristic features of phenomenological method in Chapter 3. It remains, therefore, for me to highlight and discuss some of the issues that I have experienced as helpful or problematic (and often both). Most of my own research experience has been quantitative. I have administered questionnaires and other tests, have compiled statistics and have analysed those statistics. During this process there were always experts to lend certainty to a particular line of reasoning, statistics that proved an argument or, at the very least, augmented an argument or others I could consult who would say whether my thinking was right or wrong. For me, quantitative

enquiry has been one of certainty and clarity. However, I discovered that there is no such certainty in phenomenological research. Obviously there was scaffolding - the experiences of other researchers, various readings on phenomenological method and philosophy, conversations with supervisors and friends - however, as I tried to express in Chapter 4, there were no certainties to which I could cling.

This made the process intensely exciting but also intensely lonely. I had to immerse myself in the data, accepting that others could tell me about their own experiences of the process but could not give me cut and dried answers to my anxious questions: Am I doing the right thing?, Is this an accurate description, Am I being true to the data? Throughout all my anxious questioning one of the most important scaffolds I had was the notion of phenomenological bracketing.

Simply stated bracketing is the "...attempt to put all of one's assumptions about the matter being studied into abeyance" (Von Eckartsberg 1998: 5-6). This means that the researcher must disengage from all she or he knows and assumes about the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi 1994 in Van der Mescht 1996: 183). This has always struck me as being very difficult to attain. I do know about leadership. I have read extensively in the subject, I have observed leaders most of my life and have occupied many positions of leadership myself. Furthermore, at the time of writing the research I had worked for RUMEP for over 18 months, most of that time I had spent collaborating with John on his various research projects and I was passionate about what RUMEP was trying to achieve. Therefore, I could not approach the phenomenon of leadership in RUMEP in total "conceptual silence" (Stones 1988: 124). However, as Van der Mescht (1996: 183) has observed, there are always questions that the researcher cannot answer and it is here that bracketing plays an important role.

During the interview I did with John I was careful to ensure that his views of leadership were expressed. I was consciously aware of asking questions that called for his own experience of his time as leader of RUMEP rather than pushing him to express a particular view of leadership. One of the questions from which I deliberately refrained was "Why did you...", something which I found very difficult. I believed that asking this question would force him (and myself) to classify and

categorise his own experience and thus prevent a more holistic sense of his experience to emerge later in the research process.

The desire to classify and categorise was strongest when I wrote the description. It was here I wanted certainty and clarity because I found the process very hard. There is probably no such thing as pure description (Van der Mescht 1999: 5). However, the researcher must attempt to capture the nature of the experience for the participant and keep herself or himself out of the picture as far as possible. As I have noted in Chapter 5, I took my final description and the situated general structure back to John to ensure that what I had written had captured his experience. Surprisingly, I found this a particularly vulnerable moment for me as a researcher. As I noted in Chapter 4, the description and, perhaps to a lesser degree, the situated general structure was a balance between my voice and John's voice. I did not want John to find anything 'wrong' with what I had written, perhaps because in doing so I believed that he would be rejecting my voice within the description. Furthermore, I had spent so much time drafting, reflecting and then redrafting the description that I felt that if he rejected the description I would not have the energy to go back and redraft again. However, I must point out that I found this process incredibly helpful and necessary. Firstly it helped me immerse myself in the data, with each successive rewrite I found more depth to the nature of John's experience. Secondly, my first attempts were mainly interpretive. I classified, analysed and compared my findings to the literature and to my own notions of leadership. It was almost as if I had to get these out of my system before a description rather than an interpretation could emerge. This, for me, was the loneliest part of the research, no one else could do it for me and I could only partially share the structure of the phenomenon that was emerging.

Once the description and the situated general structure had been written I needed to compare my findings with those found in the vast body of leadership research. Like Van der Mescht (1996: 185), I was surprised by my findings. For example, the issue of John's creativity emerged very strongly in the data, an issue rarely addressed in literature. Furthermore, I was fascinated by the idea of a leader playing or adopting a role, something mentioned but scarcely ever explored through empirical enquiry. The task-person dichotomy, so strong in many leadership theories, did not emerge as a major constituent in John's experience of leading RUMEP. Van der Mescht (1996: 185) in his

phenomenological study into educational leaders made a similar discovery in his research and has suggested that "it may be possible that leaders in educational contexts, where the task is frequently also the person, are less inclined to think of their leadership in dichotomous and analytic ways". These examples serve to highlight the fact that adopting a phenomenological perspective can serve to expose issues previously neglected by more positivist modes of enquiry.

7.2 Limitations of this study

However, in attesting to the appropriateness of the approach in studying educational leaders it is important to recognise the limitations that do exist. Firstly, phenomenology is concerned with the minute detail of the lives of individuals, it attempts to gain access to the human consciousness in its meaning-making capacity (McPhail 1995: 2). Therefore, it is only by means of in-depth, intensive and subjected interaction with the participant that the researcher can gain access to the lived world of that person. For this reason and the fact that I have used only one participant in this study, the results of this investigation are not generalisable nor should they be. Polkinghorne (1989: 58) has suggested that the importance of phenomenological research lies not in its generalisability but rather lies in its ability to enlarge on, deepen and, in some cases correct understandings of a phenomenon that are arrived at through empirical research. It is to these ends that I hope my study has contributed.

A second limitation of this research is the fact that I have had to be so strongly involved in the process of the research that it must have influenced, in some way, the research process. I do not think that there is a way of avoiding this, all research requires the researcher to be personally involved in the project (Cantrell 1993). However, it does raise the thorny issue of the validity of this research. Many qualitative researchers have grappled with this issue (Polkinghorne 1989, Greenfield & Ribbins 1993 and Cantrell 1993 to name but a few). Polkinghorne (1989: 57) gives a list of questions that a phenomenological researcher should consider when approaching the issue of validity:

1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects' descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects' actual experience?
2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation of the interview?

3. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

These questions I kept upper most in my mind as I was doing the research. Furthermore, I returned to John once the descriptions had been written to ensure that I had not, in anyway distorted his experience. Shapiro (1986: 172) has taken the position that "...mundane experiencing can give, if not a sure ground, an always accessible and evolving touchstone". Therefore simply being human is a basis for validation (Van der Mescht 1996: 189). Giorgi (1975 cited in van der Mescht 1996: 189) has argued that the most important criterion for determining validity in phenomenological research was "whether a reader, adopting the same view point as articulated by the researcher, can see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it".

Finally, I believe it is necessary to respond the most constantly articulated criticisms of phenomenology. Ratner (1999: 6) has stated that phenomenology "is insensitive to the social character of experience". Similarly, Campbell (1997) has put forward the view that research needs to do more than offer understanding, it needs to move from the personal experience and locate it within a social and cultural context. I believe that both these criticisms are valid. Unfortunately there was not scope within this research to explore beyond John's personal experience and provide an explicit cultural, social and historical framework for his particular view of leadership. However, these issues are implicit in the data. For example, John's sense of commitment to teachers and his insistence that RUMEP responds to their needs is better understood against the backdrop of an education system that has disregarded and often continues to disregard their needs. Nevertheless, the fact that this could not be more fully articulated is a limitation of this study.

In conclusion, I believe that phenomenology is one way of illuminating several facets of the phenomenon of leadership, however, through this very illumination other facets are darkened. It is not the only way of looking at leadership in educational settings and more complete pictures can "...only emerge when a variety of approaches and methodologies are applied in appropriate ways" (Van der Mescht 1996: 191).

Leadership studies for so long have followed the laws laid down by natural scientists as to how to conduct and interpret research (Wheatley 1999 & Shapiro 1986). It therefore seems appropriate, before moving onto suggestions for further research, to reflect on an observation by Heisenberg, a leading scientist. On characterising many of the major discoveries in quantum mechanics, he has commented that they began with a lucky guess based on shaky arguments and absurd *ad hoc* assumptions which gave a formula that turned out to be right, though at first no one can see why on earth it should be so (Wheatley 1999: 11). I am not suggesting that researchers throw out ideas about rigour and neglect the careful sifting through data. However, what I am suggesting is that during the research process they begin to follow "lucky guesses" and "absurd *ad hoc* assumptions" so that more of the facets of the human phenomenon of leadership can be illuminated.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

Throughout the research and particularly when writing Chapter 6, I kept feeling that I needed to know more. This need to know more fell into two categories. Firstly, I wanted to know more about RUMEP and secondly I wanted to access related research which would illuminate what I had found. I will attempt to name those occasions here as suggestions for further research.

a) Firstly, there were a number of occasions when I wanted to ask the staff members of RUMEP about their experience of working with John as a leader. John often spoke of his relationship with his staff and of his part in that relationship and I wanted to know how they perceived their relationships with him. I would probably conduct this research along phenomenological or even ethnographic lines. I do not believe using an instrument such as the LPCQ or the MLQ will give the fulness of the response I would desire. They would also not complement the already rich data that I have gathered from John

b) Secondly, like Van der Mescht (1996: 192), I believe that the question of how educational institutions differ from profit-making institutions needs to be explored.

c) Another question that this research raised is whether 'organisation' is the appropriate metaphor for educational institutions. Both Greenfield & Ribbins (1993) and Sergiovanni

(1994) have suggested that it is not. In this research, I believe that the 'community' metaphor is a more appropriate metaphor than organisation when discussing RUMEP. However, whether or not this is generalisable to other educational institutions is a matter for debate.

d) The creative element in John's leadership was a particularly striking finding of this research. As I noted in Chapter 6, the literature on this aspect of leadership is limited. There are many questions that are, therefore, left unanswered: Do educational institutions provide more fertile ground for creative leaders than profit-making institutions? What is creativity in leadership? How important is creativity in leadership? Furthermore, studies of this nature have implications for leadership training. As Van der Mescht (1996: 196-197) has argued:

> To what extent are they [leadership training courses] geared towards instrumentalising leadership, as opposed to developing people holistically, focussing them on their inner creative selves, opening their minds to possibilities so that they may come to see...that the reality we have is only one of several possibilities

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APPENDIX

Meaning Units

M1: *I see that members of the RUMEP staff must be as involved as I am in the decision-making. The final decision comes to me but I think that they can be involved, they can make input into the process of, of how they feel about certain things...*	John believes that the staff make contributions to the decision-making process and that they should be as involved as he is in that process. However the final decision is his alone.
M2: *...er...an example of course is when people come back from field work they inform me all the time as you know. They give me feed-back whether they've been to a farm school, whether they've had a workshop in town or up-stairs here. Or Rose has been out to see students, I make it a point that they give feedback to me, so I know what is happening. I think that's perhaps what I feel as a leader that I must know exactly what's happening in every area and what everybody's doing all the time. I think that's an important role for me as leader, that's one of the things.*	He relies on his staff to give him feedback on all their various activities. It is important for him as the leader of RUMEP to know exactly what is happening in all areas and what everybody is doing all the time.
M3: *...um...I think that people must know what contribution they have to make, what responsibilities they have to take*	He believes it is his obligation to ensure that all the staff know how they should contribute to the organisation and what responsibilities that contribution entails.
M4: *...and what their future looks, a) in terms of contracts and the funding coming which is sometimes bleak, as you know, other times it's not bad it's better (laughs), peaks and troughs and we all suffer because of it. I think that they should know about that.*	It is his responsibility to keep the staff informed of how RUMEP stands financially. He acknowledges that when funding is not forthcoming every one suffers.

M5: *...being an NGO attached to the University, makes us a different sort of unit, we're not just an NGO and we're not a University department, we just sit in between as an Institute, as a self-funding Institute. And so therefore we, we have a different role to play in some respects. We're not a research Institute as, as are the other Institutes and we're not a teaching department as we would say the English department. So we sort of sit in between that and we do (emphasis) a little bit of research to determine impact. And we do teaching but not of undergraduate students. Or, have I got that right? The FDE I suppose you would call them post-graduate students, not the typical under-graduate students I think that's, that's what I'm trying to say.*	RUMEP is an atypical organisation within the Rhodes University structure. The sole reason for research to be conducted is to determine the impact of RUMEP's programmes. Furthermore, unlike a traditional academic department, the students who are taught are not the typical under-graduate students.
M6: *Ja, at the outset, there was myself and then Rose joined us and we said what we've got to do, and this is clearly a first phase, is to make RUMEP known by delivering workshops.*	His first task as a leader was to build RUMEP's reputation by delivering workshops.
M7: *So we went around and we spent most of our energies and time travelling and giving workshops, from PE to Kokstad. All round, all these places Saynsberg we've been, Lady Grey, er Barkley East up that end and then Kokstad and Bizana, Umtata, we did workshops down there and on the other end Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Humansdorp and you'll see from all these photographs around here are the, are the workshops of those early days, and that included one of the first workshops that we gave is the Symposium for inspectors, advisors, and that was in 1993.*	He still remembers the hard work that was needed to build RUMEP's reputation in the early days. The photographs of those early workshops on his office wall serve as a constant reminder of how this was done.

M8: *And that's how we started getting people aware of a different, a transformed approach to the teaching and learning of mathematics, with the emphasis on learner-centeredness and the appropriate use of materials.*	He wanted teachers to be made aware of a transformed approached to the teaching and learning of mathematics.
M9: *We went to one of our workshops and said, it was in Fort Beaufort, in the early days before Thandi had even joined us. We said OK we'll do this workshop and it was quite a nice workshop. And we used our materials because we were beginning to develop the 100 grid and so on, and we used that. And then we said, at the end of the workshop "this is what you need", but we wouldn't give it to them, because we said "no, no if we're going to give materials out all the time, it's not our responsibility, it's the government's responsibility, let the government provide the materials and we deliver the courses" and we made this clear. But of course, you know what happens, with no money forthcoming, so we er, we said "you can't give a workshop, I mean it's unrealistic to give a workshop if we don't give the appropriate materials as well. So we developed the materials to go with the workshops*	He was aware of what teachers needed to teach better mathematics. When the government could not meet their responsibilities in achieving this end he was prepared to fill the gap.
M10: *...and we, as I say, we tried to reach as many people with workshops. And that was probably the first phase, that's how we got started and that's how we established our reputation, um as people who were able to run a workshop with a hundred people, a hundred teachers attending. I mean if you look at these photographs, they're packed...When we got there the room that was planned to hold 50 had 100 people in it, it was packed, there were just..., we couldn't move. So that was a little off putting but we said, "the teachers are there, we're here, let's get on with it!"*	He believes that RUMEP's reputation was built not on the delivery of workshops alone but on it's ability to deliver workshops to unexpectedly large numbers of people.

M11: *And it was very, very exciting times because we got a huge response from the teachers, you know, they hadn't experienced anything like this both in terms of doing the delivery, Rose, Thandi, myself you know, three very different people form what they're used to in the passed, it was interactive, highly interactive, they were involved and they came away with materials. So I mean that made a huge impact.*	The RUMEP workshops made a huge impact on the teachers.
M12: *I mean it's amazing how people remember us from those days I mean you can come up, I've been into the Bisho offices and there's been some clerk sitting in an office and I say "we're from RUMEP", "RUMEP, you must be Rose and you're John" (laughs). They remember us from that, because they say they've attended that workshop in some place, way back in the about 1993. So that was the start, that's how we got going and I think that's how we started to build-up a reputation for delivery.*	It is import to him that teachers who attended the workshops all those years ago still remember him by name.
M13: *Right so following that we needed, we realised that with the farm school, with all the farm schools around we needed a farm schools facilitator and Thandi took on the role of the farm schools and she just focussed her energy on the local farm schools and started to build up a, a, a relationship with them. But then that was, that wasn't until '94, '95, about '95 I think, ja. And that's when the Farm School Project really took off, when she then started visiting the schools themselves and of course that was a major change. And that's a significant change from just workshops to on site school visits because all the evidence that was coming back to us was that unless you start visiting the schools, the schools themselves don't change.*	He responds to needs of people on the ground. The Farm Schools Project and the visiting of schools both were a direct response to a perceived need.

M14: *The delivery, emphasis on delivery, not on a policy unit, because I though you know, "do we need to become a policy unit", and I think my feeling at the time was there's an awful lot of talking going on, we need to deliver and if we want to develop a reputation, we would develop it through delivery. And at the same time the development of materials, appropriate learning resources. And that's given, and that's given a direction to the way RUMEP has evolved over the years.*	He wants to do things that deliver results. He did not want RUMEP to be a policy unit since that would have involved too much talk and no delivery. He knows that the reputation of the project would be developed through delivery.
M15: *So that, we then, I then said "what we need are two extra people, one, that was Thandi, to facilitate the farm schools, and secondly another person to develop resources, curriculum resources, so we had a materials developer. So that's how the staffing structure evolved, we got, it evolved from the perceived need you see. You can't have any of us developing materials while we're trying to do delivery, very difficult. And so we got Sue Southwood in at that time, she was the materials developer...*	Staffing structure evolved from perceived needs; both the needs of the people on the ground and the needs of the other staff members.
M16: *...and she knew very clearly what her role was.*	It is important that the staff have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do.
M17: *But again it, it's very interesting, if you think back on how you have been nurtured into they way of RUMEP thinking and RUMEP's approach.*	He nurtures each new staff member into the RUMEP thinking and approach.

M18: *Well she had to be, coming straight from England, highly competent, different context, different environment, you can't just slot somebody in, they've got to be involved. We took her to workshops, you'll see her at some of these workshops were she didn't actually do anything, she was just there, working with the teachers. Just to see what was going, how we did things, why we're doing the things that we're doing and the way that we're doing. I think this is the important thing, because for, there's an underlying rationale and I think that I'm a very strong believer in this rationale, what we do, why we are doing it and the way we are doing it is because we believe in certain things.*	He believes that new staff have to be immersed in what RUMEP does before they can be expected to do work by themselves.
M19: *I don't believe that you can tell people things, you know straight. Um, I said to her that before she could adequately start writing materials for this particular context, she had to really experience what was happening in farm schools. Because to import British ideas into East Cape farm schools, some things might work but other things won't. So she had to go and see for herself, talk to us regularly, I think, and experience at first hand.*	He does not believe that he can tell people what they should do. New staff have to experience the context first-hand and talk about this experience with him.
M20: *And then slowly she would run a materials workshop upstairs. And I'd say, what are you going to do, and I'd guide her as to what was appropriate, what was inappropriate, but she, it would all come from her.*	He provides guidance as to how he believes things should be done.
M21: *As a leader I do believe that people must be given responsibility, er to show, but not to be left on her own. You see, she'd run a workshop but she would always have people supporting her in that workshop. It wasn't her on her own and everybody leave her. Not like give a lecture and OK it's up to you.*	Being a leader involves giving people responsibility as well as support. He does not leave staff to get on with the job by themselves.

M22: *as we try to scaffold the students so we try and scaffold the staff. I mean if you see the change from Thandi when she first came, straight out of the Grade 1 in the Adelaide district, a Grade 1 teacher from the Adelaide district and see where she is now. I think, I believe we've scaffolded her, in the thinking, in the approach, in the commitment and in the work ethic All that, it's all part, I believe of that leadership role.*	He believes he provides a scaffold on which the individual staff members build their thinking, approach, commitment and work ethic.
M23: *Yes I think we er, we, we at the same time we provide the support but we also provide the opportunity for people to do things for themselves when they are ready to do it.*	He gives people the opportunity to do things for themselves when they are ready for it.
M24: *...if Sue would want to do something she would then say right I'm going to run this workshop, I would then say what on, and she would then say the development of materials and she did something...it was a very interesting workshop, whatever they did and she allowed the groups to come up with various sorts of things. Which, as I say, was most innovative, cause I didn't really expect it from the teachers at that time. But you know, given the opportunity and the framework for doing it, it's amazing what they come up with.*	He believes that if people are given the opportunity to perform and the structure in which to work, they will out-perform expectations.
M25: *Now Sue came along and said "this is a lovely idea, now I want to develop number rods". We said number rods are fine, absolutely fine. And she developed them on a centimetre grid because she said that if everything matched mathematically... it would all link together nicely. Now that's the mathematician thinking, that's an adult thinking. And of course when she got into the classroom with those rods, they were too small, far too small. You couldn't use them. We just had to, all those rods that we had we just, I think they're sitting in there, we might as well ditch them (laughs). But I mean that's*	Ideas that do not translate into practice are regarded as learning experiences.

M26: *We were concerned about accreditation. Because people were saying "it's all very well to have delivery, the teachers, the local farm school teachers, but what about accreditation?"*	After RUMEP had become known through delivery, the next need to be addressed was that of accreditation.
M27: *So then I said OK let's see, through our funder at the time which was the British Council, let's see if we can mount an accredited course... they said, if you can run a course like that here we will support you financially. So I said straight away "RUMEP can do it, we will do it"...I was adamant that we could do this...*	He was adamant that the RUMEP staff could undertake the development and presentation of an accredited course.
M28: *I thought now "this is exactly the route that I wanted RUMEP to follow, to become an accredited course". And Cambridge was fine, and we had the opportunity of delivering it...*	Offering an accredited course was exactly the route that he wanted RUMEP to follow.
M29: *...and I badgered them into releasing the residences for these people to stay in. And they stayed for three months then.*	He badgered the University into allowing the students to stay in the University residence.
M30: *I would say, at that time '94 with the drop in student numbers and I said I can fill this, I can put 40 students into this residence er and you've spaces there and I'll pay for them at the going rate. Funny how accounts, the power of money (laughs). So I said OK I can pay for them...*	He knows how to appeal to the best interests of others in order to get what he wants.
M31:*...and, of course, they were un-used to having a large group of black students on campus, really un-used to them, of course, totally unprepared. But er, as I say, I quoted all sorts of things about how universities must transform and this is the way we must go, and this is the way of the future.*	The University was un-used to dealing with the type of students with whom RUMEP worked.

M32: [they] *were totally inexperienced in handling this type of student. I mean black teachers who are experienced adults, mature adults, don't like to be told by youngsters that they must that they must go to bed at 10 o'clock and that sort of thing (laughs), you know. And of course the sub-wardens battled like made, and of course that lead to a fair amount of tension er...*	John saw the students with which he worked as mature and experienced adults. This was not the same view as the University authorities. Therefore, John had to deal with a fair amount of conflict.
M33: *...but I knew that in the end I was doing the right thing. That we must get more and more black students onto the campus, to experience campus life. I said "the alternative is to put them into a hotel, we could do that, you loose the money, they loose the university experience. And what is it saying about Rhodes".*	If John believes he is doing the right thing, he will appeal to the better interests of others to get what he wants.
M34: *But all the time we had to, er we had to negotiate within the regulations because it went from a Certificate which was made up of three modules to a Diploma which is made up of five... So I mean it was an administrative, administrative thing, it took time, it took effort but I think, I was convinced that this was the route to follow. And it came together and so we had our first intake in 1994.*	He will put time and effort into projects which he believes are the right things to do.
M35: *And of course they weren't shy these people, they weren't shy at all. Because they, being leaders in their own field...You see they* [the students] *have a committee and of course the committee would always speak to me about what they wanted. They wanted a braai, I said OK were is the braai. So they said we want it at the beach, alright so we go and go and have the braai at the beach. And we said "OK you've got to go into schools and try this" so they go into schools and try this. And they wanted to visit other schools so we set up you know these sorts of things. We were working from their needs, within reason.*	He is prepared to respond positively to people's needs if he considers them to be reasonable.

M36: *And then the students said "now John, where are you going to have it ?". Well I said "well you tell me um we can have it here at St. Peter's". "Oh no, this is were we work, we want it in the Chapel"...Well I said "you know what, they've never had anything like that in the Chapel before but I can always ask". So then I got onto the Registrar and said "the students have requested that they have this er graduation", it was a ceremony of presentation, we weren't allowed to call it a graduation...So I got a letter back from the Registrar, they said "it's the first time it has ever been asked and...go ahead and do it".*	He is willing to do things that have never been done before.
M37: *That meant we had the choir, So he* [Rev. Peter Mtunzi] *did the procession in, and we had, and he gave the prayers in Xhosa and in English. And so you had this variety of singing, you had the VC make a speech... And we all exited to the choir and we had tea on the lawns. It was the most fantastic occasion because it was a blend of sort of Western and, and, and the traditional African approach, you know the enthusiasm, you know the Chapel was full, was absolutely full. And it wasn't stuffy you know, it was nice. And it wasn't stuffy you know, it was nice.*	He enjoys blending the traditional African and Western approaches to occasions. He particularly appreciates the enthusiasm the African approach brings.
M38: *And it wasn't stuffy you know, it was nice. And it wasn't you know, I must say Dr Henderson liked things to be just right and there was a lovely programme and everything worked, went well and er there was a praise singer. And the praise singer praised Dr Henderson for all this FDE (laughs). So that was the culmination of the course, so it was a pretty moving affair you know, and a pretty good affair. And I mean Rose and I felt pretty thrilled about that er, that we'd got the course now accredited. And then these people had to go and work in their own areas.*	He likes to celebrate his achievements, especially those of which he is particularly proud.

M39: *And of course you know, it's amazing in terms of what we were doing, we were such a small team. And after those two years we were evaluated by external evaluation, funded by the British government. A guy by the name of, I can't remember his name now, but he came from England and there was one South African lady. And the two of them drove round and I've got a report from them if you want to look at it. It's worth reading because wherever the RUMEP teachers were doing something, they did it well and it came through in the report. It was very positive as regards the RUMEP students.*	He is proud of the fact that RUMEP students are doing things well and that this comes through in external evaluations.
M40:*OK you talk about leadership, I know where I wanted go. Why, because the students want something that they can take away and it's portable and it counts. It's got to count, not just the experience alone. OK we're trying to transform the classroom all the time, that is probably one of our fundamental reasons. But we've got to acknowledge that teachers want recognition for the work they're doing, and that recognition can be transformed into something tangible. It's either promotion or salary increase.*	His goal is to transform mathematics teaching in the classroom. In order to do this he realises that the teachers who carry out this transformation need some sort of material recognition for the work that they are doing.
M41: *I realised we need to do, we have to move towards FDE. FDE is just being mentioned now, just coming on the scene Further Diploma, never been, not on the Statute books in the, at the University at all. So I say "how do we get this done? We've got to got to Pretoria, we've got to present this course, they've got to approve it". So off we go to Pretoria, every time we go there the person we're supposed to meet, even though you've made prior note, given prior warning, he's, he's not there. So it was a bit problematic to start with but the biggest problem was not there.*	He is a ground-breaker. Once he has decided what needs to happen he goes ahead and does it, despite the obstacles in his way.

M42: *The biggest problem was in the Faculty of Education here. And I think it's because, this is my own personal view now. It's the way they viewed us "yes it's nice for them to do all the delivery. Really it's got nothing to do with us, let them carry on". Well I said "I'm doing an FDE that would be accredited by the Education, it had to go through the Education Department" ...*	How the University viewed RUMEP is not important to him. What is important is being able to get what he wants from the relevant authorities.
M43: ...*when I first suggested it* [the FDE] at Faculty I got slammed ...by virtually everybody in terms of what we were trying to do, what we were offering, the amount of hours, you know, it didn't conform with the regulations and so on.	He is prepared to deal with a lot of conflict to get what he wants.
M44: *So I was a bit dis-spirited from that but I still, I stuck to my guns. I thought "I'm going to get this through come hell or high water because I realise that the sustainability of this project depends on the funding that is brought in to the University via these courses. In other words the subsidy that comes in because of the students that have passed the FDE can be diverted to us eventually.*	The long term sustainability of RUMEP is of great concern to him and he will fight any battle to ensure that the project achieves this.
M45*: '97 we were able to offer the course. And then we said all right we will, it's an FDE and we must target our own province and that was, and that was, we're in another phase now because we've learnt that, why should we support the whole of South Africa? It's not our responsibility, our responsibility, I think our moral responsibility is to look after the people in our own province.*	He believes that he has a moral responsibility to work only with teachers in the Eastern Cape.
M46:*.And, of course, it was much more manageable. I mean, I mean it's bad enough driving up to the Northern regions of our province let alone...flying up to the other end of the country*	Working in the Eastern Cape is more manageable than working in the whole country.

M47: *...it's significant that it's one of the few Maths only FDE's. Wits, of course has Maths Science and English, UPE has Maths Science. We have Maths alone. Secondly it's got this built in module of INSET work, you've got to do it in the field. So I think it's a singular FDE in many ways, whether it will stay that way I don't know. It's coming up for review now and...but it's fulfilled exactly what I (emphasis) wanted, my vision.*	He believes that the FDE offered by RUMEP is unique. It is precisely what he had wanted.
M48: *Don't just go for an accredited qualification…Go for an accredited qualification that will not only help the professional development of teachers but it will also make a difference in the classroom…I think…our underlying philosophy is "do things that will help the teachers do better maths".*	Enabling teachers to do better mathematics in the classroom is fundamentally important for him. He feels strongly that simply providing a mechanism that allows teachers to become academically qualified without improving teaching practice is useless. This does not fit into his vision for the RUMEP FDE.
M49: *I try to work from what I see as the needs out there and so OK, if we're going to do any good in terms of education, other than just produce students with better qualifications, what are we going to do. So working from my perceived needs of the situation and of course constant feedback from the people out there. The employment of Tom was a direct result of somebody saying, you need to provide support, as it is you're only doing half the job.*	It is not acceptable to him that the people on the ground perceive RUMEP as an organisation that does not deliver a complete service. Doing half a job in their eyes is untenable and he will strive to rectify this.

M50: *So JA trying to make a difference is one thing. Trying to get teachers' professional development is another clear goal, these are very clear goals in my mind in terms of how I see the Unit, it's very much a Professional Development Unit, as I say, as distinct from a Policy-making Unit, or just simply a research-based Unit. Could have gone that route if we wanted to, let's just do research, let's get researchers and stay and do research, high-powered research. Could have done that, chose not to. 'Cause I didn't think that was really what was wanted, having worked with the teachers.*	He sees RUMEP as a professional development unit. This was a deliberate decision that he made because he believed that this is what the teachers wanted.
M51: *And I think coming from experience because prior to starting up RUMEP I was in the Education department and I worked with the, what I would call privileged, white students. And often referred to as the princesses, you know. And they were princesses you know, they were girls from very privileged backgrounds that didn't know anything about the other side of education in this country. And when I introduced them to People's Education and Black Education, some of them went straight home in a state of despair...Now this is a cultural shock for many of the white students, you know their whole lives have been in a protected home environment, a secure school environment, all white, usually all girls and they would come to university, stay in very nice cosy res's, well looked after and then come bang up against the reality of what education is for most people in this country.*	Making privileged students aware of the realities of Black Education was a pivotal experience for him. He did not shy away from the emotional impact that it would have on the students.
M52: *Well they didn't want to part with that, this was not why they had come to University, they wanted to go back into the system exactly. So it came as a shock, a real shock for them.*	The students he was teaching wanted to perpetuate the system with which they were familiar.

M53: *And my experience was you know, most people in this country go through this sort of education; tough, underprivileged, disadvantaged. And that's what it's like for most people.*	*He is very aware of that, for most people in South Africa, education is tough and disadvantaged.*
M54: *And I realised that it wasn't a Policy Unit to decide that something has to be done, it was let's get down and do something about it, hands-on, hard-work, exhausting work, difficult work.*	For him, doing something, however hard, to improve education for the majority of people is far more important than deciding what it is that should be done.
M55: *And some people might say it's not, it should not have been your work, it's the work of the government but you know in those early years there was nothing going on, by the government. Very little going on, in fact the government officials all those people in that photograph up there are subject advisors, said they would like us to do the work. Because we had the expertise and the experience and the know-how. We used to run their workshops for them. And we felt and I believe that was what was needed (emphasis).*	He determines where his responsibilities lie. He knows what expertise and experience is needed by the people on the ground. He will strive to ensure that these people have access to that expertise and experience despite the fact that other people tell him that this is the responsibility of government.
M56: *Well other people think "well if you are a, an Institute of the University shouldn't you be doing University type things which is research and developing policy". Research on education, research on maths education and policy and, and planning what might take place, writing papers on what could happen and that was not my feeling about what we should do. Because I felt that the greater need was those teachers and those kids.*	He believes that work needs to be done with teachers and children. He does not care that other people may feel differently.
M57: *...mean you've been to a farm school and you see absolutely nothing you feel you've got to do something about it.*	He wants to work with teachers and children who have absolutely nothing. He feels that he has to do something for them.

M58: *I can remember some of the feeling that I have for the farm schools. I mean the one which had no ceiling, dung floors, no panes in the window, rural setting, a nice rural setting. And I remember taking one of the heads of the SABC now. And of course he wanted to write a story about it, you know kids having to walk miles for school etcetera, etcetera.*	He recognises that there is a complete lack of the basic infrastructure in most schools. He also realises that this is what most people see.
M59: *And I said wait a bit, just look and see what they're doing, what they're learning in Maths....And it was a mature teacher she wasn't a young bright thing but she was doing the right sort of things...the kids were working things out for themselves. And then he suddenly realised that these kids could think and do things for themselves because the more he asked them to do, the more they could do. And that absolutely amazed him. And of course they go on with out anybody telling them what to do, they just got on and did things. Used our materials, did problem-solving... So we were doing the right sort of things for those kids.*	He is concerned with doing the right things so that children can have a positive, meaningful experience of mathematics learning.
M60: *So this is why, this is what I say is tied up with leadership, sensitise people to things all the time. Talking, keep communication going. No I talk to you but let's just talk informally what about, what' happening. And I think there's a lot of that.*	He believes that should be making people aware of what is happening in education all the time. He does this by ensuring that he spends time chatting to his staff on an informal basis.
M61: *And in terms of leadership I think collegiality is a very important issue. I think, you know um within universities you can become very compartmentalised in your office, I do my little research and I do my little teaching and that's my domain. Don't you interfere with me, that's what I do. Now that's not the ethic of this place.*	He encourages the staff to support each other. He does not want them to become isolated from each other.

M62: *People support, work together and share ideas and have a common view all the time, a common view, a collegial view of what we're doing and why we're doing it. And there's a certain dynamic to this you know when there's a tough nut to crack, people support each other.*	By working together, he believes that the staff develop a common view of what they are doing and why they are doing it. This enables them to support each other when there is a challenge to face.
M63: *I think it's, everybody's strength contributes to the whole. And everybody has a strength and we don't all have the same strengths but everybody contributes to the whole.*	He believes that each staff member makes a unique contribution to the RUMEP programmes.
M64: *For example I know that er we have funders visit, we've got to make presentations to funders, I've got to select which people are going to make presentations to funders, I've got to select which people are going to make the presentations and I select carefully apart from myself. Cause I know the sort of impact they're going to have. So but I mean, I tell them that we've got funders and this is what they want to hear. They might want to hear about the farm schools, they might want to hear about your materials, whatever it is. You've got to get the people whose strength and whose responsibility it is.*	He realises that the people who are responsible for the various programmes should be the ones who give input into important meetings.

M65: *And I mean round the table here when we have visitors, I don't, I don't talk myself. I could, I could take, I could dominate the whole thing if I wanted to but I get people to speak about what they're doing. I suppose what I'm saying is people must take a shared responsibility. Or certainly take a responsibility not necessarily a shared one but a responsibility. I think this is what I'm saying. A responsibility for what they're doing and the contribution that they're making. And I think um making sure that they know that they're appreciated er genuinely for what they're doing. But I suppose the best appreciation comes from the clients themselves doesn't it, either the kids in the classroom or the teachers in the class. And then that's reassuring.*	He choses not to dominate important meetings as doing so would erode the responsibility he wishes the staff to have. The staff need to know that he appreciates their work, however he believes that the true appreciation comes from the children and teachers with whom the staff work.
M66: *But I suppose being sensitive and aware as much as anything, you know aware of what needs to be done, by whom, when and perhaps providing a model. I think that's an important aspect. I try as far as possible to provide a model that er, other people can respect. That I, I expect others to work hard, to do what they're required to do, to do more than they're required to do. But er, I'm inclined to do that myself, so I can say I do it, it's what I expect of you too. And I think in many ways it works, everybody works hard in this unit, there's no denying it. And I don't have to say "now come on pull your socks up". I've never ever had to say that once. Everybody does it, the admin staff to everything, everybody takes responsibility for themselves.*	He provides a model for how he expects his staff to act. He believes that this is a model worthy of respect. He works hard and puts in more than is strictly required, and his staff do the same.
M67: *And if things are not going quite right, I've got to get to the bottom of it and I get to the bottom of it by talking about it.*	He solves problems by talking about them.

M68: *But one of the lady's who came in here came from, I think a sophisticated background in Port Elizabeth, and when she started work here the job was clearly secondary to the social life and the status of being in the university. So I think we had to sit down and talk. What are her priorities, where did she see herself going, what did she see, those sort of things. And what are the problems to this. And so we had to, we had to talk through this so that everybody understood what it was that I was wanting from them. And I had to make clear that the commitment to RUMEP was a priority, it's not just a job, you have to be committed to what you're doing. And I think er, and then er the fact that she's got responsibilities, big responsibilities now, where she can operate on her own, she's, she's doing fine and she's meeting those responsibilities very well. But it's, it's a period of adjustment to get into it.*	He stresses that working at RUMEP is not just a job. It requires commitment and dedication. John ensures that the staff are made fully aware of the commitment that is required.
M69: *As I say, when she first came she was competent in everything else but then she started to become er very, very difficult to work with. I mean I couldn't tell her anything, nobody could tell her anything. So she would just um, live and work in her own little world, without much being done, I suppose being pretty disruptive to what we were trying to do.*	The staff are expected to meet their responsibilities. If they do not and he feels that he cannot talk to them about it he becomes frustrated. He believes that this disrupts the work being done by other staff members.
M70: *I mean, I mean that was that was the one of those hiccups and of course leadership is in most respects working with people and in fact that is one of the most difficult things to get productivity and cohesion and co-operation from people.*	For him, the most difficult aspect of leadership is getting people to form a cohesive, cooperative team.

M71: *And your not going to get it all the time. Er, people get upset about things, people feel that they're not being recognised sometimes , people don't feel, this is not the direction that they feel that they want to go in. But that's too bad, that's too bad. So er because if we, if we waver that much we will never have a clear direction, I think that's the problem and we I think we've got to be sympathetic and we've got to listen to people's concerns but er still try and be, I've got to keep the bigger picture in mind of where we are going.*

If other people do not like the direction that he choses for RUMEP that is tough. He feels strongly that he gives the organisation a clear focus and if he were to take into account every body's ideas the organisation would be disadvantaged.