

**Distributed teacher leadership
in South African schools:
troubling the terrain**

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ABSTRACT

This publication-based study aims to ‘trouble’ the terrain of teacher leadership – at the level of both theory and praxis, in the South African schooling context. The motivation for this study came from my increasing research interest in shared forms of school leadership, particularly the leadership practices of teachers in terms of their potential as ‘agents of change’. The thesis is organised according to my ‘logic of connectivity’ which operated at a range of levels. Eight academic, peer-reviewed, independent articles constitute the ‘core’ of the study and are connected through the following emergent research questions: 1) How is teacher leadership understood and practiced by educators in mainstream South African schools?; 2) What are the characteristics of contexts that either support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership; and 3) How we can theorise teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing?

For its connectivity at a theoretical level, this study privileges distributed leadership theory (after Spillane *et al*, 2004, Spillane, 2006), and specifically, a view of distributed leadership which foregrounds a ‘leader-plus’ and social practice perspective. In attempting to connect the independent pieces of work at a methodological level, I have organised them in inter-connected clusters within a three phase contingent design, and thus locate the study within the mixed methods research tradition. My study does not seek convergence in the classic sense of triangulation but rather an ‘expansion of inquiry’ which involves a secondary analysis of the findings – a meta-inference - guided by the research questions. The study thus offers an example of a PhD by publication; it reflects on the associated methodological challenges and it problematises the retrospective use of publications.

The key output of the overall research which emerged from and connects the publications, is a model depicting the zones and roles of teacher leadership. The main findings of the study which emerge from the connectivity of the publications as well as from the extended literature review, suggest that while teacher leadership is regularly espoused (especially by management), in practice it is often restricted to either mundane tasks and/or the classroom and/or situations where teachers work together on curriculum issues. The data highlights the ease with which the School

Management Team can operate as a barrier to teacher leadership even when national policy is underpinned by an ideological position that endorses shared forms of leadership. Despite the restrictions on take-up, however, the study argues that teacher leadership within the South African context, characterised as it is by such diversity, is nevertheless a dynamic possibility. If conceptualised within a distributed leadership framework which, in its ideal form, is democratic and which calls teachers (and management) to new forms of ‘action’, the transformation of schools and communities can become a reality.

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Carolyn Grant, declare that

- 1) The research reported on in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- 2) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- 3) This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to ‘trouble’ the terrain of teacher leadership – at the level of both theory and praxis, in the South African schooling context. To achieve this purpose, the thesis adopts, as its ‘core’, eight academic, peer-reviewed, independent articles and organises them to respond to one or more of three research questions. The insights gathered from the synthesis of the findings of this ‘core’ are presented in detail in this thesis and demonstrate how the terrain of teacher leadership is troubled.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to orient the reader to the study and to the relatively unique form of the thesis. The chapter commences with an argument about why teacher leadership troubles both the terrain of the school and the higher education terrain. The next sections of the chapter discuss the background and rationale for the study as well as the aim and research questions. The chapter then shifts focus and grapples with the complexities of a thesis by publication; it offers an overview of the ‘core’ of the study, i.e. the eight articles (or what I refer to as chronicles) underpinned by six research projects and it demonstrates how the chronicles are clustered according to the research questions. The final section of the chapter engages with the notion of connectivity which, I argue, is central to a thesis by publication and, in doing so, outlines how the thesis is organised.

At the outset let me define a few terms as I used them in the study. The term ‘educator’ is used in much the same way as it is used in the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* where the term applies to “all those people who teach or educate other persons or who provide professional educational services at any public school, further education and training institution or departmental office” (2000, p. 9). In particular in the study, the term ‘educator’ includes classroom-based teachers, heads of departments, deputies and principals. When I use the term ‘teacher’, I refer to a classroom-based educator who does not hold a formal

management position in the school. The term ‘school management team’(SMT) is used to denote the formal management team of the school, comprised of the principal, the deputy principal as well as the heads of department.

1.2. TROUBLING THE TERRAIN

The intention of this thesis is to explore teacher leadership in schools and, in so doing, ‘trouble’ the leadership terrain. In the context of this study I use the term ‘trouble’ to mean to unsettle, problematise and challenge the status quo in the practice of school leadership with a view to enabling change and improvement. In this section of the chapter I argue that teacher leadership troubles two different terrains: the school terrain and the higher education terrain. I can understand, to some extent, why some educators and academics are troubled by the notion of teacher leadership. For many educators (whether teachers or school management team members) functioning in the terrain of schools, the work of teachers is simply to teach while the work of principals and, more recently, SMT members is to lead and manage the school. From this vantage point, the concept of teacher leadership disrupts these clear boundaries and upsets the taken-for-granted identities and roles of ‘teacher’, ‘principal’ and ‘SMT’ member.

However, I do not believe that it is only educators who are troubled by the concept of teacher leadership. As an unintended consequence of this thesis, my experience is that research into teacher leadership can trouble the terrain of education faculties in higher education institutions where the concept straddles two of what some people might call the fields of education. The two fields I am referring to are ‘Education leadership and management’ (ELM) and ‘Teacher education and professional development’ (TEPD). However, there are those academics who argue that these are not fields, in the traditional sense of the term, and that only psychology of education, philosophy of education and sociology of education can legitimately call themselves fields. While there are those that do not believe that ELM is a distinct field because it does not have adequate intellectual and scholarly weight, I am convinced that it is a field in its own right. In support of this stance, van der Mescht argues that “viewed internationally

there can be no question that ELM has long been a distinct area of interest and activity that has provided a ‘space’ for scholarly as well as professional activity over a sustained period of time” (2008, p. 8). However, in the context of South Africa, I agree with van der Mescht (2008) that ELM is a field in the making. Furthermore, it is a unique field because of its fundamentally practical nature – schools require good leaders and managers and so the field is characterised by “the dual interests of the pursuit of academic (‘theory’) advancement, typically through research, and professional (‘practice’) development through training in generic management skills” (van der Mescht, 2008, p. 10). Within this field in the making, teacher leadership troubles the terrain because it does not fit neatly into either ELM or TEPD. Instead it spans both and can, as a consequence, be researched from either field which creates discomfort in those academics who value clear and rigid boundaries between fields.

In this thesis, I locate myself firmly in the field of ELM and bring a leadership lens to my research on teacher leadership. Furthermore, I am driven by a twofold interest in teacher leadership at the level of both theory and praxis. In other words, I am interested in the pursuit of the advancement of theory in so far as it impacts on the development of practice and vice versa. Positioned as I am in the field of ELM, I move on now to sketch the background and rationale of my study.

1.3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

South Africa’s history is one profoundly shaped by colonialism and apartheid in which government legislation of the times perpetuated a society of inequality based on race, class and gender. Inequality characterised the education system with a “large degraded black sector on the one hand and an administratively and pedagogically privileged white sector on the other” (Soudien, 2007, p. 185). To perpetuate this inequality, government policies promoted centralised, authoritarian control of education which was firmly located within the white education departments (Christie, 1993). In direct contrast, the proliferation of education policies post 1994 reflects the South African democratic government’s commitment to change, and its determination to “construct an inspirational and viable vision of post-apartheid South Africa’s

education and training system” (Parker, 2003, p.18). In particular, the *South African Schools’ Act, 84 of 1996*, the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) as well as the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996) challenge schools to review their management practices, which have traditionally been top-down, and create a whole new approach to managing schools where management is “seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage” and should “not be seen as the task of a few” (DOE, 1996, p.27). Thus the field of ELM in South Africa, determined by the Department of Education, stresses “participative, ‘democratic’ management, collegiality, collaboration, schools as open systems and learning organisations, and, importantly, site-based management” (van der Mescht, 2008, p. 14).

However, despite these well-intentioned policies, their implementation has been inadequate and the gap between educational policy and implementation in the South African context has been well documented (see Harley, Barasa, Bertram and Mattson, 1998; Jansen, 2000; Mattson and Harley, 2002). This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa. For example Katzenmeyer and Moller, writing about teacher leadership in the context of the United States, contend that “educational policy is easier to change than schools are” (2001, p.1). I believe the same can be said for South African policies about education leadership and management. While we have, post 1994, a range of progressive educational policies, such as the ones listed above, which create the framework for more participatory forms of leadership in schools, changes in leadership practice in schools are the exception rather than the norm. Policy documents such as the *South African Schools’ Act, 84 of 1996* and the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996) emphasise management at the expense of leadership and this is a concern which I discuss in the second chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, while these documents encourage participatory management, they lack guidelines on how to introduce teacher leadership into schools and this gives rise to “confusion and misunderstanding among educators about what exactly the role of the SMT is in promoting teacher leadership via distributed leadership, and how far level one educators can extend themselves beyond leading in the classroom” (Singh, 2007, p. 87). This weak leadership call together with a general lack of clarity about the different leadership roles that SMT members and teachers take up has contributed to what Moloji (2002) describes as many schools remaining unresponsive and retaining

their rigid structures with principals unable to shift from their patriarchal and hierarchical ways of thinking.

In response to this leadership crisis, I would suggest that if South African schools are to be transformed into effective places of teaching and learning, more quality leadership is required. Here I mean 'leadership', as opposed to 'management', where 'leadership' is about change, innovation and vision in schools while 'management' is about stability, maintenance and control. This understanding of the terms 'leading' and 'managing' concurs with that of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) which works from the premise that while leading and managing are qualitatively different activities, in reality they complement one another, and are vital to the effective performance of complex organisations and groups (Andrews and Lewis, 2007). While I believe that both leadership and management are essential in the effective functioning of schools, and I argue this strongly in the second chapter of this thesis, it is leadership that is absent from the majority of South African schools today. As complex institutions in the 21st century, schools require leadership, not just from an individual person in the form of the principal, but from a range of people across the school, including teachers. Thus I believe that it is essential for teachers to take up their leadership role and become agents of change in schools.

From the above discussion it becomes apparent that the motivation for this study came from my increasing interest in the leadership practices of teachers in terms of their potential as 'agents of change' in schools. Teacher leadership thus offers a radical departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership because it moves away from the premise of leadership in relation to position in the organisation and instead views leadership as a shared process in which all can participate at some point in time in their professional careers.

The concept of teacher leadership is understood and defined differently by various writers internationally and nationally and much of the second chapter of this thesis is dedicated to this discussion. As a consequence, I will keep this discussion brief and merely make the point that, in its simplest form, teacher leadership is understood as leadership exercised by teachers regardless of position or designation (Harris and Muijs, 2005). Many of the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that

“teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.44). Furthermore, many of the definitions focus on improving teaching and learning in a school context where the leadership practices are premised on “the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43).

A further motivation for my interest in teacher leadership is that it is a relatively new and under-developed area of research in the South African higher education arena. Much research has been done into teacher leadership in the United States and Canada over the last few decades (see for example Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Wasley, 1991; Little, 1995; Ash and Persall, 2000; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Lieberman and Miller, 2004) and, more recently, in the United Kingdom (see for example Muijs and Harris, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2005; Gunter 2005, Pounder, 2006). This gap in the literature not only motivated me to conduct research in the sub-field of teacher leadership but it also prompted a few Master of Education students at UKZN to pursue research on this topic (see for example Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008; Pillay, 2009).

From the discussion so far it is obvious that there is scope to research the sub-field of teacher leadership and that research in this area, while it may trouble both the terrain of the school and the higher education terrain, has the potential to transform South African schools into effective places of teaching and learning. With this in mind, I move on to introduce the aim and research questions that guided the study.

1.4. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to ‘trouble’ the terrain of teacher leadership – at the level of both theory and praxis, in the South African schooling context. It does this through the synthesis of eight academic, peer-reviewed, independent articles, which I refer to as chronicles. The synthesis is guided by the following three key research questions:

- 1) How is teacher leadership understood and practiced by educators (teachers and SMT members) in mainstream South African schools?
- 2) What are the characteristics of contexts that either support or hinder the take up of teacher leadership?
- 3) How we can theorise teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing?

Research question one is the primary question. However, this question presupposes the possibility that teacher leadership is already understood in contexts other than South Africa and I make reference to the extensive body of literature on teacher leadership in Chapter Two of this thesis. Research question two is the secondary question which proceeds from the responses received to the first research question. It explores the characteristics of contexts which enhance the take up of teacher leadership as well as two contexts which hinder the take up of teacher leadership: i) gender within a rural context, and ii) the context of HIV/AIDS. Finally, Research question three aims to develop a theoretical dimension to our understanding of teacher leadership for mainstream South African schools by locating it within a distributed leadership framing. While developing a theoretical dimension to one's research is a standard criterion for a PhD, I argue that in order to ensure connectivity across the eight chronicles in this publication-based study, the explicit inclusion of this question is even more critical. In the section that follows I reflect on my own choice in electing to register for a thesis by publication and I discuss some of the difficulties I faced as a result of that choice.

1.5. A THESIS BY PUBLICATION: NEWNESS AND DIFFERENCE

1.5.1. Setting the context of the study: a personal account

As a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, my research over the past five years has focused on the voices of educators, both teachers

and School Management Team (SMT) members; it has been about the perceptions and practices of 'teacher leadership' in a range of school contexts in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). When I began my research into teacher leadership in 2004, I had no idea that the initial research project I designed would become the first of six research projects in my doctoral work. In fact, at that point in my life a PhD was anathema to me. I was certain then that I would never do a PhD and was quite vocal about this to both my family and colleagues. As a fairly novice researcher, I was prepared and content to develop my research experience in a fairly contained manner by involving myself in small independent research projects that I could manage while balancing my university teaching with my home commitments as mother and partner.

This contained approach to my research in teacher leadership prompted me at the beginning of 2004 to design and lead a small qualitative study together with the tutors on the Bachelor of Education (Honours) programme I was coordinating. Electing to work with my tutor colleagues (all educators) as participants in the research project, located itself comfortably with me in terms of researching my professional practice. At that point I was already passionate about the notion of teacher leadership and its potential for change within the schooling context and I was excited about the possibility of exploring this unexplored area of research in South Africa. In retrospect it was indeed an irony that whilst I was so resistant to doing a PhD, that initial small study became the first of six research projects underpinning the eight articles which constitute the core of this thesis. De facto, that collaborative research project with my tutors was the inception of the PhD but I must reiterate that there was no formal signaling of the publication-based study in 2004 and there was certainly no formal research design at that stage.

The possibility of a thesis by publication unfolded as I involved myself in a range of individual research projects and explored an array of questions in relation to teacher leadership; the central one being how teacher leadership was understood in a South African schooling context. As each research project concluded, I reflected on the findings and the new learning was taken into account, where possible, when I designed the next study. Thus, as my inquiry proceeded, I became more and more focused and persuaded of the value of my research. This led me to continue pursuing my research interest in teacher leadership. In other words, my research design for the

PhD was emergent because, in researching teacher leadership, I initially had no idea what it was that I did not know. Also, at the outset of my research, I could not state how many projects I would involve myself in or how many participant groups I would sample during my journey towards understanding teacher leadership in the South African schooling context. This emergent journey was one in which succeeding steps were based on the results of steps already taken, implying “the presence of a continuously interacting and interpreting investigator” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 102).

As my research continued, salient elements began to emerge, insights grew and theory began to be grounded in the data obtained (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). My approach was therefore open-ended and, with hindsight, I adopted theoretical sampling which is the process where “data are collected on an on-going, iterative basis” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 492) As researcher, I kept on adding to the sample until there was sufficient data to describe what was going on in the situation under study and until ‘theoretical saturation’ (Cohen *et al*, 2007) was reached. Through this process of theoretical sampling, I extended my research design until I gathered sufficient data to create a theoretical explanation of how teacher leadership was understood and practiced in the South African schooling context and could thus determine what contexts supported or hindered the take up of teacher leadership. Thus the thesis by publication was retrospectively conceived when, in 2008, five research projects which explored teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing were completed and three articles were published. I realised then that there was the possibility of bringing the various projects and articles together in a connected whole for the purposes of knowledge contribution. It was only at this endpoint that I was able to count up the research projects (there were six) and become “empirically confident” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 61) that my category was saturated. While this moment served as the ‘endpoint’ to the data collection process, it also served as the ‘formal starting point’ for the PhD study.

A PhD ‘by publication’ is a relatively recent phenomenon in many universities today (Draper, 2008). This is particularly so in South Africa. In the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am both permanent lecturer and registered student, I was one of the first candidates to register for a thesis by publication and the

first to complete. This alternative mode of PhD is still in its inception and the rules for a publication-based study are still being debated and contested at College level and have yet to reach the level of Senate. In comparing theses by publication with more conventional PhDs, Draper suggests that “PhDs by research should surely be about recognising attainment: about judging the outcome and product, regardless of the means and process by which it was arrived at” (2008, p. 6). With little to guide me, my PhD registration process, in early 2008, was directed by rule DR9 of the university’s handbook entitled “General academic rules and rules for students”, which outlined the format of a PhD thesis. Part C of this rule pertains to a thesis by publication and reads as follows: “A thesis may comprise one or more original papers of which the student is the prime author, published or in press in peer-reviewed journals approved by the Board of the relevant Faculty, accompanied by introductory and concluding integrative material” (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007, p. 27).

In accordance with this rule, my thesis consists of eight academic, peer-reviewed, independent pieces of work (seven peer-reviewed journal articles and one book chapter) which satisfies the condition of quantity in the above statement. Draper prompts us here to bear in mind that a conventional PhD may result in between one and three journal papers so “any PhD by publication that submits more than three papers has easily satisfied the quantity implicit criterion” (2008, p. 3). In terms of the quality condition, six of my pieces of work are published in academic peer-reviewed journals, one is published as a chapter in an edited book while the final piece has been submitted to an academic journal and is in the process of peer-review. I believe that the thesis thus satisfies the condition of quality in the above statement. I discuss the final condition of the above statement, the inclusion of introductory and concluding integrative material, in a later section of this chapter. The core of this thesis, the eight independent pieces of work, is informed by six autonomous research projects. I elected in the thesis to call the six independent research projects which underpinned the chronicles ‘research strands’ (after Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006) and I discuss these strands in detail in the methodology chapter of the thesis. I also refer to the eight pieces of work as ‘chronicles’ and I present my reasons for doing this in the next section.

1.5.2. Adopting the term ‘chronicle’

I elected to use the term ‘chronicle’ rather than the more traditional, academic term ‘research article’ for a range of reasons. The first and most important was that the term ‘chronicle’ implies some form of chronology and I wanted to capture the chronology of the research process and record the six independent research strands along a linear time line. This was because the learning from one research strand informed the next to some extent. From this point of view, the term ‘chronicle’ was appropriate because, as Corona and Jorgensen explain, “the most widely accepted distinctive feature or rule that governs the chronicle is, of course, that of registering time (chronos) and establishing a temporal order of events” (2002, p. 4).

My second reason for adopting the term ‘chronicle’ was because of its subjectivity as a genre. It has been defined as “a narrative of events” (Longman’s Modern English Dictionary, 1968, p. 197) and my use of the term was a conscious effort to document the perceptions of educators on teacher leadership in a way that was not boring but rather dynamic and vital. The interpretative nature of the chronicle (Corona and Jorgensen, 2002) afforded me the opportunity to insert my voice into the study as I attempted to weave the eight chronicles together into a coherent whole. I was the “constructing narrator” (Fine, 1994, p. 74), interested and inescapably subjective. Given the subjective nature of my work, I was reminded of the suggestion of Blanco, Lenero and Villoro that “it is impossible to escape subjectivity: the important thing is to signal the degree to which it influences one’s perception of the events” (2002, p. 66).

Thirdly, the eight articles included in the thesis varied greatly in terms of format and style - in accordance with the specified requirements of the journal in which they were published. The term chronicle was therefore appropriate because of its versatility, flexibility and elasticity as a genre and because it “incorporates all kinds of foreign elements” (Blanco, *et al*, 2002, p. 66). Corona and Jorgensen describe it as “a hybrid form of writing that crosses multiple discursive boundaries” (2002, p. 1). Like a chronicle, my articles as a whole consist of “a blend” (Monsivais, 2002) of research,

vignette, essay and myth and the aim of the synthesising process was to weave the chronicles together coherently, guided by my research questions.

Finally, I also wanted, through my thesis, to adopt a more critical position on education leadership and “make a public space available to those who do not have it” (Monsivais, 2002, p. 34). I wanted to listen to the voices of those teachers in the study who were traditionally marginalised from the practice of leadership and, in so doing, challenge the status quo in relation to the leadership practice in schools. This is in line with the “sociopolitical orientation of the chronicle, with its goal of social denunciation and democratization” (Corona and Jorgensen, 2002, p. 11).

1.5.3. The chronicles and research strands informing the study

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 1</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views Published <i>Educational Management, Administration and Leadership</i>, 34(4), 2006 RESEARCH STRAND 1, Semester 1, 2004</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 2</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations Published <i>Agenda</i>, No. 65, 2005 RESEARCH STRAND 2, Semester 1, 2005</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 3</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">'In this culture there is no such talk': monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS Published <i>South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management</i>, 1(1), 2008 RESEARCH STRAND 3, Semester 2, 2005 – Semester 1, 2006</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 4</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space & practices Published <i>Education as Change</i>, 13(1), 2009 RESEARCH STRAND 3, Semester 2, 2005 – Semester 1, 2006</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 5</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens Published <i>Journal of Education</i>, No. 44, 2008 RESEARCH STRAND 4, Semester 2, 2006 – Semester 1, 2007</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 6</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership! Published <i>Perspectives in Education</i>, 27(3), 2009 RESEARCH STRAND 5, Semester 1 & 2, 2006</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 7</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Perceptions and realities of teacher leadership: a survey Submitted to <i>South African Journal of Education</i>, in peer-review process RESEARCH STRAND 6, Semester 1 & 2, 2008</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chronicle 8</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively & transformatively Published <i>Educating for Social Justice and Inclusion: Pathways and Transitions</i>, 2008 CONCEPTUAL BOOK CHAPTER</p>

Figure 1.1: The chronicles and research strands informing the study

Figure 1.1 lists the titles of the eight chronicles which form the ‘core’ of the study, along with their publication details. The figure also connects each chronicle to the research strand which underpins it and stipulates the period during which the research took place. The chronicles are numbered according to the chronology of the time period of the research strands rather than the chronology of the publication dates of the chronicles. To reiterate, Figure 1.1 is merely a list of the chronicles and research strands which inform the study. The chronicles themselves are presented in their original form in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this thesis while the research strands are discussed within a mixed methods discourse in Chapter Four. Furthermore, extracts from the chronicles are presented in italics throughout this thesis and particularly in the insights chapters (Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten). I make liberal use of footnotes to reference the chronicles according to the thesis pagination.

Of the eight chronicles selected for inclusion in the study, seven¹ are already published, and the journals in which they are published are indicated in Figure 1.1. Six are published in academic peer-reviewed journals while the seventh is published as a chapter in an edited book. The remaining chronicle² has been submitted to an academic journal and is in the process of peer-review. Of the eight chronicles, I am sole author of five³ and primary author of the other three⁴. My contribution as primary author in the three co-authored chronicles varied according to the working relationship I established with the co-authors as well as the nature of the research project I was involved in at the time. Let me explain further what I mean.

With regard to Chronicle Three, The School of Education and Development within the Faculty of Education, UKZN, in which I work, with its vision of research collaboration, set up a number of group research projects in 2004 - 2005. One of these was the National Research Foundation (NRF) funded project that aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small rural town in KwaZulu-Natal⁵. One aspect of this large research project was to explore the perceptions of the School Management

¹ Chronicles One – Six as well as Chronicle Eight

² Chronicle Seven

³ Chronicle One, Chronicle Two, Chronicle Four, Chronicle Five and Chronicle Eight

⁴ Chronicle Three, Chronicle Six and Chronicle Seven

⁵ Grant No. 2054168

Teams and the District Official on their views regarding HIV/AIDS as one of the major barriers to basic education for learners in schools. Together with my colleague, Mr. Praveen Jugmohan, we formulated the research questions and designed the study. We worked collaboratively in the data collection and data analysis processes. Furthermore, we were both involved in writing up Chapter Four, 'The voices of School Management Teams', of the final research report, *Mapping barriers to basic education in the context of HIV and AIDS* edited by Professor Anbanithi Muthukrishna and published by the National Research Foundation in 2006.

In contrast, the conceptualisation and creation of Chronicle Three entitled 'In this culture there is no such talk: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS', which was based on the research project discussed above and published in the *South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management*, 1(1) 2008, pp. 3 – 16, was entirely mine. However, within an ethos of collaboration, I included Mr. Jugmohan, as 2nd author. Appendix A constitutes a signed statement, by Mr. Jugmohan and me, of our contributions to this third chronicle.

In the case of Chronicle Six entitled 'Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!', I am prime author and Ms Hitashi Singh, a graduated Master of Education student of mine, is 2nd author. The chronicle is based on the research contained in Ms Singh's Master of Education dissertation. Building on the work of Ms Singh, I did a 2nd level analysis of her data using the model of teacher leadership which I developed during the course of this study and which is published in the fifth chronicle (p. 93)⁶ and discussed in Chapter Eight of this thesis. With Ms Singh's permission I wrote the entire chronicle while she fulfilled the role of critical reader. The chronicle is published in *Perspectives in Education*, 27(3) 2009, pp. 289 – 301. Appendix B constitutes a signed statement, by Ms Singh and myself, of our contributions to this sixth chronicle.

Chronicle Seven is based on data gathered from a large group research project into teacher leadership involving 17 *Education Leadership and Management* Bachelor of Education Honours students in 2008. As project leader, I formulated the research

⁶ Section 5.3, p. 134

questions and designed the study. The data were collected by the team of 17 students and they were taught how to input the data into the computer programme called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistical findings gathered from the 1055 questionnaires were then analysed independently by each student in the group for their Honours module. In tandem with the module, four students from this group volunteered to collaborate with me in writing and presenting a paper, based on the research, for the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM) international conference in 2008⁷. During the first semester of 2009, I initiated a writing process with this group of four students who had now completed their Honours Degree. We met regularly to rework the conference paper and write it up as an article for submission to a journal. In June 2009, we submitted the article to the *South African Journal of Education*. I am prime author of this chronicle and share the authorship with Ms Gardner, Ms Kajee, Mr. Moodley and Ms Somaroo. Appendix C constitutes a signed statement, by these co-authors and me, of our contributions to this seventh chronicle.

1.5.4. Clustering of chronicles guided by the research questions

The synthesis process of the thesis involved a meshing of the findings of the eight individual chronicles into a coherent whole, guided by the three research questions. However, this process of clustering proved to be rather awkward given that the chronicles were not originally designed to answer the research questions. Instead, the research questions, presented in Section 1.4, were generated retrospectively from the eight chronicles. Despite the challenges inherent in this retrospective design, the chronicles were clustered according to their ability to ‘best’ answer the research questions. Thus chronicles one (underpinned by research strand one), five (underpinned by research strand four), six (underpinned by research strand five) and seven (underpinned by research strand six) were clustered in response to the first research question. Chronicles two (underpinned by research strand two) and three (underpinned by research strand three) were clustered in response to the second research question while chronicles four (underpinned by research strand three) and

⁷ Held at the International Convention Centre, Durban, South Africa from 8 – 12 September 2008

eight (no research strand underpinning) were clustered in response to the third research question. The clustering of the chronicles is presented in the form of a table (Table 4.1) in Chapter Four of this thesis.

1.6. ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS: MY LOGIC OF CONNECTIVITY

At this point, let me remind the reader of Part C of rule DR9 of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's handbook entitled "General academic rules and rules for students" which I quoted in section 1.5.1 of this chapter. The final part of the statement refers to the inclusion of introductory and concluding integrative material. To my mind, this condition is critical to a thesis by publication as it requires the student to synthesise the independent papers (or in my case chronicles) into a coherent whole and, in the process, "make a distinct contribution to the knowledge or understanding of the subject and afford evidence of originality shown either by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2007, p. 25). For me this was the intellectual challenge of my doctoral work. How was I to bring all the papers together into "a thesis, i.e. a single coherent argument, with all the components (empirical work, research design, literature review, critical self-evaluation) all subordinated to, related to, and serving to support, this single argument" (Draper, 2008, p. 3)? To accomplish this synthesis process and achieve the requisite integration, I developed what I call my 'logic of connectivity'. Here 'logic' denotes reasoned thought while 'connectivity' implies a form of linking, joining or relating. My 'logic of connectivity' in relation to the additional integrative material worked at a range of levels and guided the development of the various chapters of the thesis. I list these five levels of connectivity below and then discuss them in more detail in relation to the various chapters of the thesis:

1. the development of three research questions and the clustering of the chronicles according to these questions to guide the synthesis process
2. the literature thread throughout the chronicles
3. distributed leadership as the theoretical framing for the thesis

4. the design of the PhD as a mixed research synthesis study
5. the insights gathered as a result of the synthesis process as well as the development of a model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context.

On the important issue of connectivity and coherence in this thesis, the process was driven by the three research questions which, as I mentioned earlier, were generated retrospectively from the eight chronicles. The chronicles were then clustered according to their ability to best answer the research questions. However, while the research questions were crucial to the connectivity of the thesis, I argue that this logic of connectivity was insufficient on its own. As a consequence, further levels of connectivity were sought across the chronicles. In this regard, I was persuaded of the need for a new literature review chapter, a new theoretical framing chapter as well as a new methodology chapter as part of my logic of connectivity. Thus, the clustering of the chronicles according to the research questions constitutes the first level of connectivity in the study and is discussed in this first chapter which offers an executive summary of the thesis.

The second level of connectivity operates in relation to the literature relevant to the study and is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. The chronicles which inform this publication-based study were initially written as stand-alone articles and they conform to the standard journal requirement of empirical research articles of the journals in which they are published. As such, each chronicle has a part which discusses a feature of the literature on teacher leadership pertinent to the argument it raises. However, discussion of the literature in each of these parts is succinct, in line with the journal limits on article length. The purpose of Chapter Two is therefore to generate an updated literature review which incorporates the literature from each of the chronicles into a coherent body of work and merges it, together with additional literature on teacher leadership, into a consolidated literature review. To achieve my logic of connectivity I indicate, through the use of footnotes, how sections of this chapter are connected to the literature review sections in the chronicles presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of the thesis.

Chapter Three of the thesis introduces the theoretical framing of distributed leadership and indicates the third level of connectivity across the eight chronicles. As with the previous chapter, to demonstrate the connectivity of the chronicles to each other and to the argument in this chapter, I make use of footnotes. While this description of the connections in relation to the theoretical framing across the chronicles sounds uncomplicated, in reality I struggled to come to terms with an appropriate theoretical framing for my study. I was challenged by the terms ‘theoretical and conceptual frameworks’ which are often used interchangeably in the literature and in conversations at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. After extensive reading and debate with colleagues, I came to the realisation that the meanings of these two terms are highly contested and there is little consensus on how and when they are used. As a consequence, I elected to work with Vithal and Jansen’s explanation of the relationship between the terms. They explain that “a conceptual framework can be distinguished from a theoretical framework in that it is a less well-developed explanation for events. For example, it might link two or three key concepts or principles without being developed into a full-blown theory” (1997, p. 17). Furthermore, given the eclectic nature of a thesis by publication, my work was made more difficult because there were a range of concepts and theories, other than distributed leadership, that were included in the chronicles. My challenge was to determine how they informed each other and where best to place them in the thesis.

Common throughout the eight chronicles was that each was framed by distributed leadership theory. At an intuitive level, I was convinced that any research about the leadership practices of teachers had to be framed by distributed leadership because I argue that teacher leadership beyond the classroom cannot be enacted without a distributed leadership practice in place in the school. Here I define distributed leadership as a social practice which centres on the dynamic interactions between multiple leaders who interact with followers in particular situations (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004; Spillane, 2006). In other words, the theoretical framing of distributed leadership provides the conceptual tools from which to begin to understand, describe and explain the practice of teacher leadership. Understood in this way, teacher leadership is but one manifestation of the practice of distributed leadership. Thus, I made the decision to privilege distributed leadership because it offered a set of ideas which formed the starting point of my research. For this reason,

Chapter Three is dedicated to distributed leadership as the theoretical framing for the study. The additional concepts and theories which were adopted in the individual chronicles are not discussed in Chapter Three. Instead they are introduced in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten as they relate to the discussion on the insights developed in the thesis.

A further level of connectivity in the thesis is its design as a mixed research synthesis study. The process of synthesising the chronicles in response to the research questions according to a contingent design is discussed in Chapter Four which I entitled 'Challenging methodologies'. As a predominantly qualitative researcher, the challenge for me in this chapter was two-fold. Firstly, the retrospective nature of the research design was indeed a challenge. Secondly, I was confronted by decisions about what was appropriate to include and exclude in this chapter because, at the level of methodologies, there were the six individual research strands which underpinned the eight chronicles and there was the synthesis process of the study as a whole. As a consequence of these struggles, confidence in my ability to draw the chronicles together weakened resulting, for a period of time, in the silencing of my own voice and the over-reliance on the published work of other researchers. I discuss these personal challenges in Chapter Four.

In contrast to the rest of the chapters, Chapters Five, Six and Seven of the thesis do not include any additional integrative material and they make no attempt at connectivity. Instead they are dedicated to the presentation of the chronicles which form the core of this thesis by publication. Each of the chronicles is presented in its original form as it appears in the education journal in which it is published. They are deliberately not mediated in any way as I wanted to retain the authenticity, innovation and uniqueness of the chronicles for the reader.

My 'logic of connectivity' in relation to the additional integrative material reached a peak in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of the thesis. In these chapters the insights developed in the thesis are presented, based on the synthesis of the findings of the eight chronicles. This synthesis process, which I discuss in Chapter Four, involved a secondary analysis of the findings, a meta-inference, guided by the three research questions. The purpose of my synthesis, as I argue in the fourth chapter, was one of

‘expansion’ (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989) which enabled me to acknowledge and listen to the participant voices, both consenting and dissenting, across contexts in the pursuit of ‘multiple comparisons’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1999) and ‘multi-nodal dialogic explanations’ (Mason, 2006) which are central to the development of a thesis.

Thus, it was the findings from each cluster of chronicles, in an iterative, back-and-forth process with the literature and theoretical framing, which informed “the emerging conceptual scheme” (Morse, 2003, p. 199). It was this emerging conceptual scheme that contributed to theory generation of teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing for mainstream South African schools and constituted an original contribution to the existing knowledge in the field. Thus the synthesis study generated “some important insights or understandings that would not have been accomplished with one method or methodology alone” (Greene, 2008, p. 16). One such insight was the development of the model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context which is presented and discussed in the eighth chapter of the thesis.

1.7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The work of this thesis by publication was not a simple process of publishing articles and inserting them into a portfolio with an introduction and a conclusion. In addition to the inclusion of the eight chronicles, the thesis also involved an intense reconfiguration in order to meet key requirements of a conventional thesis. Thus, a research proposal was formulated (Appendix D), the proposal was presented to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (Appendix E), ethical clearance was applied for, and approved, by the University of KwaZulu-Natal research office (Appendices F and G) and an application for change of title was applied for and approved (Appendix H). As with a conventional PhD, chapters such as an orienting chapter, a literature review chapter, a theoretical framing chapter, a methodology chapter, data presentation and discussion chapters as well as a concluding chapter were included. I argue that while this reconfiguration process presented challenges at different stages of the thesis, it also contributed to its depth and rigour. In the next chapter I review the literature on teacher leadership.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW: EXPLORING THE TERRAIN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the issue of connectivity is central to this thesis and, in this chapter, the issue of connectivity in relation to the literary thread running through the chronicles is the focus. It has already been indicated that the eight chronicles which underpin my study and which are clustered together and presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this thesis, were originally written and published as separate articles in education journals. For the most part, these chronicles conform to the standard journal requirement of empirical research articles. As such, each of the chronicles has a section which discusses an aspect of literature on teacher leadership pertinent to the argument it raises. However, discussion of the literature in each of these sections is concise and to the point, in line with the journal restrictions on article length. The purpose of Chapter Two in the thesis is therefore to integrate the literature from each of the eight chronicles into one piece of work and blend it, together with additional, updated literature on teacher leadership, into a consolidated literature review. In this light, the chapter presents what is known in the field of teacher leadership, it identifies the gaps in the research and it charts a way forward. Through the identification of the gaps in the literature, the chapter demonstrates the significance of my study in extending the field further.

My logic of connectivity operates at two levels in this chapter. In the first instance, the connectivity is demonstrated through the blending of the literature drawn from a range of researchers in the sub-field of teacher leadership. In the second instance, the connectivity of the chronicles to each other and to the argument in this chapter is demonstrated through the use of footnotes. When discussing an aspect of the literature from one or more of the chronicles, I reference this in two ways: firstly, in the text I reference the chronicle by number and the original journal page reference and

secondly, in a footnote I reference the chronicle by means of its chapter section and page reference location in the thesis.

The chapter begins by introducing the concepts of ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ and explores the relationship between the two. I argue that an understanding of these concepts is critical to any discussion of teacher leadership because the leadership of teachers is but one dimension of the practice of leadership and because the processes of leadership and management need to work in tandem to be effective. Working from this understanding, the chapter moves on to examine the traditional understanding of education leadership as an individual endeavour and contrasts this with a more recent view of education leadership as a group activity in which more than one person can engage. This section is followed by an exploration of the concept of teacher leadership in which its meaning, the associated roles, the context and conditions necessary for teacher leadership as well as the personal attributes of teacher leaders themselves are examined.

The purpose of this next section is to portray teacher leadership as a feature of education leadership and locate it within this broader field. In this section I initiate a discussion of the concepts of ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ and investigate the relationship between the two. I also trace the movements within the literature on education leadership over time with a view to demonstrating how teacher leadership emerged and is located in the field.

2.2. EXPLORING THE TERRAIN OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

It stands to reason that an understanding of the concept of teacher leadership hinges on an understanding of the concept of ‘leadership’ in general and ‘education leadership’ in particular because teachers are located in schools within the broader field of education. However, any attempt at understanding the concept ‘education leadership’ cannot be done without also giving some thought to the meaning of the concept of ‘education management’. This next sub-section is therefore committed to

exploring the meanings of each of the concepts of ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’. In doing so, it also explores the relationship between these two concepts and creates the frame in which to locate teacher leadership.

2.2.1. Defining the concepts ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ and exploring the relationship between them

Like many concepts in the field of education, the concepts of ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are contested terms (Chronicle 4, p. 46)⁸ and “their usage varies at different times, in different countries and in different professional cultures” (Coleman, 2005a, p. 6). However, it is generally agreed that education leadership and management “are fields of study and practice concerned with the operation of schools and other educational organisations” (Bush, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ are not ends in themselves; rather their core purpose is to “facilitate effective learning through effective teaching” (Thurlow, 2003, p. 34). For the purpose of my study, I elected to work from the assumption that ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ are distinct processes (Chronicle 4, p. 46)⁹. In line with the thinking of Astin and Astin (2000), I work from the premise that ‘leadership’ is the process which works towards movement and change in an organisation while its complementary term ‘management’ refers to “*the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation*” (Chronicle 4, p. 46)¹⁰. Within this understanding of leadership as a process which brings about change in the organisation, Donaldson explains how leadership “mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants or the status quo” (Donaldson, 2006, p.7). In contrast, management involves “holding the organisation” (Davidoff and Lazarus, 2002, p. 169) and maintaining the status quo of the current organisational arrangements in the most effective way possible.

⁸ Section 7.2, p. 216

⁹ Section 7.2, p. 216

¹⁰ Section 7.2, p. 216

Whilst ‘education leadership’ and ‘education management’ are distinct processes, I argue that they complement each other (Chronicle 6, p. 289)¹¹ and, like Kotter (1990), I contend that both processes are needed for an organisation to prosper. Thus the processes of ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ constitute two sides of the same coin (Davidoff and Lazarus, 2002) and hold each other in creative tension as they work together for the effective functioning of an organisation. My contention is that schools require leadership which moves the school forward, giving it a sense of direction through the development of a vision for the future in order that it can adapt to the demands of an ever changing, complex society. Simultaneously, I argue that schools also require stability, certainty and security and they develop this through “clear, consistent, firm management, provided by managers and staff who know that management is not the goal of the school but the stable bedrock that supports the fertile conditions where leadership and learning can be cultivated” (Donaldson, 2006, p.182).

In her book, *The good high school: portraits of character and culture*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot maintains that “an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership” (1983, p. 323) and I presented this point in the seventh chronicle (p. 2)¹². This view is confirmed by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond who contend that “leadership is thought critical to innovation in schools” (2004, p. 1). Accordingly, I assert that we cannot begin to talk about innovation or change in schools without talking about leadership. Furthermore, leadership conceptualised in this way is infinite and omnipresent. It follows then that leadership “is everywhere in a school where they (staff members) believe that together they can improve” (Donaldson, 2006, p. 182). Lambert eloquently describes how “leadership, like energy, is not finite, not restricted by formal authority and power; it permeates a healthy school culture and is undertaken by whoever sees a need or an opportunity” (Lambert, 1995, p. 33). Thus, there is an abundance of leadership potential in schools waiting to be tapped (Chronicle 2, p. 55)¹³ and this leadership potential, I argue, lies dormant in both SMT members and teachers in the majority of our South African schools.

¹¹ Section 5.4, p. 149

¹² Section 5.5, p. 163

¹³ Section 6.2, p. 197

To begin to understand why the leadership potential lies dormant in many South African schools, a glance at the South African *Task Team Report on Education Management Development* (1996) provides a possible clarification. The report explains that “while the vision for the transformed education system has been set out in the policy frameworks and the new legislation, the system is still shaped by the ethos, systems and procedures inherited from the apartheid past” (Department of Education, 1996, p. 17). During the apartheid era, the education system was characterised by a “non-participative, secretive ethos that was neither accountable nor democratic” (McLennan and Thurlow, 2003, p. 4). Apartheid systems and procedures were discriminatory, non-participatory and managed neither efficiently nor effectively. Furthermore, the management function of principals was emphasised at the expense of leadership because of the desire of government to control South African schools. This management function involved the establishment of systems and structures to ensure that schools ran efficiently. Essential aspects of this management function included “systems for covering for absent teachers, invigilation timetables, procedures for disciplinary problems and systems of reporting” (Davidoff and Lazarus, 2002, p. 170). Instead of leadership, the problematical apartheid legacy resulted in schools which “have tended to be run with a focus on management” (Davidoff and Lazarus, 2002, p. 170).

However, in many instances during the apartheid regime, the breakdown of both the leadership and the management functions in schools contributed to their dysfunctionality. In the context of her research, Christie describes how there were “problems with management and administration, including weak and unaccountable authority structures” (1998b, p. 289). This resulted in a need to establish “proper and effective management systems and structures with clear procedures and clear lines of authority, powers, responsibility and accountability” (Christie, 1998b, p. 291). This breakdown of the management function, so essential to the basic functioning of schools, remains an unfortunate legacy of our racially polarised and discriminatory past. Today, learners remain discriminated against through the “neglect of what are essentially the managerial matters of schooling, teachers, textbooks and time” (Soudien, 2007, p. 189).

The issue of nomenclature in relation to the concepts of education leadership and management in the context of South African schooling remains of concern today. While new legislation and policy documents devolve much more decision-making responsibility to the school level than was previously the case (Thurlow, 2003), there is still a lack of clarity about the meaning of the terms and how they are used in official documents [see for example the *South African Schools' Act* (1996) and the *Task Team Report on Education Management Development* (1996)]. I agree with Thurlow that there appears to be “an emerging preference for the use of ‘management’ in new legislation and policy” (Thurlow, 2003, p. 26). This signals either a potential slippage in the use of the terms leadership and management or an emphasis on management processes at the expense of leadership (Chronicle 6, p. 289)¹⁴. This concerns me because I strongly believe that, while good management is important for the day-to-day functioning of our South African schools, it is leadership that is critical to their transformation. Therefore, in the context of South African schools, I argue through the chronicles and in this thesis that the two processes of leadership and management must be foregrounded in attempts at improving the teaching and learning for the country’s children. The complementarity of both processes is captured in the words of Davidoff and Lazarus when they describe how good leadership and management “inspires and touches, holds and cherishes, is humble and certain, pushes and directs, waits and listens, notices, moves, contains, breaks through, senses the moment ... and rests” (2002, p. 166). The art of leadership lies in knowing when to advance and challenge the organisation to change and when to hold the organisation stationary in the pursuit of the current organisational goals.

Having explored the complementarity of and necessity for both concepts of leadership and management, the discussion must inevitably turn to the question of who leads and who manages. The next section explores traditional views on this question and indicates how this view is limited in the context of schooling in the 21st century.

¹⁴ Section 5.4, p. 149

2.2.2. Traditional understandings of educational leadership

Traditionally, research on education leadership has been premised on a singular view of leadership and upon individual impetus (Muijs and Harris, 2003). The ‘great man theory of leadership’ has long dominated the field of education leadership and, in so doing, the power to lead has been understood by the majority as positional, vested in one person, and historically male (Chronicle 6, p. 290)¹⁵. This ‘heroic leadership’ stereotype, Yukl (1999) argues, assumes that effective performance depends on the unidirectional influence of an individual leader with the skills to identify the correct way and convince others to take it. In much the same way, in the context of schooling, research on school leadership has conventionally focused on the personality traits and skills of the principal as the official authority in a school. Spillane *et al*, referring to the work of Heck and Hallinger (1999), use the term ‘blind spots’ to refer to educational research which has focused on the difference principals make to schools and, in so doing, has reinforced the assumption that “school leadership is synonymous with the principal” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 4). Said slightly differently, other sources of leadership in schools are often ignored as research to date has focused on the principal as leader, confirming the view that the vast literature on education leadership is “largely premised upon individual endeavour rather than collective action” (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p. 437).

In the context of my study, the second chronicle describes how traditional notions of leadership are premised on an individual managing an organisation alone (p.44)¹⁶. The first chronicle extends this idea and highlights how leadership during the apartheid era in South African schools was understood in terms of position, status and authority and was often equated with headship (p.512)¹⁷, in line with its strongly centralised education system and its patriarchal and authoritarian underpinnings. This perpetuated the flawed view that leadership equates with headship and is solely “vested in the figure of the principal” (Coleman, 2003a, p. 155). This faulty view is mirrored in educational research on leadership and management in South Africa because it has

¹⁵ Section 5.4, p. 150

¹⁶ Section 6.2, p. 186

¹⁷ Section 5.2, p. 105

traditionally focused on the leadership of the principal as the unit of analysis. Furthermore, as Harber and Davies (1997) claim, the leadership of principals, particularly in African countries, has tended towards the authoritarian.

However, there has been a shift in the field with a move away from individual leadership to more participatory forms of leadership practice. This is primarily because, as Timperley warns: “hopes that the transformation of schools lies with exceptional leaders have proved both unrealistic and unsustainable” (2005, p. 395). Instead, as Yukl (1999) suggests, the collective leadership of organisational members is much more important than the actions of any one individual leader. In keeping with this idea, I argued that in order to strengthen school leadership, the key concern was how to assist school leaders to become more collaborative (Chronicle 1, p. 513)¹⁸. It is to a discussion on the collective leadership of organisational members that I now turn.

2.2.3. Education leadership as a shared activity – a relational endeavour

Conceptions of leadership which are premised upon individual endeavour where leadership is equated with headship are, as Day and Harris argue, “unnecessarily limited and do not adequately explain or expose how leadership contributes to school improvement” (2002, p. 958). In direct contrast to theories of leadership such as the depressing ‘great man’ theory of leadership with its individual, predetermined and gendered underpinnings, I work from the premise that leadership should be conceptualised as a shared activity in which a range of people can engage, as and when the need for leadership arises. This is based on my assumption that all people have potential to lead, regardless of their formal position or status, and the challenge is to develop the appropriate culture and strategies to tap this latent potential¹⁹.

The notion of leadership as a shared activity is not a new phenomenon. Over a half century ago Gibb, in analysing leadership behaviour, wrote that “leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group” (1954, p. 884). In giving substance to this idea of leadership

¹⁸ Section 5.2, p. 106

¹⁹ I argued this point in the first and second chronicles

as a group endeavour, Barth (1990) envisions a school as a community of leaders which includes the management team but also teachers, parents and learners. This notion of a community of leaders who work together in the interests of learners and the transformation of schools is in keeping with Wenger's (1998) concept of communities of practice as a social theory of learning and I discuss this in more detail and in relation to my study in the ninth chapter of this thesis. The work of leaders, functioning as a community of practice, is essentially about "making the things happen that you believe in or envision" (Barth, 1990, p. 124). To achieve this shared vision requires that leaders think more about the relationships and connectedness of people as they work together to transform schools.

Building on this idea, Donaldson calls for relational leadership which functions to "mobilize people to change how they themselves work so that they collectively serve better the emerging needs of children and the demands of society" (2006, p. 8). In foregrounding relationships among individuals in the pursuit of leadership, Day and Harris describe education leadership as:

a dynamic between individuals within and without an organisation in which effective leaders focus on the relationships among individuals within a school and the promotion of pedagogic leadership which places an emphasis on the development of the school through shared purpose and the development of others (2002, p. 960).

The above quotation, whilst foregrounding the importance of relationships in the practice of leadership, also highlights the pedagogic purpose of schooling. As I mentioned earlier, the teaching and learning process must be central to any consideration of education leadership in general and schooling in particular. Gunter, while focusing on the importance of relationships and the connectedness of people in the practice of leadership, also emphasises the centrality of the teaching and learning process. She argues that:

education leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others' learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning (2005, p. 6).

The centrality of teaching and learning to the practice of education leadership is also highlighted by Spillane *et al* who define school leadership as:

the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. Leadership involves mobilising school personnel and clients to notice, face, and take on the tasks of changing instruction as well as harnessing and mobilising the resources needed to support the transformation of teaching and learning (2004, p. 11).

In attempting to determine how teacher leadership was understood and practiced by educators in mainstream South African schools in my study, I support those researchers who contend that orthodox ways of thinking about leadership are outdated and should be replaced with a more expansive understanding of leadership²⁰. I suggest that we need to conceptualise education leadership as a shared, rather than an individual activity which centres on relationships and the connections that people make in the pursuit of improved teaching and learning. This conceptualisation of education leadership, I argue, provides the fertile ground for the emergence of teacher leadership in schools.

²⁰ I positioned myself in this way in the majority of the chronicles

2.3. TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

The purpose of this section is to develop an understanding of what is meant by the concept teacher leadership. To achieve this purpose I begin this section by differentiating between a good teacher and a teacher leader. I then move on to discuss the central role of the teacher leader as an agent of change and, in this sub-section, I highlight the personal attributes of courage and risk-taking necessary for this role. I conclude this section by exploring the agency role of teachers as leaders, both within the classroom and beyond.

2.3.1. The good teacher versus the teacher leader: how are they different?

Teacher leadership, in many countries has become an appealing phrase and “has emerged as a new buzzword for how to cure schools” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 40). However, despite its popularity, there appears to be little agreement on the exact definition of the term teacher leadership and using the words of Wigginton (1992), cited in Murphy (2005), I would like to state up-front that teacher leadership is devilishly complicated and the phrase itself is frustratingly ambiguous (Chronicle 7, p. 1)²¹. Let me illustrate my point. Teaching and leadership for some people, as Barth (1990) suggests, are mutually exclusive. This group of people work from the assumption that the field of educational leadership and the field of teacher education are two completely separate entities, strongly classified, where “contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries” (Bernstein, 2003, p. 205). In this scenario, one can either be a teacher or a leader. If a teacher wants to become a leader, she must forfeit her teacher role in the take-up of the leadership position. It follows then that if teaching and leadership are mutually exclusive entities then the concept ‘teacher leader’, in this scenario, must be an oxymoron (Troen and Boles, 1994).

²¹ Section 5.5, p. 162

In contrast, if one works from the premise, as I do²², that the fields of education leadership and teacher development are social constructs, weakly classified with “reduced insulation between contents” (Bernstein, 2003, p. 205) and permeable boundaries which give rise to intersecting and overlapping areas, then the possibility of teacher leadership exists. In this scenario, teachers can lead whilst still retaining their core identity as teachers. Viewed as part of the ongoing professional development of teachers²³, teacher leadership becomes “one of the multiple phases of teacher development” (Zimpher, 1988, p. 55). In this scenario I am not suggesting that teachers’ work becomes redundant. On the contrary, teachers’ work, i.e. “the practice of organising systematic learning” (Morrow, 2007, p. 101), remains central to the work of a teacher. Barth explains that for most teachers, “the school world is the world within the classroom” (1990, p. 129) and it is here that teachers’ work is situated. Within her classroom, a good teacher will manage her practice well as she goes about planning, organising and implementing the curriculum to facilitate the teaching and learning process for her learners.

However, the work of a teacher need not only focus on the management of her practice but can also entail leading, a view endorsed by the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000). This policy document highlights, as one of the seven teacher roles, the role of leader, administrator and manager, and calls on South African educators (SMT members and teachers) to take up their leader, administrator and manager role. This role within the policy document was referred to in the first chronicle (p. 512)²⁴ and the sixth chronicle (p. 289)²⁵. Thus while a good teacher will manage her practice through the establishment of efficient classroom systems and processes to guarantee that her teaching is successful, it is my claim that a teacher leader will not only manage her classroom practice competently but, in addition, will bring a leadership component to her practice. This leadership that the teacher brings will apply to her work in the classroom but will also extend beyond her classroom, as and when the need arises. Thus, as I discuss later in this section, a teacher leader should first and foremost be a good teacher who then brings to her

²² This was the premise I worked from in all eight chronicles

²³ This was best illustrated in the first and fifth chronicles

²⁴ Section 5.2, p. 105

²⁵ Section 5.4, p. 149

practice energy and agency for vision and change, both within and also beyond her classroom, in her ongoing quest for improved teaching and learning.

In the context of the United States, Rogus (1988) suggests that teacher leadership programmes are underpinned either by school improvement, teacher effectiveness or leadership theories. As can be seen from the earlier sections of this chapter, my thesis is primarily informed by the literature and research on education leadership. My interest in researching teacher leadership within the broad field of education leadership is firstly to understand, describe and explain the practice of teacher leadership in mainstream South African schools and, secondly, to explore the significance of teacher leadership for meaningful school improvement and transformation (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997). Like Barth (1990), I believe that school reform comes about by improving schools from within rather than relying on reform initiated by national policy. And, in the process of improving schools from within, I believe that there is a wealth of latent leadership potential amongst teachers, parents, principals and learners that can be tapped and used as a resource for improvement. I argued this point in a variety of ways in my study as illustrated in the first chronicle (p. 529)²⁶, the second chronicle (p. 56)²⁷, the third chronicle (p. 14)²⁸, the fourth chronicle (p. 55)²⁹ the fifth chronicle (p. 85)³⁰, the sixth chronicle (p. 290)³¹, the seventh chronicle (p. 20)³² and the eighth chronicle (p. 182)³³. Consequently, I argue in this thesis that we need to re-imagine education leadership in our country in order to create the space for teacher leadership because I am convinced that the “key to successful leadership resides in the involvement of teachers collectively guiding and shaping instructional development” (Harris, 2003, p. 319). In the next section I move on to offer the reader a selection of definitions of teacher leadership from the literature that resonated with my study.

²⁶ Section 5.2, p. 122

²⁷ Section 6.2, p. 198

²⁸ Section 6.3, p. 211

²⁹ Section 7.2, p. 225

³⁰ Section 5.3, p. 126

³¹ Section 5.4, p. 150

³² Section 5.5, p. 181

³³ Section 7.3, p. 229

2.3.2. Exploring the parameters of teacher leadership: Agents of change within and beyond the classroom

The role of change agent is critical to the concept of leadership and therefore teacher leadership. It stands to reason then that in order for teachers to become leaders they have to demonstrate that they are agents of change. This change agency role can be enacted both within and beyond the classroom, as and when the need arises.

2.3.2.1. Teacher leaders as agents of change

The simplest description of teacher leadership and one which offers a good starting point to any discussion of teacher leadership is put forward by Harris and Lambert (2003) who suggest that it is a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead. This supports my assumption that teaching staff, regardless of designation, can be described as teacher leaders. In other words, classroom based teachers (described as post level one teachers in the South African schooling context) as well as SMT members who also teach can be included in the category of teacher leader should they be operating as agents of change, making the things happen that they “believe in or envision” (Barth, 1990, p. 124). This change agency role is central to many of the definitions of teacher leadership. For example, Howey (1988) emphasises the visionary and affective dimensions of teacher leadership. For him teacher leadership is “ultimately proven in the efforts of others to attempt to scale heights of human achievement and plunge depths of human caring not otherwise envisioned” (1988, p. 28). More recently, teacher leadership has been defined as “a form of agency that can be widely shared or distributed within and across an organisation, thus directly challenging more conventional forms of leadership practice” (Harris, 2003, p. 315). Thus, as Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) argue, teacher leadership is not solely about professionalism, passion, commitment and enthusiasm. While all of these are needed from our educators, teacher leadership involves something more. It is a form of leadership “suited to the imperative that schools transform themselves, and, in so

doing, demonstrate for communities how that transformation can be managed positively and effectively” (Crowther *et al*, 2002, p. xvii).

As change agent, each teacher is unique and brings her own identity and way of doing things to the construct of teacher leader. Each teacher is defined by identity factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class and life history. In combination with these identity factors, she brings her “talent, energy, thought and knowledge” (Glickman, 2002, p. 93) to her leadership practice. Research has shown that, for teachers to function as leaders, a healthy mix of personal attributes and interpersonal factors are necessary (Glickman, 2002) together with an understanding of the power and authority that accompanies teacher leadership (Zimpher, 1988). Examples of personal attributes that enable teacher leadership include a healthy self-esteem, a sense of autonomy and a level of self-actualisation (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997). Further personal attributes include a “positive morale derived from confidence and pride in one’s competence” (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 35) as well as a sense of “purposefulness” (Donaldson, 2006, p. 181) In addition, effective teacher leaders also focus on “increasing their own self-awareness, identity formation and interpretive capacity through self-confrontation, values clarification, inter-personal involvement, and development of their personal styles as teacher leaders” (Zimpher, 1988, p. 57). However, while personal factors contribute to the take-up of teacher leadership, interpersonal factors are also important. Interpersonal factors such as the ability to “work collaboratively with peers” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.24) are critical to the change agent role of teacher leaders and necessitate that teacher leaders develop “an understanding of their own interpersonal relationships with others, particularly their colleagues” (Zimpher, 1988, p. 57). Furthermore, as agents of change, I argued in the first chronicle that teacher leaders require the courage “*to take the initiative to make this change*” (p. 523)³⁴ within a culture of “*transparency and mutual learning*” (p. 529)³⁵ which accommodates “*ongoing learning, growing and mistake-making*” (Chronicle 7, p. 4)³⁶. Thus teacher leaders are required to be:

³⁴ Section 5.2, p. 116

³⁵ Section 5.2, p. 122

³⁶ Section 5.5, p. 165

risk-takers, willing to promote new ideas that might seem difficult or threatening to their colleagues. Their interpersonal skills - they know how to be strong, yet caring and compassionate – helped them legitimate their positions amid hostile and resistant staffs (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988, p. 150).

As agents of change, teachers can lead both within classrooms and their leadership can also extend beyond the classroom into the wider school context. This discussion will be at the core of the following two sections.

2.3.2.2. Teachers as agents of change within the classroom

In a number of the definitions of teacher leadership in the literature, teacher leadership is thought to be located in the classroom. For example, Wasley's stories of three teacher leaders set within their own lives and the context of the reform movement in the United States in the 1980s highlights the classroom and instructional focus of teacher leadership. In the context of her research, Wasley defines teacher leadership as "the ability of the teacher leader to engage colleagues in experimentation and then examination of more powerful instructional practices in the service of more engaged student learning" (1991, p. 170). More recently, in the context of the United Kingdom, Pounder (2006) refers to the work of Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) who describe the development of teacher leadership over time, articulated in terms of three waves that "progressively de-link the idea from the formal organisational hierarchy" (p. 533). Within a control model, the first wave identifies the department head as the "archetypical teacher leader" (Pounder, 2006, p. 534) while the second wave identifies the curriculum developer and instructional designer as teacher leaders. In contrast, the third wave views teacher leadership in terms of process rather than position and suggests that "teachers, in the process of carrying out their duties, should be given the opportunity to express their leadership capabilities" (Pounder, 2006, p. 534). Extending this idea further, Pounder argues for a fourth wave of teacher leadership that includes transformational classroom leadership as one of its qualities.

The centrality of teacher leadership within the classroom is sanctioned by Zimpher who, in the context of Department of Education initiatives in the US, suggests that a teacher leader must possess significant and exemplary experience in the classroom and she endorses the point that “teacher leadership must be an outgrowth of expert practice and of expert knowledge” (1988, p. 54). In a similar vein, Ash and Persall reject the notion that only activities outside the classroom constitute leadership. For them the process of teaching is central to teacher leadership and involves “working collaboratively to improve teaching capabilities, designing learning activities and engaging in school based action research” (2000, p. 20). Classroom-related functions of the teacher leader constitute informal leadership activities such as “planning, communicating goals, regulating activities, creating a pleasant workplace environment, supervising, motivating those supervised, and evaluating the performance of those supervised” (Harris, 2003, p. 314). These informal roles are often teacher initiated and are good examples of teacher agency where teachers volunteer for or initiate new endeavours in their classrooms. Rogus (1988) too, emphasises the centrality of the effective classroom teacher in deliberations on teacher leadership programmes in the US context. For him effective classroom teachers are

reflective practitioners who know the research and the literature on teaching; they model the best practice in instruction; they are well grounded in their discipline(s) and they are liberally educated; they place their classrooms in a larger social context and understand alternative visions of school and how external political and cultural factors influence these variables; they demonstrate command of programme regularities; and they have internalized the wisdom of daily practice (Rogus, 1988, p. 48).

2.3.2.3. Teachers as agents of change beyond the classroom

While a number of definitions emphasise the classroom focus of teacher leadership, other definitions contend that, while classroom leadership is important, teacher leadership is not confined to the classroom. For example, in exploring teacher leader programmes in the US, Rogus (1988), using Purkey and Smith (1983), works from the premise that teacher leadership involves more than providing effective classroom

instruction. He argues that in addition to interacting with learners, teacher leaders also “work with peers, administrators, and parents to build a school community that is characterised by faith in people’s ability to work toward common ends and a commitment to assist others in achieving those ends” (Rogus, 1988, p. 46). In other words, as Harris and Muijs suggest, teacher leadership can be described as “the capacity for teachers to exercise leadership for teaching and learning within and beyond the classroom” (2005, p. 9).

Within this extension of teacher leadership beyond the classroom, the work of teacher leaders has been described in terms of formal roles. These formal roles have traditionally included head of department or head of year, subject coordinator, union representative, association leaders, master teacher and member of the school governance council (see Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Gunter, 2005; Harris and Muijs, 2005). In the process of teachers taking up these formal roles, teacher leadership can be manifested in:

model methods of teaching, serve in an advisor capacity to other teachers, coach, mentor beginning teachers, study aspects of classroom life, jointly develop curriculum, structure problem identification and resolution, strengthen school-home relationships, or develop instructional materials (Howey, 1988, p. 30).

Many of these manifestations of teacher leadership roles described in the quotation above have been the centre of study for other researchers. For example, Joyce and Showers (1982) describe an innovative programme which involves peer coaching as a fundamental aspect of teacher leadership. The mentoring role of teacher leaders has also been a notable focus of research (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988) as has peer assessment (Zimpher, 1988). Zimpher argues for teacher leaders to be involved in the continuing professional development of other teachers as professionals, particularly with regard to “organised in-service and staff development programmes at the school level” (1988, p. 55). Against a backdrop of decentralised decision-making, Gehrke (1991) emphasises the importance of conflict resolution and communication skills while Lieberman, Saxl and Miles (1988) list rapport building, organisational diagnosis, dealing with the change process, finding and using

resources, managing the leadership work and building skills and confidence in others as important aspects of the teacher leader role. Involvement of teachers in school-based planning, decision-making and assessment (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997) is yet another aspect of teacher leadership.

In summary it is evident that teacher leadership can manifest itself in both informal and formal leadership roles. Informal leadership activity is often classroom focused while the more formal leadership activity extends beyond the classroom into the precinct of the school. However, I wish to raise a point made by Harris (2003) that one of the disadvantages with the take-up of formal teacher leadership roles is that this has, at times, necessitated teachers “moving away from the classroom to achieve this” (Harris, 2003, p. 314). Furthermore, I wish to raise a second point which is that in some of the roles that teachers have traditionally taken up, they have often served as “representatives of change rather than leaders who enact or initiate change” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.16). Thus the call in my study, as with much of the literature on teacher leadership, is for expanded leadership roles for teachers, premised on the belief that “as they are closest to the classroom, teachers can implement changes that make a difference to learning and learners” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 16).

However, teacher leaders do not operate in isolation but work collaboratively with other stakeholders to bring about change in schools. And, as I discuss in the following section, the concept of teacher leadership is an organisational phenomenon and the take-up of teacher leadership is determined, to a large extent, by the unique culture of each school.

2.4. BUILDING A SCHOOL CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Working from the premise that teacher leadership is as an organisational phenomenon, this section explores the school culture that is best suited to the development of teacher leadership. It argues that the role of the principal and SMT is critical in creating this collaborative school culture and inviting the leadership of teachers. It warns that the leadership of teachers in decision-making should not be restricted to classrooms but should also extend to school-wide issues.

2.4.1. A collaborative school culture

Leadership generally, and teacher leadership specifically, is an organisational phenomenon (Yukl, 1994). As an organisational phenomenon, it follows then that the unique context of each school will impact on the take-up of teacher leadership in that particular school. In relation to teacher leadership in the seventh chronicle in my study, I raised the crucial issue of context (p. 4)³⁷. In this regard, I quoted Smylie who makes the point that “it may be difficult to develop teacher leadership to its full potential without also developing its contexts” (1995, p. 6). I also argued, in line with research, that in order for teacher leadership to emerge in a school, “*certain structural and cultural conditions are necessary*” (Chronicle 5, p. 88)³⁸. Simply put, structure expresses “the formal pattern of relationships between people in schools, where staff hold official positions which partly determine their behaviour” (Bush, 2003, p. 82). Furthermore, structures exist in an organisation in order “to facilitate the coordination of work and workers and in order to provide control over the people and activities within the organisation” (Coleman, 2005b, p. 61). Examples of structural change in schools include the practice of time being set aside for teachers to “meet to plan and discuss issues such as curriculum matters, developing school-wide plans, leading study groups, organising visits to other schools, collaborating with Higher Education Institutions and collaborating with colleagues” (Muijs and Harris, 2007, p. 113).

³⁷ Section 5.5, p. 165

³⁸ Section 5.3, p. 129

In contrast, the concept of ‘culture’ stresses the informal features of organisations and focuses on “the values, beliefs and norms of people in the organisation and how these individual perceptions coalesce into shared organisational meanings” (Bush and Anderson, 2003, p. 87). Culture, Bush and Anderson (2003) contend, is an elusive concept in practice which, I believe, contributes to it being more difficult to change than structures, which are more visible – more evident in practice. Organisational culture is dependent on the relationships amongst individuals, how they interact with each other and to what degree their beliefs and values are shared.

The take-up of teacher leadership, according to the literature, requires a school culture which involves collaboration (Muijs and Harris, 2003) and shared decision-making within a culture of mutual trust, support and enquiry (Harris and Lambert, 2003). Muijs and Harris suggest that teacher leadership be conceptualised as “a set of behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively” and assert that teacher leadership is “centrally concerned with the relationships and connections among individuals within a school” (2007, p. 112). This suggestion is echoed in the work of Lieberman and Miller (2004) who report on two teacher leadership initiatives: i) the *US National Writing Project* which develops teachers of writing who are also teachers of teachers and school leaders as well as ii) the *Leadership for Tomorrow’s Schools*, a regional collaborative that grows teacher leaders for its schools and districts. They came to the conclusion that “when teachers lead, they help to create an environment for learning that influences the entire school community” (Lieberman and Miller, 2004, p. 91).

Thus it can be seen that a collaborative school culture enables teacher leadership and, when teacher leadership is enabled, it leads to further collaboration, both within and across the whole school community. In Day and Harris’ (2002) description of the dimensions of teacher leadership, the collaborative culture necessary for the emergence of teacher leadership comes to the fore. Their first dimension concerns the manner in which teachers assist to translate the tenets of school improvement into the practices of individual classrooms while the second dimension focuses on “participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership” (Day and Harris, 2002, p. 973). Their third dimension

of teacher leadership involves the mediating role while the fourth dimension centres around “forging close relationships with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place” (Day and Harris, 2002, p. 973). Extending this idea further, Barth (1990) calls for a culture of collegiality which, he argues, is essential to the development of teacher leadership. This culture of collegiality arises out of the trust from within a group or a learning community and is dependent, as Sizer explains, on “the honest expression of trust” (1990, p. xi).

In line with this thinking, in the fifth chronicle (p. 88)³⁹ in my study I cited Harris and Lambert who contend that teacher leadership is a model of leadership premised on “the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (2003, p. 43). Extending this idea further, I worked with the concept of professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and explored how learning can take place with increased participation in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). I argued that it is from within professional learning communities in schools that teacher leaders emerge (Chronicle 5, p. 89)⁴⁰. I expanded this idea in relation to the synthesis of the chronicles in my study in the ninth chapter of the thesis. However, I also made the point that the emergence of teacher leadership in a school “*does not suggest that the role of the principal becomes redundant*” (Chronicle 5, p. 89)⁴¹. On the contrary, I argued that the role of the principal is “critical in enabling teacher leadership” (Chronicle 5, p. 89)⁴² and the task of the SMT becomes one of holding “the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 28). It is to this discussion that I now turn.

2.4.2. Leading teacher leaders

The introduction of teacher leadership in a school does not spell redundancy for the principal. Instead, the role of the educators who hold formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership within the practice of leadership in a school. It becomes the task of the principal and the SMT to create opportunities for teachers to

³⁹ Section 5.3, p. 129

⁴⁰ Section 5.3, p. 130

⁴¹ Section 5.3, p. 130

⁴² Section 5.3, p. 130

lead within a distributed leadership practice. This can be achieved through developing a culture of collaboration within the school and by identifying the strengths and talents of the individual teachers and inviting them to lead in areas where they have the potential to succeed. The work of the principal, according to Ash and Persall, begins with “spending time – lots of it – with teachers, in and out of classrooms, engaged in conversations about teaching and learning” (2000, p. 18) within a school culture which is open and inviting. Establishing a “climate of trust, eliminating the fear of failure and encouraging innovation” (Ash and Persall, 2000, p. 21) are actions of the principal and the management team. For Barth, the most important item on a list of characteristics of effective principals, then, is “the capacity to relinquish, so that the latent, creative powers of teachers can be released” (1988, p. 640). This capacity to relinquish power and to establish a climate of trust and innovation is central to a distributed leadership practice and I discuss this extensively in the third and ninth chapters of this thesis.

In other words, the practice of teacher leadership involves a bi-lateral and reciprocal relationship between the formal school managers and the teachers themselves. This bi-lateral relationship is captured in the work of Harris and Muijs (2005) who explain that both senior managers *and* teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers in their attempts to bring about essential school change. They argue further that for schools to improve, a conceptualisation of leadership is required “whereby teachers and managers engage in shared decision-making and risk-taking” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.133). The discussion of this shared decision-making process forms the focus of the next section.

2.4.3. Teacher leadership and shared decision-making within professional learning communities

Teacher leadership is primarily concerned with “enhanced leadership roles and decision-making powers to teachers” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 16). However, while research into teacher leadership has focused on the role of the teacher in decision-making (see for example Griffin, 1995; Muijs and Harris, 2007), historically teachers’ involvement in decision-making has been restricted to the classroom and to decisions

such as what and how to teach and assess. In other words, decision-making processes beyond the classroom have traditionally excluded the voices of teachers. In contrast, Clemson-Ingram and Fessler advocate that public education requires teachers to be “full partners in school-based planning, decision-making and assessment” (1997, p. 95). Supporting this view, Mertens and Yarger argue strongly that “teaching will not be professionalised until teachers become more involved in making decisions that affect not only their classrooms, but also their professional lives beyond the classroom” (1988, p. 35). Extending the argument further, Troen and Boles (1994) contend that teacher leaders are unlikely to emerge in contexts where teachers are powerless to affect school-wide policy. They go on to suggest that teacher leadership should enable practicing teachers to reform their work and provide a means for altering the hierarchical nature of schools. In other words they should be seen as “fully empowered partners in shaping policy, creating curriculum, managing budgets, improving practice, and bringing added value toward the goal of improving education for children” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 40).

For teachers to become fully empowered partners in the practice of leadership, it is essential that schools become professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) where democratic and participatory decision-making exists and where teachers can thrive and make a difference through the actions they take in such school contexts. However, shared decision-making which is designed to advance administrative agendas is not, as Katzenmeyer and Moller warn, a democratic model but rather a controlling model which “ignores the intellectual capacity of teachers to make wise decisions” (2001, p. 27). It stands to reason then that, in its ideal form, teacher leadership cannot be imposed but will emerge as teachers embrace new initiatives and innovate in a climate of trust and mutual learning. Explained slightly differently, teacher leadership is more a “form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43). Furthermore, in order for teacher leaders to become fully empowered partners in the practice of school leadership, a distribution of leadership within the school is required. Thus I argue that teacher leadership be understood from within a distributed leadership framing and I discuss this framing in detail in Chapter Three.

In summary, it can be seen that the answer to improving schools “resides in cultural rather than structural change and in the expansion rather than the reduction of teacher ingenuity and innovation” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 2). By working to change the culture of schools into more collaborative and collegial places of learning, I contend that the take-up of teacher leadership will be enabled. I argue that, in the first instance, it is the work of the SMT to initiate this cultural change and invite teachers to lead within a distributed leadership practice. As a consequence, teachers will not only be involved in classroom decision-making but will also become more involved in school-wide decision-making practices. Conceptualised in this way, teacher leadership may well lead to school improvement.

2.5. TEACHER LEADERSHIP: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DISCOURSE

As interest in teacher leadership grows in South Africa, and I believe it will, we should learn from the experiences of research into teacher leadership in the US and other countries to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes made in these countries. In the United States over the last two decades teacher leadership has become a defining characteristic of efforts to professionalise teaching and reform schools (Smylie, 1995). Teacher leadership, Hart (1995) suggests, is promoted in the US for the following reasons:

- to nurture a more democratic, communal or communitarian social system for schools and schooling,
- to draw on teachers’ expertise and experience as a school resource by providing teachers with more power and voice in matters related directly to teaching and learning,
- to provide more appropriate work designs and incentives for teachers, and
- to create a more professional workplace in schools.

US policy makers, argues Barth (1990), support the notion of teacher leadership for the following reasons: Firstly, more able people will be attracted to the teaching profession, secondly, more people will choose to remain in the profession and, thirdly, leadership opportunities will bring out the best from teachers which will result in a raise in pupil achievement. He cites research which suggests that “the greater the participation in decision-making, the greater the productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment” (Barth, 1990, p. 130). As a mechanism to recruit and retain high calibre teachers in the US, the notion of career ladders for teachers was introduced and has been extensively researched (see for example, Howey, 1988; Mertens and Yarger, 1988; Zimpher, 1988; Barth, 1990; Hart, 1995). The concept of career ladders distinguishes hierarchical levels of teaching, with the highest being the lead teacher and the concept has also been linked to differentiated salaries over a teaching career (Mertens and Yarger, 1988).

In contrast, teacher leadership is not a defining feature of school improvement discourse and neither are there national programmes for aspiring teacher leaders at this juncture in South Africa’s democracy. Recently the National Department of Education introduced and formalised the positions of ‘senior’ and ‘master’ teacher in schools [see Department of Education (2008), Annexure A of the Occupational Specific Dispensation document] in an attempt to offer a career path opportunity for classroom teachers who choose not to apply for promotion into school management posts. However, in the way this new policy has been introduced, it would seem that we are repeating the career ladder implementation problems of the US where implementation occurred “in the absence of consensus regarding how the teaching roles should be differentiated along hierarchical levels” (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 33). In South Africa, the new senior and master teacher roles tend to be awarded to teachers based on years of service rather than on competence and expertise as teacher leaders. As we see the beginnings of teacher leadership being introduced in our country, we need to heed the warning of Muijs and Harris that “teacher leadership roles cannot successfully be imposed by management” (2003, p. 442). I argue strongly that where there are attempts by government to formalise teacher leadership through policy directives, the opposite tends to happen and I agree with Jackson (2003) that teacher leadership cannot be imposed or mandated or assumed but instead needs to be bestowed by those who are to be led.

However, I still assert that the concept of teacher leadership is essential to school improvement (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997) because of its power as an “instance of change as well as a vehicle for change” (Smylie, 1995, p. 6). Like Clemson-Ingram and Fessler (1997) I do not believe that teacher leadership is a fad or passing fancy but a concept and reality which can be initiated at several points in the career cycle of a teacher and which has the potential to transform our South African schools into democratic learning communities. However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis, teacher leadership is an under-researched area in South Africa and further research is necessary before we can begin to understand how teacher leadership can work in South African schools. This gap in the literature afforded me the impetus for my study and my research questions were developed in an attempt to narrow the research gap in the area of teacher leadership in the context of South African schools.

2.6. EXPLORING THE PARAMETERS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP WITHIN THIS SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY

The purpose of this section is two-fold. Firstly I present my own understanding of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context as it developed during the course of this study. Secondly, I introduce the model of teacher leadership which developed during the course of the study and which I used in the thesis as an analytical tool.

2.6.1. Defining teacher leadership in the study

In the initial stages of my study, and particularly in the first (p. 514)⁴³ and second (p. 45)⁴⁴ chronicles I worked with Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2001) definition of teacher leadership as it provided a useful starting point to a South African exploration of the concept. They write that “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the

⁴³ Section 5.2, p. 107

⁴⁴ Section 6.2, p. 187

classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice” (2001, p.17). In line with this conceptualisation of teacher leadership, I asserted that teacher leadership was critical to the transformation of South African schools (Chronicle 1, p. 514)⁴⁵. I was of the view that one of the ways schools would be able to meet the transformation challenges they faced in post-apartheid South Africa would be to tap the leadership potential of all staff members in order to ensure sustained and whole-school change.

In the second chronicle I used Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2001) definition of teacher leadership in the development of my own tentative definition of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. As I mentioned in an earlier section, the *Norms and Standards for Educators* document (RSA, 2000) envisages a teacher who is expected to perform a range of roles; amongst them that of leader, manager and administrator. With this policy document in mind, my initial premise was that teacher leadership was a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position (Chronicle 2, p. 45)⁴⁶. For me teacher leadership referred to the process of classroom-based teachers *“becoming aware of and taking up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared vision of their school within a culture of mutual respect and trust”* (Chronicle 2, p. 45)⁴⁷.

However, as my research into teacher leadership evolved so too did my understanding of the term. I therefore acknowledged in the eighth chronicle that a definition of teacher leadership which excluded those teachers holding formal management positions (such as the principal, deputy principal and Head of Department) was too restrictive – too limiting in terms of how teacher leadership ought to be defined (p. 186)⁴⁸. While I was convinced that teachers in informal positions of leadership in the South African context should remain central to any discussion of teacher leadership, I argued more expansively that the concept itself must also include teachers leading in formal management positions. With this distinction in mind, I defined teacher leadership in the eighth chronicle as:

⁴⁵ Section 5.2, p. 107

⁴⁶ Section 6.2, p. 187

⁴⁷ Section 6.2, p. 187

⁴⁸ Section 7.3, p. 233

a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal and formal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust (p. 186)⁴⁹.

Thus, for me, teacher leadership is an expansive concept which refers to a range of teachers, some of whom are predominantly classroom-based while others hold formal management positions. My interest in this study is primarily in the classroom based teacher leaders as there has been little research into the leadership practices of post level one teachers in our country.

2.6.2. Describing teacher leadership: towards a model

The primary research question, which guided my study, explored how teacher leadership was understood and practiced by educators (post level one teachers and SMT members) in mainstream South African schools. In response to this question, I developed a model of teacher leadership and I discuss the three phase development process of this model in Chapter Eight of this thesis. Briefly, the first phase of the model emerged in the first chronicle (see p. 525)⁵⁰ as a result of the educators' deliberations on the meaning of the concept of teacher leadership during a professional development initiative reported on in the chronicle. In this first phase of the model, teacher leadership was understood and described according to four semi-distinct levels. However, as my research progressed, I realised that any analysis of teacher leadership according to the four levels identified in the first chronicle, was inadequate in developing a comprehensive understanding of teacher leadership. I therefore turned to the international literature on teacher leadership to determine how I could extend the model and, in so doing, offer a more nuanced analysis of teacher leadership.

⁴⁹ Section 7.3, p. 233

⁵⁰ Section 5.2, p. 118

In exploring the international literature on teacher leadership, I came across the work of Devaney (1987) and, in particular, her six areas of teacher leadership which I found useful in giving substance to the four levels in my model. In attempting to capture the essence of teacher leadership, the Carnegie Foundation in the United States tasked Devaney (1987) with the responsibility of developing a description of what teacher leadership might look like. Her paper entitled *The lead teacher: Ways to begin*, describes the following six areas in which teachers might demonstrate leadership at school level and which might assist them to become “architects of school reform” (Wasley, 1991, p. 20):

1. Continuing to teach and improve one’s own teaching
2. Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
3. Providing curriculum development knowledge
4. Participating in school level decision-making
5. Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
6. Participating in performance evaluation of teachers

Each of the six areas of teacher leadership listed above is broad and captures many of the individual roles that teachers may take up, either within the classroom or beyond. For example, **area one** is similar to Day and Harris’ (2002) first dimension of teacher leadership where teachers help translate the principles of school improvement into the practices of individual classrooms. This area also includes the centrality of expert practice and of expert knowledge (Zimpher, 1988), the design of learning activities and engagement in school based action research (Ash and Persall, 2000) as well as the process of reflective practice (Rogus, 1988). Organisational diagnosis and dealing with the change process (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988), action research (Ash and Persall, 2000) as well as the mediating role (Day and Harris (2002) constitute roles within **area two**. Joint curriculum development (Howey, 1988) is clearly a role within **area three** while **area four** is about participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership (Day and Harris, 2002). **Area four also** includes problem identification and resolution (Howey, 1988), conflict resolution and communication skills (Gehrke, 1991) as well as school-based planning and decision-making (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997). **Area five** incorporates forging close relationships with individual teachers through which

mutual learning takes place (Day and Harris, 2002), staff development (Zimpher, 1988; Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997), peer coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1982) and the mentoring role of teacher leaders (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988) as well as rapport building, together with building skills and confidence in others (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) while **area six** includes peer assessment (Zimpher, 1988).

Devaney's (1987) six areas of teacher leadership have been central to my study. During the second phase of the development of the model of teacher leadership, I reorganised her six areas and mapped them onto the four semi-distinct levels. As mentioned earlier, I discuss the development of this model in detail in Chapter Eight. These six areas enabled me to expand my model of teacher leadership for the South African context and contributed to a more finely-grained analytical tool.

2.7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter has attempted to tap into the theory and research that holds particular relevance for this study. As an introduction, the concepts of 'education leadership' and 'education management' were discussed and their complementary relationship explored. Furthermore, the literature on teacher leadership was given widespread coverage because of its relevance to the research aim and questions. Let me say at this juncture that it has been a difficult task as each area, outlined above is massive and highly regarded in its own right. Thus it is difficult to grant each the acknowledgment it warrants. However, the discussion of the literature reviewed in this chapter does not end here. On the contrary, the discussion is taken up again in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of the thesis in relation to the insights gathered through the synthesis of chronicles in this study.

In the next chapter the reader will engage with distributed leadership theory. This theory is given coverage because it contributed to the theoretical framing of my study. Without a grasp of this theory, it would be difficult to make sense of the take-up of teacher leadership within the context of my study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMING

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Chapter Three is simply to introduce the reader to the theoretical framing of distributed leadership which offers a set of ideas which formed the starting point of my research. This theoretical framing of distributed leadership guided the research and provided the conceptual tools from which to begin to understand, describe and explain the practice of teacher leadership in my study. While the purpose of the previous chapter was to integrate the literature from each of the eight chronicles into one piece of work and blend it, together with additional literature on teacher leadership, into a consolidated literature review, this chapter introduces the theoretical framing of distributed leadership and indicates the connections, at the level of theoretical framing, with the eight chronicles. As with the previous chapter, to demonstrate the connectivity of the chronicles to each other and to the argument in this chapter, I make use of footnotes. When discussing an aspect of the theoretical framing from one or more of the chronicles, I reference this in a footnote by means of the chapter and page reference of the chronicle in the thesis.

I begin the chapter by revisiting the relationship between education leadership and distributed leadership in order to locate my research within the broader field of education leadership and afford myself a lens through which to describe, explain and theorise teacher leadership more effectively within the South African schooling context. I then move on in the chapter to explore the contested terrain of 'distributed leadership' and I locate my study within a conceptualisation of distributed leadership as social practice (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004; Spillane, 2006). Briefly, this conceptualisation of distributed leadership as social practice centres on the dynamic interactions between multiple leaders who interact with followers in particular situations. From within this conceptualisation, the next section of the chapter explores the development of the framing through the sequential use of

Gunter's (2005) three characterisations of distributed leadership. Here I argue that by viewing the characterisations sequentially rather than as discrete concepts, the framing offers a graded approach – a range of levels of the distribution of power - within the practice of distributed leadership. In so doing, the chapter argues that the framing brings a democratic element to the distributed leadership practice. The final section of this chapter raises further criticisms of distributed leadership and suggests ways in which I overcame these in my study.

3.2. TOWARDS A THEORY OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP: A DISTRIBUTED PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this section is to discuss distributed leadership as the theoretical framing of the study and to indicate its appropriateness to the topic of teacher leadership. To achieve this purpose, I begin this section by exploring the relationship between education leadership and distributed leadership. I then move on to discuss the array of understandings of the term as it is variously conceptualised in the literature. Finally, I position myself alongside the work of Spillane and his colleagues (2004, 2006) who conceptualise distributed leadership as a social practice in which multiple leaders interact with followers in a range of situations.

3.2.1. The relationship between education leadership and distributed leadership

In section 2.2 of this thesis, I explored the concept of education leadership and indicated its relationship to education management. In that section and in direct contrast to traditional theories of leadership which are premised on individual endeavour, I positioned myself with those researchers who conceive of leadership as a group endeavour. One form of leadership that reflects the shift from leadership as an individual pursuit to leadership conceptualised as a shared activity has been termed 'distributed leadership' (Gibb, 1954; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004; Spillane *et al*, 2004; Spillane, 2006).

In this section of Chapter Three, I revisit the relationship between education leadership and distributed leadership and I explore what is meant in the literature by the distribution of leadership.

As early as the first chronicle in my study, I suggested that a form of distributed school leadership was necessary which, as Harris (2004) explains, concentrates on engaging leadership expertise where it exists in an organisation rather than seeking this only through people in formal management positions (Chronicle 1, p. 513)⁵¹. In addition, in the second chronicle I described how distributive leadership is characterised as “*a form of collective leadership where all people in the organisation can act as leaders at one time or another*” (p. 44)⁵². Distributed leadership is based on the premise that leadership should be shared throughout an organisation, such as a school, where there are “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 31). For me, the idea of leadership as distributed across multiple people and situations “has proven to be a more useful framing for understanding the realities of schools and how they might be improved” (Timperley, 2005, p. 395) than other forms of leadership. The appeal of this shared or distributed form of leadership is because it results in “the abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles” (Gronn, 2000, p. 325). In the second chronicle (p. 45)⁵³ I argued that, in abandoning the fixed leader-follower dualisms, distributed leadership extends the boundaries of leadership significantly because, according to Harris (2004), it is premised on high levels of teacher involvement. In other words, through the adoption of a distributed leadership lens in my study, I was able to understand and theorise teacher leadership more effectively within the South African schooling context.

In this next section an integrated account of distributed leadership theory as I have understood it is presented.

⁵¹ Section 5.2, p. 106

⁵² Section 6.2, p. 186

⁵³ Section 6.2, p. 187

3.2.2. Towards understanding what is meant by the distribution of leadership

Distributed leadership is a relatively new concept to emerge in the literature on education leadership, having gained prominence since the mid-1990s (Timperley, 2005). In its simplest form, distributed leadership theory incorporates the notion of multiple leaders who interact with followers in dynamic ways. Distributed leadership theory is currently “in vogue” (Harris, 2004, p. 13) in many parts of the world and has emerged as a popular alternative to orthodox ways of thinking about leadership (Chronicle 6, p. 291)⁵⁴. However, despite its present popularity, there is little agreement about the meaning of the term ‘distributed leadership’ and the field lacks empirical work on *how* leadership is distributed (see for example Harris, 2003; Timperley, 2005; Spillane, 2006).

As early as the mid-fifties, Gibb suggested that the leadership functions performed in any group could either be ‘focused’ or ‘distributed’ where “leaders will be identifiable both in terms of the frequency and in terms of the multiplicity or pattern of functions performed” (1954, p. 884). More recently, Gronn, working within the frame of distributed leadership as activity (and activity theory in particular), is of the opinion that “leadership is more appropriately understood as a fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed, phenomenon” (2000, p. 324). For Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods, distributed leadership is a way of thinking about leadership which can be described as “not something done by an individual to others” (2003, p. 3) but rather “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise” (2003, p.3). For them it is a form of leadership which is “fluid rather than located in specific formal roles or positions, blurring the distinction between leaders and followers” (Bennett *et al*, 2003, p.6).

Implicit within this idea of the fluidity of leadership is the notion that leadership flows, it meanders; it is variable and flexible. Furthermore, in an ideal situation, leadership can surface from an assortment of people, in an array of different forms and at a range of different times. At times the leadership may emerge from teachers

⁵⁴ Section 5.4, p. 151

while at other times it may emerge from those educators holding the formal management positions. However, the emergence of leadership from teachers is likely to be dependent on the culture of the leadership practice in the school. The more widely the leadership is distributed, the more likely teacher leadership will be successful. Conversely, if leadership is confined to those in formal positions of management, the less likely it is that teacher leadership will emerge.

Thus it follows that we cannot talk about the distribution of leadership without talking about issues of power. In schools, I argue, the distribution of leadership is directly related to the re-distribution of power. Power is visible in the way people are positioned in schools, where people are positioned and who does the positioning. This positioning tells us much about the distribution, or otherwise, of power and authority in schools. In other words, as Gunter so aptly puts it, “educational leadership meets the issue of power head on” (2005, p. 45). She goes on to explain that “describing, understanding, explaining, and doing leadership requires a theory of power that is explicit” (Gunter, 2003, p. 262). In the ninth chapter of this thesis I discuss the issue of power as it related to the range of distributed leadership practices in my study. In doing so, I employed Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of power and his concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘capital’ to describe and explain the leadership practices of teachers in my study within a distributed leadership framing. Because the issue of power within the distribution of leadership is comprehensively discussed in relation to the chronicles in Chapter Nine of the thesis, I will defer the discussion until then.

In summary, I concur with Gunter (2005) that the value of distributed leadership is that it raises questions about the location and exercise of power within an organisation and examines what is distributed and how it is distributed. Understood in this way, a distributed framework uncovers whether only technical tasks are being distributed or whether authority and responsibility are also being distributed. When authority and responsibility are distributed, empirical studies are beginning to suggest that distributed leadership impacts positively on organisational outcomes and pupil/student learning (see for example Harris, 2004; Timperley, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Muijs and Harris, 2007).

3.2.3. Distributed leadership conceptualised as social practice

As my study progressed, I realised that the description of distributed leadership used in the first, second and fifth chronicles was limited in scope and required extension in order for it to be of more use as an explanatory tool in my research. Drawing on the work of Wenger (1998) and Morrow (2007), I introduced the idea in the fourth chronicle that “*education leadership should be viewed as a practice, a shared activity*” (p. 52)⁵⁵ in which “*all can practice*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)⁵⁶. I argued that the practice of leadership should be characterised by learning as social participation through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning where participation is the process of “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4). Within the practice of leadership in schools, I worked from the premise that “*obviously SMT members are integral to this leadership practice but so are teachers*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)⁵⁷. In conceptualising this practice of leadership, I found Wenger’s concept of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ useful in relation to the positioning of people within the practice and I argued that “*educators with leadership experience (whether SMT members or teachers) should lead the practice and invited newcomers to join*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)⁵⁸. This constituted legitimate peripheral participation of the newcomers in the practice of leadership as they engaged with the full participants and learnt the language and rules of the practice.

The *practice* of school leadership, Spillane *et al* argue, has received limited attention in the research literature” (2004, p. 3). However, my study suggests that conceptualising school leadership as a distributed practice offers a valuable explanatory framing for researchers working in the field of education leadership. Building on the idea of leadership as a practice, my conception of distributed leadership draws heavily on the work of James Spillane and his colleagues (2004, 2006). I worked with his definition of distributed leadership as practice in the sixth

⁵⁵ Section 7.2, p. 222

⁵⁶ Section 7.2, p. 222

⁵⁷ Section 7.2, p. 222

⁵⁸ Section 7.2, p. 222

(pp. 290 - 291)⁵⁹ and seventh (p. 2)⁶⁰ chronicles. Spillane (2006) takes a descriptive rather than a normative approach to distributed leadership and argues that a distributed perspective on leadership involves two parts: the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. The notion of a leader-plus aspect links closely to the idea of leadership as a group endeavour discussed earlier in this chapter. However, Spillane (2006) argues, while the leader-plus aspect is vital, and includes the leadership contributions of teachers; it is insufficient on its own. While the leader-plus aspect is important because it allows for the social distribution of the leadership enactment (Spillane *et al*, 2004), the leadership practice aspect is crucial because it is the unit of interest, framed as “a product of the joint interactions of school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation such as tools and routines” (2006, p. 3). Thus, as Timperley explains, a distributed perspective focuses on the “dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers” (2005, p. 396) as well as on “artifacts and how they are used” (p. 414). This means that, from a distributed perspective, there are multiple leaders in a school (either leading formally or informally) who interact with followers in particular situations during the practice of leadership.

Working from this perspective in my study, I asserted in the seventh chronicle that leadership “*need not be located only in the principal of a school*” (p. 2)⁶¹ but should be “stretched over multiple leaders” (Spillane, 2006, p. 15). In addition to this ‘leader-plus perspective, I also suggested in the sixth (p. 291)⁶² and seventh chronicles (p. 2)⁶³ that the distribution of leadership should be conceptualised as a practice, constructed in “the interactions between leaders, followers and situations” (Spillane, 2006, p. 26). Viewed in this way, I argued in line with Spillane that a distributed perspective on the practice of education leadership “is not a blueprint for doing school leadership more effectively” (2006, p. 9). It is “*in and of itself neither good nor bad*” (Chronicle 6, p. 291)⁶⁴, but instead offers a way to investigate “how leadership practice is stretched over two or more leaders and to examine how followers and the situation mutually constitute this practice” (Spillane, 2006, p. 15).

⁵⁹ Section 5.4, p. 150 - 151

⁶⁰ Section 5.5, p. 163

⁶¹ Section 5.5, p. 163

⁶² Section 5.4, p. 151

⁶³ Section 5.5, p. 163

⁶⁴ Section 5.4, p. 151

Thus, from this distributed perspective, the critical issue is not whether leadership is distributed but *how* it is distributed. The distributed perspective therefore offers a way to investigate ‘how’ leadership practice is stretched over multiple leaders and it also enables us to examine ‘how’ the practice is mutually constituted. However, it must be emphasised that followers are not an influencing factor outside of leadership activity but instead are an “essential constituting element of leadership activity” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 19). Similarly, the situation (or context) “is not external to leadership activity, but is one of the core constituting elements” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 20). Thus, the distributed leadership practice is *situated* and acknowledges “the mutuality of the individual and the environment” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 19) in determining the practice. Drawing on the work of Giddens (1979, 1984) and Wertsch (1991), Spillane and his colleagues argue that leadership practice is situated and “cannot be extracted from its socio-cultural context – that it is situated in cultural, historical and institutional settings” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 22). Furthermore, aspects of the situation include tools, symbols, designed artifacts, language, organisational structure as well as broader societal structures, including race, class and gender. All these aspects of the situation are influencing factors which impact on the constitution of the practice and I discuss this in detail in Chapter Eight of this thesis. Furthermore, this leadership practice framework addresses the relations between structure and human agency where structure refers to “the various elements which individuals must contend with when forming the action” and when human agency refers to “the actions of individuals within the context of (and, in fact, through) structure” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 10).

The benefits of framing an analysis of leadership practice in this way, is that the distributed leadership perspective can become “a tool that can enable change in leadership activity” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 5). Said slightly differently, a distributed perspective offers a way of “getting under the skin of leadership practice, of seeing leadership practice differently and illuminating the possibilities for organisational transformation” (Harris and Spillane, 2008, p. 33). Thus, in defining distributed leadership, Spillane *et al*, contend that:

Leadership activity is constituted in the interaction of multiple leaders (and followers) using particular tools and artifacts around particular leadership tasks. In this scheme, what is critical are the *interdependencies* (authors' emphasis) among the constitutive elements – leaders, followers, and the situation – of leadership activity (2004, p. 16).

Within this framing of distributed leadership as practice lies the possibility of a variety of relationships and connections between and amongst people, depending on the situation at hand. In order to clarify further the nature of relationships between leaders and followers in particular situations, I found Gunter's (2005) characterisations of distributed leadership useful to describe and explain the nature of the relationships and the location of power within the practice of leadership in my study. I now move on in the next section to present these characterisations of distributed leadership. However, I keep this discussion relatively brief because the entire Chapter Ten of this thesis is dedicated to the insights gathered through the application of the characterisations during the synthesis process in my study.

3.3. DEVELOPING A GRADED THEORETICAL FRAMING THROUGH THE CHARACTERISATIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

In this section I present Gunter's (2005) three characterisations of distributed leadership as further conceptual tools to describe and explain the nature of the relationships and the location of power in the different interactions between school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation in the practice of leadership. However, instead of viewing these characterisations independently of each other, I elected to view them sequentially to allow for levels of possibility within a distributed leadership framing.

I adopted Gunter's (2005) three characterisations of distributed leadership to varying degrees in the fourth (pp. 53 – 54)⁶⁵, fifth (pp. 87 – 88)⁶⁶, sixth (pp. 291 - 292)⁶⁷ seventh (pp. 2 – 3)⁶⁸ and eighth (p. 185)⁶⁹ chronicles in the study. Gunter suggests that research into the distribution of leadership is being characterised variously as “authorised, dispersed and democratic” (2005, p.51). This contradicts, to a certain extent, the position of Woods and Gronn (2009) who view distributed leadership and democratic leadership as two distinct entities. They argue that distributed leadership entails “a democratic deficit” (p. 430) and suggest that it be interrogated critically from the perspective of “a concern with building organisations that are more democratic and respectful of the human status of their members and other stakeholders” (Woods and Gronn, pp. 446 – 447). Mindful of this criticism, I elected in my study to conceptualise distributed leadership in a manner which brought a democratic element to it.

To this end, I adopted all three of the characterisations of distributed leadership (after Gunter, 2005), to allow for a range of possibilities within a distributed leadership framing. Furthermore, I elected to view the characterisations sequentially rather than as discrete concepts. Thus, the distributed leadership framing I brought to my research on teacher leadership was developmental in nature and offered levels of distribution of power within the practice of distributed leadership. As a first level of conceptualisation within this sequential distributed process, we have ‘authorised distributed leadership’ which entails a restricted distribution of power within the organisation. As a second level of conceptualisation within this sequential process, we have ‘dispersed distributed leadership’ which brings about an adequate distribution of power while, at the third level of conceptualisation, we have ‘democratic distributed leadership’ which involves an expansive distribution of power. This ranking of the levels within the practice of distributed leadership from level one (authorised) through to level three (democratic) mirrors the increased distribution of power from restricted (authorised) to expansive (democratic).

⁶⁵ Section 7.2, pp. 223 - 224

⁶⁶ Section 5.3, pp. 128 - 129

⁶⁷ Section 5.4, pp. 151 - 152

⁶⁸ Section 5.5, pp. 163 - 164

⁶⁹ Section 7.3, p. 232

But before I get ahead of myself, let me present each of the three characterisations of distributed leadership, according to Gunter (2005).

Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) is where work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations and because it gives status to the person who takes on the work. This type of leadership can also be termed 'delegated leadership' and is evident where there are "teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation" (Woods, 2004, p.6). Teachers often accept the delegated work, either in the interests of the school or for their own empowerment. However, power remains at the organisational level and teacher leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions.

The second characterisation of distributed leadership, Gunter (2005) suggests, is *dispersed* distributed leadership which refers to a process where much of the working of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. She explains that "while formal structures exist with role incumbents and job descriptions, the reality of practice means that people may work together in ways that work best" (Gunter, 2005, p.54). In a sense, these working relations in this dispersed distributed practice are heterarchical relations (Woods and Gronn, 2009) because they are not arranged vertically and are undifferentiated in status. Instead heterarchical relations are "random, unstructured and fluid. In this sense, a heterarchical division of labour co-exists with a hierarchical division of rights and authority" (Wood and Gronn, 2009, p. 440). Thus, dispersed distributed leadership is more autonomous, bottom-up and emergent and is accepted because of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of organisational members who, either individually or in autonomous work groups, develop the work (Gunter, 2005). This type of leadership centres on spontaneity and intuitive working relations (Gronn, 2003). Through sharing the leadership work more widely and redefining roles, the power relations in the school are shifted away from the formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals.

Democratic distributed leadership is the final characterisation of distributed leadership, according to Gunter (2005). She suggest that *democratic* distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have an emergent

character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004) and both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005, p.56). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004, p.7) and raises questions of inclusion and exclusion which include “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p.57). In other words democratic distributed leaders transform not only individual understandings of self and others, but they “lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities” (Shields, 2006, p. 77). It is from within a democratic distributed leadership framework that “critical transformative leaders enter and remain in education not to carry on business as usual but to work for social change and social justice” (Brown, 2004, p. 96).

I found these characterisations of distributed leadership as discussed above (Gunter, 2005) particularly valuable in determining the nature of the leadership practice and the extent to which teacher leadership was enabled in schools in my study. The application of these developmental characterisations to the practice of teacher leadership in my study is discussed in detail in the tenth chapter of this thesis. While I contend that distributed leadership theory, as conceptualised in the previous sections, is an appropriate lens to bring to a study on teacher leadership, I acknowledge that although currently popular, it is not without critique. In the next section I explore further some of the limitations of a distributed theory of leadership.

3.4. OVERCOMING THE CRITICISMS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

This section investigates some of the criticisms leveled at the theory of distributed leadership. However despite the criticisms, I argue that it remains an appropriate theoretical construct because it generates the space from which teachers can take up their agency role and lead. As I mentioned in section 3.2.2, distributed leadership is currently in vogue in the international literature on education leadership. It is an idea “whose time has come” (Gronn, 2000, p. 333); it is the “idea of the moment” (Harris and Spillane, 2008, p. 31). Its popularity is due to the fact that it offers an

alternative to the individualistic view of leadership which has dominated the field (Gronn, 2000). However, despite its popularity, there is little agreement about the meaning of the term ‘distributed leadership’ and this lack of clarity presents a real danger that it will be used as “a ‘catch all’ term to describe any form of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice” (Harris and Spillane, 2008, p. 32). Furthermore, this lack of conceptual clarity “does not allow for a clear operationalisation of the concept in empirical research” (Hartley, 2007, p. 202). Hatcher (2005, p. 258) warns of the “seductive ideological character” of distributed leadership which has been touted by some as ‘the answer’ to the leadership woes in present day schools – the right way to lead. Both the lack of clarity of the concept as well as its normative use in perceiving distributed leadership as something desirable, I argue, are potential weaknesses of the theory. In some of my chronicles, I positioned myself alongside those researchers (see for example Day and Harris, 2002; Harris, 2003; Harris, 2004) who use the concept normatively⁷⁰.

In reflecting on my own work and in direct response to these criticisms, I elected in my more recent chronicles⁷¹ to both give clarity to the concept of distributed leadership and adopt a more descriptive approach to it. In this regard and in line with the work of Spillane (2006) who also adopts a primarily descriptive approach, I defined distributed leadership in terms of the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect, as already discussed. I worked from the premise that distributed leadership offers a way of thinking about and analysing leadership but that it need not necessarily be desirable. Understood in this way, the distributed leadership practice being observed in the interactions between the leaders and the followers may be autocratic or democratic; it may be transformational or transactional, depending on the situation at hand. As Timperley soberly warns, distributing leadership over many people can involve risk which “may result in the greater distribution of incompetence” (2005, p. 417). She goes on to suggest that

⁷⁰ See my use of the concept in Chronicles 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8

⁷¹ See my use of the concept in Chronicles 4, 6 and 7

Increasing the distribution of leadership is only desirable if the quality of the leadership activities contributes to assisting teachers to provide more effective instruction to their students, and it is on these qualities that we should focus (Timperley, 2005, p. 417).

Despite the criticisms leveled at distributed leadership theory, I have found it a useful theoretical construct in my research because it creates the space for forms of empowerment and agency which are also at the core of teacher leadership. The value of distributed leadership as conceptualised in my study is that it is premised on the view that more than one person can lead in a school and that teachers are included in this leadership practice because they have “the agency to lead change and to guide organisational development and improvement” (Harris, 2003, p. 322). Theorised as a social practice with a range of levels of distribution, a distributed leadership framing afforded me the conceptual clarity which allowed for a clear operationalisation of the concept in my study.

In the South African education research arena, distributed leadership is still in its infancy but I suspect that it is likely to grow in popularity since it can be justified because of its “representational power” (Harris and Spillane, 2008) and its leaning towards democratic ideals in schools. While heeding the warnings of the opponents of distributed leadership, I am convinced that if distributed leadership is conceptualised as a frame or a lens through which to observe more effectively, at a range of levels, the flow of influence and the redistribution of power in an organisation such as a school, it will have value for the practice of leadership, and teacher leadership in particular. In the context of my study, I adopted this lens which enabled me to “generate insights into how leadership can be practiced more or less effectively” (Spillane, 2006, p. 9).

In summary, I contend that teacher leadership cannot be researched in isolation. Instead it has to be conceptualised within a framing of distributed leadership order to understand and explain not only what teacher leaders do (or do not do, as the case may be) but also how they do it and why they do it. To do justice to any research into teacher leadership, we cannot persist in disregarding or devaluing the notion of teacher leadership as a form of distributed leadership because “to do so is to

knowingly invest in forms of leadership theory and practice that make little, if any difference, to the achievement of young people” (Harris, 2003, p. 322).

3.5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter has attempted to tap further into the theory and research that holds particular relevance for this study. Distributed leadership theory was privileged as the theoretical framing for my study and, as such, was given extensive coverage. Without a thorough grasp of distributed leadership, as conceptualised in this thesis, it would be difficult to make sense of the study as a whole and particularly in relation to teacher leadership. However, the discussion on the theoretical framing of distributed leadership does not end here. On the contrary, the discussion is taken up again in relation to the insights gathered through the synthesis of chronicles in this study. In particular, distributed leadership as the theoretical framing is reintroduced in the ninth and tenth chapters of this thesis.

In the next chapter of this thesis I explore my logic of connectivity at a methodology level and argue for parallel methodologies in the study. In the first instance, the methodologies (research strands) underpinning the chronicles are discussed and, in the second instance, the methodology used to synthesise the chronicles in the study is outlined.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGING METHODOLOGIES

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional purpose of a methodology chapter is to describe the research design and methods used in a study. Working with this interpretation, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the mixed research synthesis approach I adopted in my study. However, this simplistic response masks the challenges I faced as I attempted to design the chapter and determine what was to be included and what was to be excluded. In the design of this chapter, I initially spent much of my time pondering on the six individual research strands which underpinned the eight chronicles in my study and the methodologies that were adopted therein. However, I came to realise that the purpose of the chapter was not only to describe the methodologies adopted in these six individual strands but it was also to find an approach which would synthesise these strands at the methodological level. Consequently, my work was to determine how best to do this and the struggle concentrated on the retrospective design of the PhD. How best could the existing six research strands be brought together in a coherent manner? Thus the multi-dimensional nature of these research strands shaped the strategic direction of the study and influenced my adoption of a mixed research synthesis approach.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. In the first instance, it describes the six individual research strands which underpinned the eight chronicles. In the second instance, it describes my logic of connectivity - the process in which each of these six research strands are synthesised into a coherent whole. Thus the first part of the chapter is important because it forms the springboard to the second. The chapter begins with a concise description of each of the research strands underpinning the eight chronicles in the study. It then offers a broad overview of the participants involved in each of the research strands and the sampling procedures adopted. I then reflect on my own orientation as a qualitative researcher in the field of education

leadership. The chapter then moves on to explore mixed methods research as an appropriate approach in which to locate my study and I present the rationale for and adoption of a mixed research synthesis design. The chapter then makes explicit the synthesis process through the clustering of chronicles, guided by the research questions in a contingent design. The balance of the chapter focuses on issues of voice and my positionality in the study, legitimation issues in relation to the mixed methods approach as well as the ethical issues that I grappled with.

4.2. THE RESEARCH STRANDS UNDERPINNING THE CHRONICLES

This study chronicles my research into teacher leadership over the last five years. The academic articles which underpin the study, and which I refer to as chronicles, were originally written and published to better understand some aspect of teacher leadership in the context of South African schooling. They are stand-alone entities which have been selected for inclusion in the study because of their ability to chronicle a response to one or more of the three research questions which direct my work. Thus the chronicles, and the research strands which underpin them, shape the structure, logic and connectivity of the thesis.

For convenience, I have elected to reproduce Figure 1.1, with some alteration, at this point in Chapter Four and have renamed it Figure 4.1. I have reordered the presentation so that the research strands, rather than the chronicles, are emphasised. My purpose in foregrounding the research strands is two-fold. Firstly, the research strands are significant because they informed my decision to take on a mixed research synthesis design and, in so doing, guaranteed the connectivity of the chronicles at a methodological level. Secondly, they are important because they depict the sequence of the research and accentuate the five year time interval of the study which indicates the research progression.

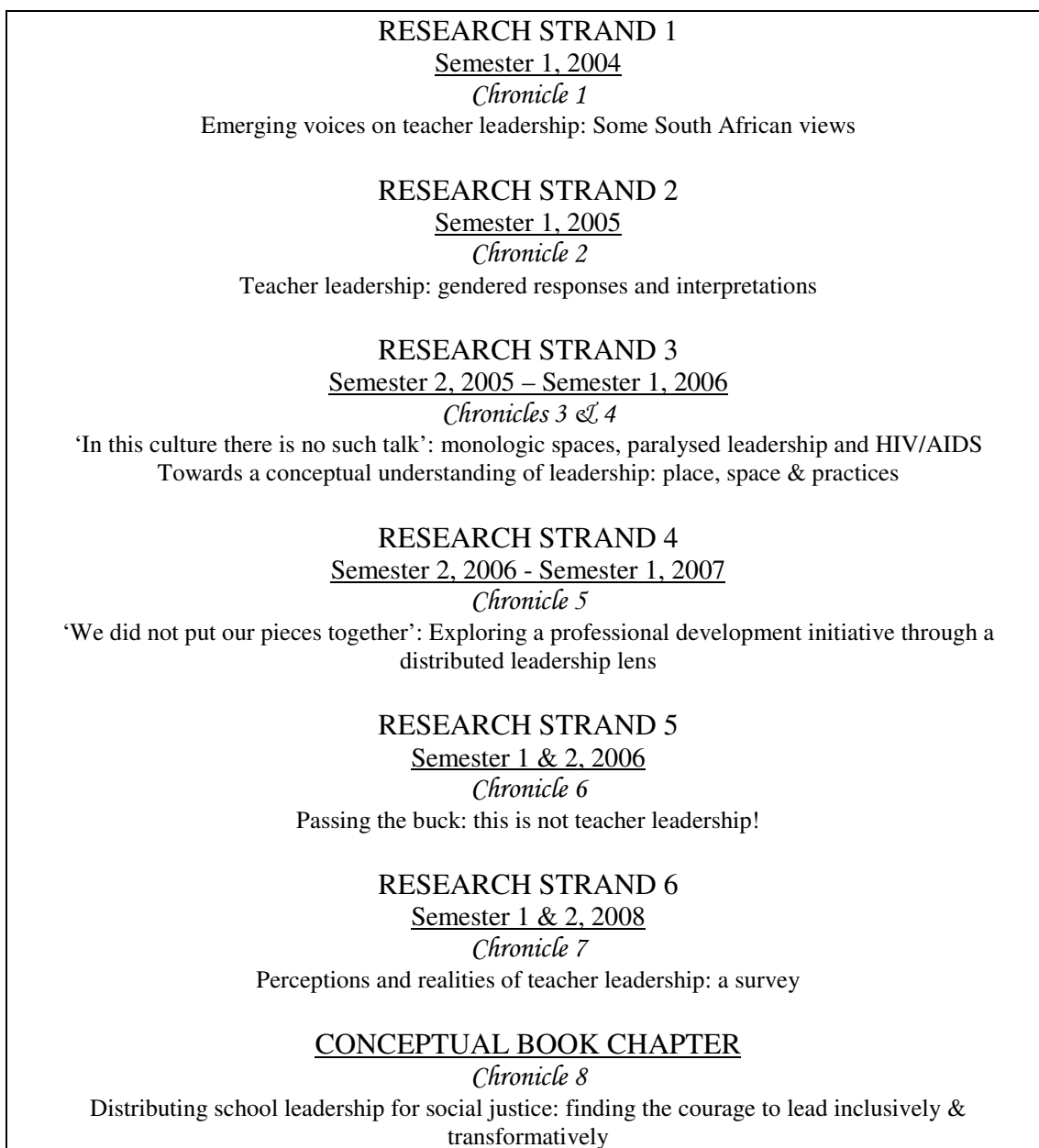


Figure 4.1: The research strands and time line underpinning the study

As depicted in Figure 4.1, the eight chronicles are underpinned by six individual, context-independent research projects or “strands” (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006) on teacher leadership and these afforded me sufficient data to obtain a response to my research questions and, in so doing, generate theory on teacher leadership. This construction was in keeping with the view of Glaser and Strauss that the researcher “chooses any groups that will help generate, to the fullest extent, as many properties of the categories as possible, and that will help relate categories to each other and to their properties” (1999, p. 49). The inclusion of six independent research strands

elicited different kinds of data which offered me “different vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its property” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 65). This eclectic approach to data collection was largely determined by the research projects I was involved in at the time and their specific research questions. For the most part, these strands used qualitative methods (strands one – five) which included journal writing, interviews (both focus group and individual), open-ended questionnaires as well as document analysis. Thus a mixing of qualitative methods occurred both in and across the first five strands. The quantitative survey project (strand six) was consciously designed and included with the purpose of adding breadth and credibility to the rich but smaller qualitative strands. Thus the mixing of methods in and across the six individual research strands determined the adoption of a mixed methods approach (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989; Morse, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark and Green, 2006) in the study.

I now move to a discussion of the six individual research strands which underpinned the chronicles.

4.2.1. Description of the individual research strands

The initial research strand (on which Chronicle One⁷² was based) was implemented in the first semester of 2004. I designed the research as a qualitative study and worked within the interpretive paradigm to explore the perceptions of a group of 11 educators on the concept of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. The educators were all tutors involved in a professional development initiative which I coordinated and which ran parallel to a Bachelor of Education Honours module they were teaching at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study was designed as a tutor self-reflective journaling process over a six month period. The primary data source was the 11 tutor journals while a focus group interview offered a further data collection method. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data and the

⁷² Section 5.2, pp. 104 - 125

categorizations of the data gave rise to the beginnings of a model of teacher leadership (see Chronicle 1, p. 525⁷³), in essence a grounded theory approach.

The second research strand (on which Chronicle Two⁷⁴ was based) emerged out of the findings of the first study. I was concerned that “*while the findings of the first study contributed to knowledge production on teacher leadership in South Africa, there was almost no mention of teacher leadership as it related to issues of gender*” (Chronicle 2, p. 46⁷⁵). This silence in the research motivated me to explore, in the first semester of 2005, the relationship between gender and teacher leadership. This second study which was also qualitative in design explored the gendered nature of the distribution of school leadership. It did this through a focus group interview process with 18 KZN educators and used thematic content analysis to analyse data.

The third research strand (on which both Chronicles Three⁷⁶ and Four⁷⁷ were based) was located within a larger National Research Foundation (NRF) Project⁷⁸ which aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small country town in KwaZulu-Natal. I was involved in the research project during the second semester of 2005 and the first semester of 2006. Working with my colleague, Pete Jugmohan, we designed a study which aimed to examine the voices of the SMT members and the District Official on their views regarding HIV/AIDS as one of the major barriers to basic education for learners in schools. We utilised a qualitative research design and worked within the interpretive paradigm to obtain rich, detailed accounts of the SMT’s perspectives and experiences of leading and managing schools in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Data were gathered using open-ended questionnaires and interviews with SMT members and the District Official. The qualitative analysis programme, NVIVO, was utilised in the organisation and categorisation of the data into themes and a number of findings emerged in relation to understanding education leadership and teacher leadership in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

⁷³ Section 5.2, p. 118

⁷⁴ Section 6.2, pp. 186 - 199

⁷⁵ Section 6.2, p. 188

⁷⁶ Section 6.3, pp. 200 - 213

⁷⁷ Section 7.2, pp. 215 - 227

⁷⁸ Grant No. 2054168

The fourth research strand (on which Chronicle Five⁷⁹ was based) was also located within a larger research project. This project arose from a partnership established between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and Bridgewater State College, Massachusetts in the United States. The goal of the project was “*to develop and research a replicable and effective school-based model of professional development for teachers in KwaZulu-Natal*” (Chronicle 5, p. 90)⁸⁰. The first phase of the study involved the design and implementation of a school-based professional development initiative for educators from a cluster of four schools in Sobantu, just outside Pietermaritzburg, KZN during the first semester of 2006. I was invited to join the project during its second phase (second semester of 2006 and first semester of 2007) and was tasked with the responsibility of exploring the take-up of the pedagogical learning by educators in the four schools eight months after the professional development initiative.

Through the lens of distributed leadership theory, I explored the leadership role that educators played in the take-up of the new learning in their classrooms and schools and the particular leadership challenges they faced in implementing this new pedagogic learning. My research was qualitative in nature and took the form of a case study of the four schools involved in the professional development initiative. The participants were educators (SMT members and teachers) from each of the four schools who had attended the initial initiative as well as the project leaders (two UKZN academics). The research design involved collecting data using a multi-method approach in an attempt to obtain rich and detailed data. Data were gathered through semi-structured questionnaires, semi-structured focus group interviews with SMT members, semi-structured focus group interviews with teachers, semi-structured individual interviews with the project leaders as well as project documentation and reports. Content analysis was used to analyse data. Working inductively and deductively, I developed my own tool for analysis (see Chronicle 5, pp. 92 – 93)⁸¹ and adopted this in the analysis and presentation phases of the chronicle.

⁷⁹ Section 5.3, pp. 126 - 148

⁸⁰ Section 5.3, p. 131

⁸¹ Section 5.3, pp. 133 - 134

The fifth research strand (on which Chronicle Six⁸² was based) was designed as a small qualitative study and implemented in two previously disadvantaged urban primary schools in Pietermaritzburg in 2006. It aimed to explore notions of distributed leadership within the two schools in order to determine whether the SMT either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership. At each of the two schools, the participants included members of the SMT and post level one teachers. Data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews; both focus group and individual, in an attempt to gain a rich picture of the different perceptions on teacher leadership from the different participants. The inductive method was initially used to analyse the data in a grounded theory process. Once the concepts and themes were developed, a second level of analysis was done using the model of teacher leadership developed in the fifth chronicle (p. 93)⁸³ and discussed in the previous paragraph.

The sixth research strand (on which Chronicle Seven⁸⁴ was based), the only quantitative strand, was designed as a post-graduate student group research project under my coordination and leadership in 2008. It aimed to teach and support Bachelor of Education Honours students in doing research using quantitative methods. It involved survey research into teachers' perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership. Quantitative data in the form of self-administered, closed questionnaires were gathered, through purposive and convenience sampling, from 1055 post level one teachers across three districts in KZN. The data were first analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then analysed using the zones and roles model of teacher leadership (Chronicle 5, p. 93)⁸⁵.

From the discussion, it can be seen that these six research strands form the context of the study because they describe and detail how the chronicles emerged and evolved. Having introduced the strands which underpin this study, I move on to sketch a picture of the schools and participants involved across the research strands and the sampling procedures I adopted.

⁸² Section 5.4, pp. 149 - 161

⁸³ Section 5.3, p. 134

⁸⁴ Section 5.5, pp. 162 - 184

⁸⁵ Section 5.3, p. 134

4.2.2. Schools, participants and sampling across the individual research strands

The majority of schools in South Africa are schools with predominantly African learners and educators in relatively poor socio-economic circumstances and, in keeping with this “numeric norm” (Christie, Butler and Potterton, 2007, p. 100), I decided, when I began my research into teacher leadership in 2004, that I wanted to research this ‘numeric norm’. Christie *et al* refer to this numeric norm of schools as “the mainstream” and, in so doing, challenge researchers to recognise that privileged schools in South Africa are at the edge, not the centre of the system (2007, p.100). In keeping with this view, I chose, where possible, not to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers from private or ex-model C schools because I did not want the ‘privilege’ of these schools, in any way, to sketch an unrealistic picture of teacher leadership in our country. Instead I deliberately targeted educators who had experience of teaching in disadvantaged schools in relatively poor socio-economic circumstances, schools with a history of previous disadvantage inherited from the era of apartheid in our country. These schools are strikingly similar to what MacBeath, Gray, Cullen, Frost, Steward and Swaffield term ‘schools on the edge’, that is, “schools living on the precarious edge between success and failure” (2007, p. 1). Schools like these are socially and economically disadvantaged and, as a result, they “face a constant struggle to forge a closer alignment between home and school, parents and teachers, and between the formal world of school and the informal world of neighbourhood and peer group” (MacBeath *et al*, 2007, p. 1). While in first world countries like England, these schools are on the periphery of the social mainstream, in South Africa these schools, by virtue of their majority, are ‘the social mainstream’. As such, I argue along with Christie *et al* that this social mainstream must be valued because it is centrally “important in finding strategies to achieve equity and quality for all” (2007, p.100).

I can confidently say that the majority of participants (the teachers and SMT members) in my study, across all six research strands, came from schools located in this social mainstream. In other words, the understandings and practices of teacher leadership which emerged from the chronicles must be understood and interpreted

against this context. Against this backdrop, I was interested in the ‘school teacher as leader’ and specifically the post level one teacher who was classroom based and did not hold a formal management position. However, I also elected to include in the category of ‘school teacher as leader’ the SMT member because for me, teacher leadership can be defined in terms of both informal and formal leadership roles, as I outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis.

At this point, I would like to bring to the reader’s attention that my study included five qualitative research strands (strands 1 – 5) and one quantitative research strand (strand 6). The five qualitative strands each involved purposeful sampling where I selected individuals or groups of educators (mainly teachers but also some SMT members) at various sites (the university; different schools) because they could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 125). With regard to the sample size of the different qualitative strands, this depended largely on the research projects I was involved in at the time, which educators I had access to within the projects and what I could do with the time and resources available to me. I argue confidently that the sample in each of the five qualitative strands was large enough to be credible given the purpose of the research but “small enough to permit adequate depth and detail for each case or unit in the sample” (Patton, 1987, p. 58). In contrast, the sixth research strand was quantitative in design and involved survey research using questionnaires to gather information from a large population in one or several locations using pencil and paper without necessarily making personal contact with the respondents (Bless and Achola, 1990) and because they lend themselves to logical and organised data entry and analysis (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). In adopting a survey approach, I aimed to describe and explain statistically the variability of certain features of the population of post level one teachers on their understanding and experiences of teacher leadership. This sixth strand adopted purposeful and convenience sampling because the students who worked with me in this group research project elected to work with post level one teachers from schools in the vicinity in which they taught. The sample included 1055 teachers for, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison explain, “the larger the sample the better, as this not only gives greater reliability but also enables more sophisticated statistics to be used” (2007, p. 101).

In summary it can be seen that my research was, for the most part, qualitative in nature. In the next section I discuss my orientation as a qualitative researcher.

4.3. MY ORIENTATION AS A QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER

Although I used both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research strands described in section 4.2.1, my research was qualitatively driven. This was because of my inherent interest in “observing and asking questions in real-world settings” (Patton, 1987, p. 21) and so I used “multi-methods to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to them” (Anderson, 1998, p. 119). As a qualitative researcher I was interested in “understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world, and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Specifically I was interested to describe and understand the meaning South African teachers gave to the concept of teacher leader and to explore the practices associated with teacher leadership in schools. Thus my primary aim was to obtain in-depth (thick) descriptions and understanding of teacher leadership in specific contexts because I wanted to listen to the plural voices (Spivak, 1988 in Fine, 1994) and better understand those groups of people who, in South Africa, were traditionally marginalised or excluded from the processes of leadership. I did this within each of the first five research strands discussed earlier using a diversity of qualitative methods. Furthermore, from a qualitative perspective, my preference was to describe and understand teacher leadership in context because, as Babbie and Mouton argue, “if one understands events against the background of the whole context and how such context confers meaning to the events concerned, that one can truly claim to understand the events” (1998, p. 272). I argue that understanding teacher leadership in context informed my logic of connectivity. The importance of context was central to my research and particularly to the second strand where I explored gender in relation to teacher leadership and in the third strand which located teacher leadership within the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It can be seen from the above discussion that, at heart, I am a qualitative researcher and I strongly support the view of Creswell that “qualitative inquiry represents a

legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparison to quantitative research” (2007, p. 11). However, in attempting to understand how teacher leadership was understood and practiced in South African mainstream schooling, I realised that while the qualitative strands elicited rich descriptions, they were limited in terms of breadth. I elected therefore, in the sixth research strand, to add a quantitative dimension to my research into teacher leadership and turned to quantitative methods to offer a different lens through which to explore my research questions because I work from the premise that “qualitative data can be collected and used in conjunction with quantitative data” (Patton, 1987, p. 21). Miles and Huberman concur with this viewpoint and argue that both qualitative and quantitative methods have much to offer and can be skillfully used together because “at bottom, we have to face the fact that numbers and words are *both* needed if we are to understand the world” (1994, p. 40). For this reason, I turned to mixed methods research as an appropriate means to frame my study and bring together the individual strands, both qualitative and quantitative.

4.4. ADOPTING A MIXED METHODS RESEARCH APPROACH

In this section I discuss mixed methods research which is increasingly recognised as the third major research approach along with qualitative and quantitative research and I locate my study within this approach. I then move on to classify my study as a mixed research *synthesis* study and I demonstrate how the six research strands inform the synthesis design.

4.4.1. The practice of combining qualitative and quantitative methods: a mixed methods approach

The practice of combining numbers and words in research studies as researchers skillfully bring together qualitative and quantitative methods has come to be known by a range of names, the most popular term being ‘mixed methods research (Johnson,

Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007) and it has been an area of conceptual interest for the last 20 years (Greene, 2008). According to Johnson *et al*, mixed methods research (also termed mixed research) is “becoming increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognised as the third major research approach or research paradigm, along with qualitative research and quantitative research” (2007, p. 112). For Greene, the mixed methods approach to social inquiry “has the potential to be a distinctive methodology within the honored traditions of social science” (2008, 20). Johnson *et al* (2007) argue that

Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognises the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results (2007, p. 129).

In their much cited article, Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) define mixed methods research designs simply as “those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm” (1989, p. 256). Working from this definition, I was able to locate my study within a mixed methods research framing because it connected the five qualitative research strands and one quantitative research strand in its design. Furthermore, I classified it as “a multiphased study” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2006, p. 90) because it involved mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches across “a series of studies” (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark and Green, 2006, p. 1) or “a related set of studies” (Johnson *et al*, 2007, p. 123) which were “interrelated within a broad topic and designed to solve an overall research problem” (Morse, 2003, p. 196).

My premise in arguing for a mixed methods approach was not to replace either the qualitative or quantitative research approaches “but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 14 – 15). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie visualise a continuum with qualitative research anchored at one pole and quantitative research

anchored at the other with mixed methods research covering the large set of points in the middle area. Giving definition to this middle area, Johnson *et al* (2007) define the different types of mixed methods research and argue for the incorporation of several overlapping types of mixed methods research along this qualitative – quantitative continuum. Figure 4.2 is taken from their work (2007, p. 124) and represents the three major research paradigms, including the subtypes of mixed methods research. I have located my study along the continuum in Figure 4.2.

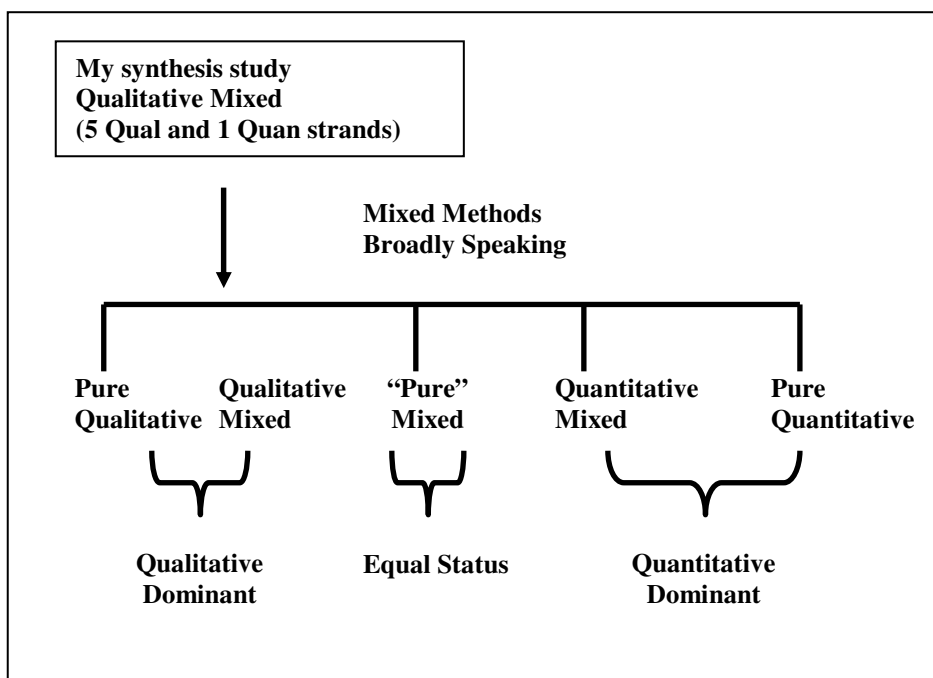
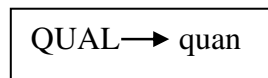


Figure 4.2: Mixed method positioning (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007, p. 124)

Thus my research is *qualitative dominant* and can be symbolized as QUAL + quan research (Johnson *et al*, 2007, p. 124) where ‘QUAL’ stands for qualitative research, ‘quan’ stands for quantitative research, and the use of upper case denotes the dominant approach. This qualitative dominant mixed methods research is the type of mixed methods research in which one relies on “a qualitative, constructivist – poststructuralist - critical view of the research process, while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most

research projects” (Johnson *et al*, 2007, p. 124). In addition, the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of my research were sequential with the quantitative strand following the five qualitative strands (see fourth cell of the mixed method design matrix in Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22), which determined my research diagrammatically as



4.4.2. Classifying the study: a mixed research *synthesis* design

In line with the thinking of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), as researcher I needed to determine which of the many mixed methods research approaches was most helpful in my own work and it was imperative that I determined when and how the mixing of the qualitative and quantitative methods would occur. Within the mixed methods literature there are a variety of research designs (see for example the conceptual framework for mixed method evaluation designs by Greene *et al*, 1989; the mixed method design matrix of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; as well as the general typology of research designs featuring mixed methods by Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006). An investigation of these research designs uncovers the actuality that, for the most part, these designs are mainly suited to single studies. I therefore turned my attention to an article by Sandelowski, Voils and Barroso (2006) which presents *mixed research synthesis* as the latest addition to the collection of mixed methods research. Here the data are “the *findings* (authors’ emphasis) of primary qualitative and quantitative studies in a designated body of empirical research” (Sandelowski *et al*, 2006, p. 29). In line with their thinking, I classified my study as a *mixed research synthesis* study (hereafter called synthesis study) where the synthesis involved the mixing or combining of the *findings* I reported in my eight chronicles.

Sandelowski *et al* suggest that the aim of mixed research synthesis studies is “to ‘sum up’ what is known about a target phenomenon and, thereby, to direct both practice and future research” (2006, p. 29). Similarly, my initial aim was to ‘sum up’ the findings of my own research into teacher leadership in mainstream South African

schools. I therefore consciously included research from the different methodological traditions of qualitative and quantitative research in order to increase, in the words of Preskill quoted in Johnson *et al*, “the likelihood that the sum of the data collected will be richer, more meaningful, and ultimately more useful in answering the research questions” (2007, p. 121). However, as my study progressed, I realised through the synthesis process that the proverbial ‘whole was greater than the sum of its parts’. In other words, the insights gathered as a result of the synthesis study (and presented in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of this thesis) were “more than the sum of the individual quantitative and qualitative parts” (Bryman, 2007, p. 8). This is in keeping with Greene’s argument that “a good mixed methods study should generate some important insights or understandings that would not have been accomplished with one method or methodology alone” (2008, p. 16).

Furthermore, the six research strands of my synthesis study afforded me a range of lenses through which to view my topic. In keeping with the metaphor of chronicles, I constructed my synthesis study chronologically into a multistrand design (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006) which employed six independent strands or “slices of data” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 65). To reiterate, a strand is understood as a phase of the mixed methods research design that includes three stages: the conceptualization stage, the experiential stage (methodological and analytical) and the inferential stage (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006, p. 16). The multistrand design of my synthesis study is illustrated in Figure 4.3. In Figure 4.3, each of the six strands was a stand-alone, individual strand. Data sets from each of the six strands were collected and analysed separately. After the methodological and analytical stages were complete, the inferential stage took place. The research findings of each of the six strands were then written up individually and published in a range of education journals. Each strand of the study incorporated a monomethod design; i.e. only the QUAL approach or only the QUAN approach was utilised across all stages of the strand (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006, p. 16). The first five strands were QUAL in design (rectangles in figure) while the sixth strand was QUAN in design (ovals in Figure 4.3).

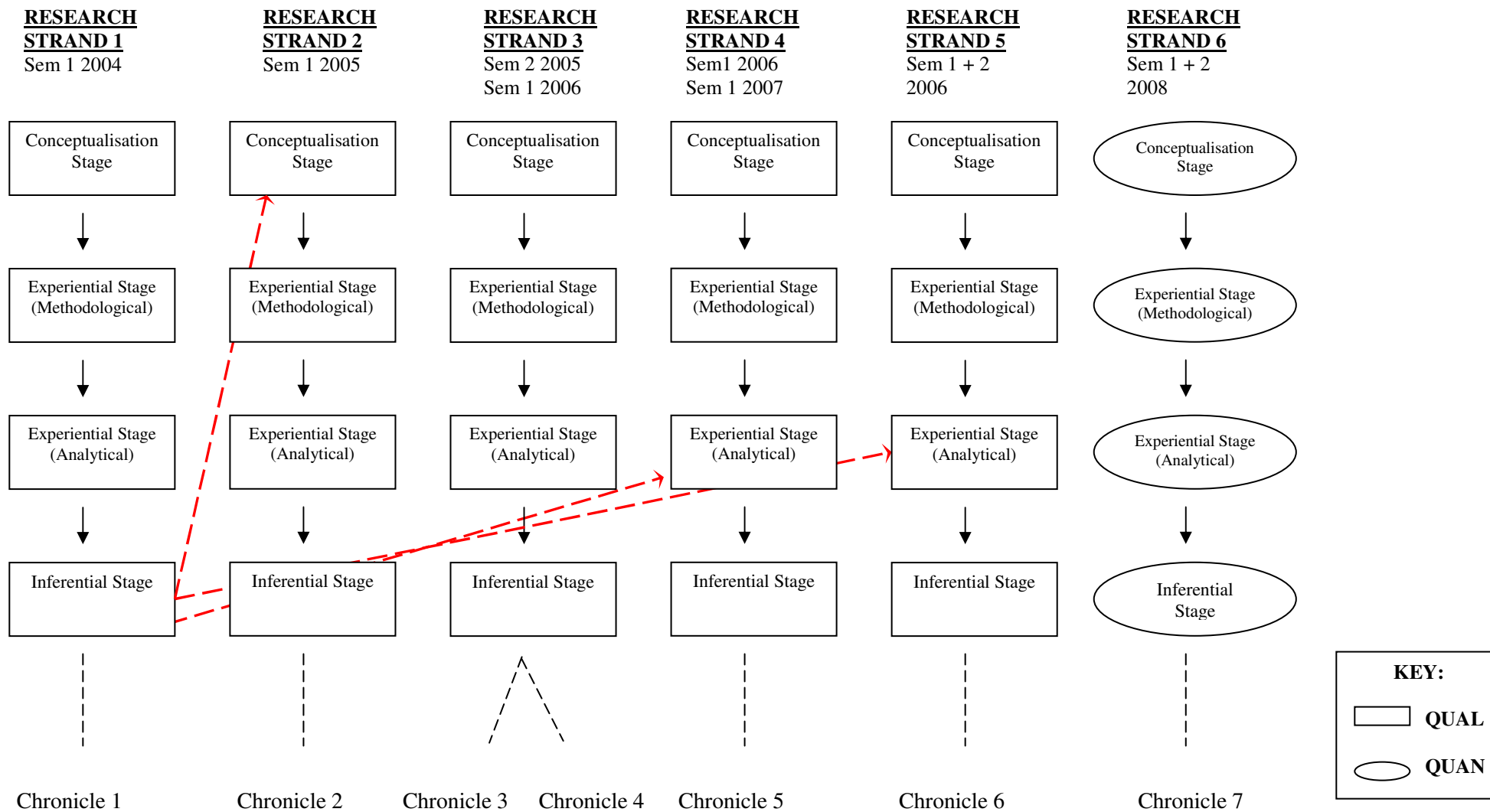


Figure 4.3: Six strands informing the synthesis study (Adapted from Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006, p.16)

In summary, the interpretation of findings in each of the six strands was done completely independently and there was no mixing during these six independent processes. As Morse explains, “it is the *results* of each method that inform the emerging conceptual scheme as the investigator addresses the overall research question (author’s emphasis)” (2003, p. 199). The process of mixing, or what I prefer to call “linking data” or “meshing methods” (after Mason, 2006, p. 20), in my synthesis study only occurred once all six strands of the larger study were completed and once all chronicles were written up, and, as can be seen from Figure 4.3, at least one chronicle originated directly from each of the six strands. Once all chronicles were written up, the PhD research questions guided the mixing process in which the inferences made from the eight chronicles were combined into a coherent whole and referred to as a “meta – inference” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 686). Thus a qualitative logic of making comparisons at the level of analysis was at the core of my “mixed-methods, multi-dimensional approach to explanation” (Mason, 2006, p. 17).

I argue that this synthesis process advanced the connectivity of the thesis at both a methodological and a conceptual level. To illustrate, it can be seen in Figure 4.3 that the findings and inferential stage of Strand One informed the conceptualization stage of Strand Two. The findings and inferential stage of Strand One also informed the analytical stage of Strands Four and Five. Finally the developing analytical tool (Strands One and Five) informed the methodological stage (development of the survey questionnaire) of Strand Six. Now that the design and organisation of the chronicles have been discussed, I move on to describe the synthesis process of the study.

4.5. DESCRIBING THE SYNTHESIS PROCESS

In this section, I outline how I established my logic of connectivity through the synthesis of the chronicles. The initial stage of the synthesis process involved the clustering of the chronicles, guided by the three research questions. The three research questions were organised in a contingent design (Sandelowski *et al*, 2006) and the

purpose of the synthesis, I argue, was one of expansion of inquiry (Greene *et al*, 1989). In synthesising the chronicles, I was guided by the pragmatics of the situation (Morgan, 2007) and elected to follow an approach that worked best in answering my research questions. It is to this discussion that I now turn.

4.5.1. Clustering of chronicles guided by the research questions

The synthesis process involved a meshing of the findings of the eight chronicles into a coherent whole, guided by the three research questions. These questions were generated retrospectively from the chronicles and, for convenience, I replicate them here:

1. How is teacher leadership understood and practiced by educators (post level one teachers and SMT members) in mainstream South African schools?
2. What are the characteristics of contexts that either support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership?
3. How we can theorise teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing for the South African schooling context?

The chronicles were then clustered according to their ability to best answer the research questions. While I acknowledge that, in many instances, the chronicles responded to more than one research question, the synthesis had to have a starting point. Although artificial to some degree, the clustering of the chronicles according to their ability to best answer the research questions offered a pragmatic start to the synthesis process. Thus chronicles one (underpinned by research strand one), five (underpinned by research strand four), six (underpinned by research strand five) and seven (underpinned by research strand six) were clustered in response to the first question. Chronicles two (underpinned by research strand two) and three (underpinned by research strand three) were clustered in response to the second question while chronicles four (underpinned by research strand three) and eight (no research strand underpinning) were clustered in response to the third question. Table 4.1 depicts the eight chronicles organised into clusters guided by the three research questions.

	Title	Author ship	Status of publication	Research Inquiry	Research Design and Methodology	Findings	Theory Used	Research Question
	CLUSTER 1							
1	Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views	Sole	Published in <i>Education Management, Administration and Leadership</i> 34(4) 2006, pp. 511 - 532	Explores experience of educators about concept and experiences of teacher leadership	RESEARCH STRAND ONE Qualitative, 11 educators, Purposive sampling Educator journals, focus group interviews Thematic content analysis Grounded Theory	Initial: leadership equated with headship Emerging model –4 zones Pre-requisites Barriers	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003) Teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001)	<u>One</u> : How is teacher leadership understood and practiced in mainstream South African schools?
5	‘We did not put our pieces together’: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens	Sole	Published in <i>Journal of Education</i> Vol. 44, 2008, pp. 85 - 107	What leadership role do teachers play in take up of new pedagogic learning and what challenges do they face?	RESEARCH STRAND FOUR Qualitative case study, four schools, SMT members, teachers and project leaders Methods: questionnaires, interviews, document analysis Thematic content analysis TL model	TL restricted to Zone 1 and 2 No take up in Zone 3. Barriers reside in school culture, time, micropolitics, hierarchical school structure and autocratic principal Argues for critical importance of linking professional development initiatives to issues of leading	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003; Gunter, 2005) Professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001)	
6	Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!	Primary <i>Co-author</i> Singh	Published in <i>Perspectives in Education</i> , 27(3) 2009, pp. 289 – 301	Explores how leadership of SMT either promoted or hindered teacher leadership	RESEARCH STRAND FIVE Qualitative, 2 schools, Purposive sampling SMT and teachers Questionnaires, interviews Grounded Theory Re-analysis: TL model	TL restricted to Zone 1 Restricted teacher management within discourse of delegation SMT controlled TL –senior teacher culture Rhetoric of TL, contrived collegiality	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003; Gunter, 2005) Teacher leadership (Harris and Lambert, 2003)	
7	Perceptions and realities of teacher leadership: a survey	Primary <i>Coauthors</i> Gardner, Kajee, Moodley, Somaroo	Submitted to <i>South African Journal of Education</i> , June 2009, In peer-review process	Explores teacher perceptions & experiences of teacher leadership	RESEARCH STRAND SIX Quantitative study Survey, Questionnaires Purposive sampling 1055 teachers, Analysis SPSS & TL model	Supported notion of shared leadership TL restricted to Zone 1 SMT major barrier – no trust, No TL in decision-making	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2006) Teacher leadership (Harris and Lambert, 2003)	

	CLUSTER 2							
2	Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations	Sole	Published in <i>AGENDA</i> No 65, 2005, pp. 44 – 57	Explores relation between gender and leadership; gendered roles	RESEARCH STRAND TWO Qualitative, purposive sampling, 18 educators, Focus group interviews, Thematic content analysis	Context matters: rural/urban divide Leadership male domain; Gendered roles Challenges status quo; calls women teachers to find voice	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004) Habitus (Bourdieu, 1972)	<u>Two:</u> What are the characteristics of contexts that either support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership?
3	'In this culture there is no such talk': monologic spaces, paralysed leadership & HIV/AIDS	Primary <i>Co-author</i> Jugmohan	Published in <i>South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management</i> 1(1) 2008, pp. 3 - 16	Explores school leadership in context of HIV/AIDS pandemic	RESEARCH STRAND THREE Qualitative, purposive sampling, SMT & District Official perspectives, Methods: Questionnaires and interviews, Thematic analysis using NVIVO	Representations of space: policy documents Representational spaces: monologic, myths and marginalization. Paralysed leadership	Distributed leadership (Harris, 2004) Space (Lefebvre, 1991), Dialogic space (Rule, 2004) Socially just leadership (Shields, 2004, 2006)	
	CLUSTER 3							
4	Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space & practices	Sole	Published in <i>Education as Change</i> 13(1) 2009, pp. 45 - 57	Explores a conceptual framework for leadership through the use of a vignette	RESEARCH STRAND THREE VIGNETTE Qualitative, purposive sampling SMT and District Official perspectives Methods: Questionnaires and interviews Thematic analysis NVIVO	SMTs not leading in relation to HIV/AIDS – not creating safe spaces, attending to technical aspects Leadership paralysis due to their being outsiders – illegitimate peripheral participation	Space, place (Lefebvre, 1991 and Tuan, 1977) and Community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) Democratic distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) as socially just leadership	<u>Three:</u> How can we theorise teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing in the South African schooling context?
8	Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively & transformatively	Sole	Book chapter Muthukrishna, (2008), pp. 181 – 192 <i>Educating for social justice & inclusion: pathways & transitions.</i> NY: Nova.	No empirical research – chapter is an argument	NO RESEARCH STRAND Conceptual chapter	Argues from critical perspective that schools require a democratic distributed form of leadership which is inclusive and which makes place for the inclusion of those previously disadvantaged, particularly teachers and women.	Democratic distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) Habitus (Bourdieu, 1972) Socially just leadership (Shields, 2004, 2006)	

Table 4.1: Clustering of chronicles according to research questions

4.5.2. A contingent design

Thus it can be seen that the clustering of the chronicles in response to the research questions constituted a logic of connectivity in the thesis. Once I had determined the clustering of the chronicles, the next stage in the synthesis process was to settle on the order in which I would work. As discussed in section 1.4 of this thesis, the first research question was the primary question and so it was this question I first worked with in the synthesis process. The second research question proceeded from the responses to the first research question and so it made sense to work with this question next. This was followed by the final research question; the theorising question. Following this logic, I adopted what Sandelowski *et al* call a contingent design, the defining feature of which is “the cycle of research synthesis studies conducted to answer questions raised by previous syntheses” (2006, p. 36). They go on to explain that “the cycle of systematic review continues until a comprehensive research synthesis can be presented that addresses researchers’ objectives” (p. 35). There were three phases to my contingent design and, within this design, each cluster of chronicles was included “to answer a particular sub question” (Morse, 2003, p. 199). Within phase one, research question one determined the first cluster of articles (chronicles one, five, six and seven) and the results of synthesising the findings in this first cluster informed the constitution of the second cluster. Within phase two, the second cluster of chronicles (chronicles two and three) were retrieved to answer the second research question. The synthesised results of each of the first and second phases led to a third phase which involved the retrieval and analysis of a third cluster of chronicles (chronicles four and eight) in an attempt to answer the third research question. This three phase contingent design is represented in Figure 4.4. The figure indicates how the first phase of the contingent design has within it an integrated design (after Sandelowski, *et al*, 2006) where the research question was answered by both qualitative and quantitative methods.

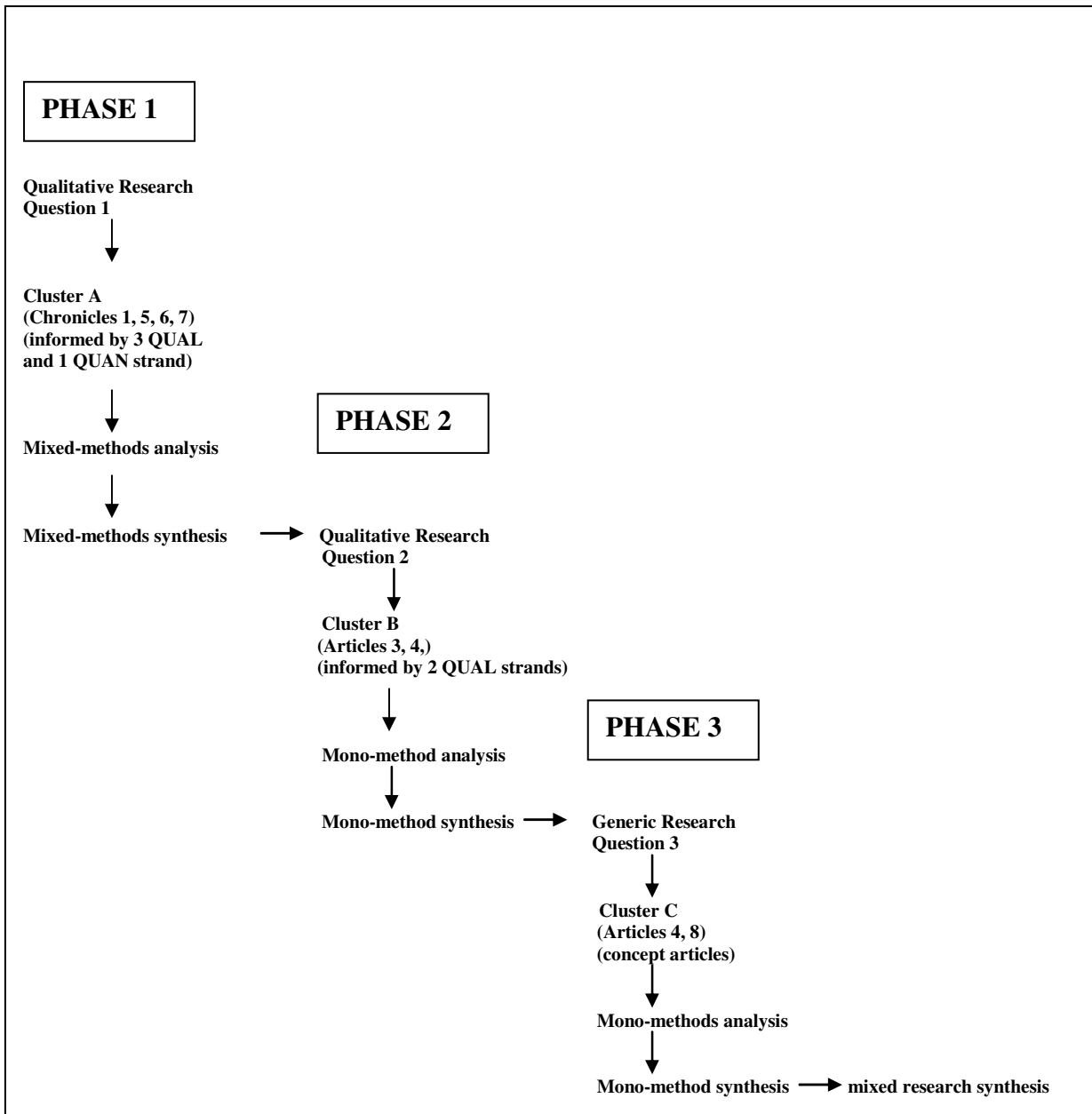


Figure 4.4: Contingent design of the synthesis study
(Adapted from Sandelowski *et al*, 2006)

4.5.3. An expansive purpose

Working within this contingent design, the aim of the synthesis study was to develop a meta-inference and generate theory around teacher leadership for South African mainstream schools. To achieve this meta-inference, the synthesis involved a secondary analysis of the findings, guided by the three research questions. Thus the design involved an “openness of inquiry” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 65) because of its multiple situations and multiple groups. I was persuaded that the synthesis of findings of the eight chronicles (underpinned by the six research strands) afforded me a comprehensive and enriched understanding of teacher leadership within the South African schooling context and I was confident that the study achieved theoretical saturation. Thus, while purposeful sampling was the dominant technique across the six individual research strands of the study, the synthesis process adopted theoretical sampling which is the “process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 45). This theory-developing process, a direct response to the third research question, incorporated a diversity of ways of knowing in which “the researcher’s comprehension of the phenomenon increases as data unfold, discrepancies are resolved, concepts are understood, and interconnections are made” (Morse, 2003, p. 191). This diversity of ways of knowing, Glaser and Strauss argue, is highly beneficial for theory generation because “it yields more information on categories than any one mode of knowing” (1999, p. 66).

Heeding the advice of Glaser and Strauss that “our main purpose is to generate theory, not to establish verifications with the ‘facts’” (1999, p. 48), my study certainly did not seek convergence in the classic sense of triangulation but rather focused on expansion (after Greene *et al*, 1989). I wanted to extend the scope, breadth, and range of inquiry into teacher leadership and I introduced multiple components (eight chronicles) and multiple methods (both qualitative and quantitative). The term expansion has also been referred to as “extension” (Sandelowski *et al*, 2006, p. 35) and reflects a “multitask intent” (Greene *et al*, 1989, p. 269) allowing for the possibility of “multiple comparisons” (Glaser and Strauss, 1999, p. 47) which honour both the consensus as well as the dissensus of views in and across the different chronicles. As Hughes and McNaughton, borrowing from Bertens, 1999, remind us, “hope for change lies not in

our agreements but in our disagreements, because in our disagreements (dissensus) we argue about what is ‘the truth’ and we question the dominant norms and values and seek to change them” (2000, p.255). Thus it was important from this expansive framework to acknowledge and listen to the participant voices, both consenting and dissenting, across contexts to enable me to “participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished” (Greene, 2008, p. 20). This involved a process of linking data and meshing methods through the research questions to arrive at “multi-nodal dialogic explanations that allow the distinctiveness of different methods and approaches to be held in creative tension” (Mason, 2006, p. 9).

4.5.4. Adopting a pragmatic approach

This linking and meshing process through the research questions and the contingent design was, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, guided by the pragmatics of the situation. Mine was a search for “workable solutions through the practice of research to help answer questions that we value and to provide workable improvements in our world” (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 54). Thus from a pragmatic standpoint, I chose a combination of methods and procedures that worked best for answering my research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Building on the work of Michael Patton (1975), Morgan (2007) proposes a pragmatic alternative to the key issues in social science research methodology and I found his thinking useful in relation to my study. For Morgan, the pragmatic approach relies on a version of abductive reasoning that “moves back and forth between induction and deduction – first converting observations into theories and then assessing those theories through action” (2007, p. 71). His contention is that any practicing researcher has to work back and forth between subjectivity and objectivity, and “the classic pragmatic emphasis on an intersubjective approach captures this duality” (p. 71 – 72). For Morgan, an important question for the pragmatist is “the extent to which we can take things that we learn with one type of method in one specific setting and make the most appropriate use of that knowledge in other circumstances” (2007, p. 72). Thus, instead of sole emphasis on context as in qualitative research or sole emphasis on generality as in quantitative research, a pragmatic approach to research emphasises transferability across settings. This view is endorsed by Greene who argues that there

are “multiple, legitimate approaches to social inquiry and that any given approach to social inquiry is inevitably partial. Better understanding of the multifaceted and complex character of social phenomena can be obtained from the use of multiple approaches and ways of knowing” (2008, p. 20).

As a result of the contingent design and expansive purpose of my synthesis study, multiple approaches and ways of knowing were honoured. Thus the participant voices across the chronicles were central to the study and it is to this discussion that I now turn.

4.6. VOICE AND POSITIONALITY WITHIN THE SYNTHESIS PROCESS

One of my aims in the synthesis study was to listen, across the chronicles, to the plural voices of teachers who were traditionally marginalised from the practice of school leadership in our country in order to explore their understanding and experience of teacher leadership. In so doing, I wished to foreground the issue of voice in relation to teacher leadership because, with voice usually comes agency. Furthermore, as a qualitative researcher, I was also aware of my own voice (and lack thereof) during many moments in the writing up of this thesis. In the sections that follow, I discuss these two levels of voice at work in the thesis [the voice of the educators (as research participants) and my own voice (as researcher)].

4.6.1. The plurality of teacher voice

To reiterate a point made earlier in this chapter, my research interest was in the ‘school teacher as leader’ and specifically the post level one teacher who did not hold a formal management position, although I did not exclude the SMT member from the category. From a critical theorist perspective, my intention was to listen to the plural voices of teachers who were traditionally marginalised from the practices of leadership in our country and call them to activism. In so doing, I wanted to advance a sociopolitical commitment to the practice of teacher leadership as a framework for transforming schools into democratic learning communities and was of the view that a transformative analysis was needed. I elected to foreground issues of “audience, perspective, voice, and advocacy” (Greene, 2008, p. 19) in relation to teachers as leaders because I wanted teachers to realise their own agency (Mezirow, 1991). A transformative research framework was thus best suited to my research.

Ontologically, I worked from the premise that there are multiple socially constructed realities of teacher leadership each of which can be described within a “historical, political, cultural, and economic context” (Mertens, 2003, p. 159). Thus my task in the thesis was to acknowledge and value the different realities and varying contexts across the chronicles and theorise teacher leadership in relation to these differing realities. Epistemologically, I worked from the premise that knowledge is socially and historically located within these multiple contexts and is therefore subjective and value-laden. A transformative lens therefore assisted me in providing “a framework for examining assumptions that explicitly address power issues, social justice, and cultural complexity throughout the research process” (Mertens, 2007, p. 213).

I was acutely aware of the power differentials implicit in my interaction with the research participants during the five year period of the study and I worked consciously to develop a “level of trust and understanding to accurately represent viewpoints of all groups fairly” (Mertens, 2003, p. 159). In introducing the concept of teacher leader to the educator participants in my study, my intention was also to disrupt the current status quo in schools which denies authentic teacher involvement in the practice of leadership. In so doing, I hoped to raise consciousness of the transformative power of teacher leadership. I explicitly wanted to offer, in the words of Greene, “a discordant voice in an otherwise harmonious choir” (2008, p. 20). My role was therefore

reframed as one that “recognises inequalities and injustices in society and strives to challenge the status quo, who is a bit of a provocateur with overtones of humility, and who possesses a shared sense of responsibility” (Mertens, 2007, p. 212).

4.6.2. My voice and positionality

Postmodernism claims that in our work “our Self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it – but only partially present, for in our writing we repress parts of ourselves, too” (Richardson, 1994, p. 520). This quotation struck a chord with me on two accounts. In the first instance, it reminded me that as researcher I was partial and situated in my research, both at the level of the individual chronicles and during the synthesis process. I was not a “disembodied, neutral authority” (McCotter, 2001, p. 7) but located and interested. My lived experience as white lesbian woman, teacher, academic, partner and mother shaped my research. As sole author of five chronicles and prime author of three, and as sole selector for their inclusion in the PhD, I was the “constructing narrator” (after Fine, 1994) of the thesis. Thus this doctoral study necessarily reflects my own processes and preferences – it is not an innocent text but “an act of construction; a drawing up of boundaries, a marking off of divisions, oppositions and positions” (Ball, 2004, p. 1). As such, I was alert throughout the study to my subjective positioning and attempted where possible in each of the research strands to employ a range of data collection methods in the pursuit of “completeness rather than confirmation” (van der Mescht, 2002, p. 49). Furthermore, in line with the thinking of van der Mescht, I attempted to be “methodical (organised and careful)” as well as “systematic (consistently operating within well defined and transparent guidelines)” (2002, p. 49).

Initially, as constructing narrator, my research into the phenomenon of teacher leadership was located predominantly within the interpretive paradigm as I attempted to understand and interpret the world (leadership in schools) in terms of the actors (the teachers and the SMT members). However, as my research progressed, I realised that merely giving an interpretive account of the perceptions and practices of teacher leaders was insufficient. I became aware of the need to adopt a critical stance in my study and by this I mean that I needed to be able to stand back and engage with my work “at the level of meta-research” (van der Mescht, 2002, p. 49). I also began to think about teacher leadership in transformatory terms and, in so doing, brought a

critical social theory lens to my work. Critical social theory, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, seeks to “emancipate the disempowered, to redress inequality and to promote individual freedoms within a democratic society” (2007, p. 26).

However, although our Self is always present in our work, it is “only partially present, for in our writing we repress parts of ourselves, too” (Richardson, 1994, p. 520). This quotation struck a second chord with me. In this second instance, there were times during my doctoral journey when I was ‘at sea’ about a way forward in constructing a thesis by publication. For a period of the study, I was troubled by the pioneering aspect of the work and the absence of a concrete template and yearned for a model to guide me in the synthesis process. As a consequence, I lost confidence in my ability to write and instead adopted the words of published authors to speak on my behalf and, in so doing, suppressed my own voice. Whilst my colleagues and supervisors continually reminded me that I had already established an academic voice through the eight chronicles, there were times when I was unable to insert my voice and agency in relation to the thesis. Each time I began to write, a flood of questions in relation to my work, its purpose, value, direction and process, arose which undermined my confidence and left me feeling inadequate and silenced. How was I supposed to construct a PhD by publication? What would transform the eight chronicles into a PhD? When would I know that my work was at a doctoral level? Was the new knowledge I was expected to create inherent in the chronicles or was it to be found in the synthesis of the chronicles? How was I going to create a text, at doctoral level, that was vital and sufficiently interesting to be read at all?

At some point in the struggle to reclaim my voice and agency, I stumbled across the work of Richardson which helped me to navigate some of these questions. She argues that the mechanistic or static writing model of traditional quantitative research “ignores the role of writing as a dynamic creative process” (1994, p. 517). She challenges us to put ourselves in our own texts, “nurture our own individuality and at the same time lay claim to knowing something” (p. 517). I realised some time later as I revisited my methodology chapter that I was searching for the ‘single’ way of writing an academic text – the one truth – I was searching (in vain) for the voice of someone who had ‘got it right’. In essence I was colluding with the positivists who claim the existence of a one universal truth, one ‘right’ way of knowing and doing. I was struggling with what bell hooks (1990) calls a ‘politics of location’:

Within a complex and ever shifting realities of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture, toward that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible (cited in Fine, 1994, p. 71).

I found my subconscious positioning of myself on the side of the “colonizing mentality” in relation to my PhD writing process exceedingly ironical given my claimed identity as a critical theorist and my standpoint on the power of teacher leadership to bring teachers from the margins into the process of leadership. It therefore came as a relief to me to read Richardson’s work and be reminded that one is allowed “to know ‘something’ without claiming to know everything” (1994, p. 518). I did not have to have ‘all the answers’ on teacher leadership and neither was there one ‘right’ way of synthesising the chronicles. It was up to me to own the synthesis process and insert myself – my voice- into my work as I re-interpreted the chronicles and organised them into a coherent whole. I came across Govender’s (2009) use of the term ‘logic of discernment’ which assisted me in finding a way forward. For her, ‘logic’ denotes reasoned thought while ‘discernment’ implies good judgement. Govender explains how her ‘logic of discernment’ draws from “the authoritative guidance of scholars (external guiding logic) and my total (both subconscious and conscious) imprints of my own experiences and intuitive sense (an internal guiding logic)” (2009, p. 113). Claiming my own ‘logic of discernment’, the liberty was mine to discern the way forward and I had to trust my own insights and perceptions in weaving the chronicles together in a creative and imaginative way. In doing so, however, I had to remember that my purpose was not to homogenize and suppress individual voices (Richardson, 1994) but rather to extend, in a trustworthy manner, the scope, breadth, and range of inquiry into teacher leadership through the eight chronicles in the search for multi-nodal dialogic explanations. It is to issues of trustworthiness in relation to my study, that I now turn.

4.7. LEGITIMATION WITHIN MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

Trustworthiness is central to qualitative research. In this section I explore issues of validity or trustworthiness in relation to my study. However, in line with the view of Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, I use the term 'legitimation' which offers the mixed methods researcher "a bilingual nomenclature that can be used by both quantitative and qualitative researchers" (2006, p. 60). They are of the view that "legitimation in mixed research should be seen as a continuous process rather than as a fixed attribute of a specific research study" (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 56). Here legitimation involves "a cyclical, recursive, and interactional process" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21) in an attempt towards "inference closure (i.e. being able to make definitive statements about the quality of inferences made)" (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 56) but which might never be fully reached.

Given the multi-strand design of my synthesis study and the dominance of qualitative research underpinning it, the study did not aspire to reliability or generalisability but to trustworthiness and completeness. In line with post-modernist thinking, and instead of triangulation, Richardson proposes that the central image for validity or trustworthiness is the crystal which "combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous" (1994, p. 522). The size of my multidimensional study with its six research strands and its eight chronicles expanded and crystallized my understanding of teacher leadership and provided me with "a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic" (Richardson, 2004, p. 522). In a similar vein, Greene (2006) argues that while convergence in the service of stronger validity is important in mixed methods inquiry, so too is "divergence, dissonance, and difference" (p. 97).

In extending their work on legitimation further, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) outline a typology of nine legitimation types in mixed methods research, three of which are pertinent to my study. These include inside-outside legitimation, weakness minimization legitimation and multiple validities legitimation and I discuss each of these briefly as they applied to my study.

4.7.1. Inside-outside legitimation

As mentioned in an earlier section, by electing to do a predominantly qualitative mixed methods inquiry, I was aware of my subjective role as ‘instrument’ (Richardson, 1994) in the research process. As principal data collection instrument, I was responsible for collecting the data in the six strands of my study and it was imperative that I attempted to understand and interpret the social reality I was studying in ways that were trustworthy. In my research, I was not attempting to articulate what Lather (1993) calls “the voice from nowhere” – the “pure essence” of representation (in Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 183). Instead I wanted to acknowledge and capture the multiple voices of teachers on the topic of teacher leadership. This meant that, as researcher, I had to make a deliberate attempt to put myself in the shoes of the people I was studying, and try and understand their “actions, decisions, behaviour, practices, rituals and so on, from their perspective” (Babbie and Mouton, 1998, p. 271). In other words, I wanted to capture the *emic* viewpoint, the viewpoint of the participant in the group, the insider.

At the same time I was also conscious of my own voice in the research process. This *etic* viewpoint is that of “the ‘objective’ outsider looking at and studying the group” (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 58). I had to continually guard against imposing my voice onto the voices of the teachers. I first attempted to understand teacher leadership through the eyes of the teachers and then only did I place their understanding within my own conceptual framework in order to “reconsider the participants’ perspective with the goal of trying to define, unravel, reveal or explain their world” (Anderson, 1998, p. 125). It was initially difficult to accurately present and utilise “the insider’s view *and* the observer’s view (original emphasis)” (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 58). However, as my involvement in the different research strands progressed, I became more and more aware of my own growth and development in this role and my experience supported the view that the human instrument is infinitely adaptable and “can be developed and continuously refined” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 250).

4.7.2. Weakness minimization legitimation

In my synthesis study I was aware that while the five qualitative strands presented rich and at times nuanced data, they were all small studies. I therefore consciously introduced the sixth strand – the quantitative survey – to add a breadth perspective to

and compensate for the depth-only perspective of the qualitative strands. This weakness minimization legitimation process, I argue, led to “a superior or high quality meta-inference” (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 58). However, while the quantitative strand afforded the study breadth, the data collected was in the form of numbers and could not respond to the ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions, a limitation of quantitative methods. Thus the combining of the qualitative strands with the quantitative strand ensured different ways of knowing in order to chronicle a more comprehensive picture of teacher leadership within the South African schooling context.

4.7.3. Multiple validities legitimation

This refers to the extent to which “all relevant research strategies are utilised and the research can be considered high on the multiple relevant ‘validities’” (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 59). In the five qualitative strands of my study the relevant qualitative validities were addressed and achieved while the relevant quantitative validities were addressed during the sixth quantitative strand of the study (see individual chronicles in Chapters Five to Seven for this detail). During the linking and meshing phase of the study, mixed legitimation types were addressed to ensure strong meta-inference quality and I argue, that my theoretical sample was adequate. The adequate theoretical sample, according to Glaser and Strauss, is “judged on the basis of how widely and diversely the analyst chose his groups for saturation categories according to the type of theory he wished to develop” (1999, p. 63). My study covered a diverse range of research projects which assisted with my understanding of the situatedness of social experience and contributed to theoretical saturation and the possibility of what Mason (2006) calls “cross-contextual generalisations”. These cross-contextual generalisations emerge out of a process of meshing or weaving which adopts a “comparative logic to move across different contexts or settings, to enhance the scope and generalisability of the explanation” (Mason, 2006, p. 17). Mason argues for “dialogic explanations which are multi-nodal” (p. 20) to assist us in understanding our multi-dimensional social world.

In summary, I argue that my study was legitimate in so far as the theoretical sample was adequate and worked towards ‘inference closure’ (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). In so doing, it covered a range of diverse contexts and created a comprehensive

picture of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools. The study was also conducted in an ethical manner and it is to this discussion that I now turn.

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

No research should be presented without some discussion of the ethical considerations pertinent to the study. Ethics in this study was understood as “a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p. 58). For Terre Blanche and Durrheim, the essential purpose of ethical research is “to protect the welfare and the rights of research participants” (2002, p. 65). I abided by the ethical norms of voluntary participation and no harm to participants in each of the six strands of the synthesis study and these norms were “formalized in the concept of informed consent” (Babbie and Mouton, 1998, p. 522). Furthermore, all participants were aware of their right to withdraw at any time from the research. They were also assured anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses was guaranteed. Ethical clearance approval for the individual studies as well as the overarching synthesis study (ethical clearance number HSS/0085/10D) was received from the University of KwaZulu-Natal under whose auspices the study was conducted (See Appendix G). Furthermore, permission to include chronicles three, six and seven in the synthesis study was received in writing from my co-authors and the work allocation in each of these chronicles is detailed in Appendices A, B and C.

4.9. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I would like to reiterate that this chapter has two main purposes. The first purpose was to present, as a multi-strand design, the six independent research strands that underpinned the eight chronicles in my study. The second purpose was to argue for the organisation of the eight chronicles as a mixed research synthesis study. As a synthesis study, the eight chronicles were organised into three clusters, each around a particular research question. The design was contingent and the purpose was one of expansion rather than triangulation as I wanted to capture the plural voices of

educators, both consenting and dissenting, on teacher leadership. I argue confidently that adopting a mixed methods framework allowed me the space to work in ways which were “multiplistic, iterative, interactive, and dynamic” (Greene, 2008, p. 17).

In closing, I would like to reiterate the point that one of the outcomes of mixed research synthesis studies is “to direct both practice and future research” (Sandelowski *et al*, 2006, p. 29). In line with this thinking, my synthesis study achieved this outcome as it was a catalyst for future research. Let me illustrate what I mean. One of the limitations, as I argue in the final chapter of this thesis, is that my study was based on research which, to a large degree, constituted self-reported data and relied on the perceptions of educators about teacher leadership. In other words, it lacked rigorous observation in a sustained manner in the real life context of the school. In response to this limitation, as project leader I designed the teacher leader group project in 2008 – 2009 with 11 Master of Education students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In brief, the project explores the enactment of teacher leadership in schools and adopts a collective case study approach using a range of data collection tools, including participant observation. Thus it can be seen that my study was a catalyst for this group project which aims to develop our understanding of teacher leadership further.

The next three chapters in this thesis are dedicated to the presentation of the eight chronicles. Chapter Five contains the first cluster of chronicles (chronicles one, five, six and seven) which respond to research question one. Chapter Six contains the second cluster of chronicles (chronicles two and three) which respond to research question two. Chapter Seven contains the final cluster of chronicles (chronicles four and eight) which respond to research question three. The chronicles are presented in the exact form as they appear in the journal in which they are published. I did this deliberately as I wanted to retain the authenticity and originality of the chronicles for the reader. In these chapters, the chronicles are presented individually as stand-alone documents and are not mediated in any way. The synthesis of the chronicles follows later in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of the thesis.

What follows in Chapter Five, is the presentation of the first cluster of chronicles.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS: PRESENTING THE FIRST CLUSTER OF CHRONICLES

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapters Five, Six and Seven in this thesis are dedicated to the presentation of the chronicles which form the core of this PhD by publication. As discussed in the previous chapter, the eight chronicles were clustered together according to the logic of how they, for the most part, responded to the research questions. At the beginning of the synthesis process, it appeared fairly clear how each of the chronicles contributed to the research questions. However, as the synthesis process progressed, I realised the need to adjust the clusters slightly in order to better connect the research questions with the chronicles. Furthermore, while the clustering represents the strongest linkage between the chronicles and the research questions, I acknowledge that, in the majority of instances, the chronicles respond to more than one research question, as is evident in the insights chapters of this thesis.

In the presentation of the chronicles, each is presented in its original form as it appears in the education journal in which it is published. They are deliberately not mediated in any way as I wanted to retain their authenticity, innovation and uniqueness. To honour the originality of the chronicles, there is no mixing or connecting of findings in these chapters. The insights gathered as a result of the synthesis are discussed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of this thesis.

In this fifth chapter, I present the first cluster of chronicles which includes chronicles 1, 5, 6 and 7. These four chronicles were selected for inclusion in the thesis and clustered together because they, to a large extent answered the first research question: How is teacher leadership understood and practiced by educators (post level one teachers and SMT members) in mainstream South African schools?

Let me now briefly introduce the first cluster of chronicles. The first chronicle is entitled 'Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views'. It is published in the journal called *Education Management, Administration and Leadership*, 34(4) 2006, pp. 511 – 532. The aim of this chronicle was to explore, tentatively, educators' reflections on and understandings of the concept of teacher leader and to examine the potential value of the concept for school transformation in a South African context.

The fifth chronicle is entitled 'We did not put our pieces together: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens'. It is published in the *Journal of Education*, Vol. 44, 2008, pp. 85 – 107. The aim of this chronicle was to explore the take-up of teacher leadership in relation to a professional development initiative by educators in four schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

The sixth chronicle is entitled 'Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership'! It is published in the journal called *Perspectives in Education*, 27(3) 2009, pp. 289 – 301. The aim of this chronicle was to explore notions of distributed leadership within two fairly similar schools to determine how the leadership of the SMT either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership.

The seventh chronicle is entitled 'Perceptions and realities of teacher leadership: a survey'. It was submitted to the *South African Journal of Education* in June 2009 and is in the process of peer-review. The aim of this chronicle was to determine the perspectives and experiences of teachers on their understanding of teacher leadership in conveniently selected primary and secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

What follows is the presentation of each of the chronicles in this first cluster.

5.2. CHRONICLE ONE

ARTICLE

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Emerging Voices on Teacher Leadership

Some South African Views

Carolyn Grant

ABSTRACT

Prior to 1994, the education system of South Africa was characterized by a hierarchical and bureaucratic style of management as well as a situation where white schools were the key beneficiaries of resources and black schools massively disadvantaged. In 1996 a national task team made strategic proposals for education management capacity, including a self-management approach to schools and implicitly supporting the notion of teacher leadership for the new dispensation (Department of Education, 1996). Despite this enabling framework, however, few teachers appear to be embracing a teacher leader role and it is an unexplored area of research in South Africa. This article reports on the experiences of 11 university tutors, many of whom are also classroom-based teachers, around the concept of teacher leader, during a professional development initiative which ran parallel with their teaching on a postgraduate module. The article identifies how tutors develop their understanding of the concept of teacher leader during the initiative, explores the factors which may support or impede the take-up of this concept by teachers and argues that, without teacher leadership, the transformation of South African schools into professional learning communities is unlikely to occur.

KEYWORDS *agency, distributive, principal, teacher leader, voice*

Education in the South African Context

The Vision of New Policy

South Africa is a fledgling democracy. The extensive range of education policies which emerged so soon after 1994 reflect the new government's commitment to change, and its determination to 'construct an inspirational and viable vision of post-apartheid South Africa's education and training system' (Parker, 2003: 18). The South African Schools' Act of 1996 promotes a shift from centralized control and decision-making to a school-based system of education management. This requires schools to transform themselves from organizations which, historically, were hierarchically structured, into democratic organizations in

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line with what Senge (1990) calls learning organizations. The *Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) envisages the educator as an extended professional who is expected to perform seven roles, amongst them that of *leader, manager and administrator*. In other words, the concepts of teacher leadership and distributed leadership are implicit in current South African education policy documents.

The Policy–Practice Divide

Despite policies that aim to address the educational inequalities of the past, inequality remains a key feature of education in South African society. As a consequence, South African schools still experience vastly different realities. Most ex-model C (ex-white) schools in the urban areas are well-resourced with well-qualified teaching staff. However, the majority of schools (about 85%) are rural and are mostly very under-resourced, many with unqualified or under-qualified teachers on their staffs. The 1996 School Register of Needs Survey (Bot, 2000) found that 57 percent of all schools countrywide did not have electricity, 40 percent did not have access to piped water and 72 percent had no library book collections. Over 50 percent had pit latrines for toilets while 13 percent had no ablution facilities at all.

Over and above the radically unequal education context, the pace and complexity of the changes introduced have, in many instances, resulted in non-existent management competencies and ‘in principals being under-prepared for their new role’ (McLennan and Thurlow, 2003: 5). And yet, as the Education Management Development Task Team argues, any hope of the vision of the education policies succeeding will ‘depend largely on the nature and quality of their internal management’ (Department of Education, 1996: 28). Similarly, Beare et al. (1989) identify ‘outstanding leadership’ as a key characteristic of outstanding schools and argue that ‘the development of potential leaders must be given high priority’ (p. 99). More recently, researchers such as Hopkins (2001) and Harris (2004) have reinforced the importance of leadership in school improvement.

This article supports this view and argues that leadership is a critical issue in the transformation of South African schools but argues that a different understanding of leadership is needed; a shift from leadership as headship to a distributed form of leadership.

Leadership in South African schools

During the era of Apartheid Education, a view of leadership as headship dominated in South Africa. Leadership was understood in terms of position, status and authority. This view is captured in Bush’s ‘formal model’ of management where ‘heads possess authority legitimized by their formal positions within the organization and are accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their

institutions' (1995: 29). Findings from research on principals in KwaZulu-Natal suggest a rhetorical commitment by principals to collegiality but these claims are not corroborated (Bush, 2003). However, anecdotal evidence points to management still being viewed as the task of a few, and not the responsibility of all the members of an educational organization. A number of formal management and governance structures have been legislated by government, such as the School Governing Body (SGB),¹ the School Management Team (SMT),² and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL).³ The most powerful of these is the SGB which was created to involve parents and communities in the transformation of schools. Ironically, research has shown that 'despite its contribution to democratizing schools through the decentralization of power, school governance policy has serious inherent dangers for any movement towards the goal of equity' (Karlsson et al., 2001: 176). As a consequence, there is talk by the Minister of Education to review the South African Schools' Act, and school governance policy in particular, in a bid to achieve equity through the strengthening of the role of leadership in education (Pandor, 2005).

Towards Distributed Leadership and Teacher Leadership in Schools

In order to strengthen school leadership, the key concern is how to assist the internal management of schools in becoming more collaborative. As early as 1954, Gibb (cited in Gronn, 2000) wrote that leadership is best conceived as a group quality. In line with this view, a form of distributed leadership is needed where principals are willing to relinquish their power to others and where fixed leader-follower dualisms are abandoned 'in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles' (p. 325). As Bennett et al. (2003: 3) remind us, 'distributed leadership is not something "done" by an individual "to others", rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise'. It concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organization rather than seeking this only through formal position or role (Harris, 2004). Harris uses the term 'blind spot' to refer to the fact that much of the research literature has focused upon the formal leadership of head teachers in particular, and has overlooked the kinds of leadership that can be distributed across many roles and functions in a school.

In keeping with the notion of distributed leadership, teachers need to be encouraged to find their voices, take up their potential as leaders and change agents to produce a liberating culture in their schools. This requires a radical shift for schools from a 'dependency culture' to one of 'empowerment' (Thurlow, 2003: 37). Teacher leadership, a term which can be closely linked to distributed leadership, although not new in international literature, is new to the majority of educators and researchers in South Africa. Teachers need to shift from a follower role to one of operating as teacher leaders, whether they are informal leaders or in a formal leadership role such as that of head of department or learning area coordinator. But defining teacher leadership is not easy.

Muijs and Harris, in their 'overview of the literature paper', offer a range of definitions from the literature available and show how they overlap and compete (2003: 438–9). The definition of teacher leadership by two American authors, Marilyn Katzenmeyer and Gayle Moller, provides a useful starting point to a South African exploration of the concept. They write 'teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice' (2001: 17). They suggest that teacher leadership is required to transform schools into professional learning communities.

This article argues that teacher leadership is critical in the transformation of South African schools. Given the inequalities that remain pervasive in the schooling system coupled with the range of new policies that require radical change in every one of its systems, schools can no longer be led by a lone figure at the top of the hierarchy. The only way that schools will be able to meet the challenges is to tap the potential of all staff members and allow teachers to experience a sense of ownership and inclusivity and lead aspects of the change process. The scope is broad and may include leadership around curriculum issues, assessment, teaching and learning, community and parent participation, school vision building, networking, the development of partnerships and so on. By allowing for teacher leadership to emerge, genuine and sustained changes are more likely to occur and, over time, a collaborative ethos with an emphasis on sound teaching and learning is likely to emerge.

With this view in mind, this article aims to explore, in a tentative sense, a sample of South African teachers' understanding of the concept of teacher leader and its value for school transformation. Drawing upon a recent study of teacher leadership in a professional development initiative, the article briefly describes the university Honours-level tutor group who participated in the study and outlines the research methodology used. It then sketches a picture of the tutors' views on teacher leadership as they developed from the beginning of the module to the end and tentatively offers a model of teacher leadership arising from their understanding. Some of the barriers to teacher leadership are then examined and the article concludes by arguing that without teacher leadership and distributed leadership, the transformation of the South African schooling system will not take place.

The Study

The Tutor Group

This tutor professional development initiative ran parallel with the implementation of a new module called 'Education Leadership and Management' in the mixed mode⁴ Honours programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It was the introductory module in a staged process of implementation of a new specialization in 'Education Leadership and Management'. Tutors were

Table 1 Tutor group categories

Gender		Race		School position		Type of school	
Female	6	African	6	Teacher	4	Disdvantaged rural	6
Male	5	Indian	3	HOD	2	Disadvantaged urban	4
		Coloured	1	Act. Principal	2	Advantaged urban	1
		White	1	Consultant	2		
				DoE Official	1		

appointed on a part-time basis and selected on their ability to meet the criteria of an assessment task as well as their experience in management and leadership positions, either formal or informal. Although the 11 tutors selected were experienced in facilitation on the B.Ed. Hons or other mixed-mode programmes, and most had practical experience in leadership and management, the majority did not have a recent postgraduate qualification in this field and had, therefore, not been exposed to the new developments in education leadership theory. The tutor group can be categorized as in Table 1.

The Module

The 'Education Leadership and Management' module is underpinned by a view of leadership beyond the traditional understanding of leadership associated with formal position. It argues that all people have the potential to lead and life is a journey of developing this potential. The module content includes an exploration of the terms leadership, management and administration and explores the relationships between the terms using both South African and international literature. It then takes a look at school organization and juxtaposes classical management theory and bureaucracies against schools as learning organizations. The module then moves on to explore change theory in an attempt to understand and reflect on the education reform process in South Africa. It concludes with questions about who should lead, the type of leadership and management needed in schools and how to lead to ensure a smooth transformation process.

The Professional Development Initiative

Because tutors had not been exposed to the new developments in education leadership theory, they were invited to participate in an initiative to assist them in this area of professional development and reflection. Reflection has come to be widely recognized as a crucial element in the professional growth of teachers (Calderhead and Gates, 1993). With this in mind, the aim of the professional development initiative was to offer support to the tutors through membership in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998; Grant, 2005) and

through involvement in a self-reflective journaling process. The content focus of this initiative was to engage with ideas and reflections around leadership and management in the South African context in general and distributive forms of leadership, such as teacher leadership, in particular.

Because the majority of tutors lived in towns away from the university and because they were inexperienced in the reflective journaling process, communication was via fax or email, using a narrative or experiential approach with guiding questions. Over the semester, four structured entries were given to tutors and, on receiving each tutor's response, the coordinator responded personally in writing in an attempt to get a dialogue going.

Research Design

Aim and Questions

The main research aim was to explore tutors' reflections on and understanding of the concept of teacher leadership and examine its potential value for the South African schooling context. For the purposes of this study the following definition of teacher leadership was developed and used:

Teacher leadership implies a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared vision of their school within a culture of mutual respect and trust.

The questions put to tutors were simple and fitted well within the interpretive paradigm (Cohen et al., 2000) which sets out to describe, interpret and explain the manner in which participants make sense of situations and the way meanings are reflected in their actions. They were asked, for example, if the concept of teacher leader was new to them and whether it resonated with them as something they could use in their own school context. They were regularly asked, over the six-month period, how they understood the concept of teacher leader. The research did not deliberately set out to develop a model or theory of teacher leadership but there was an awareness of this possibility.

Data Collection and Sampling

The study was qualitative in nature, using all 11 tutors teaching on the 'Education Leadership and Management' module. Tutor journals were the primary data source and, by the end of the semester, a total of 33 journal entries out of a possible 44 had been received. All 33 entries were analysed. Of the 11 tutors, five submitted all four entries, three submitted three, two submitted two and one only submitted one.

To corroborate the data collected in the journal entries and explore understanding further, a focus group interview was run towards the end of the semester to give tutors a space to create a group meaning of teacher leadership by shaping and reshaping their individual opinions. This was tape-recorded and the transcript of the recording was used as a secondary data source.

Data Analysis

Because the research aim was exploratory in nature, content analysis was used to analyse the data. The analysis was predominantly thematic and therefore qualitative. After multiple readings of all the texts (the 34 journal entries and the transcript of the focus group interview), texts were analysed and codes developed as patterns emerged from the data. Codes were later grouped together to form categories of teacher leadership. Four of the categories were then organized into developmental levels of teacher leadership while the remaining two categories were clearly broader and were relevant because of their impact on the four levels of teacher leadership. While this did lead to a model of teacher leadership, it initially started with an interest in the area and allowed what was relevant to teacher leadership to emerge, in essence a grounded theory approach.

Methodological Issues

The major limitation of this study was around the authenticity of the data sources. Were the tutor reflections actually their own or were they merely reciting the views in the module or in the reading they were given? In response to this question, the module content did not cover teacher leadership directly at all. The term was never mentioned and there were no readings on teacher leadership in the module. As part of the support to tutors, they were given a copy of the 'overview of the literature paper' (Muijs and Harris, 2003) towards the end of the semester. This was used as a catalyst to get tutors to compare their views on teacher leadership with those of other writers and, perhaps, to extend their own understanding within the South African context. Although there were similarities between some of the ideas of writers in the paper and comments in the journal entries, at no stage did it seem that tutors were merely reciting these views. On the contrary, tutors journal entries were supported with explanations and were contextualized within their particular school experience using local anecdotes and stories.

A second question around the authenticity of the data was whether tutors were writing what they thought the coordinator wanted them to write. In an attempt to prevent this from occurring, the tutors were asked in the fourth journal entry whether their reflections were authentic, whether they were, in fact, being honest in their reflections or whether they were simply writing what they thought was expected of them. One tutor responds:

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In all the journal entries I make, I write about my daily experience, what is in my heart is reflected in my journal. I give honest opinions and suggestions. I write about things I see in my daily life and things I learnt about.

Another tutor writes:

Journal entries are done honestly. I do not see reason to be untruthful because of the constant soul-searching involved. Introspection does not allow one to hide away from truths.

It seems from the tutors' comments that they were responding honestly. Even when asked this question orally, they pleaded honesty. It seems that because the journal writing process was a voluntary activity, tutors who took the time to invest in the writing process took it seriously, gave much thought to their responses and did not just recite other peoples' views on teacher leadership. Perhaps those who did not want to engage properly with the rigours of the reflective process were the few who did not complete the journal writing process. However, despite the above attempts to ensure an authentic process, the above issues concerning the validity of the data need to be acknowledged.

The next section of this article uses quotations from the journals as well as the focus group interview to support the exploration of teacher leadership. Because individual journal entries are the primary source of data, quotations from this source are not referenced (for example, the two quotations above). However, quotations from the focus group interview are referenced accordingly.

Voices on Teacher Leadership

Initial Views of Tutors: Leadership as Formal Position

Tutors were asked to work through the module materials at the beginning of the course and were tasked with the first journal entry at the end of the tutor training session which marked the start of the initiative. Here tutors were asked to write about their own understanding of the concepts of education leadership and management and to reflect on some leadership/management experiences in their lives and how they made them feel.

In response to this entry, six tutors understood leadership in relation to headship, equating principal with leader. The remaining five tutors showed an understanding of leadership as a shared or group activity. However, two of these five described this shared activity within a hierarchical school organization discourse, for example, 'I believe a leader may be part of every hierarchy in the school—*right down* to the classroom teacher' (emphasis added). This understanding of leadership indicates power dynamics and inequality between the principal and the teacher based on the positions in the hierarchy. Only three of the 11 tutors understood leadership within a flatter school structure, for

example, 'I have found it impossible for any individual to be able to lead people, manage people and process without sharing some responsibilities with colleagues. It is imperative that in the schooling system these roles have to be shared with every teacher in the school'. It was clear then, from the first journal entries, that the majority of tutors had not fully grasped the concept of leadership as a shared or distributed activity within a flatter organizational structure.

An Emerging Model of Teacher Leadership

Journal entries two, three and four were explicitly about teacher leadership. Questions included tutors' understanding of the term, the benefits of and the barriers to teacher leadership as well as its value for South African schools. Tutor views on these basic questions developed over time and the shifts in their thinking were reflected in their journals and in the interview transcript. Following extensive reading of all the data from the two data sources, data were coded and themes began to emerge which were then categorized into four levels of teacher leadership. Each level built to some extent on the previous one. And slowly an understanding of teacher leadership by the tutors as a group began to emerge.

For the tutors, teacher leadership was understood:

- within the classroom
- as working with other teachers
- as part of whole school development
- as an extension beyond the school.

Level One: Teachers Must Be Leaders *within the Classroom* as They Manage the Teaching/Learning Process

In the second journal entry, tutors were asked directly how they understood the concept of teacher leader. At this point, the term was understood in terms of classroom leadership. As one tutor wrote, 'In the classroom situation teachers are the designated leaders. They set goals, implement procedures, instruct, guide, facilitate, mobilize learners, motivate and inspire learners and model behaviour'. And in the words of another tutor:

teachers are 'leaders in practice'. The educator is the leader of his pack of learners, sincerely endeavouring to put theory into practice although all theories are not always practical. The teacher leader interprets his/her own curriculum, with his/her own inputs to eventually reach given outcomes.

Using the typologies of 'restricted' and 'extended' professionalism (Hoyle, 1980; Broadfoot et al., 1988), we can understand the above view of teacher leadership in terms of the notion of 'restricted professionalism', which refers to teachers whose thinking and practice is narrowly classroom based. This first level,

reached by all 11 tutors, is reflected in much of the literature on teacher leadership which emphasizes that teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers (Ash and Persall, 2000; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001).

Level Two: Teachers Must Also Lead beyond the Classroom as They Develop *Working Relationships with Other Teachers*

This level emerged in later journal entries and is aptly expressed in the words of one tutor, as follows:

It [teacher leadership] can help encourage teachers to change to do things without guidance or influence of principals or heads of department, to move beyond the classroom and start motivating, guiding and creating relationships and connections among teachers so as to improve educational practices.

This quotation highlights the need for autonomy in teacher leadership, and 'extended professionalism' (Hoyle, 1980; Broadfoot et al., 1988), the latter referring to teachers who understand their work more broadly and continually research and evaluate their work to change and improve it. This second level was also reflected in tutors' references to the establishment of 'grade committees' in schools. Another tutor writes of the need for teacher leadership of 'the curriculum in primary schools and subject departments in secondary schools'.

This second level of teacher leadership, reached by seven of the 11 tutors, is common in the literature. It is similar to Day and Harris's (2002) fourth dimension of teacher leadership where individual teachers forge close relationships through which mutual learning takes place. It also matches Katzenmeyer and Moller's definition where teacher leaders 'identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice' (2001: 17).

Level Three: Teachers Should Become more Involved in *Whole School Development* Issues such as Vision Building and Policy Development

As early as the second journal entry there were attempts by tutors to describe teacher leadership beyond the classroom in the area of whole school development. There was reference to teacher leadership in relation to sports, projects, extra-curricular activities and school task teams such as those related to developing school policy, staff development, and the school development team. One tutor even wrote that the teacher leader 'is to have a dream about the school and has to articulate where s/he intends to see the school in the near future'. This was one of the first comments which linked teacher leadership directly to the visionary aspect of leadership. This level of teacher leadership was extended further by a different tutor to include fundraising and additional duties such as responsibility for stock, textbooks and uniforms (Focus group interview, 11 June 2004, p. 3).

This third level, discussed by seven tutors in this study, connects with the work of Day and Harris (2002) who reflect on teacher leadership as it focuses on participative leadership where colleagues work together to shape whole school improvement efforts. It is also echoed in Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2001) discussion of a professional learning community of teacher leaders within a particular school.

Level Four: Finally Teachers Should Extend Themselves beyond the School and Lead in Community Life and Cross-School Networking

The dimension of teachers as leaders extending themselves beyond the school emerged towards the end of the semester, and is reflected in the following quotation: 'I have witnessed and experienced teachers creating links with teachers of other schools so as to improve classroom practices'. More specifically cluster leaders of learning areas within districts were mentioned. One tutor explains:

In your learning area, if you are working with the Superintendent of Education Management (SEM) to facilitate workshops and do moderation, oral moderation of whatever exam or cluster moderation . . . like the moderation for languages and so on. I think all those things would be counted as teacher leadership. (Focus group interview, 11 June 2004, p. 6)

Other examples of teacher leadership, which fit into this level, include teachers sitting on the School Governing Body, acting as union site stewards, becoming chairpersons of the district learning area committees and working at the help desks of the various trade unions (Focus group interview, 11 June 2004). In the literature on teacher leadership, level four, reached by six tutors in this study, is reflected in research by Wasley (1994) into 'teaming' across schools as a critical dimension of teacher leadership. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) also reflect this dimension when they locate teacher leadership within a larger school organization, the school district, and argue that colleges and universities have a role in preparing teachers as leaders. Sergiovanni (2001) too emphasizes the role of the effective school district in supporting school leadership processes.

Some Reflections

At this point it may be worthwhile to look at some general characteristics of the tutors who reached at least three out of the four levels of understanding of teacher leadership. These tutors appeared to be committed to their own professional development beyond the minimum requirements of the initiative. They took the reflective process seriously and engaged in personal and professional introspection. They extended the journal writing beyond the set entries by engaging with the coordinator in an ongoing, written dialogue. Their

writings were thoughtful, personal and they reflected deeply on their own experience and practice. Their entries were longer than the brief responses of some of the other tutors yet they were not engaged in quantity for quantity's sake. Their views were relevant and illuminating and interspersed with a range of questions to extend their thinking further.

Tutors' reflections extended beyond the four levels of teacher leadership discussed above. As their understanding of teacher leadership developed and expanded from levels one through to four, they began to locate teacher leadership within the broader South African context.

Understanding Teacher Leadership, Understanding Context

In attempting to define teacher leadership, five of the tutors explicitly and three tutors implicitly highlighted the importance of understanding the concept within a broader context of educational change. Tutors argued that the term should always be understood against a backdrop of a fledging democracy emerging from an apartheid history whilst still carrying the legacy of poverty and inequality. South Africa, as a country in transformation, requires teacher leaders who understand and are willing to lead the change process. According to one tutor:

A teacher leader is someone who is aware of the demands made by the changing South African situation on the schools to change. This awareness would mean that the teacher leader has some idea/knowledge, which could be used to transform the schools into better places of learning for both learners and educators. A true teacher leader is one who has the courage to take the initiative to make this change.

Against this backdrop of change, another tutor writes, 'the concept of teachers being leaders is now more significant than ever before. It calls for teachers to have a vision for the future, shouldering more responsibilities, and being able to take the first step'.

Like the tutors, Sergiovanni emphasizes the transformatory aspect of teacher leadership when he promotes the idea that 'together, principals and teachers become followers of the dream and are committed to making it real' (2001: 145). Similarly, Katzenmeyer and Moller argue that 'by using the energy of teacher leaders as agents of school change, the reform of public education will stand a better chance of building momentum' (2001: 2).

This reference to 'reform of public education' reinforces the view of the South African tutors about the importance of understanding the power of teacher leadership against the macro-political context.

As tutors developed their understanding of teacher leadership within the South African context, they began to articulate some of the prerequisites they felt were necessary for the take-up of teacher leadership in schools. These prerequisites reflect very much the same as those identified in the literature (see for example, Muijs and Harris, 2003) and are explored in the next section.

Prerequisites for Teacher Leadership

These include:

- A collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision-sharing;
- A set of values which assist to develop this collaborative culture;
- Distributed leadership on the part of the principal and formal management teams.

The following excerpt from a tutor journal captures the essence of this category. Interestingly, it seemed that the experience of this tutor is unique. She is the only one of the 11 tutors who seems to have had real experience of teacher leadership in her school context. This teacher describes her principal as having a democratic leadership style and changing her school in the following way:

Different task teams were elected. Everybody felt important in each team, members were involved in making policies and for all matters; there was consultation and communication. The principal is so transparent such that everybody now owns the school. The respect of other peoples' ideas and contributions is one of the reasons which have made teachers feel important. Wherever tasks are delegated, the school management team trusts teachers and emphasized that to have tasks completed, is empowerment for the team and individuals. To trust and respect teachers is important because it develops their sense of worth; hence they happily participate in all programmes of the school.

The excerpt above gets to the heart of teacher leadership because it outlines the values which lie at the centre of the development of quality relationships which are fundamental to a collaborative culture and organizational change. These include transparency, trust, respect, a sense of worth, communication, consultation and ownership. And, as Hayes argues, 'if people are given responsibility and autonomy, they will rise to it: if they are trusted, they will be trustworthy' (1997: 23). These values were endorsed by the other tutors, as were those of shared responsibility, inclusivity, equality, sensitivity to individuals and the courage to take initiative (Focus group interview, 11 June 2004). Courage was arguably the most common value to be mentioned in relation to teacher leadership: 'A true teacher leader is one who has the courage to take the initiative to make this change'. Walker's views on the values underpinning successful teamwork articulate closely here: 'For teamwork to be successful the culture of the school must be based on the fundamental values of openness, trust and participation. It would be a futile exercise to implement a team structure in a school that fosters secrecy and suspicion' (1994: 40). Finally, the three values, mentioned in the following quotation, can also be added to an understanding of teacher leadership: 'It is, however, my view that this concept has a chance to grow in SA if spiced with perseverance, flexibility and enthusiasm'.

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The critical role of the principal in delegating authority to colleagues is also highlighted in the above excerpt. It calls for a principal who has the right balance of confidence and humility to distribute leadership wisely where strengths in colleagues are evident. Another tutor supports this stance and writes of the need for all principals to 'continuously encourage all colleagues to take on leading roles in many co-curricular activities in their schools'. This view is further endorsed: 'I think that principals play a pivotal role in this regard. If they can motivate teachers to become leaders it will not only be beneficial to the teachers themselves but the entire organization'.

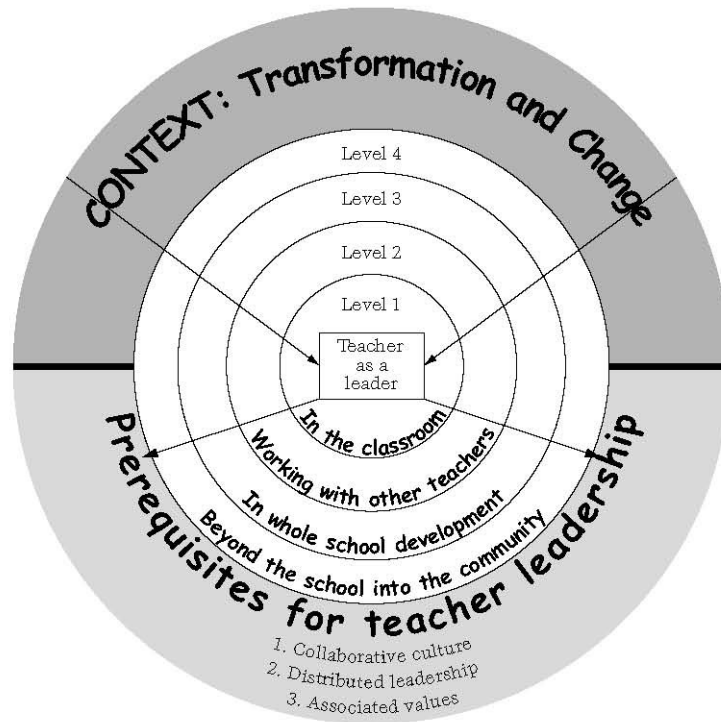
The majority of the tutors argued that the success of the concept of teacher leader would be directly related to school culture. A school that wishes to embrace teacher leadership would need to develop a culture that supports collaboration, partnership, team teaching and collective decision-making. This need for a collaborative culture in teacher leadership is discussed in the work of Lieberman and her colleagues (1988). It is also implicit in Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2001) dimensions of shared leadership and supportive conditions within professional learning communities.

Bush categorizes this type of culture as a 'collegial model' which 'includes all those theories that emphasise that power and decision-making should be shared amongst some or all members of the organisation' (1995: 52). As one tutor asserts: 'There needs to be an assertive effort to focus on inclusivity, collective decision-making and to foster a more collaborative way of working'. Another tutor writes that, 'as a leader, a teacher has to work with other practitioners in team teaching and participate in the decision making (cooperative programme planning and teaching)'. Yet another tutor refers to 'working relationships that are more relaxed where ideas are shared without fear'. Tutors agreed that teachers need to experience a sense of ownership as they involve themselves in the life of a school. They need to feel that they are 'playing an integral part in the school and are not just subject to authoritative instruction and rule'.

The Model

The four levels of teacher leadership that emerged from the tutors in this professional development initiative, together with the prerequisite of a collaborative culture, fit comfortably with many of the dimensions of teacher leadership in the literature. However, what this study highlighted was the dimension of context and transformation coupled with the values or attitudes a teacher leader would need to foreground in order to effect change in South African schools. These values included the courage to lead and take risks; the perseverance to continue with the change process, regardless of setbacks or resistance from colleagues; as well as the enthusiasm to lead and to encourage enthusiasm in those with whom one is working. In attempting to capture the various aspects of teacher leadership which emerged in this tutor initiative, the following model is tentatively offered.

Figure 1 Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa



It seems then that, in developing a definition of teacher leadership for South Africa, one may need to foreground values and context, together with a need for distributed leadership of the principal, an essential prerequisite. According to Muijs and Harris (2003), other writers have identified further dimensions of teacher leadership such as undertaking action research (Ash and Persall, 2000) and peer classroom observation (Little, 2000). These dimensions were not reflected in the tutor views.

Barriers to Teacher Leadership

Tutors wrote of the many barriers to teacher leadership, but three dominated their experiences.

Hierarchical School Organization Controlled by Autocratic Principals

The most powerful barrier to the take-up of the concept of teacher leader, based on the experience of the tutors, is that many South African schools are still bureaucratically and hierarchically organized with principals who 'are autocratic and show negativity to teachers who attempt to take up a leading role

outside the classroom! One tutor writes about problems with a hierarchical organization structure which:

Restricts activities somewhat when those in higher authority feel that they know better or do not support ideas of other teachers. At SMT meetings issues are merely for information—passed from principal to especially Heads of Departments. This creates an unpleasant situation.

In other words, we have traditional leadership practices, which emphasize 'hierarchy, rules and management protocols and rely on bureaucratic linkages to connect people to work by forcing them to respond as subordinates' (Sergiovanni, 2001: 132). Although this is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to mention that these practices are unlikely to be restricted to the school situation alone and are possibly modelled by district and regional education officers when managing the principals.

It was clear from the data that principals played a pivotal role in the success or otherwise of teacher leadership. Principals are afraid that 'if they share that someone's gonna take their position' (Focus group interview, 11 June 2004, p. 5) and so their status is threatened. This concurs with the research of Yukl: 'Failure to delegate may be the result of a strong need for power by a manager, sometimes combined with insecurity' (1998: 139). Furthermore, in the words of a tutor: 'An area of concern also is the very authoritarian mentality that still persists in schools. I think this too is a pity because many of the teachers indicated a willingness to try out what they learnt, but felt that they would be restricted! In a similar vein, another tutor wrote 'principals who are autocratic and who do not believe in delegation are in fear of being overthrown by level one teachers'. This was the personal experience of one of the tutors, a teacher in a rural school: 'my work at school lowers my self esteem when it comes to leadership. The school management team, mostly the principal, always makes sure that he opposes most of my views even how constructive they are'.

Senge et al. (2000: 325) remind us that 'a school's culture is its most enduring aspect . . . culture is rooted deeply in people. It is embodied in their attitudes, values and skill, which in turn stem from their personal backgrounds, from their life experiences . . .'. Some of the suggestions given for peoples' resistance to teacher leadership in this study were related to contextual factors. Amongst others the issues of ethnic culture and gender were cited. In KwaZulu-Natal, both the Xhosa and Zulu cultures are extremely traditional and patriarchal with power being vested in the position of the male.

A tutor, reflecting on the difficulties experienced as a woman HOD attempting to lead her department, writes:

As Head of Department of the Language, Literacy and Communications department reaching consensus on the way team members need to engage with each other sometimes was problematic. Mostly, I think this was because I was female as well as being on the same staff before being promoted.

An Understanding of Leadership as Linked to a Formal Position

Closely linked to the notion of autocratic principals is the widespread assumption that only people in formal management positions should lead. According to the tutors this is a further barrier to teacher leadership. One tutor reflects on school management teams who 'feel insecure and threatened by their colleagues' innovative ideas'. This leads to school management teams who 'are overloading themselves by monopolizing leadership roles instead of making it a collective action by all educators at school'. Teachers registered fear at the thought of challenging senior management regarding their role in leadership: 'Outside the classroom many teachers do not want to or are afraid to or experience constraints due to too much power from the top structure, to take on the role as leader'. This view concurs with the literature which points towards 'top-down' management structures in schools as a major impediment to the development of teacher leadership (Muijs and Harris, 2003). In the South African context, policy documents emphasize principal accountability and this may well be one reason why school principals are afraid to delegate authority. This requires further research.

Teachers Who Are Resistant to Change

Yet for teacher leadership to occur, not only do principals need to distribute authority, but teachers also need to understand and take-up their agency role. As Muijs and Harris argue, 'teacher leadership roles cannot easily be imposed by management' (2003: 442). This suggests that teachers become intrinsically motivated and see both the personal and professional benefits of taking up the role of teacher leadership. The tutors in this study were of the opinion that, in many instances, South African teachers were so steeped in a hierarchical, authoritarian discourse of leadership from the apartheid era that they would be unlikely to effect this change. One tutor writes that many teachers 'firmly believe that the principal's role is to lead and the teacher's is to follow/obey'. Teachers resist leadership roles because:

They don't want to take initiative. They're afraid. They see it like extra. Like they have been asked to do extra and they feel like it is the SMTs responsibility to lead and they are just there to do the minimum or what they're expected to do between the four walls of their classroom.

Another tutor agrees,

This might take time, because a complete paradigm shift (new mind set) will have to take place. Educators being in a specific mould, a kind of comfort zone in which they feel themselves secured, might be difficult to be compelled to other ways of thinking. The reason for this, I would say, is that things have always been working for them thus far, so why bother?

This concurs with the research of Steyn and Squelch (1997) which found that many teachers are not interested in participating in management issues, which involve extra work and meetings, preferring to just do their work and leave immediately after school. In other words, the stakes involved in the take-up of the 'extra work' around teacher leadership were not sufficiently strong enough to warrant the effort. So one needs to ask what the benefits of teacher leadership are. What is the 'pay-off' in embarking on this journey?

Determining the 'Pay-off'

According to the tutors, the benefits of teacher leadership for schools centred on strong stakeholder relationships, teamwork and the development of networks. For individual teachers the benefits included opportunities for personal growth and fulfilment, taking charge of one's own development through identifying one's strengths and pursuing these. Teacher leadership was also closely tied to creativity, affirmation and encouragement.

Tutor support for teacher leadership centred on the critical need in South Africa to transform the many schools from their present hierarchical organization with autocratic leadership into effective learning organizations. They argued, 'the literature surrounding the concept and the fact that there is a great need for us to transform our schools are factors that support the take-up of the concept by me'. Furthermore, policies such as the *Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000), challenge teachers to take up a leadership role.

Towards a South African Contribution

The South African education terrain remains one of diversity, complexity and, at times, chaos. While there are likely to be some schools that operate as professional learning communities, the majority of schools are characterized by a culture of opposition, dependency and non-participation as a legacy of apartheid (Thurlow, 2003). South Africa's history has taught teachers to mistrust, to doubt, to work on one's own and certainly not to trust anyone in authority. Fear experienced by principals as a result of the professional development of their staff, is also common. Lieberman and her colleagues emphasize the importance of building trust in a collaborative setting (1988). Lumby concurs and argues that 'trust within a school among staff, and of parents and other stakeholders in the community, cannot be assumed' (2003: 101). One way to restore the dignity and professionalism of teachers, this article argues, is to develop a culture of teacher leadership and distributed leadership in schools where teachers are able to reclaim their voices and where principals are able to regain their legitimacy.

The data from this professional development initiative offer up a multi-layered understanding of teacher leadership for the South African context. The model developed incorporated leadership in and beyond the classroom

including relationships with other teachers, involvement in whole school development initiatives as well as leadership beyond the school into the community. Yet, of equal importance was placing this understanding of teacher leadership within the South African context of change and transformation. For teacher leadership to develop in a context of radical change and transformation, the development of appropriate attitudes and values is critical. Teacher leadership is about courage, risk taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm within a culture of transparency and mutual learning. The main barriers to teacher leadership that emerged in this initiative included hierarchical school organization controlled by autocratic principals, an understanding of leadership as linked to a formal position, as well as teachers who are initially resistant to change because of their lack of understanding of the complexity of the change process. These barriers are real and must be taken seriously in the quest for teacher leadership. As Harris warns: 'It would be naïve to ignore the major structural, cultural and micropolitical barriers operating in schools that make distributed forms of leadership difficult to implement' (2004: 19).

Given the tutors' initial responses to teacher leadership, and given the lack of research on teacher leadership in South Africa, it is likely that the majority of teachers in South Africa are unaware of the concepts of teacher leadership and distributed leadership. They probably do not, as yet, realize their role in the transformation of schools, despite the concepts being imbedded in policy documents. This is in line with Katzenmeyer and Moller's view that 'within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership, which can be a strong catalyst for making change' (2001: 2). Yet, as Kraak and Young state: 'Implementation of changes in a system with deep historical divisions and low levels of capacity is inevitably a slow process when compared to the relatively easy task of designing new policies' (2001: 4). Hartshorne and Graudy have a similar view of education change: 'The education system is not a machine that can be overhauled, but a living organism which grows out of its earlier incarnations' (1999: 89).

Developing a culture of teacher leadership must be seen as an evolutionary process, underpinned by a new understanding of leadership. This understanding is vividly captured in the words of Lambert: 'leadership, like energy, is not finite, not restricted by formal authority and power; it permeates a healthy school culture and is undertaken by whoever sees a need or an opportunity' (1995: 33).

Teachers, principals and schools need time to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for distributed leadership and teacher leadership to become a reality. However, the journey must begin. Conceptual development and changes in behaviour can occur simultaneously. Principals need to be supported as they learn to delegate authority and teachers need to be supported as they take up their leadership role. Underpinning these ideas is the understanding that learning and leading are not solitary events but ongoing social interactions. Any attempts to develop teacher leadership must include the

development of a variety of staff teams or communities of practice each with their own purpose and goals, some around personal and others around professional development. Action research projects within schools may well afford the opportunity for teacher leadership and development. Leadership will need to be strongly invitational to build the kind of relationships that create supportive school cultures and communities based on trust, respect, optimism, intention and action (Stoll and Fink, 1995).

The initial work on teacher leadership presented in this article is taken from a very small study and the limitations of the findings are acknowledged. However, the findings do suggest a need for substantial research into teacher leadership and distributed leadership in South Africa. There is an urgent need to awaken this 'sleeping giant' of teacher leadership because, without this voice, the transformation of South African schools into professional learning communities will remain a pipedream.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. The SGB governs the school. It comprises the principal, parents elected by other parents, teachers elected teachers, learners elected by the RCL, non-teaching staff as well as co-opted members.
2. Legislation does not define a SMT. The working definition is that the SMT consists of the following members: principal, deputy principal (if appointed) and the heads of department.
3. The RCL is the official representative structure of learners in a high school which provides the opportunity for learners to participate in school governance and to participate in appropriate decision-making.
4. 'Mixed-mode' denotes a combination of face-to-face teaching and distance learning strategies, i.e. independent study and resource-based learning.

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Biographical note

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5.3. CHRONICLE FIVE

‘We did not put our pieces together’: exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

Callie Grant

Abstract

Research in education leadership has been dominated by a traditional view of leadership which separates school leaders from teachers. More recent research calls for distributed forms of leadership where all teachers are viewed as having the capacity to lead and where power is redistributed across the organisation. This article argues for the critical importance of linking professional development initiatives to issues of leading. It explores specifically, teacher leadership in relation to a professional development initiative attended by educators from four schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It reports on qualitative data gathered from school management team (SMT) members, teachers and project leaders collected eight months after the initiative, using questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Findings reveal that teacher leadership in terms of the implementation of the new pedagogic learning was restricted to individual classrooms with little take-up as a whole school initiative. This suggests that conditions in the schools were not always conducive to authentic collaboration, redistribution of power and teacher leadership. It further suggests the need for professional development initiatives to consciously address leadership issues and post-initiative support processes when they are conceptualised. The paper calls for a radical reconceptualisation of leadership where leadership is understood as a shared activity involving a range of social relationships with educators operating as agents for change as they work towards the goal of improved teaching and learning.

Introduction

This paper uses the concept of teacher leadership within a framework of distributed leadership theory to report on a school-based model of professional development which was explicitly designed to offer teachers opportunities to practise new pedagogic learning in an authentic teaching context before returning to their schools in order to assist with ‘take-up’ (after Adler, 2002) of the new learning in their classrooms and schools. In this paper I work from the premise that the central focus of education leadership is to set direction and guide the school in achieving its core function of effective teaching and learning. In order to achieve this core function, leadership must be understood as a shared process which involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and

develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school. In other words, I am suggesting that teaching and learning is central to educational leadership. And, if this is the case, then it follows that the continuing professional development of educators is a crucial element of education leadership. So I argue that any teacher professional development initiative must be linked to issues of leading. For without addressing issues of leadership, the take-up of the new learning from any initiative is likely to remain at a personal level and become restricted to individual classrooms. It is within the framework of critical education leadership, I believe, that the take-up of new learning as a whole school initiative is more likely to occur. And this requires a culture of communication, collaboration and questioning in a distributed leadership context where teachers, whether operating as formal or informal leaders, create an environment in which to grapple with the new learning, share ideas, take calculated risks in implementing the new ideas and reflect critically on the process with a view to ongoing improvement. It is within these professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) that power in the school is redistributed and where teachers can operate as leaders as they strive towards a more equitable society.

Leading through distribution

This paper works from the premise that ‘leadership’ is a process which works towards movement and change in an organisation while ‘management’ is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Although distinct processes, both leadership and management are needed for an organisation to prosper (Kotter, 1990). However leadership and management processes have traditionally been located within a single individual and most often been equated with headship (Muijs and Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006). In contrast to this singular view of leadership, I believe that leaders can exist at all levels of an organisation and, in the context of this paper, a school. I particularly like Gunter’s (2005) definition of education leadership because it links leadership to teaching and learning, it views leadership inclusively and it includes the capacity building of educators. Theorising from a critical perspective, she is of the opinion that

education leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others’ learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning.

(Gunter, 2005, p.6)

This inclusive approach to leadership as well as its capacity building aspect is

at the heart of the distributive leadership model. As Harris and Muijs explain, “Distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise where it exists in the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role (2005, p. 28). They go on to say that distributed leadership offers the school “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture” (2005, p.31). For Gronn, distributed leadership is a group activity where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where “leadership is seen as fluid and emergent rather than as a fixed phenomenon” (2000, p.324). Similarly, as Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods (2003, p.3) remind us, “distributed leadership is not something ‘done’ by an individual ‘to others’, rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise”.

A useful characterisation of distributed leadership is offered by Gunter (2005). She suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic. Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership is where tasks are distributed from the principal to others in a hierarchical system of relations where the principal has positional authority. This type of leadership can also be termed ‘delegated leadership’ and is evident where there are “teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation” (Woods, 2004, p.6). Secondly, *dispersed* distributed leadership refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous, emergent process “through networks in which the private interests of the individual are promoted through group and/or collective actions, and through the community where the public good secures the defence of the individual” (Gunter, 2005, p.52). This type of leadership opens up the space for what Gronn terms “co- or partner principalships” (2003, p.151) and which centres on “spontaneity” and “intuitive working relations” (*ibid.*, pp.42–43). Dispersed distributed leadership, through sharing the leadership tasks more widely and redefining roles, shifts the power relations in the school in the achievement of the predefined organisational goals and values. Thirdly, *democratic* distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004) and raises questions that encompass “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p.57).

Thus the concept of distributed leadership, as characterised above, is powerful in that it opens up a variety of possibilities for teachers to lead in different areas, at different times and with different purposes in their professional lives.

Teacher leadership

Implicit within the model of distributed leadership are the leadership practices of teachers. Teacher leadership, as it is known in the research literature, provides an important starting point in exploring how distributed leadership works in schools as it provides “operational images of joint agency in action and illustrates how distributed forms of leadership can be developed and enhanced to contribute to school development and improvement” (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p.440). Teacher leadership is understood and defined differently by many different writers internationally. But, as Harris and Lambert emphasise, the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that “teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (2003, p.44). They further explain that teacher leadership has as its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (2003, p.43). In the South African context, the concept of teacher leadership is new and is slowly emerging as a new area of research interest (see Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Singh, 2007; Rajagopaul, 2007). Developing on the definition of teacher leadership by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), I have argued that, for the South African context, teacher leadership can be understood as:

a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal and formal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust.

(Grant, forthcoming)

From the above brief discussion of teacher leadership it becomes apparent that, in order for teacher leadership to emerge in a school, certain structural and cultural conditions are necessary. These include, firstly, a culture of distributed leadership within the school (Grant, 2006) where teacher leaders are supported by school management and other teachers (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001); secondly, collaboration and shared decision-making within a culture of mutual trust, support and enquiry (Harris and Lambert, 2003); and, finally, support by the school’s management team for teachers’ professional development by providing time and resources for continuing professional

development activities and by validating the concept of teacher leadership (Muijs and Harris, 2003).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) call for schools to become professional learning communities where democratic and participatory decision-making exists and where teachers can thrive and make a difference through the actions they take in such school contexts. The concept of 'communities of practice' (after Wenger, 1998) is useful here to develop our understanding of this culture of collaboration and participation. People, and therefore teachers too, belong to many different communities of practice at different times in their lives, some of which are "sometimes so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons are also quite familiar (1998, p.7). These communities are characterised by learning as social participation through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning where participation is a process of "being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities" (Wenger, 1998, p.4). Learning takes place, according to Lave and Wenger (1999), with the increased participation in communities of practice and it is within these professional communities, I argue, that one can find teacher leaders. However, as Ash and Persall (2000) emphasise, professional development initiatives should not be imposed by a central office but should rather be site-based and collaborative and should take cognizance of the goals of the school and the needs of individuals. To a large extent this was the case with the professional development initiative reported on in this paper. A further important point to make is that authentic teacher leadership too cannot be imposed but will emerge as teachers embrace new initiatives and innovate in a climate of trust and mutual learning (Grant, 2006). Explained slightly differently, teacher leadership is more a "form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning" (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43). It can involve teachers working for change in a school by changing classroom practice itself, by working together with other teachers on curriculum issues, by working at a whole school level to bring about change or by networking across schools (Grant, 2006). It must be emphasised at this point that pursuing teacher leadership within different communities of practice in a school does not suggest that the role of the principal becomes redundant. On the contrary, the role of those people in formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership and creating opportunities for teachers to lead through the creation of a culture of collaboration and by using the strengths and talents of the individual teachers. The task of the SMT becomes one of holding "the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.28).

The professional development initiative

The project which frames this paper was a result of a partnership established between the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa and Bridgewater State College (BSC), Massachusetts, USA. The goal of the project was to develop and research a replicable and effective school-based model of professional development for teachers in KwaZulu-Natal (Farrar, 2006). This model was specifically designed to overcome some of the limitations of the 'cascade model' of professional development, a model which has dominated teacher professional development in South Africa during the last decade. Said differently, the aim of the school-based model was to introduce new ways of teaching and learning to teachers in a way which, after the initiative, would have a sustained impact on the schools.

Drawing on Thomson and Stakneovich, (2007), Phase One of the initiative comprised five simultaneous Professional Development courses offered in one township school (School A) in Sobantu just outside Pietermaritzburg, during the July school holiday in 2006. The initiative consisted of five simultaneous week-long teacher development courses, identified by the teachers in the initial needs analysis and defined as crisis areas by the National Department of Education. The courses offered were Emergent Literacy, Reading and Writing across the Curriculum, Mathematical Literacy, Enquiry-based Learning and Reading Assessment and Instruction. This project involved a team of 29 staff and post-graduate students from UKZN and BSC and 33 educators from a cluster of four neighbouring primary schools in the Sobantu Township. The schools were selected because of their context of previous disadvantage, because of their proximity to each other and to UKZN and because relationships between the schools already existed. All four principals enthusiastically supported the initiative and played a vital role in the project and it was they who encouraged their entire staff to attend. Of the 33 educators who attended, 12 were SMT members (including three of the four principals) and 21 were post level one teachers. Learners from all four schools, divided into grade groups, were present for the entire week at School A. The school-based model used during the initiative simulated a real life teaching – learning situation and was specifically designed to increase potential for implementation of new strategies or take-up. Formal teaching was followed by exercises for practical application of the teaching with a group of real learners. During the five-day period teachers from each school were asked to sit with their colleagues at lunch time to share what was happening in the different courses and also to discuss take-up in the school afterwards.

This paper is concerned with Phase Two of the project which explores the take-up of the pedagogical learning in the four schools eight months after the curriculum courses were delivered. It does this through the lens of distributed leadership and teacher leadership.

Research design

Research questions

During this second phase of the project, the following broad research question guided the thinking of the researchers: "What leadership roles do teachers play in the take-up of the new pedagogic learning in their classrooms and schools? A secondary question was: what are the particular leadership challenges the educators face in implementing this new pedagogic learning?"

Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature and took the form of a case study of the four schools involved in the professional development initiative. The participants were the educators (SMT members and teachers) from each of the four schools who had attended the initial courses as well as the project leaders (two UKZN academics). I would like to clarify at this point that I was not involved in Phase One of the project at all. I was invited to join the project at the beginning of Phase Two because the project leaders required an 'outsider' to be a part of the research process. It was hoped that this 'outsider' status would make it easier for participants to respond more honestly to my research questions, especially in cases where their reflections were critical of the initiative.

The research design involved collecting data using a multi-method approach in an attempt to obtain rich data so as, firstly, to describe the take-up of the new learning in each of the four schools and, secondly, to reflect critically on the professional development initiative. The *first* set of data was gathered from SMT members and teachers using semi-structured questionnaires which required open-ended qualitative responses. A total of 22 out of 35 questionnaires were completed and returned, a 63% return rate. School C had a low questionnaire return rate, due mainly to internal conflict in the school resulting from a dispute between the principal and deputy principal. A *second* set of data consisted of four semi-structured, focus group interviews with the SMT members, one at each school. A *third* data set consisted of three semi-structured, focus group interviews with the teachers. We did not interview

teachers at School B because of their non-involvement in the initiative. A *fourth* set of data was gathered from a semi-structured individual interview with each of the two UKZN project leaders while the *final* data set constituted the analysis of project documentation and reports. In a further attempt to make the findings more trustworthy, I and a researcher from the original team analysed the data together.

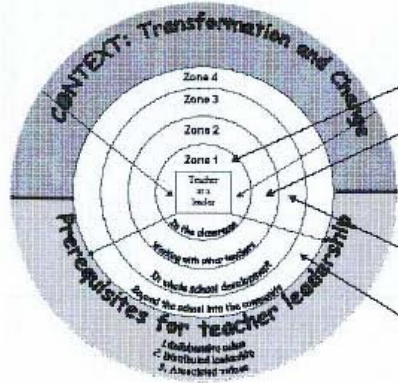
Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data in this study. Working inductively and deductively, I developed my own tool for analysis. I used the notion of 'zones' developed in my earlier research into teacher leadership in the South African context where I suggested that teachers lead in four semi-distinct areas or 'zones' (Grant, 2006). In that paper, I argued that teacher leadership exists within the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Secondly, it exists between teachers when they discuss curriculum issues and work together in order to improve their teaching and learning. Thirdly, it extends beyond separate learning area foci into whole school planning, development and decision-making. Finally it exists beyond the school boundaries into the community and between neighbouring schools. These four 'zones' of teacher leadership are broad and provide the first level of analysis in this study. Within these four zones, I then used the six roles of teacher leadership identified by Devaney (1987, in Gehrke, 1991) as the second level of analysis. The six roles (re-ordered by me to articulate more coherently with the four zones) are:

1. Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
2. Providing curriculum development knowledge
3. Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
4. Participating in performance evaluation of teachers
5. Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
6. Participating in school level decision-making.

The diagram that follows illustrates how the levels of *zones* and *roles* work together in the analysis of the data from the four schools.

Figure 1: Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa



TEACHER LEADERSHIP	
First level of analysis: Four Zones	Second level of analysis: Six Roles
One In the classroom	One: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
Two Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities	Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers Four: Participating in performance evaluation of teachers
Three Outside the classroom in whole school development	Five: Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice Six: Participating in school level decision making
Four Between neighbouring schools in the community	Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers

Analysis: zones of implementation

In the following sections data drawn from the study reveal that, in each of the four schools, implementation of the new pedagogic learning was most strongly identified in the zone of the classroom (Zone One). Teachers also operated as leaders outside their classrooms while working informally with other teachers (Zone Two) as they grappled with the new knowledge and methods learnt. Some also operated as leaders as they networked with teachers from other schools (Zone Four). However, the take-up of the new pedagogic learning did not move into a whole school framework (Zone Three) in any of the four schools. This primarily suggests a lack of articulation between the design of the professional development initiative and issues of leadership and take-up of the new learning. It also suggests that some of the schools in the study did not have a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making with the necessary structures in place to support teachers in a process of critical reflection and inquiry in relation to the new learning. It is to the data that I now turn. This section is presented according to the *zones* where teachers lead (Grant, 2006).

Zone one: Teacher leadership in the classroom

Within the zone of the classroom (Zone One), we have examples of teachers from all four schools taking up leadership in their classrooms and experimenting with some of the new pedagogic learning from the courses in order to improve their own teaching (Role One). For example one educator was of the view that “In the learning area that you attended (at the workshop), you feel at ease to implement what you have learnt without planning because you use the previous experience from the workshop” (Educator, School C). For another her “attitude to teaching changed. I was now exposed to different approaches and teaching skills. I worked with the learners at their level and got better results” (Educator, School A). In the context of the *Enquiry-based Learning* course, the following SMT member spoke of the value of the new learning for her: “I used to teach and rush to complete the lesson I am teaching. But I noticed that now when you teach, you must go steady. You teach, you observe the learners, the things they are doing, like the structures. It was an ongoing process; step-by-step-by-step” (SMT member, School B). For another educator, the new learning was in the area of classroom management as a result of increased confidence: “I understand it (the technology content) now and love to teach. The learners like to be at school because I don’t bully or scold them.” (Educator, School C). In the context of the *reading courses*, one participant reflected: “I found that absolutely fascinating, and we saw how the children themselves ordered and re-ordered and they actually learnt. . . ”

(SMT member, School D). Tangible learner outcomes were reported by another participant: "My learners gained much from the language experience which also enhanced their vocabulary. Because of this my learners (Grade One) were able to compose a book in their own handwriting and illustrations by September which was exhibited at our Art and Culture exhibition" (Educator, School D). In the context of the *Mathematics courses*, an educator made a connection between method appropriateness and the age of the learner: "discovery of themes and concepts (in Mathematics) is far more interesting for the little child than learning or being told by the teacher or just informed" (Educator, School D). For another participant, the new pedagogic learning had resulted in an increased professional identity and confidence in teaching: "I really moved my mindset about Maths. It wasn't a science anymore. Now I know I can play games with Maths and talk about Maths!" (SMT member, School D).

From the data we get a picture of curriculum change in the classrooms as a result of the initiative. This suggests that the structure of the professional development initiative, organised around practical sessions with children, made it possible for teachers, on their return to schools, to take on leadership roles by experimenting in their classrooms with the strategies taught during the initiative. Of course, educators were conscious of and vocal about the barriers to implementing the new learning. The two most common barriers that emerged from the data were, not surprisingly, the difficulty of large class size and the issue of second language as the language of instruction for the majority of learners. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore these barriers.

Zone two: Teacher leadership through working with other teachers

There was varying take-up of teacher leadership in Zone Two in the four schools which, in most instances, was affected by a combination of school structure and teacher agency. In two of the four schools there is sufficient evidence to indicate the existence of teacher leadership in Zone Two where teachers, either in formal or informal positions of leadership, worked together with other teachers to grapple with the new pedagogic learning in order to improve their classroom practice. Within this zone of teacher leadership, I caught glimpses of the following three roles working together (Devaney, 1987 in Gehrke, 1991): providing curriculum development knowledge (Role Two), leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (Role Three) and participating in performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four).

In School A there was much evidence of teachers working together, discussing the new content and methods and attempting to implement this in their classrooms (Roles Two and Three) as the following quotation depicts: “After the winter holidays we held numerous informal group discussions, one-on-one talks and even talks to some that were unable to attend the workshop” (Educator, School A). An SMT member concurs: “Especially when they (the teachers) have a problem with a certain thing, they share ideas from that workshop. Try this and that” (SMT member, School A). At this school, the involvement of the SMT, and particularly the principal, in the courses seemed to have benefited the teachers implementing the new learning in their classrooms. This principal immersed herself in the courses and “really had a sense of how important the good teaching function is” (Project Leader 1). All the questionnaires spoke of a supportive SMT which: “encouraged us to implement what we have learnt during the workshop and they tried to organise a time for us to share ideas” (Educator, School A). Another educator adds: “Although we didn’t meet formally but educators shared them during breaks and in the mornings” (Educator, School A). From the above quotations we get a feel of the encouragement and recognition that Harris (2003) argues is important for teacher leadership. The data offer us a picture of teachers providing curriculum knowledge to their colleagues through informal in-service education such as through discussion, reflection and mentoring. We get a sense of the teachers operating as leaders as they communicate with each other about their teaching in their communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Regarding the role of performance evaluation of teachers (Role Four), one SMT member reflects with honesty on her failure to observe her peers, citing time as a barrier: “As an HOD, I am a full-time teacher, There is very little chance that I get to go out and observe, and to see how its being implemented” (SMT member, School A). However, another SMT member refers to a teacher who invited one of the university academics to observe her “because I felt I have really gained” (SMT, School A).

It seems from the data that at School D there were different levels of take-up of the new learning depending largely on the learning area concerned. For example, in Foundation Phase Mathematics the following happened: “In my phase meeting there were discussions on the different methods. Arrangements and discussions were made on how to implement the ideas. . . . The Grade 2 teacher drew up work based on the workshop. She shared her ideas with other teachers in her grade” (Educator, School D). However, in the Intermediate Phase language learning area the SMT member explained that she “did not get a chance to give any feedback to the staff or to any members of the SMT” (Educator, School D). This differentiation in terms of pedagogic take-up does suggest that some teachers were offering informal in-service education by

sharing the new methods and operating as leaders in developing work plans for the grades (Roles Two and Three). In this instance we have an example of a community of practice in action, characterised by learning as a social participation through mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998).

It is not really possible to discuss how teachers at School B worked together with other teachers as no teachers from that school attended the courses and therefore could not be expected to lead this process. In terms of School C, I do not feel sufficiently confident to claim how the new pedagogic learning was introduced due to the poor return rate of questionnaires from this school. The interview data from this school is, at times, contradictory in relation to this *zone* and so I make no claims about Zone Two at School C. In summary, the data thus far point to teacher leadership roles being taken up in Zone One in all four schools and in Zone Two at two schools. We now turn to Zone Three where a very different picture emerges.

Zone three: Teacher leadership and whole school development

Leading, sharing and planning for the new pedagogic learning as a whole school initiative did not happen formally at any of the four schools. In describing the process of implementation at School A, a participant says: "We didn't actually have a formal meeting where we cascaded them on the information we received but we did meet informally in our groups and we discussed the methods used" (SMT, School A). At School C a similar picture emerged, described in a slightly different way: "We did not put our pieces together. I don't know what they did; they don't know what I did. But at that point we were busy with policy. There was so much else" (Teacher, School C). Similarly, at School D the teachers reflected that: "We never really had a chance to talk about the different courses. . . I would have liked us all to come together and share – the whole staff. Especially for those of us working in the same phase" (Teacher, School D). For School B, the situation was different. The data spoke of the attempts of the SMT to introduce *Enquiry-based Learning* as a school based initiative, for example, a teacher comments: "To be frank enough, I did not attend the workshop but we had feedback from our Head on what transpired from the workshop. More emphasis was on Technology. As a school we have just started to look at the importance of Technology and seen the need to teach it in a proper way" (Educator, School B). The feedback to staff was SMT-led through informal meetings and one-on-one discussions with teachers.

It can be seen from the above discussion that the take-up of the new pedagogic learning by teachers as a whole school initiative did not happen in any of the four schools. There were no formal school meetings dedicated to the professional development initiative where staff members were given a chance to discuss and give feedback on their experiences in the courses. Neither were staff development meetings set up for teachers to reflect critically on the new learning in terms of its potential and relevance for implementation in the context of the school (Role Five). Teachers were not engaged in school level decision-making about the initiative and the associated new learning (Role Six).

Zone four: Teacher leadership between neighbouring schools

While the professional development courses were particularly valuable for the curriculum knowledge and methods learnt, an additional benefit was that they gave educators a chance to work closely with educators from nearby schools, some with different racial and cultural backgrounds. As one participant shared: “We gained a lot of experience in different methods and we also got a chance to network with other schools and mix with people from overseas” (Educator, School A). Another participant concurred: “Now I know and like to network with other educators, even those outside our school” (Educator, School C). However, the benefits of cross-school interaction, the sharing and the learning, ended for some at the end of the professional development initiative. As one participant admitted: “We haven’t been able yet to network with other schools who actually participated because of time frames. So all the excitement that went with the course, a lot of it gets lost along the way. And that’s just a fact. Not because we do not want to do it, but because people are all busy with their own programmes – the reality of it” (SMT member, School D). And yet for some teachers the collaboration continues: “We met teachers from different schools and shared many ideas. We are still networking with those teachers” (Educator, School C). It is clear from the data that the take-up of teacher leadership across school boundaries in an attempt to continue professional relationships was uneven across the schools in the study. The take-up, where it occurred, demonstrates the agency of individual teacher leaders.

So far in the paper I have described, using the zone and role rubric for analysis, the take-up of teacher leadership in the context of the professional development initiative. The evidence of teacher leadership is convincing in Zone One in all four schools; convincing in Zone Two in two of the four schools and, while there is commitment in theory to teacher leadership in Zone

Four, there was very little evidence of this in practice. The lack of teacher leadership in Zone Three is sobering and demands our attention. What were the barriers that impeded the take-up, or otherwise, of the new learning at a school level and how did this relate to issues of leadership? It is to this question that I now turn.

Discussion

Barriers to teacher leadership in the context of the four schools in this study

In this study there was a varying take-up of teacher leadership in the four schools in relation to the professional development initiative in terms of zones and roles. The context of each school, together with its unique structure and culture, impacted on how the take-up of teacher leadership occurred. The data point to different barriers to whole school take-up of the new learning in each school. I now move on to each school and give a brief description of the type of leadership and identify what I consider the major barrier to the take-up of the new learning.

In *School A* the principal and the majority of staff worked together and were involved in discussions regarding curriculum development in the school. As researchers we got the sense of leadership as “fluid and emergent” (Gronn, 2000) with real collaboration where teachers were working effectively, supporting each other and working collegially (Hargreaves, 1992). Dispersed distributive leadership was evidenced through the flatter organisational structure, the level of teacher agency and co-leadership. Teachers did not resort to blaming the SMT for non-implementation of the initiative at a school level but owned the ‘failure’ for themselves, with *time* being the major barrier: “Teachers are just, as I say, trying to manage their time. And time is just of a major issue in our lives. Teachers from the schools that were here are willing, they want to, but they just don’t find the time because many of the teachers that were on the workshop are studying as well” (SMT member, School A). This level of teacher leadership evidenced at School A is an example of the shift “away from traditional top-down management and getting teachers to take responsibility and to accept some accountability” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.42).

A lack of teamwork, collaboration and shared vision seemed to be a major cultural barrier to professional development in *School B*. The absence of teachers from the courses frustrated the Principal and HOD, and this non-

attendance was attributed to the fact that there were *no financial benefits* for participation (SMT member, School B). The non-participation of teaching staff in the courses resulted in an SMT-led rather than teacher-led curriculum development initiative with the SMT having authority because of their participation and knowledge and where they were attempting to motivate teachers within a 'culture of encouragement' (Harris, 2003).

While a good number of SMT members and teachers in *School C* were involved in the professional development initiative, the major barrier to the take-up of new learning at a school level was due to a later disruption of the formal leadership in the school as a result of a dispute; in other words, due to what Hargreaves (1992) terms the 'micropolitics' of the school. The absence of the Principal for a large part of a term followed by the departure of the Deputy Principal to another school left teachers feeling isolated and "without opportunities to collaboratively solve problems, share information, learn together, and plan for improving student achievement" (Ash and Persall, 2000, p.15). During our visits to the school we got the sense of a culture of cautiousness and reserve, rather than 'a culture of mutual trust and respect' (Grant, 2006). The *internal school conflict* resulted in a level of 'bruising' which operated as a barrier to distributive leadership. However, the agency of individual teachers comes to the fore in the following quotation and demonstrates a form of teacher leadership as "ownership of a particular change or development" (Harris, 2003, p.79): "The responsibility was on us. I kept saying to Y (another teacher), because she did Maths, we must sit. We must sit. It's commitment and time. The other way we could have done is to go to someone and say I have got this and just ask" (Teacher, School C).

The literature points to successful teacher leadership where formal school leaders become involved in pedagogic learning and spend lots of time "with teachers, in and out of classrooms, engaged in conversations about teaching and learning" (Ash and Persall, 2000, p.18). In School D, the Principal and Deputy Principal did not attend the professional development initiative and their absence was felt by the majority of the educators: "Maybe the *whole SMT* (my emphasis) should have been present, helping us to integrate the whole thing, putting it together and bringing it down to the staff level" (Teacher, School D). The major barrier to teacher leadership at this school was '*top-down*' leadership and hierarchical school structure with power and decision-making firmly in the hands of the Principal. One teacher explains that "it was hard for us as teachers to organise a workshop. If somebody *higher up* (my emphasis) had organised it, it would have been easier" (Teacher, School D). An SMT member explains that: "We have freedom with consultation or with his approval. He's *strong at the top* (my emphasis) and his management

is. . . I don't know, we are all a good team. . . There is nobody who is going to challenge him, I don't think" (SMT member, School D). Here we have a form of authorised distributed leadership with controlled delegation and no real devolution of decision-making. Even the two HODs appear powerless to initiate curriculum change in the face of their senior colleagues: "Us, you know, having this information and then coming and saying this is what we've learnt. Let's implement this. They (the principal and deputy principal) won't say no but then they need to create time and they need to create the structure in the school so that we can implement" (SMT member, School D). This lack of agency centralises the power and decision-making at a school level firmly in the hands of the principal and deputy principal at the top of the pyramid.

Any discussion about teacher leadership and the challenges to take-up of the new learning in schools in the context of the professional development initiative would be incomplete without a critical look at the professional development initiative itself and it is to this that I now turn.

Reflections on the professional development initiative: what can we learn?

Working from the premise that leadership is fundamentally linked to issues of teaching and learning, this study suggests that any professional development initiative should, in some way, be explicitly linked to leadership and, in particular, teacher leadership. For, without this link, I argue that the learning from any development initiative is likely to remain at the level of the individual teacher and be restricted to the zone of the classroom. And, in some instances, this may be sufficient. However some professional development initiatives, like the one discussed in this paper, have broader organisational goals that target not only the individual teacher but the school as well. During the planning phase of this initiative, meetings were set up with each of the four principals to discuss and negotiate the goals of the initiative in the light of individual school needs and their Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) processes. The initiative also aimed to motivate teachers to form a community of practice *within* their schools, grounded in the belief that these communities of practice would promote sustainability, increase the take-up of the new learning and "would most likely increase the ongoing impact and enable teachers to implement practices they examined in their courses" (Farrar, 2006, p.29). In addition it was anticipated that "teachers might even form a community of practice *across schools*, as the schools are all situated near each other and are in a natural relationship with one another" (*ibid.*, pp.29-30). These goals, laudable as they were, met with limited and uneven success

and the data point to the design of the initiative as one possible reason for this. In the planning phase of the initiative, the programme focused on the content of the five curriculum areas and the only time allocated to discussions on take-up in schools was at the end of the teaching day. In practice the educators negotiated to have this discussion time moved earlier and it therefore occurred informally during lunch breaks and only amongst educators from schools A and C (Verbeek, 2006). A project leader reflected that “unless you really work very closely on trying to convince one of the individuals to take that responsibility (of leading the initiative back at school), it doesn’t happen. So I think we failed on that score” (Project Leader 1). A weakness of the design of this initiative was that there was no planned post-initiative school support and this view was communicated by the teachers in School A who felt there should have been more contact between the course facilitators and the educators after the initiative at a grade level and a school level (Teacher, School A). A project leader endorsed this point: “I’ve personally not followed up in the schools and that’s a huge gap. I think that’s a huge gap in the project” (Project Leader 2). In some instances, course facilitators compiled resources to help teachers to hold the experiences (Project Leader 2), but this was as far as the support went. The project leaders were in agreement that subsequent school-based professional development initiatives “should involve major changes to the design” (Farrar, 2006, p.32) and more time should also be given to the planning process (Project Leader 1).

So what does this mean when we design professional development initiatives? Working from the premise that “professional learning communities hold the key to transformation – the kind that has real effects on people’s lives” (Wenger, 1998, p.85), I argue, firstly, that we need to build into our professional development initiatives discussions on the possible barriers that teachers may face in the take-up of the new learning in schools and ways in which these may be overcome. We need discussions about the value and role of teachers in developing professional learning communities and offer educators strategies for developing ways to build learning communities in schools because, as Harris and Lambert (2003) explain, these do not occur naturally. We need to discuss the important role of teachers as leaders in this process of building learning communities and offer teachers some strategies for taking the new learning back into schools. Secondly, and equally importantly, the design and aims of the professional development initiative should be discussed and negotiated with the SMT of the school to ensure that the SMT owns the initiative and participates in the training, as their teaching responsibilities should be central to their leadership work – they are first and foremost teachers. They should therefore experience professional development together with the teachers in their school. Finally, once the initiative has

ended, course facilitators should build on the professional relationships they developed with teachers and principals by “developing sustained, resourceful relationships that support professional growth and the emergence of local school leadership” (Farrar, 2006, p.32). However, it must be argued that reflection and critique on and take-up of the new learning in schools are not solely the responsibility of the project leaders and course facilitators. Schools themselves, and the leadership therein, have a critical role to play as agents of change.

Conclusion

While teacher leadership was supported as a concept across the four schools in this study, the extent to which it operated in practice was limited. The take-up of new curriculum knowledge and methods by teachers was restricted to individual classrooms and informal teacher discussions but did not move formally into the whole school arena. The reasons for this restricted take-up resided in the school culture and differed across the four schools. Teacher leadership within a collaborative culture was most prevalent in School A with a lack of time within the constraints of an already full teaching programme being the main barrier which impeded staff from taking initiative. In schools B, C and D teacher leadership was not as widespread as in School A due to a range of cultural and structural barriers that did not support teacher leadership. These included the non-involvement of all staff in the original initiative (School B), the fraught ‘micropolitics’ within School C and a forceful principal within a hierarchically organised School D. A further barrier to teacher leadership in school D was the non-involvement of key SMT members in the professional development initiative. This case study has highlighted that a commitment to the rhetoric of teacher leadership will not, in itself, make it happen in practice. Instead it needs to be “facilitated and embraced as a cultural norm within the school” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.120). Given the limitations of case study research, I make no further claims from this study but raise a number of questions which a larger study might well be able to answer. How does one develop in educators a critical notion of agency for the take-up of democratic distributed leadership and teacher leadership? How can we get educators to look critically at the notion of schools as hierarchies and to expand their understanding of leadership beyond formal role or position? How do we get principals to work within a distributed leadership framework without feeling threatened?

So what can be learnt from the experiences of this professional development initiative to improve school-based professional development models? This

paper has argued that professional development initiatives for educators must be linked to issues of leading if the goal is to have sustained impact on the whole school context. It has also suggested that when designing these initiatives, time must be allocated for discussions around teacher leadership as well for the development of strategies for teachers to initiate professional learning communities on their return to schools. The following questions might be of use when designing professional development initiatives: Have we included workable leadership strategies into the courses to support educators in taking the new learning back into their schools? Have we grappled with the composition of educators attending the workshop and asked questions such as ‘who will lead the process once educators return to schools’? How do we get teacher leaders to deal with structural barriers and resistant principals? These questions, I believe, are critical to the successful implementation of new learning in schools as a result of professional development initiatives and, if disregarded, will restrict the take-up of new learning to individual teachers in individual classrooms.

In conclusion, I argue in the context of South African schools for the radical reconceptualising of leadership (Gunter, 2001) and for debates about critical education leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership. I believe there is a need in our country for more research into teacher leadership primarily because, in the words of Farrar, “Education reform rests on effective professional development that is sustained by teacher leaders” (2006, p.33). And, as Muijs and Harris contend, teacher leadership “reclaims school leadership from the individual to the collective, from the singular to the plural and offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action” (2003, p.445).

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5.4. CHRONICLE SIX

Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!

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Despite an enabling democratic policy framework, the leadership of many South African schools remains firmly entrenched within the formal, hierarchical management structure. The potential for teacher leadership is, therefore, relatively untapped and, where it is enacted, it is often restricted. We report on a small qualitative study which explored how the School Management Teams (SMTs) in two primary schools distributed leadership, and the effects of this on the development of teacher leadership. Using questionnaire and interview data, it emerged that teacher leadership existed in both schools at the level of the classroom and in interactions amongst colleagues. However, teacher leadership in relation to school level decision-making, when it occurred, was largely delegated to senior teachers. The findings suggest the existence of two forms of distributed leadership in the schools — a dispersed form within the ‘teacher domain’ and an authorised form within the ‘SMT domain’. We argue for a radical reconceptualising of the concept of leadership at the level of practice in South African schools in an attempt to move towards more dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership.

Keywords: authorised; delegation; dispersed and democratic distributed leadership; leadership as practice; teacher leadership

Introduction

During the period of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, government legislation perpetuated a society of inequality based on race class and gender. To control and maintain this inequality, government policies promoted centralised, authoritarian control of education at all levels within the system (Grant, 2006). Today, within a democratic South Africa, the South African Schools’ Act (1996), the Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000), and the Task Team Report on Education Management Development (1996) challenge schools to review their management practices, which have traditionally been top-down, and create a whole new approach to managing schools where management is ‘seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage’ and should ‘not be seen as the task of a few’ (DoE, 1996:27). Here it can be seen that, in the context of government legislation, the term ‘education management’ is often used in preference to ‘education leadership’. This signals either a potential slippage in usage of the two terms or an emphasis on management processes at the expense of leadership. Whatever the intimations of policy are, however, we argue that ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are distinct processes with ‘leadership’ being the process which works towards movement and change in an organisation while ‘management’ is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin & Astin, 2000). Like Kotter (1990), we believe that the two processes complement each other and *both* are needed for an organisation to prosper.

Mosage and Van der Westhuizen describe the task of converting the ‘proliferation of legislation’ introduced so soon after South Africa became a democracy, as ‘daunting’ (1997:196); a view echoed by Jansen who argues that “while impressive architecture exists for democratic education, South Africa has a long way to go to make the ideals concrete and achievable within educational institutions” (2004:126). Molo (2002) suggests that although our new education policies call for new ways of managing schools, many remain unresponsive and retain their rigid structures, with

educators unable to shift from patriarchal and hierarchical ways of thinking. Against this backdrop, we explore whether leadership (and here we mean the process of fostering purposive and value-based change) in two KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) schools has indeed shifted to become more participatory and inclusive. One form of leadership that would reflect this shift has been termed 'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004). This form is based on the premise that leadership should be shared throughout an organisation, such as a school, where there are "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture" (Harris & Muijs, 2005:31). This alternate form of leadership allows for the emergence of teacher leadership as one of the multiple sources of guidance and direction. Teacher leadership offers a radical departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership because it deconstructs the notion of leadership in relation to position in the organisation. Instead, it constructs leadership as a process which is shared and which "involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school" (Grant, 2008:85-86). In its simplest form, teacher leadership is understood as leadership exercised by teachers regardless of position or designation (Harris & Muijs, 2005). In the South African schooling context the concept of teacher leadership is relatively new but, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it is slowly emerging as an area of research interest (see Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008; Grant, 2008).

Within the broad framework of distributed leadership theory as described above, we explore the leadership practices of the School Management Teams (SMTs) in two primary schools in KZN, in terms of whether they promoted or hindered teacher leadership. In developing our argument we first present distributed leadership as our theoretical frame from which to understand teacher leadership. The context for our empirical study is then described and the methodology discussed. We then move on to a discussion of the findings and the concluding section.

Leading through distribution

Traditionally, research on education leadership has been premised on a singular view of leadership and upon individual impetus (Muijs & Harris, 2003). The 'great man theory of leadership' has long dominated the field of education leadership and, in so doing, the power to lead has been understood by the majority as positional, vested in one person, and historically male. This 'heroic leadership' stereotype, Yukl (1999) argues, assumes that effective performance depends on the unidirectional influence of an individual leader with the skills to identify the correct way and convince others to take it. However, for Yukl, the collective leadership of organisational members is much more important than the actions of any one individual leader. In South Africa, and especially during the apartheid era, this heroic leadership genre was the norm. Education leadership was, for the most, equated with headship and understood in relation to formal position, status and authority (Grant, 2006). School principals were often cast as the only leaders but, while they were accountable to the Department of Education (DoE) because of their formal position in schools, we argue that this did not necessarily make them good leaders and neither did it give them the monopoly in issues of leadership. The style of leadership adopted was often autocratic in nature and involved a process of 'delegation' where tasks and directives were passed down a managerial structure by a head, to 'subordinates', without consultation or negotiation.

However, Ndebele reminds us that leadership is "not only what we do when we have been put in some position of power to steer an organisation or some institution" (2007:2). In line with this thinking, we work from the premise that leadership potential exists widely within an organisation and emerges from different individuals and groups of people at different times as they go about their work. Spillane (2006) usefully refers to this as the 'leader-plus perspective' where the work of all individuals who have a hand in the practice of leadership is acknowledged and valued. Included in this leader-plus perspective are the leadership contributions of teachers. The concept of teacher

leadership is a contested term but, as Harris and Lambert emphasise, the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that “teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (2003:44). They explain further that teacher leadership has at its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris & Lambert, 2003:43).

Distributed leadership theory is currently “in vogue” (Harris, 2004:13) in many parts of the world and has emerged as a popular alternative to orthodox ways of thinking about leadership. In the context of a now democratic South Africa, distributed leadership is likely to grow in popularity and can be justified because of its “representational power” (Harris & Spillane, 2008) and its leaning towards democratic ideals in schools. However, as Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods (2003) concede, there is little agreement about the meaning of the term ‘distributed leadership’. This lack of clarity of the term presents a real danger that distributed leadership will be used as “a ‘catch all’ term to describe any form of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice” (Harris & Spillane, 2008:32). In defining the term, we align ourselves with Bennett *et al.* who suggest that distributed leadership is ‘a way of thinking about leadership’ which they describe as ‘fluid’, where leadership is “not something done by an individual to others” (2003:3), in comparison to traditional notions of leadership that delineate the leader from the follower. From this perspective, we argue that distributed leadership should be viewed as a practice, a shared activity in which *all* educators, i.e. SMT members *and* teachers, can participate (Grant, 2009), such that “the leadership practice is constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers, and their situations” (Spillane, 2006:26). Focusing on the “dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers” (Timperley, 2005:396) as well as on “artefacts and how they are used” (Timperley, 2005:414), a distributed perspective offers a way of “getting under the skin of leadership practice, of seeing leadership practice differently and illuminating the possibilities for organisational transformation” (Harris & Spillane, 2008:33). Defining distributed leadership in this way means that it “is not a blueprint for doing school leadership more effectively” (Spillane, 2006:9). It is in and of itself neither good nor bad. Instead, it offers a way to investigate “how leadership practice is stretched over two or more leaders and to examine how followers and the situation mutually constitute this practice” (Spillane, 2006:15). However, while distributed leadership has representational power, its lack of conceptual clarity “does not allow for a clear operationalisation of the concept in empirical research” (Hartley, 2007:202). Notwithstanding this view, research evidence from empirical studies is beginning to emerge which suggests that distributed leadership impacts positively on organisational outcomes and pupil/student learning (see for example Harris, 2004; Timperley, 2005; Spillane, 2006; Muijs & Harris, 2007).

Working within this theoretical frame of distributed leadership as practice, the characterisations of distributed leadership offered by Gunter (2005) become pertinent when investigating how the practice happens. She suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic (2005:51). For Gunter, central to distributed leadership theory are questions about the location and exercise of power in an organisation and she argues that researchers should be examining ‘how’ and ‘what’ is distributed. She warns that it should not be “just the technical aspects but possibly the authority, responsibility, and hence legitimacy, to do or not do the work” (Gunter, 2005:51). The first characterisation, *authorised* distributed leadership, is where work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations and because it gives status to the person who takes on the work. This type of leadership can also be termed ‘delegated leadership’ and is evident where there are “teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation” (Woods, 2004:6). Teachers often accept the delegated work, either in the interests of the school or for their own empowerment. However, power remains at the organisational level and teacher leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions.

The second characterisation, *dispersed* distributed leadership, refers to a process where much

of the workings of an organisation takes place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous and bottom-up process, “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise” (Gronn, 2000:324). It is based on trust (Lieberman, Saxl & Miles, 1988; Grant, 2006) and requires ‘letting go’ by senior staff rather than just delegating tasks. This type of leadership centres on spontaneity and intuitive working relations (Gronn, 2003) and, as Gunter explains, “while formal structures exist with role incumbents and job descriptions, the reality of practice means that people may work together in ways that work best” (2005:54). Through sharing the leadership work more widely and redefining roles, the power relations in the school are shifted away from the formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals.

The final characterisation, *democratic distributed leadership*, is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concerted action (Gunter, 2005:56) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, democratic distributed leadership is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004:7). It raises questions of inclusion and exclusion in terms of “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005:57). In other words, ‘democratic distributed’ leaders should “embrace leadership for transformation for social justice” (Phendla, 2004:53) and should “lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities” (Shields, 2006:77).

Research design

Aim and research questions

Our main aim in the study was to explore notions of distributed leadership within two fairly similar schools and to determine how the leadership of each school’s management team either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership. The following broad research question guided the research: “To what extent did the SMT distribute leadership to allow for teachers to emerge as leaders and participate in school-level decision-making in the context of their schools?”

Context of the study

Two previously disadvantaged urban KZN primary schools were chosen for the study. These schools were chosen to increase the size of the data set. At the time of the study, School A had a pupil enrolment figure of 922 and a staff of 23 permanent educators and six Governing Body employed educators. The management team included the principal, a deputy principal and three Heads of Department (HoD). The school had one state paid administration clerk and two additional administration clerks who were employed by the School Governing Body (SGB). School B had 578 pupils and a staff of 17 state paid permanent educators and two SGB-employed educators. The management team included the principal, deputy principal, and three HoDs. The school had one state employed administration clerk. The parent community of both schools was characterised by mainly middle to lower income earners. However, both schools, despite the hardships they faced, remained focused on their central tasks of teaching, learning and management and achieved this with a sense of confidence, responsibility, purpose and commitment. Furthermore, both schools had organisational cultures that supported a work ethic and expected achievement which classified them as ‘schools that work’ (Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007:5).

Methodology

The research was designed within the interpretive paradigm as a small-scale qualitative study which drew on questionnaire and interview data from the two schools. Purposive sampling was used to select the two schools. The schools were chosen primarily because they were ‘schools that worked’ (after Christie *et al.*, 2007). In other words, they were functioning well in a context where their neighbouring schools were not. We made the assumption that, by choosing ‘schools that worked’,

it was more likely that teacher leadership could be evident in the schools, which would enable us to address our research question. The two schools were also chosen through convenience sampling on the grounds of accessibility. At each of the two schools, the participating SM T members in the study were the principal, deputy principal, and an HoD, all of whom were formal leaders appointed to management positions by the provincial Department of Education. There was no specific criterion created by the research team for selecting one HoD from each school. HoDs were informed that only one of them from each school was required to participate in the study. They decided amongst themselves who would participate, and informed us accordingly. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with each of the three SM T members at School A and School B.

Post level one teachers from each school were also invited to participate in the study and were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. Out of 30 questionnaires handed out across the two schools, 15 were completed and returned. We took the non-return of the questionnaires to mean that those educators who did not complete the questionnaire did not wish to participate in the study. Five teachers from each school were then invited to participate in a focus group interview at each school. Teachers who completed the questionnaires decided amongst themselves who would participate in the interview. We aimed, through our combination of different data collection methods, to gain a rich picture of perceptions of teacher leadership from different perspectives in order to answer our research question. Our qualitative study therefore did not intend to make generalisations, but instead aimed to examine the unique context of each school and the role of the SM T in either mediating or hindering the development of teacher leadership. Permission to do the research was received from all participants, each of whom gave their written informed consent. Ethical clearance was also received from the higher education institution under whose auspices the study was conducted.

Data analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, we used the inductive method to analyse the questionnaire and interview data. Using a grounded theory process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we allowed the data to 'speak' and concepts and themes were generated through the process of coding. The concepts and themes developed were then further categorised using Grant's (2008:93) model (hereafter referred to as *the model*) of 'zones' and roles' of teacher leadership as illustrated in Figure 1.

Discussion

Teacher leadership within *Zones One and Four*

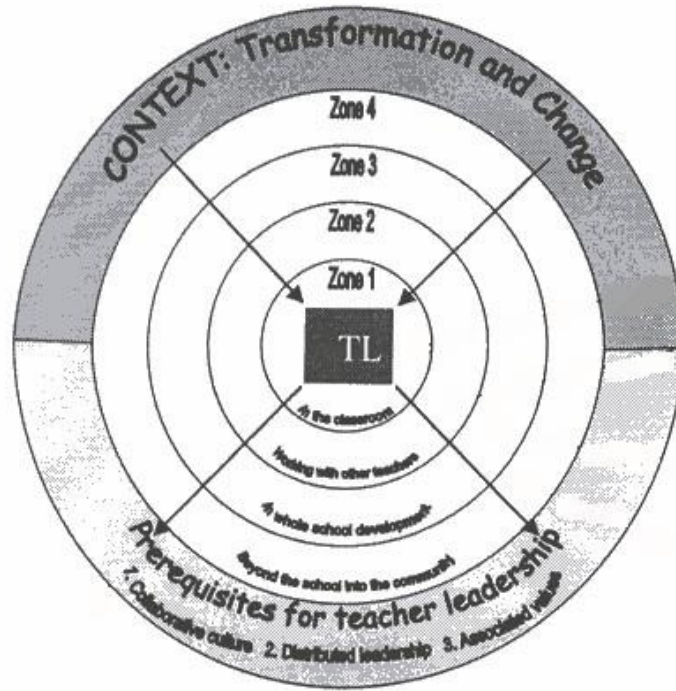
The first finding of interest from our study was that there was no common understanding of the concept of teacher leadership among participants in either school. The term was understood in a range of different ways and it is beyond the scope of this article to explore all these different understandings. However, what emerged from the questionnaire data was that the majority of teachers had a narrow understanding of teacher leadership as being restricted to leadership in the classroom, that is, teacher leadership within *zone 1* of the model. Within this zone of the classroom, teachers were leading in an effort to continually improve their own teaching (*Role 1*).

A second finding was that there was very little opportunity for teacher leadership across schools, i.e. teacher leadership in *zone 4*. The few examples of cross-school networking given were particularly specific to the South African school context. An example from the data in this study was teachers' involvement and leadership within the HIV and AIDS 'LoveLife campaign', an annual event held by external organisers to raise awareness of the prevention of suicide and drug abuse amongst school children and the community.

In the next sections we explore teacher leadership in *zone 2* and *zone 3* as we attempt to understand 'where' and 'how' teacher leadership actually was happening.

A change in school leadership: towards more participation in *zone 2*

From the interviews with teachers it emerged that opportunities for teachers to involve themselves



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

First level of analysis: Four zones	Second level of analysis: Six Roles
One In the classroom	One: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
Two Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities	Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
Three Outside the classroom in whole school development	Four: Participating in performance evaluation of teachers Five: Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
Four Between neighbouring schools in the community	Six: Participating in school level decision-making Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers

Figure 1. The zones and roles model of teacher leadership (Grant, 2008:93)

in leadership practices beyond their core function of classroom teaching, i.e. beyond *zone 1* of the model, had recently surfaced in the schools. A teacher in School B explained how opportunities to lead were greater than they were in the past, saying, for example,

We're involved in policy making now. It wasn't like that all the time. Now there's a sense of ownership. We are all role players; the teacher has a lot to gain. Things have changed from the past where unilateral decisions were made.

Other examples also emerged. These included level one teachers being curriculum leaders, grade heads, leaders of various committees, and are all examples of the curriculum development knowledge role (*Role 2*) as well as the role of leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (*Role 3*). A participant from School A spoke of her mentoring role:

I mentor and advise new teachers and young student teachers, not officially, but casually, but we teachers help each other and learn from each other.

Other examples included teachers working collaboratively to develop new curriculum methods and planning jointly (*Role 2*) as well as preparing for peer observation (*Role 4*). These represent good examples of teacher leadership within *zone 2* and fit into the typology of the 'extended professional' (Hoyle, 1980; Broadfoot & Osborne, 1988), that is, a professional whose thinking and practice is not narrow and restricted to the classroom but leads to what Phendla terms "connected classrooms" (2004:53).

Teacher leadership within *zone 3*: restricted involvement within a discourse of delegation

The data also pointed to opportunities created by the SM Ts for teachers to involve themselves in leadership practices within *zone 3* of the school, i.e. within a whole school development setting. At School B the following was an example of a teacher leadership opportunity of this nature:

... we've given teachers a chance every Monday to address the school at assembly.

Some of the teachers in the focus group made reference to their involvement and decision-making (*Role 6*) in developing school policy on aspects relating to homework, assembly, discipline, learner admissions and sporting codes. Teachers also spoke of their involvement in representing the staff at School Governing Body meetings, and convening and chairing sub-committee meetings. Other examples of teachers-as-leaders included preparing learners for concerts and debutante balls in aid of fund raising for the school as well as organising feeding schemes for learners. These teacher functions were required on an annual basis as part of the school tradition or were regular administrative functions within the school year plan. To extend our understanding further, we turn now to try to understand the level of teacher leadership within *zone 3* in particular, and how, and on whose authority, leadership emerged.

The SMT members in this study discussed teacher leadership mainly within a discourse of delegation where delegation, as Jackson (2003) explains, involves a manifestation of power relations and involves the handing down of tasks within a managerial structure. For example, in this study one SM T participant from School A explained:

So you would basically use them and their expertise and appoint them as leaders so they will co-ordinate and take over this activity.

Another SM T member from School B said:

I think we as managers are crying out for help so coming from the managers there aren't any barriers, we need the assistance of everybody. The school is a huge institution to run.

One SM T respondent's perceptions of teacher leadership revealed the kind of reasoning behind delegating tasks in School B. In his words:

In a school there's so much, people have to multi-task all the time, and it's difficult for the management staff to always carry out all the responsibilities assigned to us. You can do it but to do it effectively I feel it's good to have the assistance of educators.

These remarks attest to the weight of management responsibility felt by SM T members — their

desperation was almost tangible and one can understand their relief at being able to hand down some administrative and management tasks to teachers. This leadership practice, from the perceptions of the SM T, may thus be described as 'authorised distributed leadership' which is dependent on the will and skill of formal leaders, on the experience of overload, "to necessitate pushing work down the line" (Gunter, 2005:52).

However, a look at the *teacher* data gives us another perspective on this situation. They were particularly outspoken about the SMTs' understanding of teacher leadership, with one teacher from School A describing it as follows:

You are given extra duties by the management above your normal teaching.

Another teacher from School B bemoaned the additional responsibility, saying:

... extra work and duties just get palmed on you.

Gunter (2005:55) warns of the additive nature of distributed leadership whereby inviting teachers to participate in areas that they were not involved in before actually leads to the creation of more work for them, and this was borne out in this study. Many of the teachers felt that the extra management duties they were forced to take on was an unfair practice as management was merely passing down functions within their own job descriptions, to teachers. The following words from a School B teacher touches the core of the argument we are attempting to make in this article:

Sometimes you feel its management's job just passed onto you. I won't consider that as leadership. It is just passing the buck.

These strong views of the teachers point to a crucial feature of authentic leadership which, we argue, is that it cannot be imposed or assumed but instead needs to be bestowed by those who are to be led (Jackson, 2003). It involves a dynamic and reciprocal relationship within a 'dialogic space' (Rule, 2004; Grant & Jugmohan, 2008) of equality, flattened hierarchies, learning and empowerment. These dialogic spaces, Rule argues, must "provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds" (2004:326). In contrast, the two schools in this study operated "with hierarchy, rules and management protocols" that relied on "bureaucratic linkages to connect people to work by forcing them to respond as subordinates" (Sergiovanni, 2001:132). The leadership practice was not experienced positively by teachers because it was not negotiated. Instead, it involved unwanted tasks being passed down the hierarchy to a teacher, contradicting a critical feature of teacher leadership. For Wasley (1991), the incentives for teachers to participate in teacher leadership arise out of a sense of personal commitment to provide the best education for students and also the motivation from successes experienced in terms of teacher and student tasks that are well accomplished. In line with this thinking, we argue that teacher leadership, while it existed among individual teachers in their classrooms (*zone 1*), working with other teachers (*zone 2*) and, to a lesser extent, with teachers working in the community (*zone 4*), it did not really exist at a whole school level (*zone 3*) because of the lack of dispersed distributed leadership in the two schools in this study. The power in each organisation was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SM T who, in these two schools, prevented it from emerging in *zone 3*.

Within *zone 3*, teachers were delegated tasks that were mainly administrative and fairly repetitive in nature, or that were less important aspects of school life. Examples included activities like fund raising, a braai evening, the school dance, and so on. In reality, the more important decisions that required leadership, curriculum issues for example, were taken by the SM T:

As management we need to make certain decisions ourselves and it should be implemented by educators.

Here it appears that distributing leadership was seen as too much of a risk for these SM T members who felt the sole weight of accountability for the leadership of their schools. But not only did the SM Ts decide which functions and tasks teachers could manage but they also determined which teachers could participate and which were excluded. It is to this point that we now turn.

The politics of teacher leadership and the boundaries of participation within *zone 3*: who cracks the nod?

Members of the SM Ts in this study used their formal positions to delegate management and administrative tasks to people they saw fit for the role, while they withheld this from others. This raised issues of access to leadership opportunities. Within the discourse of delegation, 'appointments' to teacher leadership in these two school contexts, rested on the criteria of experience, seniority and expertise. The general assumption of the SM T members about the potential for leadership amongst their teachers can be summed up in the following words:

We identify this person is good in this, or has certain skills. We can approach this person to co-ordinate these activities, but not all teachers are leaders. If you give it to someone else, you'll find that the teacher is not a leader and can't manage. In certain cases others have developed much more competence than teachers who are lower down, so you harness it. So we distribute leadership all the time. Support will be on a one-to-one basis because the teacher has been identified as a teacher leader who is co-ordinating a programme.

This view taken by both SM Ts reflects the 'professional management approach' (McLennan & Thurlow, 1997) which protects power on the basis of expertise and professional elitism and results in repetitions of patterns of disempowerment. Teachers who had experience and expertise in areas such as curriculum, administration, networking, fundraising and project co-ordination were deemed fit by the SM T to take on these opportunities for leadership and management. In both schools a senior teacher culture existed with senior teachers given preference and favoured over less experienced junior teachers. The data contained many such examples: "utilising educators who have expertise in a particular field", "educators qualified", "teachers with experience and competence to lead". Again, the power in the organisation was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SM T who, in the two schools, prevented the emergence of junior, less experienced teacher leaders, confirming the inequality and power differentials in the schools as a result of the hierarchical school structure. This senior teacher culture operated as a barrier to the full emergence of teacher leadership in each school by restricting young creative teachers from introducing new initiatives. We now turn to another barrier to teacher leadership at the organisational level of the school, that of a culture of non-collegiality.

Barriers to teacher leadership: Contrived collegiality and the micropolitics of the school

From the questionnaire data it emerged that all 15 teachers in the study described their school culture as being collegial with the staff engaging in teamwork and participating in staff meetings. However, evidence from the focus group interviews with teachers pointed to the contrary, with educators saying that ownership of decisions taken was lacking because the SM T caucused beforehand and took unilateral decisions on issues. At staff meetings the SM T made it appear as though democratic, participatory decision-making processes were being employed, but this was not so in reality, as the following quotation from School A illustrates:

Not everything is by full consensus; most often the idea has already been formulated, decisions already made by the SM T. We are coerced into accepting it. The strategies they use, tactics are used to get us to take ownership — but it is not so. Ultimately, if it's for the benefit of the children, we agree and accept the idea.

Teachers were familiar with, and used, the rhetoric of collegiality in describing their school culture. However, in practice, a culture of authentic collegiality did not exist as decision-making processes were largely not participatory and teachers merely agreed to 'go with the flow', citing the benefits to learners and learning as their reason for complying. From a micropolitical perspective, the culture in each of the two schools could be described as 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1992). To the questions, "who guides and who controls collegiality?" (*ibid.*:82), the data clearly pointed to SM T

members who controlled the leadership practices of the school, allowing teachers limited control and superficial involvement in decision-making. From a micropolitical perspective, collegiality in the two schools was understood by the SM T as “a way of co-opting teachers to fulfilling administrative purposes and the implementation of external mandates” (Hargreaves, 1992:83). In this study, the external mandates were in the form of policy requirements and directives from the DoE, of which one SM T member from School A had this to say:

For example, there cannot be participation with regards to that kind of policy that has been handed from the department because you are merely informing them what has been brought down via policy. So in that case you may find your leadership may tend to be more autocratic type where you are basically informing.

This quotation points to the possibility that the SM Ts viewed their role as conduits for the DoE, i.e. simply passing policies onto teachers. Thus they passed department directives (an example of an artefact of the leadership practice) down the chain of command to their teachers without registering any need for critiques of the directives. This was, in all likelihood, evidence of a lack of critical education leadership on the part of the SM T members to see a need to engage with, reflect on, discuss and critique departmental directives, before they were implemented. Thus, the contrived nature of teacher participation in school decision-making processes highlighted the mere rhetoric of collegiality, perhaps because, as Gunter (2005:58) suggests, it was too risky in practice. Furthermore, all six SM T members' accounts of how they ran staff meetings revealed that agendas (another example of an artefact of leadership practice) were drawn up by the SM T and circulated to staff without prior consultation. The following excerpt illustrates the hierarchical manner in which staff meetings were planned and conducted and the limited time allocated for teacher agency and leadership:

We also, at our staff meetings have a section under general where educators feel free to report back on matters concerning the school, matters that need attention, matters that the SM T need to record, etc.

What strikes us from this is the positioning on the agenda for teacher input and the time and space allocated for teachers to raise and discuss important issues. Again we see that the power was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SM T who paid lip-service to teacher participation and dialogue in decision-making, indicating a ‘lack of valuing’ of teacher voice and authentic dialogic space in the school.

Conclusion

We explored the extent to which the SM Ts in two KZN primary schools distributed leadership to allow for post level one teachers to emerge as leaders and participate in school-level decision-making in the context of their schools. Working from the premise that leadership is a practice in which all can lead and which involves the interactions between leaders, followers and the situations, we found firstly that there was evidence of multiple leaders or what Spillane (2006) calls the ‘leader-plus perspective’. Secondly, it was apparent from the study that in different situations or zones in the schools, leadership was distributed differently.

In *zones 1* and *2*, teacher leadership was practiced and its emergent property (Bennett *et al.*, 2003) was prevalent. Teacher leaders (leaders) had relative freedom to interact with other teachers (followers) in the practice of leadership in relation to curriculum and matters of teaching and learning (the situations). Examples of teacher leadership in these two zones included teachers as curriculum leaders, grade heads, mentors, peer observers and committee leaders. Teacher leadership was evident in *zone 4* (leadership beyond the school into the community), although to a much lesser degree. It was clear from the data that the teachers in the study were first and foremost ‘good’ teachers, i.e. they prioritised the teaching and learning process in the best interests of their learners. This is in line with Zimpher who endorses the point that “teacher leadership must be an outgrowth of expert practice and of expert knowledge” (1988:54). The leadership practices in *zones 1* and *2* can, therefore, be characterised as dispersed distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) which is more

autonomous and bottom-up and is accepted because of the knowledge, skills and values of teachers who, either individually or collaboratively, lead the practice. Here, teachers have more power to lead and in these zones the impact of the school hierarchy is less pervasive.

In contrast, teacher leadership and particularly teacher involvement in decision-making was almost non-existent in *zone 3*, at a whole school level — in both schools. Instead, the interactions between the leaders (the SM T), the followers (the teachers) and the situations (school-based decision making and whole school development issues) were hierarchically managed through superior-subordinate relationships. In these situations, the power to lead was firmly located within the SM T and leadership was delegated to a group of teachers they selected as having the skills and experience lead. At the level of *zone 3* then, the leadership can at best be characterised as *authorised distributed leadership*, a form of leading which is “not a very dynamic or necessarily productive one in regard to sustained activity” (Gunter, 2005:52). Within a culture of ‘contrived collegiality’, what was delegated to teachers was often not leadership but instead management or administrative functions. Furthermore, pushing work down the line to senior teachers due to SM T overload was not the best form of distribution as it was ‘additive’ (Gunter, 2005), creating more work for teachers and ignoring their agency. In relation to teacher agency in this zone, there was relative silence on the part of SM Ts and teachers, on teacher involvement in development and innovation practices (Harris & Lambert, 2003), a central component of teacher leadership.

In terms of leadership practice, the data provided a picture of each school being divided into two domains; the teacher domain (*zones 1 and 2*) and the domain of the SM T (*zone 3*). Teacher leadership was more prevalent in the former while the SM T held on to power in the latter. Furthermore, there was an over-emphasis on management functions of the schools at the expense of leadership — the leadership to “express sincerely, our deepest feelings and thoughts; when we do our work, whatever it is, with passion and integrity; when we recall that all that mattered when you were doing your work, was not the promise of some reward afterward, but the overwhelming sense of appropriateness that it had to be done” (Ndebele, 2007:2). Within this leadership vacuum, the boundaries between the teacher domain and the SM T domain were fairly impermeable and only through invitation were senior teachers allowed to traverse the territory of the SM T. This contrasts with a distributed leadership perspective which “assumes permeable boundaries between leaders and followers” (Timperley, 2005:410).

So, given South Africa’s colonial and apartheid history and the resultant hierarchical and bureaucratic management structures that remain the norm in many of our schools, how can we begin to negotiate the boundaries surrounding the various leadership practices and move towards more teacher involvement in school-level decision-making? Initially, there needs to be a radical reconceptualisation of the concept of leadership and debate about critical education leadership in our country (after Gunter, 2005). However, we need to heed the warning that developing a culture of distributed leadership and teacher leadership in schools must be seen as an evolutionary process (Grant, 2006). In our fledgling democracy our first step must be to try to move schools away from autocratic forms of leadership and an understanding of leadership-as-control towards more distributed forms of leadership. But perhaps the most we can aim for, in the first instance, is an authorised form of distributed leadership where tasks are distributed from the SM T to others in a hierarchical system of relations, but where leadership (instead of merely management or administrative tasks) is allowed to emerge from teachers who are interested in and empowered to take the lead, and who are supported and developed in the process. Once an authorised form of distributed leadership is in place in a school, then a move can be initiated towards more dispersed forms of distributed leadership where the workings of the hierarchy are gradually removed as a more collective and shared process of leadership is adopted. And finally, only once this form of leadership is solidly in place, can one move to a democratic form of distributed leadership and begin to engage critically with the values, goals and mission of the school and ask questions which begin to challenge the *status quo* and raise issues of social inclusion and exclusion. But how to start the distributed leadership journey is complex but nevertheless essential because, as Jansen argues, “despite their obvious limits, schools

remain the life-blood of this young democracy” (2004:127), requiring leaders who are socially just and “who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility towards and with others and to society as a whole” (Phendla, 2004:61). However, we conclude this article with two paradoxes. The first paradox is that a ‘redesign’ of schools requires distributed leadership as the engine and capacity for change, and the second paradox is that the development in schools of leadership which is truly distributed, requires ‘strong headteacher leadership’ (Jackson, 2003:xiv).

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5.5. CHRONICLE SEVEN

PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how teachers perceive teacher leadership and determines the extent to which teachers are involved in leadership roles across a range of schools of diverse contexts. Data were gathered from a survey questionnaire which was administered to 1055 post level one teachers in 3 districts in KwaZulu-Natal. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and interpreted within a conceptual framework of zones and roles of teacher leadership. This article describes the three key findings from this research. Firstly, teachers supported the notion of shared leadership and believed they were equipped to lead. Secondly, teachers were involved in leadership, mainly within their classrooms and to a lesser degree in collaboration with colleagues in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Evidence of teacher leadership in relation to school-wide and community issues was substantially less. Thirdly, School Management Teams were considered a major barrier to teacher leadership and it also emerged that teachers themselves were also a barrier. Overall, the article highlights the restricted nature of teacher leadership in many KZN schools and argues for concentrated support of teachers as leaders as they work collaboratively within schools to bring about improvement.

Key words: teacher leadership, delegation, distributed leadership, School Management Team, teacher roles

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

There appears to be little agreement on the exact definition of the term teacher leadership and we agree with Wigginton (1992), cited in Murphy (2005), that teacher leadership is devilishly complicated and the phrase itself is frustratingly ambiguous. Given the contested nature of the terrain, and for the purposes of this article, we work with the definition of teacher leadership by Harris and Lambert (2003) which is that, in essence, teacher leadership is a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead. The main idea underpinning this view is that leadership is not only individual or positional but instead is a group process in which a range of people can participate. Teacher leadership has as its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris and Lambert, 2003: 43). A further comment which needs to be made at this

point is that teacher leadership is an emergent process rather than something that can be forced from the top in an autocratic manner. Gronn emphasises this emergent aspect of leadership when he argues for the “abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles” (2000: 325).

Teacher leadership research is well established in the USA and Canada and, in the last decade, it has become a focus of research activity in the UK. However, in South Africa, teacher leadership is relatively unknown as an area of research although, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it is slowly emerging as an area of research interest. However, studies to date have mainly been small qualitative studies (see for example Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008, Grant, 2008). This article presents the overall findings of a research project carried out by a group of post-graduate Honours students in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2008. In contrast to the smaller qualitative studies on teacher leadership, the project was designed as a large scale survey which explored the perceptions and experiences of 1055 post level one teachers on teacher leadership in conveniently selected primary and secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. In doing an extensive survey, we aimed to add breadth and credibility to the findings of previous research. We were interested to know whether the findings of our quantitative research would compliment the findings of the completed qualitative studies or would offer a different perspective altogether.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP WITHIN A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

For us, within the concept of teacher leadership lies the potential for change and therefore for school improvement. In her book, *The good high school*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, maintains that the literature tends to agree that “an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership” (1983: 323). Here leadership is understood as the process which brings about change in the organisation and which “mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants or the status quo” (Donaldson, 2006: 7). In other words, Donaldson continues, “leadership helps the school adapt to its changing function in society” (2006: 8), while management ensures the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Leadership, however, need not be located only in the principal of a school but should be “stretched over multiple leaders” (Spillane, 2006: 15). This distributed leadership perspective foregrounds leadership practice which is “constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations” (2006: 26).

Working within this theoretical frame of distributed leadership as practice, the characterisations of distributed leadership offered by Gunter (2005) become pertinent when investigating how the practice happens. She suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic (2005: 51). The first characterisation, *authorised* distributed leadership, is where work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations and because it

gives status to the person who takes on the work. However, power remains at the organisational level and teacher leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions. The second characterisation, *dispersed* distributed leadership, refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous and bottom-up process; “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise” (Gronn, 2000: 324). It is based on trust (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Grant, 2006) and requires “the capacity to relinquish, so that the latent, creative powers of teachers can be released” (Barth, 1988: 640). The final characterisation, *democratic* distributed leadership, is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005: 56) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004: 7) and raises questions of inclusion and exclusion which include “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005: 57).

Our thesis is that the more the leadership is distributed in the school, the more scope there is for the emergence of teacher leadership. The nature of leadership distribution in the school will determine the take-up of teacher leadership. We use Grant’s (2008) zones and roles model of teacher leadership to capture this take-up (Diagram 1). In this model teacher leadership is first depicted in terms of four zones; the zone of the classroom during the teaching and learning process, the zone where teachers discuss curriculum issues and work together in order to improve their teaching and learning, the zone of the school where teachers are involved with whole school planning, development and decision-making and finally the zone beyond the school boundaries into the community and between neighbouring schools. Within these zones, teacher leadership is then depicted according to roles; first, continuing to teach and improve one’s own teaching; second, providing curriculum development knowledge; third, leading in-service education and assisting other teachers; fourth, participating in performance evaluation of teachers; fifth, organising and leading peer reviews of school practice and sixth, participating in school level decision-making.

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

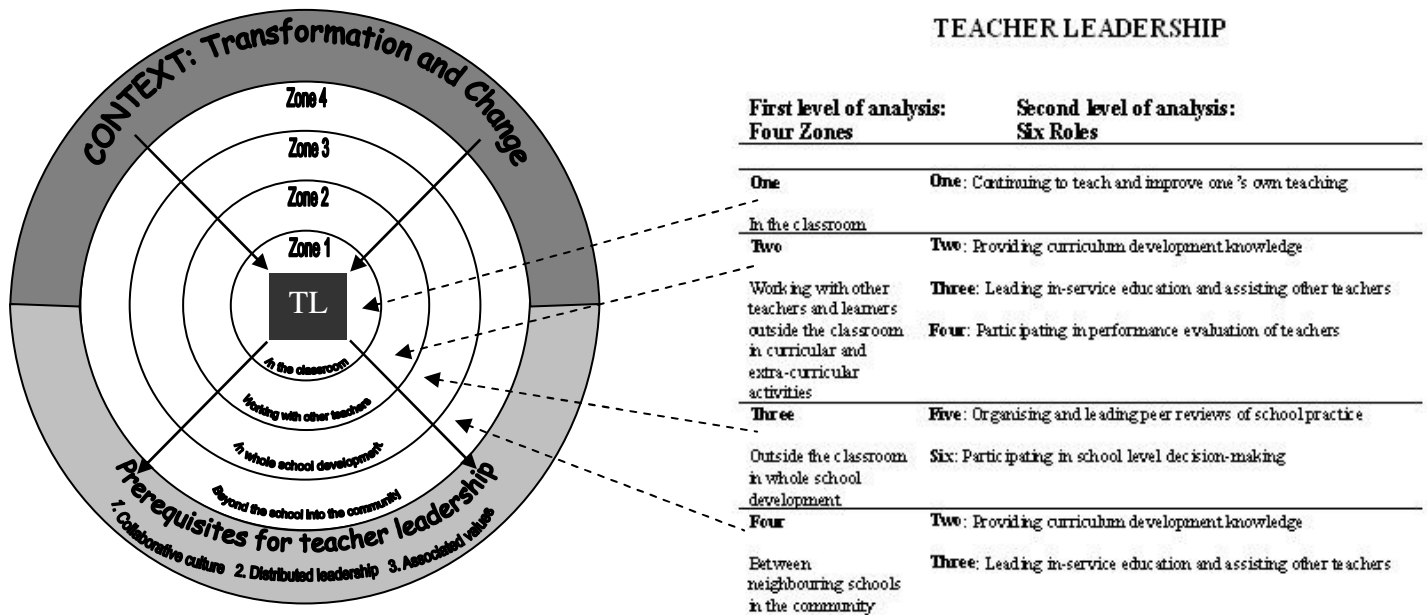


Diagram 1: Model of teacher leadership (Grant, 2008: 93)

Teacher leadership can only be understood in relation to the context in which it occurs (Grant, 2006) and, as Smylie argues, “it may be difficult to develop teacher leadership to its full potential without also developing its contexts” (1995: 6). Research shows that teacher leadership requires a school context and culture which is collaborative (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) and collegial (Muijs and Harris, 2003) and which allows for ongoing learning, growing and mistake-making. Thus a climate of ongoing support and teacher professional development (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and a culture of transparency and mutual learning (Grant, 2006) are essential to the development of teacher leadership. Teacher leadership requires that principals distribute authority but it also requires that teachers claim and take up their agency role. As Harris and Muijs argue:

Both senior managers and teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers and try to bring about fundamental changes. Essentially, school improvement requires a conceptualization of leadership whereby teachers and managers engage in shared decision-making and risk-taking (2005: 133).

Thus for teachers to function as leaders, a healthy mix of personal attributes and interpersonal factors are necessary, including “purposefulness” (Donaldson, 2006: 181), the courage to take initiative (Grant, 2006), the strength to take risks (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) and the ability to “work collaboratively with peers” (Harris and Muijs, 2005: 24). In summary, teacher leaders are:

risk-takers, willing to promote new ideas that might seem difficult or threatening to their colleagues. Their interpersonal skills - they know how to be strong, yet caring and compassionate – helped them legitimate their positions amid hostile and resistant staffs (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988: 150).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Aim and research questions

The aim of the study was primarily descriptive and was to determine the perspectives and experiences of teachers on their understanding of teacher leadership in conveniently selected primary and secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The following specific research questions were addressed:

- i. What are teachers' perceptions about leadership in schools?
- ii. To what extent is teacher leadership happening in schools and what roles do teachers take up?
- iii. What are teachers' perceptions of the leadership context and culture in their schools?

Background to the study, population and sampling

The study on which this article is based was designed as a post graduate group research project involving the project leader and 17 Bachelor of Education Honours students at a higher education institution in KwaZulu-Natal. The research was designed as a large-scale survey and called for numerical data and descriptive statistics to ascertain teachers' understanding and experiences of teacher leadership in the sample schools. Its attractiveness was in its "ability to make statements which are supported by large data banks and its ability to establish the degree of confidence which can be placed in a set of findings" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 207). To this end, questionnaires were employed because of their ability to gather information from a large population in one or several locations using pencil and paper without necessarily making personal contact with the respondents (Bless and Achola, 1990) and because they lend themselves to logical and organised data entry and analysis (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). Thus a self-administered, structured, closed questionnaire completed by the teachers was deemed an appropriate instrument to gather the required data. The population to which the research inquiry was addressed was selected purposively to include primary and secondary teachers (at post level one) employed in schools within a convenient distance from the schools and/or homes of the researchers. Thus a limitation of the study was that the sample was not representative of the whole population. However, the size and demographic spread of the data set reduced this limitation to a certain extent. Permission to undertake the study was granted from each of the 81 schools participating in the study and written consent was received from all research participants. Ethical clearance was also received from the higher education institution under whose auspices the study was conducted.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into three broad sections; biographical information of the teachers in the study (Section A), school information (Section B) as well as key information on teacher leadership (Section C). Section C was further divided into four sections: C1 was organised as a response to Research Question 1, C2 and C3 were organised as responses to Research Question 2 while C3 was organised as a response to Research Question 3. Sections A and B each consisted of five questions while Section C consisted of 46 questions (4, 16, 16 and 10 respectively). Responses to sections A and B of the questionnaire were gathered using nominal scales while Section C of the questionnaire adopted a five-point Likert rating scale to capture the data. The questionnaire fairly and comprehensively covered the domains of the three research questions in an effort towards content validity whilst ensuring that it remained contained to reduce the possibility of respondent fatigue. The questionnaire was designed with some questions repeated in different sections in different ways to determine if they would “yield the same result each time” (Babbie and Mouton, 1998: 119) in an effort towards reliability. The survey questionnaire was originally developed for, piloted and implemented in 2007 (see Khumalo, 2008). Based on the learning and feedback from this 2007 study, it was adapted and used in a pilot in 2008. Following the pilot, it was further refined before implementation in this study, enhancing the construct validity of the instrument.

Data collection

Each of the 17 researchers were required to access at least three schools, selected conveniently, and gather a minimum of 60 completed questionnaires from post level one teachers working in these schools. To avoid possible non-return of questionnaires, researchers communicated regularly with and personally visited the schools to follow up on and collect questionnaires within as short a time-frame as possible. A possible limitation of the study was that, for the majority of the teacher respondents, English was a second language. This was particularly evident in section C3 of the questionnaire where the level of comprehension of the questionnaire was weak. To overcome this limitation, the returned questionnaires were checked for accuracy and completion, the data set was cleansed and inconsistencies removed. A total of 1055 completed questionnaires were received from primary (54%), secondary (39%) and combined schools (7%) in three variously resourced districts in KwaZulu–Natal. Of the sample, 70% of the respondents were from the Umgungundlovu District, 24% from the Umzinyathi District while 6% were from the Umkhanyakude District.

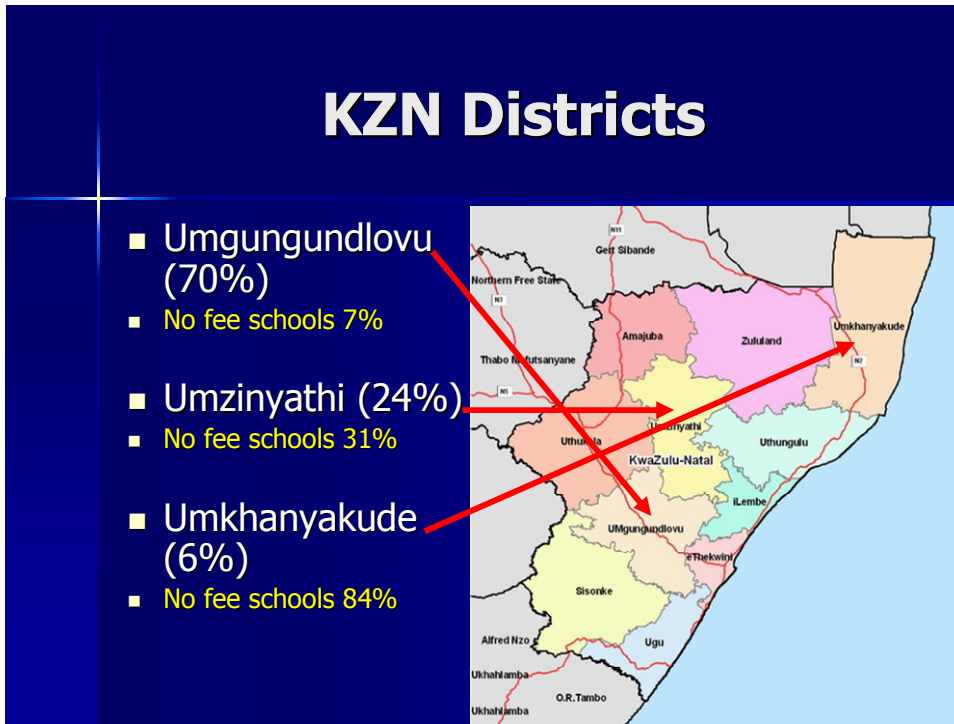


Diagram 2: Location of study schools

Data analysis

The data were analysed descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data from Section C2 and C3 were then further analysed using Grant's (2008) model of teacher leadership in relation to zones and roles (Diagram 1) discussed earlier in this article. The findings were recorded and the data interpreted in the light of the available literature on teacher leadership, in an attempt at literature triangulation in the quest for reliability (Liebenberg and Roos, 2008: 585). A further limitation to the study was that a team of 17 novice researchers was responsible for inputting the data and errors may have occurred during the process. However, the process was coordinated by the project leader and her team of colleagues and, as mentioned earlier, the final data set was cleansed and inconsistencies removed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

PROFILE OF RESPONDING TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

The first section of the questionnaire (Section A) gathered biographical information about the 1055 participating teachers in the study. Section B of the questionnaire gathered information about the 81 schools in which the participating teachers worked. Table 1 summarises the statistics about the participants and schools.

Category (Individual)		Percentages
Gender	Female	75.9
	Male	23.2
	Missing	0.9
Age	18-30	15.5
	31-40	41.1
	41-50	29.5
	51+	12.8
	Missing	1.1
Qualification	Below M+3	9.4
	M+3	23.4
	M+4	49.4
	M+5 and above	15.1
	Missing	2.7
Nature of Employment	Permanent	83
	Temporary	15.4
	Seconded	0.3
	Missing	1.3
Years of Teaching Experience	0-5 years	20.8
	6-10 years	23.7
	11-15 years	17.6
	16+ years	36.2
	Missing	1.7
Category (School)		Percentages
School Type	Primary	54.1
	Secondary	38.7
	Combined	7.1
	Missing	0.1
District	Umgungundlovu	69.6
	Umzinyathe	24.6
	Umkhanyakude	5.8
Annual School Fees	No fees	17.6
	R1-R500	37.1
	R501-R1000	19.8
	R1001-R5000	9.5
	R5001+	16
Learner Enrolment	1-299	2.5
	300-599	25.4
	600+	72.1
	Missing	0
Number of Educators	1-10	0.5
	11-19	14.9
	20-28	40.5
	29-37	27.9
	38+	16.2

Table 1: Summary of Biographical and School Information

In summary then, the majority of respondents in the study were women (76%), with 83 % permanent teachers, 88% qualified and their experience ranging evenly across the data set. Thus the respondents were fairly representative of KwaZulu-Natal teachers and were sufficiently skilled to evaluate their school context and culture in order to assess the level of opportunity afforded them to take up leadership roles in schools. An examination of the annual fees levied at each of the study schools, indicated a good spread of schools from schools which set fees at less than R500 (55%) to highly resourced schools (16%).

TEACHERS ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO LEAD

No.	Findings	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Missing
11	Only SMT to make decisions.	7.9%	14.8%	34.9%	9.2%	29.6%	3.6%
12	Leadership role by all teachers	41.3%	30.4%	18.7%	4.8%	3.8%	1%
13	Only people in authority positions to lead.	7%	14.5%	28.9%	13.7%	32.6%	3.3%
14	Men better to lead than women	3.4%	5%	18%	11.4%	59.1%	3.1%

Table 2: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C1

Responses to section C1 (questions 11 – 14) of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of the teachers in our study (71,7%) believed that school teachers were confident and capable of leading (Q12). From the responses, it emerged that only 7,9% of the teachers were of the opinion that it was only the School Management Team (SMT) who should make decisions in the school (Q11). Only 21,5% of the sample were of the opinion that people in positions of authority should always or often lead (Q13). This perception reinforces the view of the Task Team Report on Education Management Development (Department of Education 1996: 27) which states that “management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organizations engage”. At a level of rhetoric then, teachers in our study supported the notion of distributed leadership and believed that teachers could and should lead. This supports the view of Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejard that “moving away from a hierarchical approach to one of empowerment is the task facing education leaders in South Africa” (2002: 16).

THE EXTENT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS: ZONES AND ROLES

Research literature indicates that teacher leadership has been shown to be a centrally important feature in classroom and school improvement (Muijs and Harris, 2003). In an attempt to determine the extent of teacher leadership in the context of our study, data from teacher responses to Section C2 (questions 15 – 30) of the questionnaire were analysed using the zones and roles model of teacher leadership (Diagram 1). Roles related to teacher leadership abound in the literature and include, for example, expert teacher (Harris and Lambert, 2003), reflective practitioner (Day and Harris, 2002), mentor (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988), coach (Joyce and Showers, 1982), professional developer (Zimpher, 1988), action researcher (Ash and Persall, 2000) and decision-maker (Griffin, 1995, Muijs and Harris, 2003). We move on now to present the findings in terms of the four zones of teacher leadership and the associated roles.

Zone 1: Leading within the classroom

This zone focuses on teacher leadership within the classroom and the continuous attempts by teachers to elevate their standard of teaching (role 1).

No.	Question	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Missing
15	I take initiative without being delegated duties	26.2%	35.1%	29.8%	5%	2.7%	1.2%
16	I reflect critically on my own classroom teaching	38.6%	38.1%	15.9%	2.5%	3.1%	1.8%
29	I keep up to date with developments in teaching practice and learning area	37.9%	33.6%	19.6%	5.2%	2.7%	1%

Table 3: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C2, Zone 1

In the survey, 76,7% of the teachers stated that they often or always critically reflected on their classroom practice (Q16). Of the respondents, 71,5% also asserted that they regularly (often or always) updated their knowledge on pedagogical developments in their learning area (Q29). It was evident from the data presented that teachers said they were engaged in activities that promoted teaching in their classrooms. Upon further interrogation of the data to ascertain if these findings were congruent with the findings across the three districts, it was discovered that there was a strong correlation. In the Umgungundlovu District, 80,1% of the teachers indicated that they critically reflected on their teaching (Q16). The data from the Umzinyati and Umkhanyakude Districts revealed that 69,6% and 65,5% of the teachers respectively engaged in critical reflection on their teaching. The data also revealed that 73,0% of the teachers in the Umgungundlovu District, 66,1% of the teachers in the Umzinyati District and 75,4% of the teachers in the

Umkhanyakude District claimed that they kept abreast with teaching developments in their learning areas (Q29).

However, the data from teachers in the rural district of Umkhanyakude seemed contradictory. While teachers appeared to be the most well informed with regard to developments in their own teaching practices and within their learning areas, they appeared to engage in the least amount of critical reflection about their teaching. We wondered of the possibility of this actually happening and it raised questions about the trustworthiness of our data. Perceptions of people are just that, perceptions which may differ greatly from actually practice. This pointed to a limitation of our data and highlights the need for further observation and evidence-based research into teacher leadership in schools.

Zone 2: Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra- curricular activities

In this zone the teacher leader is likely to be involved in the provision of curriculum knowledge (role 2), managing in-service training and providing assistance to other educators (role 3) and finally, participating in the performance evaluation of other educators (role 4).

No.	Question	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Missing
19	I give in-service training to colleagues	5.9%	13.3%	31.2%	21.6%	26.7%	1.3%
20	I provide curriculum development knowledge to my colleagues	10.8%	21.4%	36.4%	17.9%	12.3%	1.1%
22	I participate in performance evaluation of other teachers	16.7%	21.1%	29.3%	12.8%	18.7%	1.4%
23	I choose text books and instructional material for my grade/ learning area	45.2%	26.4%	18.1%	5.2%	4.2%	0.9%
24	I co-ordinate aspects of extra-mural activities in my school	23%	24.7%	30.4%	12.3%	8.6%	0.9%

Table 4: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C2, Zone 2

A mere 19,2% of the educators in this study claimed to often or always provide in-service training (role 3) to their colleagues (Q19) whilst 31,2% of the teachers claim to sometimes provide in-service training to assist other educators. The data also revealed that 32,2% of educators often or always led outside the classroom by providing curriculum development knowledge to their colleagues (role 2, Q20). Despite performance evaluation of peers being an integral aspect of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in which all South African schools are compelled to engage, only 38,4% of educators often or always participated in the performance

evaluation of their colleagues (role 4, Q22). The two areas in which teachers were most actively engaged were related to role 2 and involved the planning of extra-mural activities in their schools (47,7% often or always, Q24) and in the selection of textbooks and instructional materials for their grade or learning area (71,6% often or always, Q23). These findings pointed to a restricted form of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2005) within this zone and emphasised maintenance and administrative processes, at the expense of leadership processes which works towards movement and change in an organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Opportunities for authentic leadership and teacher empowerment through team work, peer support and collaboration in relation to curriculum issues were the exception rather than the norm. This, Harris and Lambert argue, is crucial to an understanding of teacher leadership because “collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised on change that is undertaken collectively” (2003: 44).

Zone 3: Leading outside the classroom in whole school development

This third zone comprises two roles of a teacher leader, the one involving teacher participation in school level decision making (role 6) while the other involves the teacher in organising and leading reviews of school practice (role 5).

No.	Question	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Missing
17	I organise and lead reviews of the school year plan	9.3%	17.9%	34.4%	19.6%	17.6%	1.1%
18	I participate in in-school decision making	12.5%	18%	42.7%	15%	10.9%	0.9%
26	I set standards for pupil behaviour in my school	35.4%	31.9%	18.2%	8.1%	5.5%	0.9%
27	I design staff development programmes for my school	3.8%	8.4%	23%	24.1%	39.3%	1.3%
30	I set the duty roster for my colleagues	5.5%	8.6%	19.2%	16.5%	48.8%	1.3%

Table 5: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C2, Zone 3

For Muijs and Harris (2003) involvement in decision-making is a key indicator of the strength of teacher leadership. In our study, the data revealed that teachers were seldom fully involved in in-school decision making with only 30,5% responding often or always (Q18). The role which enjoyed the highest level of involvement by teachers within the zone of the whole school related to the setting of standards for pupil behaviour in the school (role 6, Q26). The data revealed that 67,3% of the teachers participated in setting standards for pupil behaviour in their schools. However, only 27,2% of educators often or always organized and led reviews of the school year plan (Q17) whilst a mere 14,1% of educators often or always set the duty roster for their colleagues (Q30). In other words,

teachers in our study were not always fully involved in school-wide decision-making processes and when teachers were involved, this was usually restricted and took the form described by Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 90) of “individual or collective consultation with the senior management team”. Another finding which demonstrated that teachers were not adequately empowered as leaders was their failure to engage in designing staff development programmes. This study revealed that a massive 65,6% of even the most seasoned teachers (51+ age group), seldom or never participated in designing staff development programmes for their school (Q27). This finding is illustrated in Table 6 below. Only 11,8% of all the respondents were often or always involved in this role. According to Harris and Muijs (2005: 126) one of the key problems in developing teacher leadership is that “staff lack confidence and in some cases leadership skills to perform the roles and responsibilities”. In cases like these where “teachers are expected to move into leadership roles, they must be provided with meaningful professional development experiences, in both formal and informal settings” (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001: 53).

		27. I design staff development programmes for my school.					
		% Never	% Seldom	% Sometimes	% Often	% Always	% Missing
Age	18-30	50.0	19.5	20.1	7.3	2.5	0.6
	31-40	41.5	23.9	21.7	7.6	4.4	0.9
	41-50	30.2	27.3	27.7	8.7	4.2	1.9
	51+	42.5	23.1	21.0	8.2	3.0	2.2
% Total of sample		39.5	24.3	23.1	8.0	3.8	1.3

Table 6: Cross-tabulation: Age with design of staff development programmes.

Zone 4: Leading between neighbouring schools in the community

Roles in this zone are associated with, firstly, providing curriculum development knowledge across schools (role 2) and, secondly, leading in-service education and assisting other teachers across schools (role 3).

No.	Question	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Missing
21	I provide curriculum development knowledge to teachers in other schools	5.6%	10.3%	32.5%	20%	30.6%	0.9%
25	I co-ordinate aspects of extra-mural activities beyond my school	11.1%	14.3%	23.8%	20.5%	28.5%	1.8%
28	I co-ordinate cluster meetings for my learning area	9.9%	12.6%	21.8%	17.4%	36.7%	1.6%

Table 7: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C2, Zone 4

Only 15,9% of the teachers in our study often or always provided curriculum development knowledge to teachers in other schools (role 2, Q21). The data also revealed that 25,4% of the teachers coordinated aspects of extra-mural activities beyond their school (role 2, Q25). Of the teachers, 22,5% often or always coordinated cluster meetings for their learning areas within their districts (Q28). This further demonstrated their involvement in providing curriculum development knowledge to teachers in other schools (role 2). We can conclude, on the basis of these statistics, that teacher leadership within Zone 4 was not a common practice for teachers in our study. This finding concurs with the case study research of Rajagopaul (2007) and the survey research of Khumalo (2008) that teacher leadership was not especially evident in Zone 4.

In summary, it is evident from the data presented above that glimpses of teacher leadership were apparent across all four zones but the degree of teacher leadership varied dramatically from zone to zone. Irrespective of age, gender and qualification, the majority of teachers in our study saw themselves as people who took initiative without being delegated responsibilities. In relation to Zone 1, the majority of teachers believed that they critically reflected on their teaching with the purpose of continuously improving their classroom practice. In contrast, the take-up of teacher leadership in the other 3 zones dropped dramatically. In zone 2, teachers were involved in curricular activities (the selection of materials and text books for their grade or learning area) as well as extra-curricular activities (such as sport). However, many of the teachers (50,6%) seldom or never provided curriculum development knowledge to their colleagues nor did they lead in-service education and neither did they participate in peer performance evaluation. Teachers defined themselves as leaders within Zone 3 primarily in relation to their participation in school level decision making on the issue of learner discipline. There was little further evidence of teacher leadership in relation to other school decision-making contexts and teachers did not seem to be involved in reviews of school practice. Furthermore, there was little teacher leadership evident in Zone 4 beyond some involvement in learning area cluster meetings and involvement in extra-mural activities, indicating a restricted form of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2005).

We now turn our attention to section C3 (questions 31 – 46) of the questionnaire to understand how, according to the participants, teacher leadership occurred in schools. Did teacher leadership emerge through the initiative of teachers or were teachers appointed or nominated to the various roles?

HOW TEACHER LEADERSHIP HAPPENS IN SCHOOLS: THROUGH DELEGATION OR DISTRIBUTION?

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) argue that it is crucial to ascertain whether teachers are taking the initiative in efforts to bring about school improvement or whether they are carrying out the directives of others. In line with this thinking, our survey aimed to determine *how* teacher leadership happened in schools. Was it emergent or was it delegated by a principal or a central office? We worked from the premise that if teacher leadership was delegated then it was likely to be “limited in scope and vision and subject

to cancellation” (Troen and Boles, 1994: 40). An initial response to this question can be found in Question 15 of Table 3. Here 61,3 % of the teachers indicated that they often or always took the initiative without duties being formally assigned to them. Further scrutiny of the above finding revealed that 64,1% of the teachers in the Umgungundlovu District, 56,5% in the Umzinyati District and only 45.9% in the Umkhanyakude District often or always took the initiative of their own accord. The issue of context is perhaps pertinent here in understanding this variation. In the Umkhanyakude District, 84% of the teachers in our study taught at no-fee schools that serviced extremely poor communities, compared to 7% of no-fee schools in Umgungundlovu and 31% in the Umzinyathe district. This statistic raised the following question which requires further research: How does the socio-economic status of a community impact on teacher initiative?

Furthermore, in Section C3 of our questionnaire, we aimed through questions related to school committees, to determine which committees’ teachers were involved in and how they got to be involved on these committees. By focusing on this aspect of appointment to committees we hoped to uncover how schools were organised and *how* leadership happened. To do this we used Gunter’s (2005) classification of distributed leadership, and particularly the authorised and dispersed forms, to frame our analysis. For Gunter, authorised or delegated distributive leadership involves a hierarchical distribution of tasks to others by the principal (Table 8, 2nd column headed ‘delegated by SMT’) while dispersed distributed leadership refers to a process whereby the functioning of an organization mainly occurs in the absence of hierarchical structures and is a more bottom-up process (Table 8, 1st column headed ‘nominated by colleagues’ and 3rd column headed ‘volunteered’).

COMMITTEE INVOLVED IN	NOMINATED BY COLLEAGUES	DELEGATED BY SMT	VOLUNTEERED	INCOMPLETE RESPONSE TO QUESTION	TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
Catering	40.3%	16.2%	36.8%	6.7%	345
Sports	38.6%	14.1%	35.2%	12.1%	546
Bereavement	41.7%	10.6%	34.9%	12.8%	235
Cultural	38.0%	12.0%	36.4%	13.6%	376
Library	40.5%	16.0%	36.8%	6.7%	163
Learning area	35.1%	25.8%	25.1%	14.0%	561
Awards	27.8%	26.5%	34.7%	11.0%	291
Time-table	27.9%	32.1%	25.6%	14.4%	215
Governing body	73.8%	13.1%	8.3%	4.8%	145
Development team	55.6%	18.1%	12.3%	14.0%	277
Fundraising	29.1%	16.3%	42.8%	11.8%	381
Maintenance	27.3%	26.0%	34.4%	12.3%	154
Safety & security	32.4%	23.1%	31.8%	12.7%	173
Discipline	31.2%	17.7%	35.0%	16.1%	311
Teacher Union	36.5%	2.5%	41.0%	20.0%	485

Table 8: Teacher leadership questionnaire, Section C3: How teachers got involved in committees

From Table 8 as well as the pie chart (Diagram 3), it can be seen that the majority of the educators on the committees were either nominated by colleagues or they volunteered, indicating a more dispersed form of distributed leadership. Some of the committees such as the learning area committee, the timetable committee, the awards committee and the maintenance committee had a relatively high percentage of teachers who were delegated the responsibility by the SMT, indicating an authorised form of distributive leadership. This committee data as well as teacher responses to Question 15 points to a more emergent form of teacher leadership (Gronn, 2000; Harris and Muijs, 2005). This contrasts somewhat with the previous section which pointed to the restricted take-up of teacher leadership in schools, particularly in relation to zones 2, 3 and 4.

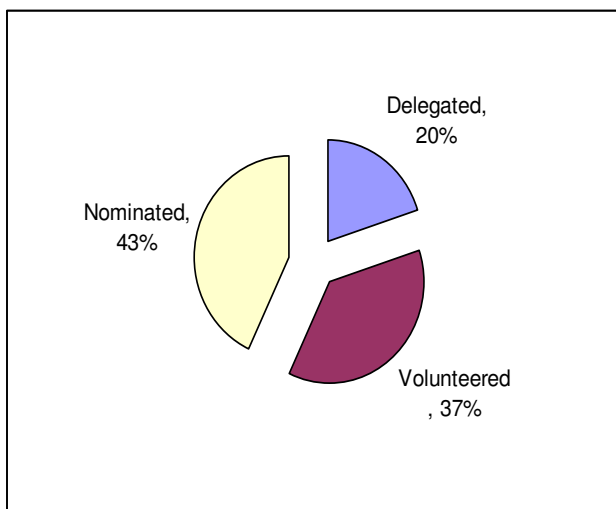


Diagram 3: Pie Chart to indicate how teachers got involved on committees

THE SCHOOL CONTEXT AND CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

No.	Question	Always %	Often %	Sometimes %	Seldom %	Never %	Missing %
47	The SMT has trust in my ability to lead	29.1	27.0	26.7	7.3	6.9	2.9
48	Teachers resist leadership from other teachers	6.4	13.9	37.5	18.5	19.9	3.8
49	Teachers are allowed to try out new ideas	35.2	29.2	20.9	8.0	4.3	2.5
50	SMT values teacher's opinions	27.7	27.0	27.2	10.1	5.5	2.5
51	SMT allows teachers to participate in school level decision-making	24.3	26.5	29.3	12.1	5.4	2.4
52	Only the SMT takes important decisions	20.1	24.1	26.8	13.6	13.0	2.5
53	Only the SMT takes initiative in the school	10.9	18.3	26.2	19.5	21.7	3.4
54	Adequate opportunities are created for staff to develop professionally	32.7	27.7	22.9	10.0	3.9	2.7
55	Team work is encouraged	58.0	21.9	12.5	3.7	1.6	2.3
56	Men are given more leadership roles than women	7.2	11.8	15.6	15.2	47.9	2.4

Table 9: Teacher Leadership Questionnaire: Section C4

According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) the context of a school is a vital component that either facilitates or hinders teacher leadership. In support of this position, Harris and Muijs recognise that “school culture and structure are key elements in allowing teacher leadership to flourish” (2005: 127). In line with this view, our survey (section C4, questions 47 – 56) aimed to reveal teachers’ perceptions of the context and culture of their schools in order to determine whether schools were well-placed to support teacher leadership or whether aspects of the school context operated as barriers to teacher leadership.

A culture of teacher support and collegiality is critical to teacher leadership and, as Grant and Singh maintain, “if the culture of the school is not collegial, barriers to teacher leadership may arise” (2008, forthcoming). Collegiality was not seen as a major stumbling block to teacher leadership as 79.9% of respondents in the study schools indicated that teamwork was often or always encouraged (Q55) and only a mere 1.6% indicated that they had never experienced teamwork. In relation to teacher professional development (Q54), 60.4% of teachers felt that adequate opportunity was often or always created for staff development. These findings confirm those of the original study and, in the words of Khumalo, “adequate opportunities are created for the staff to develop professionally, hence the majority of them believed that the leadership culture and context of their schools is very open and collaborative” (2008: 83). However, we believe that this question requires further research because these findings appear to contradict the responses to questions 19, 20 and 27 discussed earlier in this article.

We agree with Harris and Lambert that the possibility of teacher leadership in any school is dependent on whether “the head and the senior management team within the school relinquishes power to the teachers and the extent to which teachers accept the influence of colleagues who have been designated as leaders in a particular area” (2003: 44 – 45). In about half of the schools in our study, the SMT was still perceived as an impediment to teacher leadership because members of the SMT did not distribute leadership but instead autocratically controlled the leadership process. The data in Table 9 reveals that 56.1% of teachers often or always indicated that the school management trusted their ability to lead (Q47). For many of the teachers, while acknowledging varying degrees of trust exhibited by the SMT, felt that they were not fully acknowledged as leaders. Some 54.7% of the teachers believed that the SMT often or always valued their opinion (Q50). This perceived lack of confidence of the SMT in the ability of teachers to lead was a barrier to teacher leadership for just under half of the teachers (44% or 478 to be exact!) in the study. Furthermore, our argument was strengthened by the perception that for 44,2% of the teachers, their SMT often or always take the important decisions (Q52). This finding of the SMT as a barrier to teacher leadership in schools concurs with the findings of the original study (Khumalo, 2008) and compares favourably with the more qualitative studies as well. Rajagopaul’s (2007) case study research highlights principals as a barrier to teacher leadership because of their fear to let go of authority. In one of Ntuzela’s (2008) case study schools, under the guise of teacher leadership, principals delegated unwanted tasks and administrative work (as opposed to distributing leadership) to teachers. Similarly, the case study research of Singh (2008) also found that the SMT members were a barrier to leadership through their control of the decision-making

process. The principals in Singh's (2008) study believed they were developing teacher leadership when instead this was perceived by teachers as management overloading them with unwanted maintenance and administrative chores. In reporting on Singh's study, Grant and Singh explain how "members of SMT's used formal positions to delegate management and administrative tasks to people they saw fit for the role, thereby restricting access to teachers based on their seniority, experience and expertise" (2008, forthcoming). We concur therefore with the South African research on teacher leadership to date that the SMTs, working from a traditional view of leadership, remain a barrier to authentic teacher leadership emerging in KZN schools.

In line with the thinking of Harris and Lambert (2003), a further barrier to teacher leadership in schools in our study was teachers themselves. Only 38,4% of teachers in our survey indicated they seldom or never resisted teacher leadership from peers (Q48) while 20.3% said they often or always resisted leadership from other teachers, supporting the research of Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) that egalitarian values among teachers may militate against teacher leadership. This finding is in keeping with the case study research of Ntuzela (2008) who found in his study that teachers themselves blocked teacher leadership, either by refusing to lead, by resisting leadership from other teachers or through a lack of understanding and a lack of training of what teacher leadership is about. This is in line with the view of Troen and Boles who suggest that in the context of teacher leadership, "seeing some teachers do something new and different and get attention and respect, intensifies feelings of turf protection and powerlessness in other teachers" (1994: 41).

CONCLUSION

Teacher leadership was generally supported across the schools in our study as a concept, but the extent to which it was understood and practiced was limited. At the level of practice it seemed that, for the majority of teachers, leadership remained elusive and out of bounds. Where teacher leadership happened it was restricted to the level of the classroom (Zone 1) or, to a lesser degree, to teachers working together on curricular and extra-curricular activities (Zone 2). There was very little evidence of teacher leadership in Zone 3, the level of school-wide decision-making, or in Zone 4 where teachers lead across schools or within the community. Where there was evidence of more participation in zones 2, 3 and 4, the nature of the task was mainly administrative and fairly repetitive. This points to what Harris and Muijs (2005) term restricted teacher leadership which is found in schools where "the cultural and structural changes required to support teacher leadership have not been put in place" (2005: 116). Given South Africa's history of inequality based on patriarchal power relations within a hierarchical social structure of class and race, it follows that the majority of schools are likely to be grappling with what it means to lead schools democratically. Despite well intentioned national policies, acts and reports, the goals of democracy, equity and redress have remained largely at the level of rhetoric and ignored the "realities on the ground" (Sayed, 2004: 252). Although formal management and governance structures, through legislation, exist in schools, it seems that many schools remain unable to change their culture and practices. This is perhaps

because, as Smylie (1995) explains, historically schools are organisations which are conservative and which attempt to maintain the status quo. As such, South African schools cling to their apartheid legacy of leadership as control and delegation and find it therefore extremely difficult to redefine leadership in terms of distribution. Furthermore, as Troen and Boles argue, “teaching is not a profession that values or encourages leadership within its ranks” (1994: 40), whether it be leadership from teachers *or* leadership from those in formal positions of authority.

However, we argue that South African schools require just that, leadership, and particularly dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership that will challenge the existing status quo and initiate the journey towards teacher leadership and school improvement. Our schools need leaders who are courageous, unafraid to take risks and who can use their initiative and work collaboratively with people in achieving the shared school vision. And, we argue, the role of teachers in this leadership process is crucial. This sleeping giant of teacher leadership must be awakened (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and tapped as a powerful source of leadership for school improvement. And, in releasing this potential, teacher leadership will provide “a means for altering the hierarchical nature of schools” (Troen and Boles, 1994: 40).

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CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF CONTEXTS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP: PRESENTING THE SECOND CLUSTER OF CHRONICLES

6.1. INTRODUCTION

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Chapters Five, Six and Seven in this thesis are dedicated to the presentation of the chronicles which form the core of this PhD by publication. In this sixth chapter, I present the second cluster of chronicles which includes chronicles 2 and 3. These two chronicles were selected for inclusion in the thesis and clustered together because they, to a large extent, answered the second research question in my study: ‘What are the characteristics of contexts that either support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools’?

Let me now briefly introduce the second cluster of chronicles. The second chronicle is entitled ‘Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations’. It is published in the journal called *Agenda*, 65, 2005, pp. 44 - 57. The aim of this chronicle was to explore the relation between gender and teacher leadership in order to determine whether leadership was evenly distributed across teachers, regardless of gender.

The third chronicle is entitled ‘In this culture there is no such talk: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS’. It is published in the *South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management*, 1(1) 2008, pp. 3 - 16. The aim of this chronicle was to examine the views of the school management team members and the district official on their views regarding HIV/AIDS as one of the barriers to basic education for learners in schools. In so doing, it sought to determine how the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic impacted on the practice of school leadership.

What follows is the presentation of each of the chronicles in this second cluster.

6.2. CHRONICLE TWO

Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations

Callie Grant

abstract

Teacher leadership, which refers to leadership which is more than headship or formal position, is a relatively new concept in South Africa. Within the education management framework of distributive leadership and a collaborative school culture, teacher leadership refers to teachers taking up informal and formal leader roles in the classroom and beyond into areas of whole school development and community involvement. Teacher leadership is fundamentally about change, guided by a collective vision. This *article* reports on an exploratory study of the relation between gender and teacher leadership through an intimate look at the views of a group of KwaZulu-Natal educators. Using Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of field and habitus, this small-scale study highlights the situatedness of leadership and the importance of context in the take-up of teacher leadership. It points to the social and cultural embeddedness of leadership and the difficulties associated with shifting the taken-for-granted assumption that leadership is a male domain. The *article* urges women teachers to challenge the existing status quo and take up their rightful roles, both formal and informal, in a move to a more distributed, shared and collective form of leadership.

keywords

teacher leader, distributed, voice, agency, women

Introduction

South Africa's new education policies promote a shift from centralised, authoritarian control and decision-making to a school-based system of education management where 'management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage' (Department of Education, 1996:27). This requires that schools transform themselves from organisations which, historically, were tightly controlled and autocratically managed, into democratic organisations in line with what Senge (1990) calls learning organisations. To achieve this, collaboration and participation of all staff and stakeholders are essential

in decision-making and leadership and management processes (Department of Education, 1996). In other words, distributed leadership is needed so that informal shared forms of leadership are allowed to emerge. Distributed leadership is increasingly used in school leadership discourse. While traditional notions of leadership are premised upon an individual managing the organisation alone, distributive leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership where all people in the organisation can act as leaders at one time or another. As Harris explains, 'distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or



CALLIE GRANT

Research participants: tutors on the BEd Honours programme

role' (2004:13). In other words, as Gibbs (1954) claims, 'leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group' (cited in Gronn, 2000:324). Extending Gibbs' ideas, Gronn argues that leadership is more appropriately understood as 'fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed phenomenon' (Gronn, 2000:324) which will result in 'the abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles' (2000:325).

Distributed leadership extends the boundaries of leadership significantly because, according to Harris (2004), it is premised upon high levels of teacher involvement. In other words, it offers a platform for teacher leadership to emerge. The term 'teacher leadership', although not new in international literature, is new to the majority of educators in South Africa. While teacher leadership has, until recently, not been researched in this country, it is slowly becoming an area of interest. The definition of teacher leadership by

two American authors, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), provides a useful starting point to a South African exploration of the concept. They write: 'teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice' (2001:17). Using the Katzenmeyer and Moller definition, I developed my own tentative definition of teacher leadership for the South African context which I used to inform this article:

Teacher leadership implies a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared vision of their school within a culture of mutual respect and trust.

**One person
can no longer
be expected
to lead and
manage a
school
effectively**

Given the complex terrain of schools in South Africa in the 21st century, it is my view that one person can no longer be expected to lead and manage a school effectively. Working from the premise that firstly, leadership cannot be equated with headship, and secondly, that all people have leadership potential, I believe that leadership must be encouraged as an essential role of all school staff. While the principal is accountable as the head of the school, and can exercise authority as the most senior person in the hierarchy, leadership denotes influence (Gronn, 2000) and should take a distributed form. I agree with Harris (2004) who claims that it is the task of the principal then to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship through the creation of a common culture where leadership is equated with maximising the human capacity within the organisation. It is my view that unless principals learn to distribute leadership informally to teachers in their organisations, through relinquishing their power, the transformation of South African schools is unlikely to occur.

Working from this premise, this article reports on research in the second phase of a small-scale study, the first phase of which explored educators' reflections on and their understanding of the concept of teacher leadership and examined its potential for the South African schooling context. While the findings of the first phase of this study contributed to knowledge production on teacher leadership in South Africa, there was almost no mention of teacher leadership as it related to issues of gender. This concerned me because, as Marianne Coleman argues, 'stereotypes and theories about leadership are still predominantly male' (2003a:167). Furthermore, as the report on education management argues, 'the paucity of women in senior management positions in the education system is testimony to the gender discrimination which has pervaded all levels of the public

sector' (Department of Education, 1996:21). This motivated me to explore, as phase two of the study, the relationship between gender and teacher leadership. My point of departure was that if leadership is to be distributed, then by whom and to whom is it to be distributed? In other words, is it distributed equally across the staff or are certain staff members more likely to be given leadership responsibility than others? More blatantly, is leadership distributed more to men than to women teachers and, if so, how are the teacher leadership roles gendered?

The study

To explore these questions, I initiated phase two of the study by running a focus group interview. Seven of the original 11 tutors who were participants in phase one of the study, participated in the interview. Eleven first-year Master of Education students were invited to join the interview to give more voice to the questions and to offer a better gender balance. The group consisted of 12 women and 6 men. The group was made up of 14 teachers, 2 principals, 1 department official and 1 education consultant. Participants were representative of the rural/urban divide with 8 with a rural background, 3 with a township background and 6 with urban experience. The issue of confidentiality was not an issue for the participants and they were even willing to be photographed. However, I felt it prudent not to link participants' names directly to their views and have instead used pseudonyms. I used content analysis to analyse the data using a thematic, qualitative approach.

In this study, what emerged most forcefully from the findings was that context matters. We cannot begin to talk about gender and teacher leadership without taking the context of the school into account and prevailing views on the roles of men and women in the wider community.

Context matters

The central finding from this study was the importance of context in an exploration of the

relationship between teacher leadership and gender. As a consequence of the impact of the macro South African context and the legacy of apartheid ideology on education, South African schools experience vastly different realities. This legacy of inequality, initially along a racial divide, is now becoming more evident across the rural/urban divide. For the purposes of this article, I have chosen to explore gender and teacher leadership in our country, looking specifically at the urban/rural dichotomy.

In the majority of rural communities, women are viewed (by both men and women) as less than equal to men. Whereas men are generally valued and empowered, women are disempowered by their place and function in the home. It was clear from all the African participants in this study that, in rural communities, women have very little credibility as leaders. Thandanani, an ex-principal, and presently a department official in education management and governance, believes that women can lead as effectively as men and should be given more opportunity to do so. However, when reflecting on the region in which he is often called in to mediate disputes over principals' posts, he observes that:

The majority of the community in that area believe that the person who can lead the school better is a male, especially in that area. They don't believe that a female can lead a school. They don't. Whether you can bring them and workshop them, you are wasting your time. They believe that a male can lead the school. For MPs [members of parliament] it's fine, put her there – but at a school, put a strong male, a strong male.

This community view is endorsed by Themba, a Head of Department in a high school, when reflecting on another rural KwaZulu-Natal community:

You see it's rural and there are males... and they don't want their children to be

under the leadership of a female because even the chief in the area is a male. Even the assistants of the chief are izinduna. They are males. Every leader here in the community is a male... I don't want to say it's culture but I think it is, you see. And you can't tell them about changes you see – you can't tell them about changes that now you are living in the new South Africa.

The findings of this study were no different to those of other South African researchers when it came to the question of rural community views about women and leadership. Magwaza, in her research into traditional dress as a means of expression and communication, comments, 'Zulu society has always been largely patriarchal. Its women have been given minimal or marginal opportunity to air their views' (2001:25). She argues further that feminism is viewed by many as having no relevance to African culture because 'it leads women away from their families and responsibilities' (2001:25). Ngcongco acknowledges that African women may lead in certain areas such as a sewing club, but that 'it is still uncommon that they lead groups which have significant memberships of men' (1993:6).

However, in contrast to rural communities, research participants argue that in urban communities and townships, women are more likely to be given the space to lead and are generally respected for a job well done, although this is not always the case. It is the view of Sibongile, a teacher in a township high school, that '... in a township definitely because there are a lot of [women] principals, primary schools and high schools, even for my school it is like it's accepted that women can take high schools to greater heights'.

Sunitha, a Head of Department from an urban school, also acknowledges that her

In the majority of rural communities, women are viewed as less than equal to men.

experiences are not the same as those of the rural teachers. When reflecting on the mathematics and science department in her school, she comments on there being a good gender distribution without male domination:

I am also looking back to what has happened at subject committee meetings and it struck me that this is really something very positive – the male and female teachers work very well together. There is lots of sharing of work, sharing of worksheets.

What emerges from this study is that when exploring gender and teacher leadership in South Africa, the terrain is simply too diverse to offer a homogenous picture. This is largely because rural areas remain predominantly patriarchal with an emphasis on traditional values and norms, while urban areas and townships tend to reflect a more western influence with more awareness of the rights of women. Our understanding of gender and teacher leadership and the barriers that have to be overcome in attempts to implement teacher leadership will vary across different school contexts, or what Bourdieu (1991) calls 'cultural fields', where the prevailing social conditions are historically embedded and notions on education leadership are taken for granted and uncritically accepted.

So what are these taken-for-granted perceptions in the field of education leadership? Two perceptions about education leadership dominated the stories of the educators interviewed in this study. These were firstly, that effective leadership is perceived as the domain of men, and secondly, that leadership is associated with the 'physically strong'. In response to the first perception, one may want to argue that this is, indeed, fact as there is empirical evidence to show that far more men

than women hold leadership positions. However, in the remainder of this *article* I argue that while men hold the majority of the leadership positions, it is a myth that only men – strong men – can lead. Women, when given the chance, can also be very effective leaders. I have particularly chosen the term 'myth' to argue that these perceptions are commonly held beliefs that can and should be challenged and demystified. I now explore the first myth and explain how both women and men educators sometimes collude to perpetuate and reproduce the myth of leadership being the male domain.

Myth one Effective education leadership is the domain of the man

The first myth, leadership as a male domain, is premised on a more formal view of leadership where it is equated with headship or formal position. Blackmore (1989:123), in her feminist critique of leadership, suggests that 'women have been alienated by the masculinist portrayal of power, leadership and organisational life which emphasises control, individualism and hierarchy'. Hall (1996) argues that power in organisations is associated mainly with men, based on a general cultural attitude that men make better leaders.

In a South African context, Ngcongco writes, 'In a typical African tradition men lead and women follow' (1993:6). Today, despite the many education policies in place which foreground democracy and gender equity, in practice it appears that while there has been some change in the urban context, little has changed in the rural context. In this study there are examples, in both urban and rural contexts, of leadership being understood as a male prerogative. Nonhlanhla, a rural high school teacher, spoke of their school subject meetings where the one male usually says, 'I will be head of the subject. You know I am supposed to be the head.' She describes a typical situation where 'someone [male] comes and tells you they are the boss, you just look at that person and you don't say

Leadership as
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leadership

anything'. This behaviour is in keeping with what Ngcongco refers to as 'women's games of powerlessness' when they pretend to be weak in the presence of men or when they pretend to agree with them (1983:8) and leads to the internalised oppression of women (Freire, 1970). Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is useful here to understand the behaviour and practice of both the men and women in these situations. On this, Carrington and Luke (1997:101) say:

The particular features of the habitus are formed via a process of inculcation which begins at birth. One develops distinctive class, culture-based and engendered ways of 'seeing', 'being', 'occupying space' and 'participating in history'. The concept of habitus, then, serves to connect the biologic being with the social world via physical and psychic embodiment, a structured and structuring durable, yet flexible, disposition.

In other words, we are deeply conditioned individuals and social beings who are products of our histories and the sum of our lived experiences. We have learnt gendered ways of knowing and behaving from the time we were born. Our habitus has developed over time through our socialisation in the community we grew up in. We have learnt the values, norms and practices of our community and these appear to us to be 'objective', natural and God-given. As an example, for many women teachers who have grown up in rural communities, it is the right of a man to lead and they accept, as the norm, their inferior status. Women teachers who have lived their lives in urban communities have not been exempt from gendered ways of knowing and behaving but their socialisation in the community may or may not have taught them a different set of values, norms and practices.

In this study, participants commented on the many women teachers in rural schools who do not hold formal leadership roles but who attend workshops and who work actively in learning

area committees and extra-curricular committees. These women generally 'carry the load' and fulfil the more informal leadership roles while the men masquerade as the 'real' leaders within the school. An example of this was Nonhlanhla's experience of being ordered around, told what to do and which workshops to attend while the male committee head did nothing. As a result of the work of the women, the subject committee was viewed as a success and 'people were saying the head [of the committee] is fine but the head will just be sitting there relying on the women to know what to do'. When challenged by another participant as to her collusion in 'the plot' or, in Bourdieu's terms, reproduction of the conditions of oppression (Webb et al, 2002:23), Nonhlanhla's justification was that she wanted to work properly and do very well and so, by colluding, she would be benefiting.

In her study of women head teachers in schools in the United Kingdom, Hall found that the women heads required others' willingness to follow. While no leader can take willingness to follow for granted, Hall (1996:137) argues that:

... women assume that their relative absence from leadership positions means that they will have to work even harder than men to cultivate it... Men who are given formal positions of power may make the culturally justified assumption that others will follow.

This notion of women leaders needing to work harder than their male counterparts was raised by the participants in this study and Govan, a teacher in an urban high school, comments: 'So it seems sometimes that because of the stereotypes of the school, the female now has to work twice as hard to come up with the same result as a male does.' And, if this does not sufficiently alienate

We have learnt gendered ways of knowing and behaving from the time we were born

women from leadership then add to it the domestic scene where 'at work, women have to compete with men, who do less at home' (Ngcongco; 1993:6).

Given this unfair cultural advantage that men appear to have, there was much discussion in the group around the different reasons why women and men choose to lead. Zandile, a teacher and Head of Department in a township high school, summed up the general feelings of the group very well:

For a female, in most cases, if we take leadership positions it's because we need to prove a point... to show that we are capable and to show that we can actually think and for males it's like they want to maintain that it's them who should lead for power. In most cases they should be up there and then as females down there... We can actually do what the men do so that you find out I am working under such pressure just trying to prove you know, focusing on everything that we shouldn't be, just because we want to prove a point. But with them, it's all easy because it's like they have been there and they will still be there.

**Women are
complicit in
their own
gender
domination**

I believe that Zandile's assessment is accurate. Generally for men, leadership is about power and once a man takes up a position of leadership it is accepted as permanent. However, the same rights are not accorded to women. The last sentence of the quotation hints at the temporary and precarious nature of women leaders as opposed to their male counterparts. Women leaders, because they do not always have the automatic trust and support of their communities, often have to prove their capability as leaders under conditions of oppressive, critical scrutiny. Duduzile, a principal of a rural high school, reflecting on her rural community, laments:

Even if you can work hard, deliver the whole service to the community... the fact remains because you are a female, even if you do your utmost best to whatever thing you are doing, they have got that 'hmmmm... you may never know tomorrow, this is a female principal. Now she is doing well, just for now, but we don't have trust that that particular person will be doing that in the future'.

Patriarchy cannot only be understood simply in terms of coercion by one group (men) of another (women) and, as Webb et al (2002) argue, women are complicit in their own gender domination by misrecognising the symbolic violence to which they are subjected. Similarly Hall (1996), when exploring the stories of the six women head teachers in the UK in the early 1990s, found that both men and women were more reluctant to work for a woman than for a man, even when the leadership styles of the men and women leaders were not significantly different. This complicity of women was borne out by the participants in this study where women vote men into the more formal leadership positions while they lead informally, 'behind the scenes'. Zandile acknowledges that:

... when it comes to leadership, as to who is going to head the committee, we as females in most cases we vote for the males to be heads or chairpersons, whilst we are working and doing most of the things.

This view is confirmed by Ngcongco in her reflections on African culture, 'Where people must be elected to senior positions, it is not uncommon that women will elect a man because he is a man, even if there are women who show better capabilities' (1993:8). When asked why the females voted for males, Zandile responded, 'I don't know why but it seems to be the case.' Bourdieu's concept of habitus is again useful here to help us understand the women's

acceptance of the norms and values of their community and it explains why they do not question or challenge the existing status quo.

So far, this study has shown that leadership in many communities is still understood by both men and women as a male domain. Men take up formal leadership positions as their right, with little resistance from women. For a minority of women who aspire to lead, they have to fight for that right, work twice as hard as their male counterparts to prove themselves and often receive little or no support from their colleagues or communities. Furthermore, in some communities, women are not trusted to lead and, if they do take up leadership roles, these are often viewed as temporary. The second taken-for-granted assumption that emerged from this study suggests that a 'strong' man is needed to lead. I will now explore this second myth and examine how it positions women.

Myth two The strong man view

The first myth, that of leadership as a male domain, links closely with the second myth, that of a leader as a 'strong' man. Gender division is still implicit in the use of terms like 'strong' and 'weak', 'hard' and 'soft'. Loots (2001:9) argues that 'soft' corresponds with the values that the patriarchal system attributes to the feminine – negative and powerless while the 'hard' corresponds with the values of the male – powerful and significant. Cora Burnett, writing in the context of gender and sport, explains how 'macho' or 'he-man' values validate a masculine identity that 'emphasises toughness, bravery, courage, tolerance for pain and quick rational thinking under pressure' (2001:72) but which counters and excludes feminine behaviour. Webb et al (2002) in their writings of Bourdieu, also refer to female bodies which were read as having significance which demonstrated their inferiority. In other words they were weak, soft, unfit for hard work and unable to take pressure. These gender stereotypes related to the body

have pervaded thinking on leadership and have resulted in an understanding of the leader as someone physically strong. This leads to the perception that women are less able than men to lead because they are physically smaller. Sibongile, a slim, youthful 40-year-old teacher laughs, when she says:

... in Zululand, in the rural areas, it's so hard for a person like me to get a principal's post. It is made worse because I am tiny! Perhaps my CV would be okay, but the moment I stepped out of the car, they would say 'oh gosh' she cannot be a principal!

In many communities in South Africa, discipline is still associated with physical power and corporal punishment. In line with the hard/soft principle, women are often viewed as not having the physical power to discipline children and are seen as 'less capable than their husbands of effecting discipline' (Ngcongco, 1993:7). This 'myth of frailty' is often then carried over into the school in the different ways men and women teachers lead and discipline their learners. Similarly, there was a sense across all types of schools in this study that men and women lead their learners differently in their approaches to discipline. For Sunitha, it was the men more often than the women who would:

... raise their voices, they would shout; they are the ones that carry sticks to the classroom; they would even chase children out of the classrooms and it is the women that in most cases – I am not saying all – play a nurturing role. You would say, okay come and talk to me after the lesson, and try and find out what the problem is. Maybe identify a problem, send the child for counselling and stuff like that. So I

In some communities, women are not trusted to lead

think in terms of the way we handle problem children in the classroom shows the difference.

According to the participants, the question of who will be approached to deal with a problem will depend on the issue itself and whether it needs someone physically strong to deal with it or not. It seems that, in certain schools, boys feel more comfortable to approach men teachers about issues such as drug and alcohol use and abuse: 'All the things that they do in the toilets they believe that for women this is a no-go area'. Girls would rather approach women to talk

Where women are given leadership roles, these are likely to be informal and less valued

about issues such as pregnancy. The participants also raised the point that, in relation to the issue of discipline, learners seem to show more respect for men teachers than they do for women teachers. However, it was suggested that women teachers bring this upon themselves when they choose not to deal with an issue and simply refer the learner to the principal or a male School Management Team (SMT) member. According to Zandile, this results in a situation where 'by so doing, those learners will say that, oh! that educator cannot handle us and they will continue challenging us because we have shown that the males can better handle them'. Again we see women's complicity in perpetuating the status quo. When asked why women do not deal with the discipline of learners and instead refer learners to the principal (usually a male), Zandile responded that this was because of the influence of the Zulu culture. Women did not generally discipline children at home as this was traditionally the role of the father or the older brother. Again Bourdieu's concept of habitus assists us here to understand the women's acceptance of the norms and values of their community and it explains why they do not question or challenge the existing status quo.

The image of the leader as a strong man,

according to participants, is often apparent in staff rooms when decisions have to be made. Men, figuratively speaking, 'use their muscles', their powers of coercion, to get the decision made quickly. Bongiwe, a teacher in a rural high school, describes what happens in her school:

Males, when they want something, when they have decided about a particular something, if female teachers are not on an idea of that, they will speak to it. They will twist it around until at the end of the day they say this is what should have happened.

The two myths discussed above endorse the view that women are followers in the male world of leadership. Leadership is associated with strength and power which is traditionally understood as a male domain. Where women are given leadership roles, these are likely to be informal and, therefore, less valued, unrewarded and not associated with power. I now turn to the types of roles and functions that women tend to fill when they are given access to this male domain.

Gendered roles, committees and subjects

This study points to the possibility that, where teacher leadership exists, stereotypical roles for men and women may be ascribed. Coleman (2003b:185) suggests that

... in schools there are clear identifications of women with the more pastoral and caring roles and men with aspects of education that are often more highly regarded, for example, curriculum roles and time-tabling, roles that may be more likely to lead to responsibility and leadership.

For Hall (1996:123):

... women heads combined care and control. The care was manifest in actions

that were supportive and nurturing, aimed at making someone feel good about what he or she was doing, as well as securing his or her support, commitment and trust.

This view was borne out in the interview where there was a sense from participants that women educators were generally far more caring, loving, supportive and nurturing than their male counterparts. However, it seemed that, instead of this 'feminine approach' being valued, it more often than not was only valued in relation to the foundation and intermediate phases. There was a sense from participants that in some communities these nurturing values were useful in the leadership of young children but that they had no place in high school leadership where a rational, hard-line, physical approach was the order of the day.

According to the participants, membership on committees is often gendered. Particularly in rural schools, it was argued that cultural committees and catering committees are largely the domains of women while sports committees are the homes of men. Furthermore, the apportioning of roles within the committees is often stereotyped. As Nonhlanhla explains:

There are certain positions that we think should be taken by a male. Then when it is a secretary, it will be easy for us to say Miss so-and-so or Mrs so-and-so, you be the secretary. But when it comes to the chairperson or the treasurer, if it's fundraising committees or cultural or sports committees where we need to have a treasurer, we will say maybe Mr so-and-so and not Miss or Mrs. I don't know why but it seems to be the case.

Bongiwe laments her position as the only woman teacher in the commerce department in her school. At every meeting she is given the task of writing the minutes, purely because she is the woman in the group and when she

queries this with her Head of Department she is told that it is because she has good handwriting and because she does it so well. Her anger at the stereotyping of roles and her relegation to the informal, devalued, menial tasks becomes evident in the following quotation:

They normally give us these tiny little jobs but when we are given money to go and buy books, it's 'Okay Mrs X, you are staying ... I have asked Mr M to go for us'. I cannot take money, I can only write the minutes!

The question I now ask is whether we, as women, are still comfortable perpetuating the myths surrounding gender and leadership, because myths they are. There is sufficient empirical evidence to prove that women can lead effectively, either formally or informally. Hall's (1996) study of the six women head teachers is but one example of the effectiveness of women leaders. While some of the participants in this study were participating in the perpetuation of the myth that only men can lead, others were clearly more critical of this taken-for-granted assumption and were vocal that things could be done differently. The question that now needs to be posed to participants is whether we can remain comfortable with our stereotypical roles now that the myths have been exposed? Are the women participants content to lead informally and without acknowledgement or is there a possibility that both the women and the men in the group can lead more courageously and challenge our schools into a distributive form of leadership so that a shared and collective form of leadership can emerge?

Strategies for transformation: challenging the status quo

While the individual habitus is powerful in

Cultural committees and catering committees are largely the domains of women

contributing to the reproduction of patterns in society, Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that it is a dynamic construct which can be used to resist and transform the status quo. In order for teachers, such as those in this study, to engage in the transformation of gender roles in leadership, they would need to question their taken-for-granted assumptions about leadership and explore alternative options. This awareness-raising could be through university qualifications in 'Education Leadership and Management' (ELM) or through in-service courses in ELM. Redressing gender inequality in school leadership requires all educators, but especially women teachers, to find their voices and challenge the myth that women cannot lead. Indeed, Thabisile, a teacher in a rural high school, has already seen the need for this. She challenges the status quo by arguing that:

Women have to work twice as hard as men to be acknowledged as a leader

I think it is high time that we have to take our stand and know that as a female you mustn't be bossed around... We know that we do have our own leadership skills which we have to practise as often as necessary.

In the interview, Thabisile described her strategy to be seen and valued as a leader. Her approach is to open up, share more of herself and move closer to people so that they begin to see her as an ally rather than as an enemy or inferior being. Thabisile's approach reiterates the point made earlier that women have to work twice as hard as men to be acknowledged as a leader.

Vijay, an urban primary school teacher, mentioned her frustrated attempts at being seen and heard as a leader. She spoke of the resistance she was met with at staff meetings when she attempted to participate as a teacher leader and the different strategies she resorted to:

We tried the silent mode, we said nothing and that didn't work because you just had

decisions taken that were totally against you or against the kids or the interests of the kids so you change and then you work via the Head of Departments. You suggest your ideas and when they come up at management meetings and you see, oh, there is your suggestion coming up as if it's theirs, but it's okay because it's come up.

It was the personal view of two of the participants that, in order to achieve distributed leadership, one has to take a more organisational development approach and ensure that policies and structures are in place which support the distribution of leadership and issues of equality of opportunity. According to Govan, there is need for a situation where 'policies are in place in line with the constitution so you have mechanisms in place to ensure that there is equity'. He argues that policies will then guide the process of distributing leadership equally and fairly across committees or allow for the rotation of leadership of the committees every few months. It is my view that while these ideas are good in theory, they are too simplistic. We know from the literature that there is a serious discrepancy in our country between policy and practice. Policy documents outline vision and goals in a simple linear process. Policy implementing, however, is a complex, long-term process which is impacted upon by the context and people and, therefore, fraught with obstacles and challenges. To counter the top-down approach, Govan also suggests a 'bottom-up' approach to change. He suggests that where there is resistance from the principal to distribute leadership in a school, the onus is on the whole staff to get involved. In his words: 'Possibly, to overcome that kind of [autocratic] attitude by that manager, you have to mobilise on the ground first. Because if you don't have support on the ground it is one against the superior'. Given that change is complex and cannot be mandated (Fullan, 1993), it makes sense that to shift people's understanding of leadership, one has to start with the culture of

the school and the vision and values of the teachers. For long-lasting change to happen, teachers need to understand and own the change process. Ongoing discussion and debate about leadership as a group activity is imperative, together with an exploration of each individual's leadership potential. An examination of the strengths and weaknesses of distributed leadership is essential, together with the ensuing conflict, resistance and emotion that this process will invoke. Unless teachers are given the time and space to challenge their deep taken-for-granted assumptions about leadership and are supported in the process, the shift in thinking is unlikely to occur.

Role models are a wonderful strategy for transformation. Good women principals, who have succeeded despite the odds, do wonders for the image of women leaders. Sibongile speaks of her principal as a role model for women in leadership. She claims that, from her experience, 'the women have proved to be the people who can really make a school a learning organisation'. She suggests that her school was dysfunctional under the headship and deputy headship of men and it was only when a women principal took over and distributed leadership to other teachers that things improved. 'So in my school in fact there is that feeling we can really make change, and it's beginning to spread to those of neighbouring schools that females can make positive changes in schools.' I would like to make the point that what Sibongile describes seems to be a shared leadership where individual teachers operate as leaders in their area of expertise and feel that their contributions are important and valued by the principal. I argue that this is real distributed leadership which 'is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise' (Bennett et al, 2003:3). It is leadership which is engaged wherever it exists within the organisation and is not only sought in the formal position of principal.

It is my view that effective women role models are essential to prove to communities

that leadership is not solely a male prerogative. Christie and Potterton (1997:14), in their research undertaken in 32 South African schools, point out that 'many of the resilient schools were headed by women. Our study suggests that the relationship between gender and school effectiveness and school quality warrants further specific research. It is the stories of successful women principals and teacher leaders, leading both formally and informally, that need to be heard and used to dispel the myths about men and leadership.

Conclusion

The structural, cultural and social consequences of patriarchal power relations in our South African society have contributed to leadership being understood as a male domain and the prerogative of an individual in a formal position of power. As a result, the majority of South African schools have not been exposed to shared or distributed forms of leadership where leadership is not 'located in the person of the leader but can be dispersed within the school' (Muijs and Harris, 2003:437). The experiences of participants in this study show that leadership, especially in rural schools, often remains located in the person of the principal who is sometimes unwilling to relinquish power to teachers. Where a principal chooses to delegate a task, this is often 'done' by an individual 'to others' which, according to Bennett et al (2003:3), is not distributed leadership. Distributed leadership, as I discussed earlier, is about maximising the human resource capacity within the school by engaging many people in leadership activity according to their expertise. So often principals are unaware of the strengths and capacity of their teachers and do nothing to seek out this untapped potential. They simply rely on their senior management to support them in leadership and decision-making.

Good women principals do wonders for the image of women leaders



CALLIE GRANT

Research participants: first-year Master of Education students

regardless of the expertise, or lack thereof, of these senior members of staff. Some principals might argue that because their formal position holds them accountable to the Department of Education, they cannot distribute leadership to others. While I agree with the first part of the above argument, the second part does not logically follow because it works from the faulty premise that leadership means headship. I agree with Gronn (2000:332-3) that:

... whereas leadership denotes influence, headship, on the other hand, denotes authority and describes the exercise of authority by the most senior role incumbent in an executive hierarchy. The confusion is caused, therefore, by the slippage in usage from the person who heads becoming cast as the person who leads.

Leadership does not mean headship, and so, while principals are accountable to the Department of Education because of their formal position in schools, they do not have the monopoly over influence. Schools would surely benefit if principals were also good leaders but as exploratory studies are beginning to show, where principals distribute leadership, school improvement is more likely to occur (Harris, 2004:12-13).

Coleman reminds us that 'the profession of teaching is numerically dominated by women but women are proportionately under-represented in positions of management in education' (2003a:165). Policies are in place in South Africa to redress gender inequality in the area of education leadership and management. However, this is insufficient and requires a change in practice. There is a critical need for women teachers, and particularly rural women teachers, to find their voice, speak out, and support each other in transforming community views on women and leadership. It is time for women teachers to dream their own dreams, to develop their own visions, to define their leadership role and to take up their rightful place in schools and communities. This requires courage, risk-taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm within a culture of transparency and mutual learning. Women teachers have to lobby for this change because, without pressure and critical exposure, the existing power relations in society as they relate to gender and leadership are likely to remain.

I hope that this *article* will be a catalyst for further exploration into this under-researched area of gender and teacher leadership. For me, the take-up of teacher leadership is critical to the transformation of South African schools into professional learning organisations. It follows then that any study into teacher leadership in South Africa, no matter how small, has significance and should be shared amongst academics and educators in the pursuit of knowledge creation and education transformation in our country. For me personally, it constitutes a moral imperative.

Notes

1. The tutors were teaching on a module called Education Leadership and Management in a mixed-mode Bachelor of Education Honours programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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6.3. CHRONICLE THREE

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“In this culture there is no such talk”: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS

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We argue that the notion of dialogic space is a useful conceptual tool for recognising, describing and applying to school leadership in all its complex forms, including issues related to HIV/AIDS. We draw on qualitative research on HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning in a rural education community in KwaZulu-Natal. Based on data gathered through questionnaires and interviews with school management team members and a district official, we suggest that schools in the study did not offer *dialogic space* when it came to the management of HIV/AIDS but rather the antithetical concept of a *monologic space*. The concept of *monologic space* offered us a tool to explain the silences and soliloquies, in schools in this study, around issues of HIV/AIDS and pointed tentatively to a lack of educational leadership and agency. Consequently those learners and educators affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS were marginalised through the silences and their real stories and suffering were not heard. Finally we recommend that for dialogic space to be established in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the development of distributed leadership within a transparent, trusting, and courageous school culture is essential.

Keywords: agency; dialogic space; marginalisation; monologic space; silences

Introduction

This article arose from a study located within a larger National Research Foundation project, which aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small country town in KwaZulu-Natal. We examined the voices of the School management team (SMT) members and the District Official on their views regarding HIV/AIDS as one of the major barriers to basic education for learners in schools. The main thesis in this article is that leadership should embrace the concept of dialogic space in its endeavour to transform South African schools into inclusive, participatory, and socially-just learning communities.

After beginning with an exploration of the concepts dialogue, space, and dialogic space, we go on to discuss dialogic space as a useful tool for understanding, describing and analysing the process of educational leadership. We then offer a discussion of the term monologic space as the antithesis of dialogic space. Following this the methods of the study are described. A selection of relevant findings is then presented to give substance to the discussion on monologic space, paralysed leadership, and HIV/AIDS. Finally we argue that

unless a dialogic space is created by courageous educators who take up a distributed leadership role in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, HIV/AIDS affected and infected learners will continue to be marginalised and denied the right to speak.

Defining *dialogic* and *monologic* space

Dialogue

The word 'dialogue' comes from the Greek word *dialogos* which means 'conversation' or 'discourse' (Freire, 1970, Rule, 2004, Lefebvre, 1991). The term implies a form of speech between two or more people where the people who take part in the dialogue are individual beings who are separate from each other but who come together through the conversation. Dialogue is

an unfolding process, a search or quest for knowledge and understanding usually through the medium of spoken language, but not excluding written and visual codes, involving partners who are committed to the quest. Thus dialogue assumes relationship and is impossible without it (Rule, 2004:320).

The notion of dialogue and dialogic relations is central to Freire's (1970) problem-posing education and a liberated society. He argues that the essence of dialogue is praxis which involves the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. In problem-posing education, the teacher is "no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (Freire, 1970:61). For Freire dialogue can only exist in the context of love, humility and mutual trust where praxis "is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone" (1970:69). He warns that if people are denied their right to speak, they will be unable to transform their own worlds and will remain oppressed.

Space and *place*

The pioneer into the concept of space in the social sciences was the French thinker Lefebvre (1991) who, from the perspective of urban geography, criticized the view perpetuated by Newtonian Physics that space is physical and therefore neutral, abstract, transparent, empty, and passive. He argues instead that spaces are social and therefore charged with meaning; they are complex, relational, and produced. For Lefebvre, the concept of space includes all possible spaces, whether abstract or 'real', mental or social. He distinguishes between representational spaces (the 'lived' spaces) and representations of space (the 'conceptual' spaces). He argues that "every social space has a history, one invariably grounded in nature, in natural conditions that are at once primordial and unique in the sense that they are always and everywhere endowed with specific characteristics (site, climate, etc.)" (Lefebvre, 1991:110). Implicit in this quotation is the understanding that time and space are not separable; space implies time and vice versa. For Lefebvre, it is beyond dispute that relations of inclusion and exclusion, and of implication and

explication, exist when people act and situate themselves in space as active participants. Tuan (1977) makes a useful distinction between 'space' and 'place'. For him place refers to the concrete, the location where one can pause and dwell. On the other hand, space is the more abstract concept that implies movement and freedom. For Tuan, the ideas of space and place require each other for definition. He explains that "from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa" (1977:6).

Space and the contestation of space, for Munt (2002) also points to relations of inclusion and exclusion and she claims that any space is always contingent on the space next to it, in other words, positionality is dependent on relationships of proximity. For her spaces are not only gendered, and sexed, but also moralised. She proposes that where people have been excluded from a place or 'displaced', there is a need for the generation of some form of agency where those marginalized become proactive in reinventing space and construct new spaces. The agency she is calling for could be conceived as something that is the "product of negotiations, of sorts, between all kinds of actors with seemingly autonomous (but actually mutually interdependent and determined) capacities" (Knopp, 2004:125). This 'product of negotiations' within a space is essentially what Rule (2004) terms 'dialogic space'.

Dialogic space

In the context of adult learning, Rule (2004) integrates 'dialogue', 'space' and 'place' into the conceptual tool he calls 'dialogic space'. For him dialogic space is not only a descriptive category; it also has qualitative dimensions. It is a space which can be physical (or virtual), intellectual, social or ideological but which is always characterised by dialogue. Rule calls for a dialogic space that encompasses movement and freedom, a type of 'spaciousness' which "is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act" (Tuan, 1977:52). For Rule, spaciousness implies the physical need for sufficient literal space and light in order for learning to occur as well as a "learning ethos and a curriculum which allows participants to explore new social and intellectual spaces, to expand their horizons and to travel to new territories" (2004:325). These dialogic spaces, he argues, must "provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds" (2004:326). Central to an understanding of dialogic space, for Rule, are the notions of process (as opposed to product), context, relationship and change.

School leadership as dialogic space

We argue that the concept of dialogic space (as defined above) is a useful conceptual tool to recognise, describe and apply to the process of education leadership. For the purposes of this article, we define 'leadership' as a process towards movement and change in an organisation while the term 'manage-

ment' is understood in relation to the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin & Astin, 2000). Much of the literature on leadership in general, and education leadership in particular, emphasizes its visionary and transformatory nature, as well as its ability to establish direction, align people by motivating, inspiring and empowering them (Kotter, 1990; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Heifetz, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1998; Ubben *et al.*, 2001). In line with contemporary leadership studies, and with special reference to school leadership, we contend that while good leadership is about the acquisition of skills and knowledge, it is even more about values and attitudes — it should have a “moral purpose” (Sergiovanni, 1998) and a holistic perspective (Ubben *et al.*, 2001). Good leadership has also been described as an ‘art’ which “inspires and touches, holds and cherishes, is humble and certain, pushes and directs, waits and listens, notices and moves, contains, breaks through, senses the moment ... and rests” (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002:166).

Furthermore, school leadership, in our view, is not only linked to formal position or role but is best understood as a group process (Gibb, 1954). We argue for a form of leadership, namely, *distributed leadership*, which “concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role” (Harris, 2004:13). Implicit within the notion of distributed leadership is a level of ‘moral’ leadership underpinned by values such as “inclusion, participation and transparency” (Harber & Davies, 1997:152), values such as “trust, respect, a sense of worth, equality, and the courage to take initiative” (Grant, 2006). Distributed leadership, within a schooling context, extends the boundaries of leadership significantly because it is premised upon high levels of teacher involvement and reinforces the notion of leadership potential in every teacher (Lieberman *et al.*, 1988; Lambert, 1995; Astin & Astin, 2000; Muijs & Harris, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Grant, 2005). The task of the principal, where teacher leadership exists, is then to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship through the creation of a common culture where leadership is equated with maximising the human capacity within the organisation (Harris, 2004).

The centrality of safe spaces and dialogue is not new in education leadership theory. Educational leadership, for Gunter, is about productive relationships and the importance of agency and connectivity in each other’s learning (2005:6). Hargreaves emphasises that leadership is about creating safe and secure spaces in which creativity can flourish and where “efforts are coordinated and new directions set by learning, information gathering and dialogue rather than through administrative regulation and hierarchical control” (1998:285). For Shields, dialogue is a way of being in the world with one another and “grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice” (2004:116). She urges educational leaders to

facilitate, model, and encourage dialogue about the multiple realities of the school community, helping students and adults alike to challenge

inequities, to develop respect for difference, and to create frameworks and criteria for making tough decisions about right and wrong (Shields, 2006: 64-65).

Leadership, in our view, is then primarily about agency and the creation of dialogic spaces where positive social relationships are allowed to develop in the pursuit of ongoing learning, the achievement of common organisational goals and the management of HIV/AIDS in schools. We agree with Shields that leaders should engage in dialogic relationships

in order to ensure that education is transforming rather than deforming, that we transform not only individual understandings of self and others, but that we lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities (2006:77).

Monologic space

The absence of dialogic space around issues of leadership in schools can be problematic. We suggest that the antithetical concept of *monologic space* commonly prevails in South African schools and can account for the silences and the soliloquies in relation to HIV/AIDS, and resultant school spaces characterised by fear, acquiescence and passivity. For us monologic space is a space of disengagement from HIV/AIDS which results in an absence of community and a lack of trust and transparency. It is a place of inequality where the powerful dominate and deny others the right to speak. It is most likely to emerge in a regime of autocratic leadership and hierarchical school organisation. Monologic space can emerge anywhere in a school community, e.g. between the district official and the principal, between the principal and the SMT, between the SMT and the teachers, between the SMT and the learners, or between the teacher and learners within the classroom. Central to an understanding of monologic space around HIV/AIDS is the notion of product (as opposed to process), decontextualisation, an absence of relationship and the maintenance of the *status quo*.

Methods

We utilised a qualitative research design and worked within the interpretive paradigm to obtain rich, detailed accounts of the SMTs' perspectives and experiences of HIV/AIDS as a barrier to basic education. Of the nine schools that were invited to participate, five became involved. Questionnaires were distributed to the SMT members at all nine schools along with letters of invitation to be interviewed. A total of 7 completed questionnaires were returned and six SMT members came forward to be interviewed. A district official was also interviewed. A total of 10 SMT members participated in the study. Table 1 gives a brief description of each of the schools and indicates the SMT members who participated in the study and the data collection techniques used to capture their voices.

Educators and learners in the rural schools (Schools J, H, and E) and the peri-urban school (School G) were mother-tongue *isiZulu* speakers. Schools

Table 1 Schools and participants* in the study

School	Education phase	SMT members involved	Physical and financial resources	Geographic region
J	Primary	Principal (I and Q) Deputy Principal (I and Q)	Extremely limited resources	Rural
G	Primary and secondary	Principal (I) HOD (Q) HOD (Q)	Limited access to resources	Peri-urban
F	Primary	Principal (I) HOD (I and Q) HOD (Q)	Good resources	Urban
H	Primary	Principal (I)	Extremely limited resources	Rural
E	Secondary	Principal (Q)	Extremely limited resources	Deep rural
DO		District Official		

* I = interview; Q = questionnaire

J, H, and E were poorly resourced with no water on the school premises and toilets in very poor condition. These schools were between 20 and 50 km from the small country town. The urban (School F) was an ex Model-C school and extremely well resourced with a library, computer room, hall and extensive school fields. The peri-urban school (School G) was a special needs school with a boarding establishment, which was better resourced than the three rural schools but did not have all the facilities of the urban school. The urban school (School F) was the only school that had a racially mixed learner group and predominantly English-speaking educators.

As can be seen from Table 1, five principals, one deputy principal, and four heads of department were involved in the study. Of the group of ten participants, seven were African and three were white. Of the group six were male and four female. To ensure anonymity, we indicated the voices of the SMT members as P1 to P10, and the voice of the district official as DO.

All seven individual interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questionnaires and the interview transcripts were analysed qualitatively using a thematic analysis approach. The qualitative analysis program, NVIVO, was utilised in the organisation and categorisation of the interview data. Analysis of the data revealed a rich set of information and varied experiences of the participants. It gave us insight into HIV/AIDS as a perceived barrier, and the

meaning of this barrier, from the perspective of management and in relation to specific contexts.

To enhance validity, the data were then triangulated across the two data sources (the questionnaires and the individual interviews) and no marked discrepancies were evident. There was further coherence between the views of the SMT members and those of the district official. The data were analysed by two researchers and it was through critical debate that the final themes and findings emerged. However, given the small sample size, our findings were context-specific and cannot be generalised.

Findings

As we concentrate solely on HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning, our discussion of findings is limited to this aspect of the larger project. What emerged from the data was that few dialogic spaces were created for meaningful and authentic interaction in relation to HIV/AIDS in schools. Instead monologic spaces prevailed. These took the form of silences, fear, passivity, and an absence of relationship and community. We find Lefebvre's (1991) concepts of the *representations of space* and *representational space* useful and use them in this section to contrast what has been written and envisaged about HIV/AIDS in schools with what actually happened. We then tentatively suggest the metaphor of paralysed leadership to describe what happened to SMT members in the context of this study.

Representations of space: HIV/AIDS policy and curriculum documents

For Lefebvre (1991), the *representations of space* refer to something conceptual, something ideal, something that is not real but operates in the visual realm, something that is perhaps written in words rather than lived. In the context of this study, the *representations of space* featured strongly when the SMT members discussed their school policy on HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS in the formal curriculum. It seemed that, in terms of the policies and structures, all five schools were well prepared to deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Schools J, H, F, and E had an HIV/AIDS policy. School G did not have an HIV/AIDS policy but instead had an HIV/AIDS committee which planned to "*formulate a policy around HIV and Aids when the schools reopen next year*".

Schools G and E placed the responsibility for HIV/AIDS on an individual. In these two schools, a post level one educator was identified as the HIV/AIDS co-ordinator. These two teachers attended all the HIV/AIDS workshops and counseling courses offered by the Department of Education and were responsible for gathering all the information and documentation on HIV/AIDS. In contrast to Schools G and E, schools J and H viewed the management of HIV/AIDS as a shared activity, a task for all the educators and not the SMT alone. For example, a participant from School H explained:

No, no, since all the educators were workshopped. There were workshops conducted for every grade. They were compelled to go and attend and give feedback to other educators. So everyone in the various classrooms is expected to deliver HIV/AIDS education (School H).

In School F, every teacher and the principal had been on at least one HIV/AIDS course. However, the staff had recently identified one of their members as the HIV/AIDS co-ordinator for the school. This educator underwent a week-long training session and there were plans in place to hold a workshop with the staff to ensure that the learning was shared. But the complexity of this process was explained by an HOD from this school,

it is our job to ensure that every educator and every single person has to be empowered. What I do find is that not everybody is willing to go to the nth degree but that is their choice.

The ten SMT members in the study were confident and articulate about where HIV/AIDS was taught in the school curriculum and how effective the teaching of the syllabus was according to the curriculum documents. In all five schools, HIV/AIDS was formally taught as part of the Life Orientation learning area, in the sub-section Sexuality Education. In addition, HIV/AIDS education was also communicated during assemblies and prayers. Generally participants spoke of the need for a holistic approach in dealing with the education of learners around the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It appeared to happen incidentally during the teaching of other learning areas as well. There was also an acknowledgement that there was a need for parents, the community, and the churches to also get involved in the education around HIV/AIDS.

It appeared then, from the point of view of these participants, that they were ready and prepared to lead their schools in the management of HIV/AIDS. Educators were trained on HIV/AIDS, in some instances teachers took on a leadership role in dealing with HIV/AIDS in schools and policies were in place to guide stakeholders in the process. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the above constituted examples of what Lefebvre (1991) calls the *representations of the HIV/AIDS space*; they were the written and verbal spaces, the symbolic spaces and not the actual or lived spaces. The critical question for us as researchers was whether there was a link between the conceived or symbolic space of policy and curriculum document and the lived space of HIV/AIDS in the school. Was what was written in the policy and curriculum documents 'lived out' in practice at the school or not? The experience of the district official pointed to a disjuncture between the many written policies in schools and the reality of practice. His view was that, in general,

Policies in the school are merely submission documents, so they are not strictly followed. That's what, I observed. You find when you ask for the file the policies are there. But now we find in practice, you find, they even tend to forget about a particular policy. So we have really developed only the policies (DO).

Was this the reality in the case of HIV/AIDS? Was the lived space of the school a dialogic space where children and educators were free to discuss the reality of living with HIV/AIDS in all its forms? Or was the opposite true?

Representational spaces: Monologic spaces, myths and marginalization

For Lefebvre (1991), the representational spaces refer to the real, lived spaces of daily existence. In the context of this study, we can tentatively say that the

representational spaces featured a community which resisted dialogue when it came to the lived world of HIV/AIDS. Silences around HIV/AIDS experiences were the norm. Learners, educators and parents did not speak much about HIV/AIDS nor did they share their personal experiences.

The following voices offered us a stark and vivid picture into the secrecy, silences and monologic spaces of HIV/AIDS.

This is not a spoken issue in our school. People are still secretive about their illness until they go down to the grave (P8).

No. In this culture there is no such talk. So you only hear that the parent died of natural causes (DO).

On the side of the learners, the high rate of absenteeism makes one to be sceptical that somewhere somehow something is not right, although one cannot say that the cause is HIV/AIDS (P2).

No interestingly enough here nobody has actually come to me, not once, and said 'I am affected'. ... We have had children lose parents; lose brothers you know, all of that kind of thing. But interestingly enough in this school, yes I am sure there are kids (who have HIV/AIDS). I know there are one or two, we think. I am sure they have got it but we are not going to go and ask them to tell us. But nobody has actually physically come and said I am concerned because I have aids (P6).

From the above quotations it can be seen that learners did not communicate with educators about HIV/AIDS or vice versa. Not one of the ten SMT members in this study had ever been called on to counsel an educator or learner affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS. Learners only approached educators when they became ill and then they merely described the symptoms they were suffering rather than discussing the cause of their illness. According to P2, learners "*just come and say they have a headache, stomach ache or whatever, just that*".

An interesting phrase emerged repeatedly from the data in relation to HIV/AIDS, that of 'coming out', a term commonly associated with gay and lesbian literature (see Knopp, 2004). The following quotations illustrated how the phrase was used in this study:

We can just be sceptical because they don't want to come out and say that they have got a problem but you can read between the lines that the problem seems to exist (P2).

What I say is that they don't come out so it's difficult to approach them. Even you can see the signs (P5).

Not too many, but there are some, as I said; they don't come out these people (P4).

This unwillingness to 'come out' pointed to a lack of dialogue around HIV/AIDS and an unspoken, and perhaps unconscious, marginalization of those people with the disease; an 'us — them' dichotomy. Instead of a dialogic space of openness, trust, security, and risk taking, the quotations above pointed to the opposite, a monologic space of inequality, insecurity and fear. We were unable to find evidence of SMT members consciously creating the space for what Buber (1964) calls 'authentic dialogue' or genuine dialogue which would

involve the movement from monologic space to dialogic space; of breaking through, of real responding and authentic relationship. Instead the data suggested that, by and large, the SMT members remained on the periphery of any form of dialogic space, presented themselves as neutral arbiters, unaffected by the disease, and waited for learners who were affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS to come forward. Yet the HSRC research into HIV/AIDS (Shisana *et al.*, 2005) found that more than 20% of educators in KwaZulu-Natal are infected with the disease. This brings the 'us and them' discourse into question and suggests that it was a false dichotomy. No one can be 'neutral' in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and it is likely that the SMT members were struggling with the same personal issues around HIV/AIDS as their learners and were equally oppressed by it. Two lone voices in this study acknowledged the denial of educators around personal experiences of HIV/AIDS:

The staff can't talk about this issue as they are too secretive about their status (P9).

Sadly no one in the staff or the learners has ever come forward to be open about their status (P7).

Instead, SMT members referred to and described some of the myths and deep-seated assumptions that those affected or infected with HIV/AIDS used as a strategy to cope with the shame of the disease. For example, P7 discussed the challenges of dealing with parents in his school: "*Parents need to be educated. They lack knowledge and believe many myths about HIV/AIDS*". This 'mythicising' of reality to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world is not new and is used by Freire (1970:64) in relation to his concept of banking education. The following two quotations from this study reveal some of the myths used by this community in dealing with HIV/AIDS:

*Eh, not that much. I think the problem there is, they are hiding it. They are still want to believe that it's because of witch-craft and things like that. Or being in Zulu they say we are **twasa** (period of initiation). You will become a sangoma. Then you become sick (P5).*

Ja, most of them as a result of HIV/AIDS, only that the parents won't accept that, they think that it was because they ate poison, that maybe they had TB, not that is was actually HIV/AIDS. They have some motivators. They are getting sangomas in the family, all those things. They don't accept it as HIV/AIDS actually (P3).

Paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS

We argued earlier that education leadership is primarily about agency, change and movement and the creation of productive relationships and dialogic spaces. However, in the context of this study, the data pointed to the possibility that the SMT members, the formal leaders in the school, were not willing to involve themselves in authentic dialogue around the lived experiences of HIV/AIDS and, in a sense, were absconding from their central leadership role. We got the sense that they were waiting, like victims, also silenced by the stigma and myths surrounding the disease. Perhaps they experienced what

Freire terms “the submersion of consciousness” rather than “the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (1970:62). If this was the case, then this theme of silence was for them “a limit situation” (Freire, 1970: 80), an obstacle to their own liberation and that of their learners, which would then have resulted in their being mute, and perhaps paralysed, in the face of the community stigma around HIV/AIDS.

We tentatively use the metaphor of *paralysed leadership* in relation to the monologic spaces of HIV/AIDS to describe the type of leadership that emerged in this study. For us the metaphor of *paralysed leadership* allows for the underlying existence of leadership potential in an individual but which, understandably, given the overwhelming chaos and complexity surrounding HIV/ AIDS, renders one’s leadership non-active, inert, and still. This is likely to leave individuals feeling helpless, a victim of something beyond their realm of control. While we acknowledge completely that the participants in this study, all in formal leadership positions, had leadership qualities and led their schools effectively, in many areas such as curriculum transformation, staff development and extra-curricular activities, this was less evident when it came to the leadership of HIV/AIDS. Instead, in the context of HIV/AIDS, some SMT members demonstrated a paralysis in respect of authentic dialogue and leadership.

Conclusion

The data from this study painted a stark picture of life and death in this poverty stricken country town in KwaZulu-Natal with its high levels of unemployment, illiteracy, and HIV/AIDS. However, the majority of the previously disadvantaged schools continue to survive in the face of a tremendous lack of physical and financial resources. Against this backdrop, we get a sense of a community battling with the ravages of HIV/AIDS but the majority unwilling to acknowledge, name, or own the disease. Yet the impact of the disease was a reality as families fast became fractured as they dealt with illness and death. There was a spill-over into schools, as learners and their families became ill and were less able to function.

However, a culture of silence still remained around HIV/AIDS, both in the community and in schools. The disease was unnamed, shrouded in myth, and therefore untouched. Participants in this study, the formal leaders of schools, seemed unwilling to break the silence around HIV/AIDS for fear of the stigma attached to it. So while all schools formally taught HIV/AIDS in their curriculum, and while most had in place their own policies on HIV/AIDS and were able to identify staff members responsible for the co-ordination of HIV/AIDS in their school, there was a disjuncture between this and what was happening in the lived space of practice. Instead of dialogic spaces of trust, caring, and inclusion which encouraged critical reflection and action, a form of monologic space prevailed, a form of verbalism — empty words — reminiscent of banking education (Freire, 1970) where text-book knowledge of HIV/AIDS education was transferred to the learners in conditions where their lived experiences of HIV/AIDS were muted. In other words, those affected by and infected with

HIV/AIDS, whether learners or educators, were denied their right to speak and so were unable to transform their world and as a result remained oppressed. The lack of dialogic space in relation to HIV/AIDS in schools also perhaps indicated a form of paralysed leadership on the part of the SMT. This leadership paralysis and lack of agency around the disease contributed to a perpetuation of the *status quo* and the continued marginalization of HIV/AIDS affected and infected learners to the periphery of the school.

We have argued that the two concepts of *monologic* and *dialogic* space provide useful tools to assist school leaders to understand better the critical need for safe open spaces and authentic dialogue in schools, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS. The use of these tools by SMTs and other leaders can help to describe, explain, evaluate, and if necessary, change what is happening in schools. To transform schools operating as monologic spaces, we argue the critical need for distributed leadership, a shared form of leadership which aims to radically change the present situation and which involves courage, risk-taking, trust, transparency, and dialogue on the part of all participants in the school. For, as Munt (2002) suggests, where people have been 'displaced' (in this study by HIV/AIDS), there is a critical need for the generation of some form of agency. We argue that the schools need real leaders, at all levels, who will have the courage to speak out, name, and demystify the disease and invite authentic dialogue in an open space of trust and non-judgement. This requires SMT members to awaken their critical consciousness and overcome their limit-situations around HIV/AIDS. School leaders, whether in formal positions or as teacher leaders, have to move to a place where they develop real partnerships and through praxis become co-investigators in critically exploring and giving space and voice to HIV/AIDS. For, as Knopp argues, it is in this place that "we recognize and hono[u]r the lived experiences of marginalized groups and individuals whose 'identities' constitute important frameworks for the exercise of power, with real consequences for real people" (2004:122).

For effective leadership to occur at any level in an organisation such as a school, we argue that there is a critical need to reconstruct existing spaces or develop new spaces which are safe and spacious and which allow for constant and transparent dialogue amongst all the people involved if real and lasting change is going to happen. And this requires educational leadership which, in the words of Shields, is more "viable, robust, and credible when we break the silences that constrain us, broaden the base of our reflections and interventions, and when we become 'wide-awake' to the people with whom we live and work in schools" (2006:79).

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THEORISING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: PRESENTING THE THIRD CLUSTER OF CHRONICLES

7.1. INTRODUCTION

As with Chapters Five and Six, Chapter Seven is dedicated to the presentation of the chronicles which form the core of this PhD by publication. In this seventh chapter, the third cluster of chronicles, chronicles 4 and 8, are presented. These two chronicles were selected for inclusion in the thesis and clustered together because they, to a large extent, answered the third research question: ‘How we can theorise teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing for the South African schooling context’?

Let me now briefly introduce the third cluster of chronicles. The fourth chronicle is entitled ‘Towards a conceptual understanding of education leadership: place, space and practices’. It is published in the journal called *Education as Change*, 13(1), July 2009, pp. 45 - 57. The aim of this chronicle was to explore education leadership as a social practice and the role of the school management team and teachers in facilitating this social practice.

The eighth chronicle is entitled ‘Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively and transformatively’. It constitutes a chapter in a book (pp. 181 – 192) which carries the title *Educating for social justice and inclusion: pathways and transitions* (2008), edited by A. Muthukrishna and published by Nova Science Publishers, New York. The aim of this chronicle was to argue that, as researchers and educators, we should bring a critical lens to the practice of educational leadership in order to be able to challenge issues of power and privilege, inclusion and exclusion.

What follows is the presentation of each of the chronicles in this third cluster.

7.2. CHRONICLE FOUR

Education As Change, Vol. 13, No. 1, July 2009, pp. 45 - 57

Towards a conceptual understanding of education leadership: place, space and practices

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Abstract

Using the concepts of space and place, this article explores education leadership as a social practice and the role of the school management team (SMT) and teachers in facilitating this social practice. It develops a conceptual framework for the practice of leadership and uses a vignette to illustrate the argument being made. The vignette is based on data gathered from a large qualitative research project around HIV/AIDS as a barrier to learning in a rural education community in KwaZulu-Natal. The vignette highlights the monologic spaces of leadership and the leadership paralysis in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the group of schools in the study. It also illustrates how an outsider status of SMT members constitutes 'illegitimate peripheral participation' in the practice of leadership in the context of the pandemic. The article argues that education leadership, whatever the context, should be conceptualised as a practice, a shared activity which takes a distributed form. It calls on all school leaders to take up their central role in giving voice and space to issues of leadership and to become 'insiders' and change agents, developing a democratic distributed leadership culture within their schools in order to achieve socially just and inclusive schools.

Key Words: Place, dialogic space, communities of practice, distributive leadership, teacher leadership

Introduction

The Task Team report on Education Management (1996) challenged schools to review their management practices, which have traditionally been top-down, and to create a whole new approach to leading and managing schools where management is 'seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage' and should 'not be seen as the task of a few' (Department of Education, 1996: 27). An example of a new approach to leading and managing a school is a form of distributed leadership where there are "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture" (Harris and Muijs, 2005: 31). Yet, as Moloji's research (2002) suggests, many South African schools remain unresponsive to the policy call and retain their rigid bureaucratic structures with principals perpetuating the old status quo by controlling schools in autocratic ways. So how can we get schools to understand leadership and leading differently? The researcher argues that a new conceptual framework for understanding school leadership in the South African context is needed and so this article explores one such possible alternate

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framework. It does so through a vignette which was purposely chosen to illustrate, through a practical example, the argument being made. The article uses this vignette to argue for a conceptual understanding of education leadership around the theoretical concepts of place, space and practices as well as democratic distributed leadership.

The article begins by introducing the reader to an understanding of education leadership in relation to the key concepts of space and place (Lefebvre, 1991; Tuan, 1977). This first part of the article is, by design, purely theoretical. The next part of the article presents the research study on which the vignette is based as well as the vignette itself. The final section of the article discusses the vignette within the developing conceptual framework of place, space, communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Morrow, 2007) and distributed leadership theory (Gronn, 2003; Gunter, 2005). The article concludes by suggesting that education leadership should be understood as a practice in which all educators can participate and argues for debates about critical education leadership as we work towards education leadership as a democratic distributed and transformative social practice.

Defining the concepts: leadership, place and space

Like many terms in the field of education, the concepts of 'leadership' and 'management' are contested and are used differently in different countries and by different people. For the purposes of this article, 'leadership' and 'management' are viewed as distinct processes with 'leadership' being the process which works towards movement and change in an organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000) and 'management' the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (ibid, 2000). In line with the view of Kotter (1990), the two processes complement each other and *both* are needed for an organisation to prosper. This article works from the premise that educational leadership is concerned with:

productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others' learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning (Gunter, 2005: 6).

Education leadership, then, is about creating safe and secure spaces in which creativity can flourish and where "efforts are coordinated and new directions set by learning, information gathering and dialogue rather than through administrative regulation and hierarchical control" (Hargreaves, 1998: 285). Here the understanding of space is understood as a social construct, charged with meaning and therefore complex, relational and produced (Lefebvre, 1991). In line with Lefebvre's thinking, spaces are consciously constructed so that people can act and situate themselves within them as active participants.

In theorising space further, Tuan (1977) makes a simple yet clear distinction between 'space' and 'place' which is useful in the context of this article. For him 'place' refers to the concrete, the location where one can pause and dwell. On the other hand, 'space' is the more abstract concept that implies movement and freedom where "one has the power and enough room in which to act" (ibid: 52). For Tuan, the ideas of space and place require each other for definition. He explains that "from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom,

and threat of space, and vice versa” (1977: 6). Indeed, space can suggest something positive as in ‘spaciousness’ but it can also suggest something negative as in ‘exposure and vulnerability’. Tuan refers to the dialectical nature of human life which moves between “shelter and venture, attachment and freedom” (ibid: 54). In this article, Tuan’s distinction between ‘place’ and ‘space’ are used where ‘place’ distinguishes the different literal ‘places’ of the home, the school and the wider school community in this study. It is from within these places that ‘spaces’ are instantiated which either support or form a barrier to the take-up of effective and shared leadership. The vignette that follows later on in this article will use the concepts of ‘place’ and ‘space’ to describe and explain school leadership practice within a specific context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In the context of adult learning, Rule (2004) integrates ‘dialogue’, ‘space’ and ‘place’ into the conceptual tool he calls ‘dialogic space’. For him dialogic space is not only a descriptive category; it also has qualitative dimensions. It is a space which can be physical (or virtual), intellectual, social or ideological but which is always characterised by dialogue. Rule calls for a dialogic space that encompasses movement and freedom, a type of ‘spaciousness’ which “is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act” (Tuan, 1977: 52). For Rule, spaciousness implies the physical need for sufficient literal space in order for learning to occur as well as a “learning ethos and a curriculum which allows participants to explore new social and intellectual spaces, to expand their horizons and to travel to new territories” (2004: 325). These dialogic spaces, he argues, must “provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds” (2004: 326). In a later section in this article, the researcher will argue that, in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as described in the vignette, it is the responsibility of the leaders to create these dialogic spaces in schools; spaces for people to talk openly and honestly about their lived experiences of HIV/AIDS in a safe and secure community.

The *absence* of dialogic space around issues of leadership in schools, and particularly around HIV/AIDS in the context of the vignette, is problematic. The antithetical concept of *monologic space* (see Grant and Jugmohan, 2008) commonly prevails in South African schools where leadership is equated with headship and delegated from the head to ‘subordinates’ in a top-down, one-way process without consultation or negotiation. In relation to the vignette, which will speak specifically to issues of leadership and HIV/AIDS, monologic spaces are spaces of disengagement which results in a lack of trust and transparency and an absence of a sense of community. They are places of “inequality where the powerful dominate and deny others the right to speak” (Grant and Jugmohan, 2008: 7).

The research

The research on which the vignette is based was located within a large *National Research Foundation*¹ project that aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and

¹ The mandate of the NRF is prescribed by the NRF Act, No. 23 of 1998. The NRF supports sustainable high-quality research and knowledge generation for the promotion of a healthy South African society.

adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small rural town in KwaZulu-Natal. The study was guided by the question: "How do educators in formal leadership positions lead their schools in relation to HIV/AIDS?" A secondary question was: "What are the particular barriers faced in the leadership of schools in the context of HIV/AIDS?" Working within the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative research design was utilised to obtain rich detailed account of the SMTs' perspectives and experiences of HIV/AIDS as a barrier to basic education. The study used questionnaires and individual interviews to collect data from the District Official and ten SMT members (five principals, one deputy principal and four heads of department) from five schools, three of these rural, one peri-urban and one urban. To ensure anonymity, the voices of the participants are indicated in this article as P1 through to P11.

The three rural schools and the peri-urban school were historically disadvantaged schools which serviced non-white learners during the apartheid era and carried the legacy of this disadvantage. The rural schools were poorly resourced with no water on the school premises and toilets that were in a very poor condition. These schools were between 20 and 50km from the small town. The peri-urban school was a special needs school with a boarding establishment which was better resourced than the three rural schools but did not have all the facilities that the urban school had. Educators and learners in the rural schools and the peri-urban school were mother tongue isiZulu speakers. In contrast, the urban school was a historically advantaged school which serviced white learners during the apartheid era and, as a result, was well resourced with a library, computer room, hall and extensive school fields. This school was the only one with a racially mixed learner group and was staffed by predominantly English-speaking teachers.

All individual interviews were recorded and transcribed. The questionnaires and the interview transcripts were analysed qualitatively using a thematic analysis approach. The qualitative analysis software programme, *NVIVO* assisted in the organisation and categorisation of the interview data. Analysis of the data revealed a rich set of information and varied experiences of the participants which gave insight into HIV/AIDS as a perceived barrier, and the meaning of this barrier, from the perspective of management and in relation to specific contexts. To enhance validity, the data were then triangulated across the two data sources (the questionnaires and the individual interviews) and no marked discrepancies were evident. There was further coherence between the views of the SMT members and those of the district official. In a further effort to ensure trustworthiness, the data were analysed by two researchers and it was through critical debate that the final themes and findings emerged. However, given the small sample size, findings were context-specific and could not be generalised.

The vignette

The place is a small rural town in KwaZulu-Natal, a province in the eastern coastal part of South Africa. The history of the town is one of poverty and intense political violence where high unemployment, high population mobility and sustained social fragmentation have contributed to the high rate of HIV/AIDS (Van der Riet, Hough and Killian, 2005). At the time of the study, fractured families were the norm (John and Rule, 2006). As a consequence, cases

of the study, fractured families were the norm (John and Rule, 2006). As a consequence, cases of 'dis-placed' children living with extended families were prevalent

"HIV and Aids has got a serious impact on their lives because most of them are orphaned. Their parents died at an early age. Then they can't cope on their own you see. It is hard for them because you see sometimes they are being looked after by some members of their extended families not their biological parents" (Participant 1).

However, not all orphans had the 'advantage' of living with a relative. There were cases of orphaned children learning to adapt to the confined social spaces of child headed households; leading and taking responsibility for younger siblings, a role traditionally assigned to parents. For example, *"She is an orphan. She is so young. She said she has another three kids at home that she has to look after. In the morning she has to wash them. Ja, a young child becomes a parent"* (Participant 2). Tuan aptly describes children like these as "adrift – placeless – without a supportive parent" (1977: 29). These children lacked access to a stable and familiar sense of place which Tuan describes as "a calm centre of established values" and "the solitude of a sheltered place" (1977: 54). A culture of silence around HIV/AIDS existed; both in these fractured home places and the place of the school. The connective space between the home and the school was not being creatively utilised, either by family members or educators. This meant that instead of a dialogic space of openness, trust and security existing between the place of the home and the place of the school, a monologic space of inequality, insecurity and fear prevailed, as the following quotations attest: *"So there is little or no continuity at home in terms of what the school is doing"* (Participant 11). Participant 8 acknowledged that *"there is still more to be done because our learners only get information from us educators because of the communication breakdown at home"*.

The SMT members, the formal leaders in the place of the school, seemed unwilling (or unable) to create a sufficiently safe space in which to talk about HIV/AIDS. Attempts to deal with HIV/AIDS education were at the level of the inanimate, for example policy documents and curriculum outlines; what Lefebvre (1991) calls the 'representations of space'. So while all schools formally covered HIV/AIDS in the Life Orientation curriculum, and while most had in place their own HIV/AIDS policies and were able to identify staff members responsible for the co-ordination of HIV/AIDS programmes, Grant and Jugmohan (2008: 11) found that there was a disjuncture between this and what was happening amongst people in the lived space of practice, what Lefebvre (1991) calls the 'representational spaces'. This lived space of practice was characterised by a lack of voice on the part of the educators and the learners and by disengagement from authentic dialogue about the realities of living and coping with HIV/AIDS. Grant and Jugmohan (2008: 13) tentatively suggest that the lack of dialogic space in relation to HIV/AIDS in schools perhaps pointed to SMT members who were paralysed in their leadership of HIV/AIDS. So what were the possible causes of this leadership paralysis?

One possible cause of this leadership paralysis may have resulted from the fact that the majority of SMT members were not originally from the rural town but had taken up a promotion post in the town as a career move which they saw as temporary. They chose to live far from the schools

in which they taught and commuted daily from the urban cities. This created a geographical distance between them and the school community, a literal space between two places. This literal space operated as a barrier to effective leadership in addressing issues of HIV/AIDS and resulted in disengagement by the SMT members from their leadership role in the following three ways. Firstly, the literal space gave rise to a largely temporary workforce in the schools, as a participant explains: *“That also then affects our quality when it comes to staff morale because when educators keep coming in, there is a high educator turnover. Then you have got a problem in terms of developing the educators corps”* (Participant 11).

Secondly, the literal space between the rural town and the larger cities resulted in a loss of time due to daily travel on the part of these commuting educators. The district official, himself a commuter, was concerned about this restriction on time and its impact on quality teaching: *“I doubt if they are really giving quality service because some of them are commuting and have to wake up as early as five a.m. and leave their homes. They are back at six in the evening. Where do they get the time to prepare for lessons thoroughly and do marking as well?”* Another participant also spoke of the loss of time in relation to its restriction on extra-curricular activities: *“Now they have to travel to try and get here on time. Then they say ‘oh, I have got a lift club. I just have to go’. As long as that happens you are not going to get extra-mural activities in place and you are not going to get holistic education right across the spectrum which is extremely important”* (Participant 4).

Thirdly, the pressure of daily travel on commuting educators sometimes resulted in absenteeism and ill health. As another participant explains: *“It is very difficult to manage in terms of punctuality and educator attendance because most of the educators, now you find they get medical certificates where they are citing depression and stress and I think it’s the toil of travelling”*. Thus the literal space between the commuters’ home place and school place resulted in space barriers to effective leadership within the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. High staff turnover, illness and time constraints impacted negatively on quality teaching and leading in the place of the school, precipitating spaces which lacked loyalty and trust and which undermined the development of dialogic spaces.

A second possible cause of this SMT leadership paralysis may have resulted from the lack of support from the Department of Education (DoE) in relation to issues of HIV/AIDS. The bureaucratic functioning within the DoE resulted in, what the researcher calls, ‘hierarchical spaces’ and unequal power relations between the SMTs at school level and the ‘more elevated’ officials within the level of the district. This hierarchical space separating the district official from the SMT members is acknowledged by the district official: *“We have principals’ meetings but principals’ meetings are one way because I convene a meeting so as to communicate what is in my programme and such objectives for a particular time-frame”*. This quotation depicts the monologic nature of the meetings run by the district official for principals and confirms the positional power of the official within the bureaucracy. Another forum for meetings was also discussed, that of the ‘development workshop’, which was called in response to local needs and conducted by a departmental official or subject advisor. However, it seemed unlikely that the ‘representational spaces’, i.e. the lived space of HIV/AIDS, was ever a topic for consideration

at these workshops, as the following quotation highlights: *“They (the department officials) don’t help. Truly speaking they don’t help. You see we have tried to talk to them, so many times”* (Participant 1).

Where support concerning HIV/AIDS matters was given by the DoE it was, in most cases, technical in nature rather than in-depth, ongoing and dialogic and thus constituted Lefebvre’s (1991) ‘representations of space’. For example, Participant 2 explains: *“Not directly. The department what it has tried to do is just provide us with first-aids kits. They supply us with booklets how to treat those learners with such illnesses”*. In particular, it seemed that the more remote and rural a school was, in terms of its geographical distance from the district office, the less likely it was to be visited and supported by the officials stationed within the hierarchy of the central district office. In other words, the more rural the broader community, the more monologic the space was in relation to issues of HIV/AIDS. The frustrations of SMT members from the three rural schools, in terms of the lack of support from the district officials pertaining to problems around HIV/AIDS, were tangible as the following quotation attests:

“Some departmental officials they don’t go to the rural areas to talk to our people, you see. They (our rural people) don’t know anything about AIDS. You find that sometimes in the rural areas there are no clinics where they could access information and even condoms and everything” (Participant 1).

The experience of Participant 3 is very similar: *“The year before last the psychologist, hired by the department, by the name of Mrs X, visited the school once. Actually she didn’t do much. She wanted us to fill in the form in connection with the learners and then they (Mrs X and her team) left hoping to come back. They never did. Maybe their hands are full, I hope”*.

Towards a conceptual understanding of education leadership

What can we learn about education leadership from the vignette?

From the vignette, it becomes clear that the SMT members, the formal leaders in the place of the school, were not actually leading in relation to issues of HIV/AIDS. They were not creating safe and secure spaces for people to connect with each other and learn together, a requirement for authentic leadership (Gunter, 2005). In relation to HIV/AIDS they were not setting new directions and gathering information through dialogue (Hargreaves, 1998) but rather attending to the more superficial and technical interventions in response to bureaucratic directives from the DoE. In a sense they operated as managers or administrators, following departmental instructions and implementing a range of policies and procedures in a monologic manner. It stands to reason that these efforts had little impact on changing the culture of the school and did not assist with creating the space for real dialogue and learning through the lived and shared experiences of HIV/AIDS. This raises a critical question: ‘How can the role of the SMT be conceptualised differently to ensure effective, inclusive and socially just school leadership? In responding to this question, the researcher now moves beyond the vignette and the specific context of leadership in relation to HIV/AIDS to take the discussion to a more abstract level, by suggesting two ways in which, conceptually, this leadership role could be better understood.

Leading distributively within a community of practice

Firstly, in order for the leadership role of the SMT to be better understood, education leadership should be viewed as a practice, a shared activity, as is playing soccer, doing mathematics or writing history (see Morrow, 2007). In describing leadership as a practice, the researcher is working from the premise that it is a participative process in which *all* can practice. The practice of leadership must be characterised by learning as social participation through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning where participation is a process of “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998: 4).

To lead in a school is to become a participant in the practice of leadership, initially as a novice and then, over time, as a full participant in the practice. But *who* is eligible to become a participant in the practice of leadership? The researcher argues that the answer is: any educator, regardless of position or designation, because all people have the potential to lead. Obviously SMT members are integral to this leadership practice but so are teachers. The leadership potential of teachers constitutes a wealth of human capital but it is often unacknowledged and untapped (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006). Often too, the leadership potential of SMT members lies dormant because of the multitude of managerial and administrative tasks imposed on them from within the hierarchy of the education system.

Thus, in order to excavate leadership potential within a school, educators with leadership experience (whether SMT members or teachers) should lead the practice and invite newcomers to join. Newcomers, such as novice teachers or newly appointed SMT members, can begin their leadership journey on the periphery of the practice. This constitutes ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ in the leadership practice which refers to the gradual process by the newcomers or apprentices of participating in, “of both absorbing and being absorbed in”, as well as assembling “a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community” (Lave and Wenger, 1999: 22). With time, the newcomers will learn, through participation in the practice and from those with more experience, to become full participants in the leadership practice. However, we know that leadership is a complex practice within an ever-changing school context. As such it consists of multiple existing strands, often inter-related and occurring simultaneously with new strands emerging all the time. It follows then that the legitimate peripheral participation in the practice of leadership is not only the domain of newcomers but that everyone can to some degree be considered a ‘newcomer’ as the practices within the leadership community change. In other words, the leadership of the practice will rotate depending on the issue at hand and the strengths and experience of the practitioners in the community to deal with the issue.

However, in the context of the vignette, the monologic spaces, literal spaces between places as well as the hierarchical spaces experienced by SMT members placed them on the periphery of their everyday leadership practice and resulted in their participation in leadership in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic being tenuous and, at times, superficial. The geographical distances

between home and school served literally to separate commuting SMT members from the local community who were more present and grounded in the life of the school. As members on the periphery of the school community, these SMT members could not bridge the 'insider-outsider' gap and were unable to participate fully in the leadership practices in the context of HIV/AIDS. In all likelihood, this peripheral participation prevented the development relationships of trust and collegiality, the culture necessary for the creation of authentic dialogic space. The researcher argues that, in the place of the school, experienced SMT members *cannot* be peripheral to core leadership practices and calls this '*illegitimate* peripheral participation'.

Secondly, in order for the leadership role of the SMT to be reconceptualised, the researcher argues that leadership, from within the social practice, must take on a distributed form. A distributed form of leadership "concentrates on engaging expertise where it exists in the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role" (Harris and Muijs, 2005: 28). However, this type of leadership the researcher is calling for is not something 'done' by an individual 'to others', but instead it is an "emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise" (Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods, 2003: 3). Gunter's characterisation of the dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership (2005: 51), are helpful in attempting to develop a conceptual frame for education leadership. In order to develop leadership as a social practice, the first goal is to move away from an *authorised* (Gunter, 2005) or delegated form of distributed leadership to a more *dispersed* form of distributed leadership in the place of the school. This means that the leadership in the school takes on a flatter structure by moving away from the formal workings of a hierarchy. Here leadership is seen as an emergent process, a shared activity which centres on 'spontaneity' and 'intuitive working relations' (Gronn, 2003: 42 - 43) within a safe and trusting dialogic space. Through sharing the leadership tasks more widely and redefining roles in the place of the school, the power relations are shifted in the achievement of the predefined organisational goals and values. However, once a culture of dispersed distributed leadership has been achieved, the school can then begin to work towards the next level of *democratic* distributed leadership.

Democratic distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, democratic distributed leadership is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004: 7) and questions the status quo of the school. Based on the premise that spaces within the school are positional and relational (Munt, 2002), democratic distributed leadership raises questions of who is included and who is excluded in relation to leadership and in relation to the multitude of social practices within the school. It also raises questions that encompass "how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change" (Gunter, 2005: 57). Furthermore, it is the task of democratic distributed leaders to transform not only their individual understandings of self and others, but they should also "lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities" (Shields, 2006: 77).

It stands to reason that when a democratic distributed form of leadership is adopted in the place of the school, it becomes the role of the SMT to create a dialogic space for people to talk about the issue at hand (whether it be issues related to HIV/AIDS or issues related to race, gender, poverty and so on – the list is endless) in a safe and non-judgmental environment which will ultimately lead to shared learning and changed practices. It is the responsibility of the SMT members to become the ‘masters’, the ‘old-timers’ by immersing and saturating themselves in the leadership practices of the school. They, as leaders of leaders, should invite and convince teachers, learners and parents to talk more freely about social and personal issues that are experienced in ways which are “grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice” (Shields, 2004: 116). However, to effectively do so the SMT members should first be willing to share their own experiences and personal stories of the social problem or the issue at hand in an effort to initiate the dialogue and model the culture of the practice. This requires emotional maturity on the part of the SMT members and an understanding of leadership as ‘moral purpose’ (Sergiovanni, 1998). It calls for a leader who “inspires and touches, holds and cherishes, is humble and certain, pushes and directs, waits and listens, notices and moves, contains, breaks through, senses the moment... and rests” (Davidoff and Lazarus, 2002: 166). In fact it calls for the development of democratic attitudes and values in schools including “inclusion, participation and transparency” (Harber and Davies, 1997: 152) as a means of promoting a more stable South African society.

Conclusion and a way forward

Using the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ and illustrated through a vignette, this article has argued that education leadership should be understood as a practice, a shared activity in which *all* educators (SMT members *and* teachers) can participate and which takes a democratic distributed form. Through participation and interaction in the practice, new understandings about education leadership gradually emerge and become distributed among members. It is through social participation, mutual engagement and dialogue using a shared repertoire about the social issue at hand that will give rise to changed practices and lead to socially just schools. And it is the role of the SMT members to initiate and lead this process through creating safe and trusting spaces within the place of the school for engagement in this joint enterprise. This form of leadership requires courage and risk-taking in order to challenge the status quo and transform the perceptions of the school community in relation to unjust and exploitative social issues.

But how do we develop this understanding of leadership in schools? How do we get SMT members to adopt a critical view of education leadership and take up their role as agents of change in the school rather than hold on to a conservative identity which protects the status quo? How do we get SMT members to look critically at the notion of schools as hierarchies and to expand their understanding of leadership beyond formal position to include teachers as leaders? How do we assist SMT members to create a culture of authentic dialogue, social participation and mutual engagement in schools?

In response to these questions, the researcher argues strongly that, in the context of South African schools, there needs to be a move away from the nomenclature of leadership which defines itself primarily in relation to policy implementation and the development of school structures in a bid to carry out the policy directives within a hierarchical chain of command. This, the researcher argues, is management and, as argued earlier in the article, it is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000) and it has its place in the school. However, schools require both management *and* leadership in order to function effectively and, all-too-often, they have an overemphasis on management at the expense of real leadership. Here leadership is understood as a process which works towards movement and change (Astin and Astin, 2000) and is about the development of productive relationships and the importance of agency and connectivity in shared learning (Gunter, 2005).

While continuing with the daily maintenance functions of the school, leadership needs to be facilitated where leadership is understood as being located in the potential available to be released within an organisation (Harris and Lambert, 2003); what the researcher calls the leadership capital of the organisation. It cannot be imposed but instead emerges as the need arises and is taken up by different people at different times and for different purposes in the organisation. As such we need to think about leadership emerging through informal (and perhaps formal) communities of practice within schools, made possible by a school culture which is made up of dialogic spaces which are collegial, where educators feel free to act and be creative and innovative in a 'spacious' and supportive environment.

These are places where, as Rule reminds us, educators can explore new social and intellectual spaces, expand their horizons and travel to new territories" (2004: 325). Supporting Gunter (2005) this article argues, in the context of South African schools, for a radical shift in education leadership and for debates about critical education leadership as educators work towards education leadership as a social practice. Without this reconstruction of leadership thinking, it is unlikely that schools will become socially just and transformative learning communities.

Comment

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7.3. CHRONICLE EIGHT

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Chapter 3.3

DISTRIBUTING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: FINDING THE COURAGE TO LEAD INCLUSIVELY AND TRANSFORMATIVELY

Callie Grant

INTRODUCTION

This chapter works from the premise that educational leadership is not just about delivering efficient and effective schools in a rational kind of way. Instead it argues that educational leadership is a more complex process which challenges the “power structures and cultures that we inherit and that can act as barriers to democratic development” (Gunter, 2005, p. 6). In other words, the chapter takes a critical approach to education leadership which gives a central place to issues of social justice and inclusion and which works within an ethical framework. Critical research into educational leadership allows us to question rational approaches to leadership and challenge issues of power and privilege, inclusion and exclusion, in relation to education leadership. A critical education leadership perspective enables us to see “how and why experienced teachers are in receipt of systems that are more about domesticating the teacher into existing power structures than about enabling teachers to work in an emancipatory way with colleagues and students” (Gunter, 2001, p. 60).

If we as South Africans educators are serious about diminishing the inequities in our post-apartheid schools then we cannot pay lip service to issues of diversity and social justice. Instead, we who are involved in the field of education leadership and management have a responsibility to offer alternative approaches to leadership and management which go beyond traditional forms of leadership, and explore models of leadership which foreground democracy and social justice and which draw on the relatively untapped leadership potential of women and teachers. I begin the chapter by briefly sketching the historical legacy of educational leadership in South Africa. I then move on to offer an alternative interpretation of leadership which speaks to issues of social justice and inclusion. In offering this alternative interpretation of leadership, I argue that dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership are socially just leadership.

THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

Leadership as a Male Domain

In pre-democratic South African society, the structural, cultural and social consequences of patriarchal power relations within an hierarchical social structure of class and race contributed to leadership being largely understood as the domain of a male (Grant, 2005). This understanding of leadership as the domain of men has been problematised by many women writers in the South African context. For example, Kotecha explains that "Men have greater credibility as authority figures, whereas women tend to be recognized for stereotypical qualities such as sympathy, creativity, openness, patience and are viewed as less suited for leadership positions" (1994, p.30). Ngcongco describes how "In a typical African tradition men lead and women follow" (1993, p.6). Magwaza confirms this, "Zulu society has always been largely patriarchal. It's women have been given minimal or marginal opportunity to air their views" (2001, p. 25). She argues further that feminism is viewed by many as having no relevance to African culture because "it leads women away from their families and responsibilities" (ibid).

These patriarchal power relations have permeated many of the sectors of the South African education system. Teaching has generally been seen as a female career and, yet, as Kotecha asserts, "if the teaching profession is heavily dominated by women, then the teaching hierarchy is conversely dominated by the men" (1994, p. 24). Reeves (1994) recounts the stories of women teachers in South Africa, both black and white, and their struggles against discrimination, Afrikaner nationalism and authoritarianism. More than a decade later the Task Team Report on Education Management still raises the issue, "The paucity of women in senior management positions in the education system is testimony to the gender discrimination which has pervaded all levels of the public sector" (Department of Education, 1996, p. 21). Ngeobo's (1999) study found that communities did not want women to be appointed as school principals, because of the perception that school management was a serious endeavour which only men could be involved in. This suggests the internalisation of the dominant patriarchal discourse through socialisation.

However, the perception of educational leadership as a male domain is not unique to the South African context. In the United States, Blackmore, in her feminist critique of leadership, suggests that "women have been alienated by the masculinist portrayal of power, leadership and organisational life which emphasises control, individualism and hierarchy" (1989, p. 123). In the United Kingdom, Hall also explains that power in organisations is associated mainly with men, based on a general cultural attitude that men make better leaders (1996, p. 137). This view is confirmed by Coleman, "stereotypes and theories about leadership are still predominantly male" (2003, p. 167).

It is important to emphasise that men are not the only group responsible for the masculine portrayal of leadership. Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002), for example, argue that many women are complicit in their own gender domination by misrecognising the symbolic violence to which they are subjected. Similarly, when exploring the stories of six women head teachers in the UK in the early 1990s, Hall (1996) found that both men and women were more reluctant to work for a woman than for a man, even when the leadership styles of the men and

women leaders were not significantly different. Similarly, in the South African context, Ngeongo writes, “Where people must be elected to senior positions, it is not uncommon that women will elect a man because he is a man, even if there are women who show better capabilities” (1983, p. 8). These examples illustrate the internalisation by women of the socialised norms and values of a patriarchal society .

Leadership as an Individual Pursuit

Leadership in the pre-democratic South African education era was not only perceived as the domain of men but it was also generally understood as the prerogative of an individual in a formal position of power, the head of the school (Grant, 2005). In line with bureaucratic theories, schools “have mainly been organized in a rigid hierarchy and managed from a top-down approach” (Steyn and Squelch, 1997, p. 1). This notion equates with the concept of headship and, for many educators and community members, school leadership was traditionally equated with headship. Yet the two terms are very different. As Gronn explains:

whereas leadership denotes influence, headship, on the other hand, denotes authority and describes the exercise of authority by the most senior role incumbent in an executive hierarchy. The confusion is caused, therefore, by the slippage in usage from the person who heads becoming cast as the person who leads (2000, p. 332 – 333).

In South Africa there has been slippage in usage of the two terms and school principals have often been cast as the only leaders. But it is important to remember that not all school principals are effective leaders and while principals are accountable to the Department of Education because of their formal position in schools, this does not necessarily make them good leaders and neither does it give them the monopoly in issues of leadership. To make the argument clearer, the term ‘leadership’ needs more clarification, and it needs to be understood in relationship to the term ‘management’ as there has been slippage in usage of these two terms as well. This chapter is premised on the view that ‘leadership’ is a process which works towards movement and change in an organisation, while ‘management’ is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Although distinct processes, both leadership and management are needed for an organisation to prosper (Kotter, 1990). Educational leadership is about the development of productive relationships and the importance of agency and connectivity in each other’s learning (Gunter, 2005). It is about creating safe and secure spaces in which creativity can flourish, and where “efforts are coordinated and new directions set by learning, information gathering and dialogue rather than through administrative regulation and hierarchical control” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 285).

Both the processes of leadership *and* management are critical to the success of teaching and learning in South African schools post 1994, and, this chapter argues, cannot be in the hands of the principal alone. However, schools would benefit if principals were also good leaders and managers. Furthermore, as exploratory studies are beginning to show, where principals distribute leadership, school improvement is more likely to occur (Harris, 2004). However, many South African schools have not had experience of alternative forms of

leadership, such as Harris describes, so are unable to challenge conventional forms of authority structures. However post 1994, we have in South Africa a proliferation of education policies which foreground democracy, participatory decision-making, social justice, inclusivity and gender equity. Examples include the *White paper on Education and Training* of 1995, the *South African Schools' Act* of 1996, the *National Education Policy Act* of 1996, the *Higher Education Act* of 1997, the *White Paper on Special Needs Education: Building an inclusive education and training system* of 2001, *Curriculum 2005*, and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*. The Task Team Report on Education Management, while conflating the terms 'leadership' and 'management', proposes that "management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage" (Department of Education, 1996, p. 27). This policy requires schools to transform themselves from organisations which, historically, were tightly controlled and autocratically managed into democratic organisations in line with what Senge (1990) calls 'learning organisations'. To achieve this, the policy document argues that collaboration and participation of all staff and stakeholders are essential in decision-making and leadership and management processes (Department of Education, 1996).

Nevertheless, despite well intentioned national policies, acts and reports, the goals of democracy, equity and redress have remained largely at the level of rhetoric and ignored the "realities on the ground" (Sayed, 2004, p. 252). In practice the changes that have occurred in South African schools are largely at the level of 'form' but not 'content'. A number of formal management and governance structures have been legislated by government, such as the School Governing Body (SGB), the School Management Team (SMT), and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The most powerful of these is the SGB which was created to involve parents and communities in the transformation of schools. Ironically, research has shown that "despite its contribution to democratising schools through the decentralisation of power, school governance policy has serious inherent dangers for any movement towards the goal of equity" (Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 2001, p. 176). Although these structures now exist with elected members in place, it seems that many schools are still controlled by principals who have retained their past identity as autocrats and are unwilling to delegate authority to 'subordinates' and new partners. Sayed refers to this form of social inclusion as 'window dressing' which "appears responsive to the need for change, without introducing fundamental changes, and, on the contrary, every effort to maintaining the status quo" (2003, p. 5). So while school structures have changed, there is still a profound need for change in the culture and practices of schools towards more democratic forms of participation.

In the next section, I argue that schools in South Africa in the 21st century need a new approach to leadership which is inclusive and democratic. However, notions of leadership as headship and leadership for democratic participation are mutually exclusive. Leadership must be understood as a process in which all can participate and which is about agency and transformation in the pursuit of ongoing, effective teaching and learning in an environment which is fair and just. This argument is based on the premise that everyone has the potential to lead – and this includes the previously excluded, in particular in this case, teachers and women. I argue that a distributed form of leadership is needed which is socially just and inclusive. It is my view that schools have a reservoir of leadership potential which is largely unknown and therefore untapped. It is this potential which should be explored and encouraged to emerge by a school's management team for the development and improvement

of schools. Leadership, in terms of the position taken in this chapter, is about accessing the reservoir of strengths of the people in the organisation and using these appropriately in a journey of relating, learning, leading and growing. This potential dialectic between 'form' and 'content' is values-driven and it is only through ongoing critical reflection and dialogue in a transformative and distributive leadership process that we can work towards achieving authentic democratic participation in South African schools.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

In the context of our young democracy, South African schools would benefit most from a form of leadership which taps the potential of everyone in the organisation to deal with the challenges and complexities that school communities face on a daily basis. Schools require a form of distributed leadership which "concentrates on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role" (Harris, 2004, p. 13). Leadership should be understood as fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed phenomenon which will result in "the abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles" (Gronn, 2000, p. 325).

A useful characterisation of distributed leadership is offered by Gunter (2005). She suggests that distributed leadership in current research is being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic (ibid, p.51). Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership is where tasks are distributed from the principal to others in a hierarchical system of relations where the principal has authority because of her position. This type of leadership, also termed 'delegated leadership' relates closely to autocratic forms of leadership and notions of leadership as headship, inherited from our apartheid past. This type of leadership can work against issues of social justice and inclusion. The second characterisation, *dispersed* distributed leadership, refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more bottom-up process "through networks in which the private interests of the individual are promoted through group and/or collective actions, and through the community where the public good secures the defence of the individual (Gunter, 2005, p.52). This type of leadership opens up the space for what Gronn terms 'co- or partner principalships' (2003, p.151) and which centres on 'spontaneity' and 'intuitive working relations' (ibid, pp.42 - 43). Dispersed distributed leadership, through sharing the leadership tasks more widely and redefining roles, shifts the power relations in the school. The third characterisation, *democratic* distributed leadership, argues Gunter (2005, p. 56-57), is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for 'concertive action', but is different in that it "widens the gaze from the school as an organisation to the wider role of the school as a public institution within a democracy". Instead of assuming political neutrality, it recognises the value of dissent (Woods, 2004) and raises questions that encompass "how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change" (Gunter, 2005, p.57). For South African schools to develop inclusive cultures which are democratic and which seek out leadership potential where it exists, dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership are essential.

These two forms of distributed leadership open up the possibility of challenging the status quo around leadership processes and make space for teachers to lead at different times

in their professional lives. In other words they offer a platform for teacher leadership to emerge (Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles *et al.* 1988; Harris, 2004; Harris and Muijs, 2005). The term 'teacher leadership', although not new in international literature, is new to the majority of educators in South Africa. While teacher leadership has, until recently, not been researched in our country, it is slowly becoming an area of interest (See Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Singh, 2007; Rajagopaul, 2007). The American authors, Katzenmeyer and Moller write that "teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice" (2001, p.17). For the South African context, teacher leadership can be understood as a form of leadership beyond headship which refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond (Grant, 2005). However, more recent research in this area points to this view being too restrictive – too limiting in terms of how teachers actually lead. While the emphasis on teachers in *informal* positions of leadership in the South African context must remain central to any understanding of teacher leadership, the concept itself must include teachers leading in formal positions as well. With this distinction in mind, teacher leadership can be defined as, a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal and formal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust.

Given the complex terrain of schools in South Africa post 1994, one person can no longer be expected to lead and manage a school effectively. Working from the premise that firstly, leadership cannot be equated with headship and, secondly that all people have leadership potential, leadership must be encouraged as an essential role of all school staff. I agree with Harris (2004) that it is then the task of the principal to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship through the creation of a common culture where leadership is equated with maximising the human capacity within the organisation. Thus, while the principal is accountable as the head of the school, and can exercise authority as the most senior person in the hierarchy, leadership in the school should take a distributed form.

DISPERSED AND DEMOCRATIC DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS SOCIAL JUST LEADERSHIP

Implicit within the notion of dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership is a level of 'moral' leadership (Sergiovanni 1998) underpinned by values such as "inclusion, participation and transparency" (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 152), values such as "courage, risk-taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm within a culture of transparency and mutual learning" (Grant, 2006, p. 529). In other words, dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership are socially just leadership. I agree with Astin and Astin who argue that the value ends of leadership should be "to enhance equity, social justice, and the quality of life; to expand access and opportunity; to encourage respect for difference and diversity" and to "strengthen democracy....." (2000, p. 11). In other words, leadership for social justice must value, and not ignore, diversity. Here diversity or difference becomes

not something to fear, or to avoid, but part of the rich fabric of human existence with which we interact on a daily basis. Understood as part of our very being, difference is the basis for human relationship, for organisational life, and certainly for leading and learning (Shields, 2004, p. 116).

This implies that as educational leaders we have to question our taken-for-granted assumptions about sameness and difference; be honest about who we exclude and who we include; and develop the courage to lead and learn differently. In other words we need to be stretched beyond our comfort zones (Brown, 2004), beyond our current habitus (Bourdieu, 1972) of educational leadership which prevents the development of creative, positive and new relationships in which we will learn and grow. For Carrington and Luke, our habitus is formed

via a process of inculcation which begins at birth. One develops distinctive class, culture-based and engendered ways of 'seeing', 'being', 'occupying space' and 'participating in history'. The concept of habitus, then, serves to connect the biologic being with the social world via physical and psychic embodiment, a structured and structuring durable, yet flexible, disposition (1997, p. 101).

In other words we are deeply conditioned and positioned individuals and social beings who are products of our histories and the sum of our lived experiences. We have learnt racist, gendered and discriminatory ways of leading, managing, teaching and controlling which have developed over time and function "below the levels of consciousness and language" (Swartz, 1997, p. 105). Leaders need to recognise "how our habitus restricts equity and social justice and then to find ways to overcome these constraints" (Shields, 2004, p. 113). In other words, for many South Africans, our habitus is fundamentally opposed to the empowered participation of all for democratic functioning. The challenge for leaders is to confront unjust, stereotypical and discriminatory ways of being, and therefore leading, in the pursuit of a more fair and equitable society. It is through authentic dialogue in a democratic culture that this is most likely to happen. And, as Shields argues, dialogue is a way of being in the world with one another and "grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice" (2004, p. 116). It is through dialogue that each individual educator is exposed to "differing realities and worldviews" (ibid).

While 'servant leadership' has emerged as a new metaphor in recent conversations in the American research context (see Brown, 2004), this metaphor is not helpful for the South African context given our history of inequality and discrimination. 'Servant' in our context is likely to conjure up images of powerlessness, subjugation and possibly abuse which, I do not believe, will do the leadership cause any justice. Instead there is a need for 'empathic leaders' in our schools who have the capacity to 'put themselves in the other person's shoes' (Astin and Astin, 2000). Empathy is a central tenet of the Sesotho term 'Batho Pele'¹, which means 'people first'. A collective concept, 'Batho Pele' means that the group, the people come before the individual. In a similar vein, the isiZulu phrase 'Umuntu, gumuntu, gabantu'

¹ 'Batho Pele' is the name of the South African government's programme for transforming its public service delivery to a culture of customer care, set out in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Government Gazette No. 18340, 1997).

means 'I am who I am because of other people'. Leaders in our schools need to put 'people first' and foreground healthy relationships based on the values of empathy, inclusion, trust and creative action. Noddings (1986) writes of empathic leadership in relation to a 'pedagogy of care' while Hall, in her study of women principals, also emphasises the importance of caring

Women heads combined care and control. The care was manifest in actions that were supportive and nurturing, aimed at making someone feel good about what he or she was doing, as well as securing his or her support, commitment and trust (1996, p. 123).

Yet, leading empathically still requires an acknowledgment and confrontation of the conflict and complexities that exists in schools. Schools are not homogenous entities so the hidden, different and uncomfortable aspects of school life must be allowed to emerge and be given voice. Teachers' voices and women's voices must be heard and valued, especially when they present an alternative view which challenges the existing status quo. Teachers' ways of knowing and leading and women's ways of knowing and leading are two different sources of potential in schools, waiting to be tapped.

EDUCATING ABOUT SOCIALLY JUST FORMS OF LEADERSHIP

It is the task of higher education institutions and those of us who research and teach in the field of education leadership and management to present, in our published work and to students, the different approaches to education leadership and to enter into debate about the values underpinning each approach and the associated different political positionings. We need to foreground more a critical education leadership perspective which challenges the existing habitus around leadership issues and which raises questions of exclusion, marginalisation and silences. In other words, we need to continually challenge both the view that leadership is a male domain and the view that leadership is only the role of those in formal management positions. Instead, we need to give voice to those marginalized from the leadership process; in many instances, teachers and women. We need to assist those marginalized by foregrounding dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership in schools which challenge the existing status quo and which allow for authentic teacher leadership to emerge.

Democratic management and governance structures are now in place in the majority of our schools. However, this is only the first step in a long and complex journey towards more socially just and inclusive school cultures. And if there is to be any hope of using decentralization to transform schools into democratic, participatory learning organisations, we must move away from what Grant, Lewis and Motala (2004) call "the structuralist perspective of decentralisation" to a form of decentralisation which pays considerable attention to process and values. Young argues the need for real participatory structures in which "actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage representation of their distinct voices" (1990, p. 116). While the power of the individual habitus is acknowledged in contributing to the reproduction of patterns in society, Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that it is a dynamic

construct which can be used to resist and transform the status quo. The challenge for educational leaders is to recognize how the habitus restricts social justice and issues of equity. It is through a process of deep, ongoing critical self-reflection, at both a personal and a professional level that leaders will start to work in socially just ways. From a critical leadership perspective, school leaders, whether teachers or SMT members, must become critical reflective practitioners who guide their colleagues on a journey of critical self-reflection in an environment which is transparent and supportive and open to new ideas and new learning. This critical reflection journey can be supported through different methods such as life histories, reflective analysis journals, cultural autobiographies, cross-cultural interviews and prejudice reduction workshops (see Brown, 2004, pp. 99 – 103).

CONCLUSION

In the quest for inclusive and democratic schools, this chapter has argued for a form of distributed leadership which is socially just and which maximises the human resource capacity within the school by engaging different people in leadership activity according to their expertise. It has argued for a move away from autocratic leadership within a hierarchical school structure to more dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership. Within this framework of distributed leadership, teacher leadership will therefore have a platform to emerge. So often principals are unaware of the strengths and capacity of their teachers to lead and to bring new initiatives to their schools and so do nothing to seek out this untapped potential. They simply rely on their senior management to support them in leadership and decision-making, regardless of the expertise, or lack thereof, of these senior members of staff. Along with Shields (2004), I am urging that conversations that explore difference become regular occurrences in staff meetings and during staff tea breaks. All staff members should experience a sense of belonging in schools where they should feel that their experiences, attitudes and beliefs are heard and valued, even if they are different. There is a critical need for teachers, and particularly women teachers, to “break the silence” (Fine, 1994), overcome their pathologies of silence (Shields, 2004), find their voice, speak out, and support each other in transforming community views on women and leadership. This requires courage, risk-taking and perseverance (Grant, 2005) on the part of the women and teachers as well as from empathic leaders who put ‘people first’ and who are willing to ‘walk in the shoes of the other’ in a journey towards learning, understanding, collaboration and inclusion. Put another way, the conscientisation of educators is essential to support ‘women’s ways’ and ‘teachers’ ways’ of being and leading.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHER LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING CONTEXT: PROPOSING A MODEL

8.1. INTRODUCTION

As explained in the introductory chapter of this thesis, to accomplish the integration of the eight chronicles in my study into a coherent whole, I developed my 'logic of connectivity'. In Chapter One I introduced the idea of a 'logic of connectivity' and explained how it operated at five different levels in the study. In Chapter Two I explored the 'logic of connectivity' in relation to the literature thread running through the chronicles and, in Chapter Three, in relation to theoretical framing of distributed leadership. In chapter Four I indicated how the chronicles were connected through the research questions and the mixed research synthesis design. Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten are dedicated to the insights gathered as a result of the synthesis process of the study. They constitute a kind of meta-data discussion because they involve a discourse of a range of discourses, given that each chronicle has its own discussion and significance. In writing up these three insights chapters, I aspired to present a coherent body of work. Thus, whilst the research questions guided the initial stages of the synthesis process, these chapters are organised according to the coherence of the discussion.

The purpose of this eighth chapter is to 'trouble' the terrain of teacher leadership at the level of praxis and theory in the South African schooling context. As such, it offers a response to the first and third research questions in my study and demonstrates, through the synthesis of chronicles, how teacher leadership is understood and practiced and thus can be theorised within the mainstream South African schooling context. This chapter works with the teacher leadership literature as outlined in the second chapter of this thesis and extends the discussion as it is applied in relation to the chronicles in this study. It does this by means of a model of teacher leadership which was developed during the study and employed as an

analytical tool. The insights gathered in this chapter are organised and presented according to this model of teacher leadership. Throughout Chapter Eight, I have used extracts from the chronicles to support the argument being developed. To indicate these extracts and to set them apart from other literature used, they are presented in italics and are referenced in two ways. In the text, they are referenced according to the number of the chronicle and the associated original journal page in which they can be found. They are also referenced in a footnote according to the chapter and page of the thesis in which they can be found.

By way of introduction, the two insights chapters that follow this eighth chapter aim to ‘trouble’ the terrain at the level of theory by critically examining teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing. The purpose of the ninth chapter is to extend the discussion around the theoretical framing of distributed leadership to obtain purchase on the practice of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. As such, it offers a response to the second and third research questions and in so doing demonstrates, through the synthesis of chronicles, how distributed leadership conceptualised as social practice is an appropriate theoretical framing in which to locate research on teacher leadership. Adopting this extended theoretical framework, the tenth chapter demonstrates how distributed leadership is applied in practice in the study through its three characterisations (Gunter, 2005).

I begin this eighth chapter by exploring the situatedness of teacher leadership as a core constituting element of the distributed leadership practice and I argue that the situation or context is critical to a South African understanding of teacher leadership. As a consequence, I also make the point that the concept of teacher leadership cannot be fixed because it is understood and experienced differently by different educators at different times and within different contexts in their professional careers. Despite this lack of a fixed understanding of the term, I go on to describe the general sense of support for the concept of teacher leadership that prevailed in the study.

In the next section of the chapter, I present my model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context and argue its value in offering researchers and educators a tool through which to describe and explain the practice of teacher leadership in schools. In the final part of this chapter, I then employ this model as an organisational tool in presenting the insights on teacher leadership gained from the synthesised findings of the chronicles.

8.2. THE SITUATEDNESS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

As a result of the synthesis process, a range of common themes emerged across the chronicles and contributed to the logic of connectivity of the thesis. These included the centrality of context in understanding teacher leadership, teacher leadership as a dynamic construct as well as the general support for the concept. I suggested in Chapter Three that leadership practice is *situated* and that the situation or context is one of the core constituting elements of the practice (Spillane *et al*, 2004). In the sections that follow I explore the situatedness of teacher leadership in the South African schooling context and contend that an understanding of context is critical to one's understanding of the take-up of teacher leadership. Thus, as a school's context and culture changes, so the practice of teacher leadership is likely to change. Consequently I assert that teacher leadership must be understood as a dynamic construct which alters, depending on the situation at hand as well as on how the educators interact with and relate to each other in the given situation. Finally in this section, I indicate to the reader the level of support for the notion of teacher leadership reflected by the participants in my study.

8.2.1. Context matters

The centrality of the situation or context is critical to a South African understanding of teacher leadership because “leadership practice cannot be extracted from its socio-cultural context” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 22). In other words, teacher leadership is likely to vary depending on the historical, cultural and institutional settings in which it is situated. And, as Christie suggests, the apartheid legacy with its dysfunctional schooling system has “not simply disappeared with the replacement of the apartheid government with a new government” (1998b, p. 284). Instead, this inheritance “continues to be determinative in shaping and accounting for the character of current social behaviour in the country, including the performance of children in schools” (Soudien, 2007, p. 183). Context therefore remains central to issues of leadership and school improvement in South Africa because deprivation continues in many disadvantaged communities and these “distinctive social conditions precede and accompany the child on his or her way to school” (Soudien, 2007, p. 190). Thus, as Harris wisely advises, “it would be naïve to ignore the major structural, cultural and micropolitical barriers operating in schools that make distributed forms of leadership difficult to implement” (Harris, 2004, p. 19). It is imperative therefore, that any understanding of teacher leadership from a South African perspective be expansive and sufficiently flexible to accommodate these vastly differing school contexts.

The situatedness of teacher leadership emerged as a constant theme across the chronicles and contributed to the logic of connectivity of the thesis. In some chronicles the finding was explicit while in others it was more implicit. It was named explicitly as a finding in chronicles one, two, five and seven while the research strands underpinning the second, third, fourth and fifth chronicles were framed by context. Let me illustrate with a few examples. In an exploration of the relationship between teacher leadership and gender, the second chronicle found that “*context matters*” (p. 46)⁸⁶. The chronicle highlights “*the situatedness of leadership and the importance of context in the take-up of teacher leadership*” (p. 44)⁸⁷. Developing this idea further, the first chronicle argues that teacher leadership, in the context of South

⁸⁶ Section 6.2, p. 188

⁸⁷ Section 6.2, p. 186

Africa, should be understood “*against a backdrop of a fledgling democracy emerging from an apartheid history whilst still carrying the legacy of poverty and inequality*” (p. 522)⁸⁸. It follows then that the experiences and therefore, the understanding of teacher leadership will differ from person to person because, as the eighth chronicle rightly states, schools in South Africa “*are not homogenous entities*” (p. 188)⁸⁹.

In line with this thinking, it was found that, across the four research schools in the professional development initiative which framed the fifth chronicle, “*the context of each school, together with its unique structure and culture, impacted on how the take-up of teacher leadership occurred*” (p. 99)⁹⁰. In the seventh chronicle, the importance of context was raised on two accounts. Firstly, the issue of context was thought to be pertinent in understanding some of the variations in the statistics in the study and the *widely varying contexts of the three KZN districts* were therefore taken into account when interpreting the data (p. 15)⁹¹. Secondly, it was established that many of the barriers to the take-up of teacher leadership in schools emanated *from the contexts of the schools themselves* (p. 18)⁹². This confirms the view of Wasley that the context in which teachers work has a significant impact on a teacher’s ability to influence the practice of others and that one cannot easily transfer a role from one place to another “without giving careful thought to the impact of the place and its culture” (1991, p. 145). Put slightly differently, we cannot assume that a teacher leader who is effective in one school will necessarily be effective in another. In the new school, her take-up of leadership may well need to alter as she reads the situation, explores the interactions amongst educators and reflects on the institutional needs and goals. This requires flexibility on the part of the teacher leader as well as the wisdom to know how to adapt to the changing context. Thus the dynamic nature of the concept emerges and it is to this discussion that I now turn.

⁸⁸ Section 5.2, p. 115

⁸⁹ Section 7.3, p. 235

⁹⁰ Section 5.3, p. 140

⁹¹ Section 5.5, p. 176

⁹² Section 5.5, p. 179

8.2.2. Teacher leadership as a dynamic construct

In attempting to understand the practice of teacher leadership in the South African schooling system, I worked from the premise that teacher leadership was understood differently depending on the situation or the context in which it was practiced. Working from a critical, post-modern position, I was not seeking a fixed understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. Thus the expansive purpose of my synthesis study (Green, *et al*, 1989) afforded me the opportunity of a plurality of understandings across the first cluster of chronicles and also within chronicles. In this regard, I was guided by the metaphor of the crystal which I discussed in Chapter Four as an alternative to triangulation. I used this metaphor because I wanted to capture “an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522) in relation to teacher leadership. Like a crystal, I argue that teacher leadership across the chronicles had a range of different shapes and transformations, determined to a large extent by the complexity of the context in which it was located. Instead of attempting to converge on a fixed understanding of teacher leadership, this diversity of context demanded that the concept be multi-dimensional and multi-nodal (Mason, 2006) to allow for growth, change and crystallization.

Let me illustrate my point. In the first chronicle, for example, educators’ understandings of teacher leadership were not fixed but developed over the semester as their involvement in the professional development initiative progressed. At the start of the initiative, which formed the basis of the initial research project (Strand One, as discussed in Chapter Four) in my study, the majority of educators equated leadership with headship and many described leadership within “*a hierarchical school organisation discourse*” (Chronicle 1, p. 518)⁹³. Equating leadership with headship and conceptualizing leadership as an individual endeavour (Muijs and Harris, 2003) negates the existence of teacher leadership and I argued then that the concept of teacher leadership, although not new in international literature, was “*new to the majority of educators and researchers in South Africa*” (Chronicle 1, p. 513)⁹⁴. This

⁹³ Section 5.2, p. 111

⁹⁴ Section 5.2, p. 106

stands to reason given South Africa's colonial and apartheid history and her legacy of bureaucracy and autocracy within the education system generally and within schools particularly. And, as discussed in the previous chapter, the dominant understanding of leadership, inherited from this racialised and unequal education system, was one in which leadership was equated with headship and understood in terms of *position, status and authority* (Chronicle 1⁹⁵; Muijs and Harris, 2003). In other words, in the majority of mainstream schools in South Africa, there remains “an expectation of top-down mandates with little input from practitioners” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 41).

However, as educators' involvement in the professional development initiative progressed, as reported in the first chronicle, so their understanding of leadership as headship was deconstructed as I worked with them in connected and interactive ways in a conscious attempt to challenge their taken-for-granted assumptions on education leadership. During the six month professional development initiative, the educators began to take more responsibility for their own learning and slowly the gap between researcher and researched was reduced as they reconstructed their ideas about leadership. This reconstructed notion of leadership as a shared endeavour provided a new lens through which the educators were then able to acknowledge and explore the concept of teacher leadership. This new lens afforded educators the opportunity to expand their understanding of teacher leadership and discover new ways in which it could be conceptualised. In this way, the inter-subjective research process resulted in support for the concept by the educators in the study.

8.2.3. Support for the concept of teacher leadership

There was support, at a conceptual level, for teacher leadership in schools across all chronicles and this again contributed to the logic of connectivity of the thesis. This support for the concept of teacher leadership seems logical given the language of democracy which permeated the educational arena at the time of my research as well as the consequence of the structural democratisation of schools (visible in structures such as the SGB, the SMT and the RCL). For example, in the seventh chronicle, the

⁹⁵ Section 5.2

data revealed that the majority of the teachers surveyed supported the notion of teacher leadership and 71,7% believed that “*school teachers were confident and capable of leading*” (p. 9)⁹⁶. As a further example, a teacher’s comment from the sixth chronicle explained how teachers were more involved in leadership than in the past: “*We’re involved in policy making now. It wasn’t like that all the time. Now there’s a sense of ownership. We are all role players; the teacher has a lot to gain. Things have changed from the past where unilateral decisions were made*” (Chronicle 6, p. 295)⁹⁷. The fifth chronicle also found that “*teacher leadership was supported as a concept across the four schools in the study*” (p. 103)⁹⁸. The synthesised findings indicate a commitment to the rhetoric of teacher leadership in schools and a shift, even if at a superficial level, to more participatory involvement of teachers in leadership. These views represent the second dimension of teacher leadership (after Day and Harris, 2002, p. 973) which constitutes more teacher participation and involvement in the practice of leadership.

However, whilst South African schools have undergone extensive structural transformation, many have yet to transform at the level of their modes of operation as well as their interactions amongst people. So whilst there is far more participation in schools today than perhaps there was prior to 1994, questions remain around the nature and quality of this participation. To this end, I motivated in the eighth chronicle that while “*school structures have changed, there is still a profound need for change in the culture and practices of schools towards more democratic forms of participation*” (p. 184)⁹⁹. Here I am of the view that there are “*differing degrees of teacher leadership*” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 100) which are determined by the levels of participation in the practice of leadership. Teacher leadership can be restricted when it is limited by the extent to which it operates in practice; it can be emergent or successful (Harris and Muijs, 2005). These differing degrees of teacher leadership are largely determined by the context and culture of a particular school as well as the level of distribution of leadership that occurs within it.

⁹⁶ Section 5.5, p. 170

⁹⁷ Section 5.4, p. 155

⁹⁸ Section 5.3, p. 144

⁹⁹ Section 7.3, p. 231

To determine in my study how much teachers were able to lead and what tasks and roles they were involved in, I developed a model of teacher leadership which assisted me in this endeavour. This model is presented in the next section.

8.3. THE TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Within a theoretical framing of distributed leadership as practice, this section explores the development of my model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. It is important to mention that the model developed over time as my research into teacher leadership expanded and the need for an analytical tool became apparent. Given the importance of the model as an analytical tool which was developed and used in my study, in this section I track its development through a range of phases, three to be exact, over the five year period of the study.

The **first phase** of the model can be found in the first chronicle (see p. 525)¹⁰⁰ of my study and it emerged as a result of the educators' deliberations on the meaning of the concept of teacher leadership during the professional development initiative. Teacher leadership was understood and described according to four semi-distinct levels which are described in this chronicle:

- Level One: Teacher leadership can exist within the classroom as teachers lead and manage the teaching and learning process (pp. 519 – 520)¹⁰¹.
- Level Two: Teachers can also lead beyond the classroom as they develop working relationships with other teachers (p. 520)¹⁰².
- Level Three: Teachers can become more involved in whole school development issues such as vision building and policy development (pp. 520 - 521)¹⁰³.

¹⁰⁰ Section 5.2, p. 118

¹⁰¹ Section 5.2, pp. 112 - 113

¹⁰² Section 5.2, p. 113

¹⁰³ Section 5.2, pp. 113 - 114

- Level Four: Teachers can extend themselves beyond the school and lead in community life and cross-school networking (p. 521)¹⁰⁴.

As can be seen from the four levels of teacher leadership outlined above, each level is built to some extent on the previous one. However, as I argued in the first chronicle, this understanding of teacher leadership does not occur in isolation but is framed by context and, in particular, a macro context of transformation and change. Furthermore as the chronicle contends, three pre-requisites are necessary for the development of teacher leadership. These include:

- a collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision-sharing;
- a set of values which assist in developing this collaborative culture;
- distributed leadership on the part of the principal and formal management teams (p. 523)¹⁰⁵.

Thus, I assert in this thesis that distributed leadership, defined as a group-plus perspective and a practice perspective, is critical to the take-up of teacher leadership. In other words, for some semblance of teacher leadership to emerge in a school, there must be some distribution of leadership, even if this distribution is limited and restricts teacher leadership to the zone of the classroom. However, the more leadership is distributed, the greater the possibility for the take-up of teacher leadership in and beyond the classroom into zones 2, 3 and 4. Successful teacher leadership, I argue, is when teachers are not excluded from leadership practices in any of the four zones but can involve themselves in decision-making across all four zones as and when the need arises. Successful teacher leadership thus requires a culture of trust, authentic dialogue, care and a “collective commitment to the success of the new developments” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 104). Figure 8.1 constitutes this 1st phase of the model.

¹⁰⁴ Section 5.2, p. 114

¹⁰⁵ Section 5.2, p. 116

Figure 1: Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa

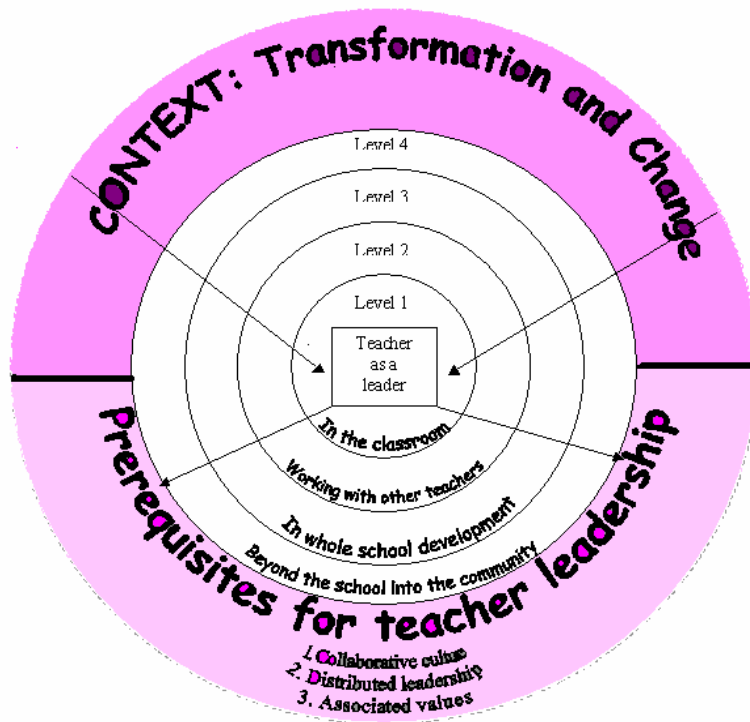


Figure 8.1: Model of teacher leadership with zones (Chronicle 1, p. 525)

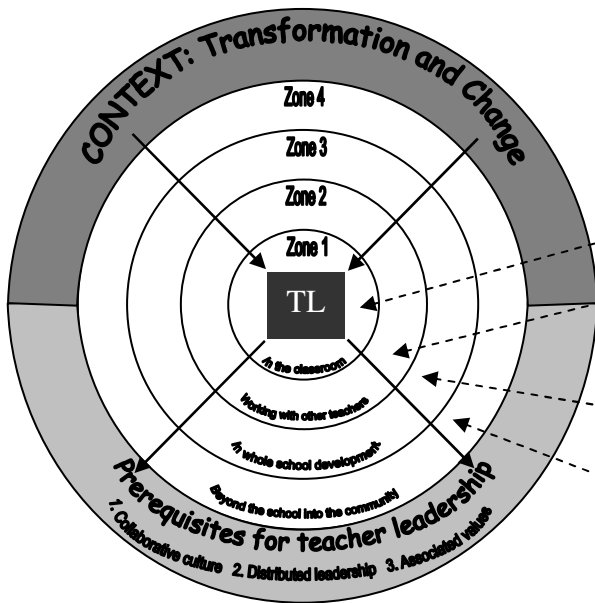
As my research progressed, I realised that any analysis of teacher leadership according to the four levels identified in the first chronicle, was inadequate in developing a comprehensive understanding of teacher leadership. I therefore turned to the international literature on teacher leadership and explored the various roles of teacher leadership in more detail. I found the six areas of teacher leadership, identified by Devaney (1987), [see section 2.6 of this thesis] useful in giving substance to the four levels in my model. I therefore re-ordered the roles and mapped them onto the four levels which I renamed ‘zones’. Within the four zones, teacher leadership is then depicted according to six roles, some of which are repeated across zones. The roles include:

- Role One: continuing to teach and improve one’s own teaching;
- Role Two: providing curriculum development knowledge;
- Role Three: leading in-service education and assisting other teachers;
- Role Four: participating in performance evaluation of teachers;
- Role Five: organising and leading peer reviews of school practice and
- Role Six: participating in school level decision-making.

This expanded version, with the four zones and their associated roles, constitutes the **second phase** of the model and was published for the first time in the fifth chronicle (see p. 93)¹⁰⁶. Figure 8.2 re-presents this 2nd phase of the model and illustrates how the levels of *zones* and *roles* work together as a tool for analysis. In other words, the roles describe the different forms of teacher leadership take-up possible within each of the different zones. The value of the model with its two levels of analysis (zones and roles) lies in its capacity to offer the researcher a tool to describe the practice of teacher leadership in terms of the places where teacher leaders are most likely to lead and the roles they are most likely to take up.

Teachers can take up leadership responsibility at different times in their lives, in different ways and for different purposes and these four zones and six roles represent the possibilities for teacher leadership. Thus the take-up of teacher leadership need not necessarily happen simultaneously across all four zones. Neither does it need to happen consecutively from *zone 1* through to *zone 4*. However, I strongly support the view of Harris and Lambert (2003) that the main focus of a teacher leader is the ability to facilitate the teaching/learning process as expert teacher in the classroom. Thus, for the majority of post level one teachers, the bulk of their work as a teacher leader should locate them in the first zone. However, if teacher leadership is restricted to the first zone it remains severely limited in its scope and it will have minimal impact on the school as a whole. In contrast, if teachers lead within and beyond their classrooms into zones 2, 3, and 4, as and when the need arises, the scope for successful teacher leadership is enhanced because of its potential to transform teaching and learning through its impact on the whole school.

¹⁰⁶ Section 5.3, p. 134



TEACHER LEADERSHIP	
First level of analysis: Four Zones	Second level of analysis: Six Roles
One in the classroom	One: Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching
Two Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities	Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
Three Outside the classroom in whole school development	Four: Participating in performance evaluation of teachers Five: Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
Four Between neighbouring schools in the community	Six: Participating in school level decision-making Two: Providing curriculum development knowledge Three: Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers

Figure 8.2: Model of teacher leadership with zones and roles (Chronicle 5, p. 93)

Following the development of the 2nd phase of the model of teacher leadership, as depicted in Figure 8.2, the model was then used as a tool for analysis in research strands five and six of my study. The findings of research strand five are captured in the sixth¹⁰⁷ chronicle in my study and are presented according to the zones (and roles) of the teacher leadership model. Similarly, the findings of research strand six are captured in the seventh¹⁰⁸ chronicle in my study and are presented according to the zones (and roles) of the teacher leadership model.

However, while the model in Figure 8.2 with its zones and roles proved useful and enabled me to analyse the understandings and practices of teacher leaders in the individual chronicles, it was not without its limitations. As discussed in an earlier chapter, I have also been involved in leading a group research project which explores the enactment of teacher leadership in schools with a group of 11 Master of Education students at UKZN. The model in Figure 8.2 proved limited in this collective case study research because of its inability to unpack the nature of the roles it identified. As a result, I worked together with the group of Master of Education students in 2009 to expand the model by sketching indicators for each of the six teacher leadership

¹⁰⁷ Section 5.4

¹⁰⁸ Section 5.5

roles. This I refer to as the **third phase** of the model and it was this expanded version which I used in the synthesis of the chronicles in my study. This 3rd phase of the model is depicted in Figure 8.3.

Thus it can be seen that during the five year period of my PhD study, a model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context was generated. The development of this model involved three phases:

- phase one: four zones of teacher leadership (Figure 8.1)
- phase two: four zones and six roles of teacher leadership (Figure 8.2)
- phase three: four zones, six roles and an extensive range of indicators of teacher leadership (Figure 8.3).

As mentioned earlier, I used the **third phase** of the model in the synthesis of the chronicles in my study in an attempt to garner a response to my first research question. This is presented in the next section of the chapter.

Zones	Roles	Indicators
1.	1. Continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching in the classroom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> centrality of expert practice (including appropriate teaching and assessment strategies and expert knowledge) keep abreast of new developments (attendance at workshops & further study) for own professional development design of learning activities and improvisation/appropriate use of resources processes of record keeping and reflective practice engagement in classroom action research maintain effective classroom discipline and meaningful relationship with learners (evidence of pastoral care role) take initiative and engage in autonomous decision-making to make change happen in classroom to benefit of learners
2.	2. Providing curriculum development knowledge (in own school)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> joint curriculum development (core and extra/co curricular) team teaching take initiative in subject committee meetings work to contextualise curriculum for own particular school attend DOE curriculum workshops and take new learning, with critique, back to school staff extra/co curricular coordination (e.g. sports, cultural activities etc)
2.	3. Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (in own school)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> forge close relationships and build rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place staff development initiatives peer coaching mentoring role of teacher leaders (including induction) building skills and confidence in others work with integrity, trust and transparency
2.	4. Participating in performance evaluation of teachers (in own school)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> engage in IQMS activities such as peer assessment (involvement in development support groups) informal peer assessment activities moderation of assessment tasks reflections on core and co/extra curricular activities
3.	5. Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice (in own school)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> organisational diagnosis (Audit – SWOT) and dealing with the change process (School Development Planning) whole school evaluation processes school based action research mediating role (informal mediation as well as union representation) school practices including fundraising, policy development, staff development, professional development initiatives etc)
3.	6. Participating in school level decision-making (in own school)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> awareness of and non-partisan to micropolitics of school (work with integrity, trust and transparency) participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership problem identification and resolution conflict resolution and communication skills school-based planning and decision-making
4.	2. Providing curriculum development knowledge(across schools into community)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> joint curriculum development (core and extra/co curricular) liaise with and empower parents about curriculum issues (parent meetings, visits, communication – written or verbal) liaise with and empower the SGB about curriculum issues (SGB meetings, workshops, training –influencing of agendas) networking at circuit/district/regional/provincial level through committee or cluster meeting involvement
4.	3. Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (across schools into community)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> forge close relationships and build rapport with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place staff development initiatives peer coaching mentoring role of teacher leaders (including induction) building skills and confidence in others work with integrity, trust and transparency

Figure 8.3: Model of teacher leadership with zones, roles and indicators (Grant *et al*, 2009)

8.4. DETERMINING THE PRACTICE OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING CONTEXT

In this section I discuss how teacher leadership was understood and practiced across the chronicles in my study, and particularly the first cluster of chronicles. In doing so, I provide a comprehensive response to my first research question. To assist me in the organisation of this section, I have chosen to present the insights gathered according to the four zones of teacher leadership (and the six roles) as discussed at length in the previous section.

8.4.1. Teacher leadership within the zone of the classroom

I work from the premise that teacher leaders are, in the first place, “expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. 44). It follows therefore that the centrality of *zone one* is crucial to our understanding of teacher leadership and we should not fall into the trap of thinking that only activities outside the classroom constitute leadership. Within the zone of the classroom, a critical role of a teacher leader is that they continue to teach and improve their own teaching (*role 1*). In line with this thinking, teacher leadership was initially described solely in terms of its classroom focus in the first chronicle in my study: “*In the classroom situation teachers are the designated leaders. They set the goals, implement procedures, instruct, guide, facilitate, mobilize learners, motivate and inspire learners and model behaviour*” (p. 519)¹⁰⁹. Similarly, the majority of teachers in the sixth chronicle had “*a narrow understanding of teacher leadership as being restricted to leadership in the classroom*” (p. 293)¹¹⁰. Furthermore, in the seventh chronicle¹¹¹, the highest percentages of teacher leadership emanated from *zone one*. The fifth chronicle found that

¹⁰⁹ Section 5.2, p. 112

¹¹⁰ Section 5.4, p. 155

¹¹¹ Section 5.5

within the zone of the classroom (zone one), we have examples of teachers from all four schools taking up leadership in their classrooms and experimenting with some of the new pedagogic learning from the courses in order to improve their own teaching (role one) (p. 94)¹¹².

Data from this fifth chronicle contributes further to a more nuanced understanding of teacher leadership in the first zone. It is clear from this chronicle that teachers became expert because “of expert practice and of expert knowledge” (Zimpher, 1988, p. 54). For example, an educator explained how, in terms of the technology content, “*I understand it now and love to teach*” (p. 94)¹¹³. Another educator in the same chronicle explained how, through her exposure to new and different approaches and teaching skills, her attitude to teaching changed: “*I worked with the learners at their level and got better results*” (Chronicle 5, p. 94)¹¹⁴. For another educator, the new pedagogic learning resulted in “*an increased professional identity and confidence in teaching*” (Chronicle 5, p. 95)¹¹⁵.

Many of the educators in the study shared their amazement at the ability of their learners to demonstrate their new learning in very tangible ways. The data were replete with examples of educators’ wonderment at the ability of their learners. For example, in the context of reading, one educator reflected: “*I found that absolutely fascinating, and we saw how the children themselves ordered and re-ordered and they actually learnt ...*” (Chronicle 5, p. 94)¹¹⁶. Another educator explained how her Grade One learners were able to “*compose a book in their own handwriting and illustrations*” (p. 94)¹¹⁷. These examples are illustrative of the *first role* in the model of teacher leadership which is to ‘continue to teach and improve one’s own teaching’. Furthermore, many of the examples illustrate the reflective practice dimension of teacher leadership (Rogus, 1988). This reflective practice dimension is captured in the following excerpt from a teacher of technology the fifth chronicle:

¹¹² Section 5.3, p. 135

¹¹³ Section 5.3, p. 135

¹¹⁴ Section 5.3, p. 135

¹¹⁵ Section 5.3, p. 136

¹¹⁶ Section 5.3, p. 135

¹¹⁷ Section 5.3, p. 135

I used to teach and rush to complete the lesson I am teaching. But I noticed that now when you teach, you must go steady. You teach, you observe the learners, the things they are doing, like the structures. It was an ongoing process; step-by-step-by-step (p. 94)¹¹⁸.

These examples demonstrate the importance of the professional development role of teacher leaders and suggest that teachers were teaching in different and improved ways as a result of the professional development initiative. I argue for the continuing professional development of teachers through “meaningful professional development experiences in both formal and informal settings” (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001, p. 53) because, as Farrar argues, “education reform rests on effective professional development that is sustained by teacher leaders” (2006, p. 33). And, as I argued in the fifth chronicle, “*professional development initiatives for educators must be linked to issues of leading if the goal is to have sustained impact on the whole school context*” (p. 104)¹¹⁹. This is in keeping with Harris’ view that professional development needs to focus “not just on the development of teachers’ skills and knowledge, but also on aspects specific to their leadership role” (2003, p. 320).

8.4.2. Teacher leaders working with other teachers in curricular and co/extra-curricular activities

Within *zone 2* of the model, teacher leaders work with other teachers in curricular and co/extra-curricular activities. The take-up of teacher leadership within this zone includes providing curriculum development knowledge (*role 2*), leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (*role 3*) as well as participating in performance evaluation of teachers (*role 4*). Across the chronicles in my study, there were many examples of teacher leadership in *zone 2* where teachers provided curriculum development knowledge (*role 2*) and worked “collaboratively to improve teaching capabilities” (Ash and Persall, 2000, p. 20). Here the emphasis was on “the ability of the teacher leader to engage colleagues in experimentation and then examination of more powerful instructional practices in the service of more engaged student learning”

¹¹⁸ Section 5.3, p. 135

¹¹⁹ Section 5.3, p. 145

(Wasley, 1991, p. 170). Collaboration included joint curriculum development (*role 2*) which was evidenced in the establishment of *grade committees*” (Chronicle 1, p. 520)¹²⁰ or phase meetings where “*there were discussions on the different methods*” as well as a sharing of “*ideas with other teachers in her grade*” (Chronicle 5, p. 96)¹²¹. Teacher leaders within this zone operated as “*curriculum leaders, grade heads, leaders of various committees*” as they worked collaboratively with their colleagues “*to develop new curriculum methods and planning jointly*” (Chronicle 6, p. 295)¹²². Within this curriculum leadership role (*role 2*), another indicator of joint curriculum development was the “*selection of text books and instructional materials for the grade or learning area*” (Chronicle 7, p. 12)¹²³. Furthermore, within *role 2*, there was a high percentage of teacher leadership in *co/extra-curricular coordination* such as sport and cultural activities across the first cluster of chronicles.

While the take-up of teacher leadership within *zone 2* was convincing in the provision of curriculum knowledge (*role 2*), it was also evidenced, although to a much lesser degree, in the role of leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (*role 3*). In connection with this third role, although it was mentioned in both the sixth chronicle (p. 295)¹²⁴ and the seventh chronicle (p. 11)¹²⁵, it did not emerge as a strong indicator of teacher leadership. For example, in the seventh chronicle, “*a mere 19,2% of the educators in the study claimed to often or always provide in-service training to their colleagues whilst 31,2% of the teachers claimed to sometimes provide in-service training to assist other educators*” (p. 11)¹²⁶. There was some evidence in the fifth chronicle of this in-service training role in two schools but this varied according to the different learning areas within each school. The data revealed that “*some teachers were offering informal in-service education by sharing new methods and operating as leaders in developing work plans for the grades*” (Chronicle 5, p. 97)¹²⁷. Furthermore, within this third role, there was mention of the *informal mentoring of beginning teachers* (Chronicle 6, p. 295)¹²⁸, perhaps more correctly termed induction. While

¹²⁰ Section 5.2, p. 113

¹²¹ Section 5.3, p. 137

¹²² Section 5.4, p. 155

¹²³ Section 5.5, p. 173

¹²⁴ Section 5.4, p. 155

¹²⁵ Section 5.5, p. 172

¹²⁶ Section 5.5, p. 172

¹²⁷ Section 5.3, p. 138

¹²⁸ Section 5.4, p. 155

mention was made, in the fifth chronicle, of informal “*discussion, reflection and mentoring*” (p. 96)¹²⁹, there was no reference to a formal mentoring or peer coaching role (Joyce and Showers, 1982).

The final teacher leadership role within *zone 2* relates to the performance evaluation of teacher leaders and constitutes the fourth role. As an illustration of the fourth role in my study, “*peer observation*” (Chronicle 6, p. 295)¹³⁰, an aspect of performance evaluation, was mentioned. In contrast, in the context of the take-up of new learning from the professional development initiative reported on in the fifth chronicle, peer observation did not seem to take place. This was because, as an educator explained, “*As an HOD, I am a full-time teacher. There is very little chance that I get to go out and observe, and to see how it’s being implemented*” (Chronicle 5, p. 96)¹³¹. However, there was reference to some performance evaluation occurring in schools reported on in the seventh chronicle. According to the survey data, “*only 38,4% of educators often or always participated in the performance evaluation of their colleagues*” (p. 10)¹³². This is an interesting statistic to contemplate given that performance evaluation of peers is “*an integral aspect of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in which all South African schools are compelled to engage*” (Chronicle 7, p. 11)¹³³. Thus, despite the DoE’s IQMS framework, which is in place in South African schools, there appears to be little performance evaluation by teachers of their peers taking place. Further research is required to explore how teachers interact with and lead other teachers as they enact their performance evaluation role in the context of the IQMS framework.

¹²⁹ Section 5.3, p. 137

¹³⁰ Section 5.4, p. 155

¹³¹ Section 5.3, p. 137

¹³² Section 5.5, p. 172 - 173

¹³³ Section 5.5, p. 172

8.4.3. Teacher leadership in issues of whole school development

Teacher leadership within *zone 3* of the model incorporates the following two roles: organising and leading peer reviews of school practice (*role 5*) and participating in school-level decision-making (*role 6*). Across the first cluster of chronicles in my study, the take-up of teacher leadership within this third zone was very limited. Let me illustrate my point with examples from the chronicles. In the first chronicle, teacher leadership in *zone 3* was described as teacher involvement in “*school tasks teams, such as those related to developing school policy, staff development, and the school development team*” (p. 520)¹³⁴. There was also reference, in the sixth chronicle, to decision-making (*role 6*) in “*developing school policy on aspects related to homework, assembly, discipline, pupil admissions and sporting codes*” (p. 295)¹³⁵. In contrast, in the context of the professional development initiative reported on in the fifth chronicle, it emerged that “*the take-up of the new pedagogic learning by teachers as a whole school initiative did not happen in any of the four schools*” (p. 98)¹³⁶. And, as one educator so aptly explained, “*we did not put our pieces together. I don’t know what they did; they don’t know what I did*” (Chronicle 5, p. 97)¹³⁷. There was evidence across the chronicles that teachers were not involved in the important decision-making processes in *zone 3* and very little dialogic space was created for teachers to talk about, reflect on and lead school practices. This finding, I believe, is symptomatic of the prevailing ‘egg-carton’ organisation of schools which “isolates teachers in their classrooms, providing them with few opportunities to discuss instructional issues with peers” (Lortie, 1975, in Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 26). This ‘egg-carton’ school structure, Spillane *et al* argue, is an “essential constraint in the composition of leadership practice, fundamentally shaping how school leaders enact their tasks” (2004, p. 26).

This limited take-up of teacher leadership in *zone 3*, the zone of the school, was further illustrated in the seventh chronicle. In this chronicle, I argued that teachers “*were not always involved in school-wide decision-making processes and when*

¹³⁴ Section 5.2, p. 113

¹³⁵ Section 5.4, p. 155

¹³⁶ Section 5.3, p. 139

¹³⁷ Section 5.3, p. 138

teachers were involved, this was usually restricted” (p. 13)¹³⁸. Data from this chronicle indicated that only 30,5% of the teacher were “*involved in in-school decision-making*” (p. 12)¹³⁹ and while teachers enjoyed a high level of involvement in “*setting of standards for pupil behaviour in the school*” (67,3%), they were less involved in activities such as organising and leading “*reviews of the school year plan*” (27,2%), setting “*the duty roster for their colleagues*” (14,1%) and participating in “*designing staff development programmes*” for their school (11,8%)¹⁴⁰. While the *fundraising* aspect of teacher leadership within *zone 3* was captured across all chronicles in cluster one, it must be noted that many of the fundraising activities mentioned were annual events on the year calendar (concerts, debutantes’ balls etc) and it can be debated whether such activities involved leadership or whether they were more management oriented. Further examples of teacher leadership within *zone 3*, from the first cluster of chronicles, included “*responsibility for stock, textbooks and uniforms*” (Chronicle 1, p. 520)¹⁴¹ as well as “*organising feeding schemes for learners*” (Chronicle 6, p. 295)¹⁴². The findings in this zone point to a restricted form of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2005) and emphasise “*maintenance and administrative processes, at the expense of leadership processes which work towards movement and change in an organisation*” (Chronicle 7, pp. 12)¹⁴³.

In making this the point, I am not suggesting that the management activities within the practice of leadership are not important. On the contrary, I am of the view that the management aspect of the leadership practice is crucial to its success and cannot be divorced from it. However, teacher leadership is more than just teacher management and I argue that the leadership role – the change agent role - is critical to an understanding of teacher leadership. I believe, like Barth, that “teachers harbour extraordinary leadership capabilities, and their leadership is a major untapped resource for improving our nation’s schools” (1990, p. 124). This leadership potential constitutes a wealth of human capital but it is so often unacknowledged and untapped

¹³⁸ Section 5.5, p. 174

¹³⁹ Section 5.5, p. 173

¹⁴⁰ Section 5.5, pp. 173 - 174

¹⁴¹ Section 5.2, p. 113

¹⁴² Section 5.4, p. 155

¹⁴³ Section 5.5, p. 173

(Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Muijs and Harris, 2003).

In the context of our South African mainstream schools, I strongly suspect that the leadership potential of educators, both SMT members and teachers, has not been fully awakened and sourced. To this end, there was an urgent call from the first chronicle to “awaken this ‘sleeping giant’ of teacher leadership because, without this voice, the transformation of South African schools into professional learning communities will remain a pipedream” (p. 530)¹⁴⁴. However, it is not only the leadership of teachers that needs to be awakened. Often too, the leadership potential of SMT members lies dormant because of the multitude of managerial and administrative tasks imposed on them from within the hierarchy of the education system. SMT members, when they are appointed to their official management positions in schools, take on a complex ‘professional-as-administrator’ role (Hughes, 1978 in Gunter, 2003, p. 261). However, I argue that all too often the professional identity of these educators as self-regulated leaders is stifled by their administrator identity which demands that an array of administrative and management practices be completed, often at the expense of innovation and transformation.

8.4.4. Teacher leaders working with other teachers in curricular and co/extra-curricular activities across schools and into the community

The final zone of the teacher leadership model, *zone 4*, includes two roles: the provision of curriculum development knowledge role (*role 2*) and the leading in-service education role (*role 3*). These two roles, the reader will remember, were discussed in relation to teacher leadership in *zone 2* where teacher leaders worked with other teachers in curricular and co/extra-curricular activities in a particular school. In *zone 4*, the roles are replicated but here they are employed where teacher leaders work with other teachers in curricular and co/extra-curricular activities across schools and into the community. Furthermore, in *zone 4*, we have teacher leaders working not only with peers but also with “administrators and parents to build a school community” (Rogus, 1988, p. 46).

¹⁴⁴ Section 5.2, p. 123

Let me now offer the reader some examples from my study to illustrate how teachers can lead within this fourth zone. Across the first cluster of chronicles in my study, examples of teacher leadership within this zone included “*sitting on the school governing body, acting as union site stewards, becoming chairpersons of the district learning area committees and working at the help desks of the various trade unions*” (Chronicle 1, p. 521)¹⁴⁵ as well as “*teachers’ involvement and leadership within the HIV and AIDS ‘Love Life Campaign’, an annual event held by external organizers to raise awareness of the presentation of suicide and drug abuse amongst school children and the community*” (Chronicle 6, p. 293)¹⁴⁶. It also included *curriculum provision across schools (15,9%), co/extra curricular provision across schools (25,4%)* as well as the *coordination of learning area cluster meetings within districts (22,5%)* (Chronicle 7, p. 14)¹⁴⁷. In the context of the professional development initiative reported on in the fifth chronicle, it was revealed that networking across the four schools in an attempt to continue professional relationships was uneven and, when it occurred, it was a result of “*the agency of individual teacher leaders*” (p. 98)¹⁴⁸ rather than a whole-school initiative.

8.5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I conclude this chapter by reiterating the point made in an earlier section that there are differing degrees of teacher leadership depending on the personal attributes of the individual teacher leader as well as the unique context and culture of the school in which the teacher leader finds herself. These differing degrees of teacher leadership are encapsulated in the model of teacher leadership, developed in this thesis. The four zones offer the researcher a tool to describe the areas in which teachers can take up leadership while the six roles suggest the various tasks or functions that the teacher leaders performed. In my study there was evidence of differing degrees of teacher leadership in the schools across the chronicles and this confirmation is important

¹⁴⁵ Section 5.2, p. 114

¹⁴⁶ Section 5.4, p. 155

¹⁴⁷ Section 5.5, p. 175

¹⁴⁸ Section 5.3, p. 139

because it provides “operational images of joint agency in action and illustrates how distributed forms of leadership can be developed and enhanced to contribute to school development and improvement” (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p. 440). In other words, the evidence of teacher leadership was proof of some form of distribution of leadership and I explore this relationship further in the next chapter.

In addition, there were exemplars of teacher leadership across all four zones in my study. However, the spread of examples across the zones was uneven, with the largest take-up of teacher leadership in the first zone. This is in and of itself not problematic given my earlier argument that teacher leaders are first and foremost expert teachers who spend the majority of their time in the classroom as they interact with their learners during the teaching and learning process. Within the private space of their classrooms teachers have relative freedom to lead and manage this teaching and learning process as they see fit. While the teacher interacts with her learners as she leads the teaching practice in this first zone, she is fairly isolated from her colleagues for much of the time. Thus, if teacher leadership is limited to this first zone, I argue that it is severely restricted in scope because it offers little possibility of successful teacher leadership which enables schools to transform themselves as the need arises. In other words, teacher leadership must begin in the zone of the classroom as expert teachers continue to teach and improve their own teaching. But, for it to have more of an impact, it must extend beyond the classroom into zone two as teachers work in collaborative and dialogic ways with colleagues in the pursuit of improved teaching and learning.

The existence of teacher leadership in zone two is an indication of some devolution of power and decision-making in a school, particularly in the provision of curricula and co/extra-curricular development and innovation. However, I believe that while this increase in teacher leadership across the first two zones is a considerable improvement on teacher leadership restricted to the classroom, I contend that the scope of teacher leadership can be expanded further. If teachers are also able to lead, not only in zones 1 and 2, but also in issues of whole school development (zone 3), then the opportunities for school improvement and transformation are far more likely. This is because teacher leaders are involved in authentic decision-making which impacts not only on their work at a classroom, grade or phase level, but also at a

school level. Within a school culture of mutual trust and support, collective commitment and good communication, teachers are able to initiate and lead in innovative ways within a truly authentic distributed leadership practice. Finally, teacher leadership can be expanded into the final zone to include leadership practices across schools and into the community.

I propose that we conceptualise teacher leadership as a range of layers or strata. The take-up of teacher leadership across these strata is directly dependent on the level of distributed leadership in the school. If the distributed leadership practice is limited, then teacher leadership is likely to be restricted to zone 1 or it may include zones 1 and 2. However, if the distributed leadership practice is widespread, then teacher leadership is likely to expand beyond the first two zones into the school and the community (zones 3 and 4) where it is likely to have much more of an impact on the transformation process. In attempting to describe and explain further how distributed leadership works to either enable or restrict the take-up of teacher leadership, I adopt Gunter's (2005) three characterisations of distributed leadership, discussed in Chapter Three, and I demonstrate in Chapter Ten how these three characterisations connect the chronicles and are constructively applied in my study.

Furthermore, in concluding this section, I argue that effective classroom leadership on the part of the expert teacher is an important stepping stone for school leadership. Let me explain what I mean. If we work from the premise that leadership is the quest for change and is about "providing vision, direction and support towards a different and preferred state" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 15), then expert teachers who demonstrate excellent leadership in their classrooms have the disposition and can over time transfer these skills and processes to other zones as and when the need arises. However, this does require that the practice of leadership in the school is sufficiently distributed to allow for this expansion of teacher leadership.

I take my argument a step further and speculate that an excellent classroom teacher leader may or may not be a good principal. I am ambivalent here because while the classroom teacher leader has the leadership strengths to bring to the post, a principal's work is not restricted to curriculum leadership and involves a wide range of tasks, relationships and responsibilities which might just not be of interest to the classroom

teacher leader. However, I argue with more confidence that an excellent teacher who demonstrates leadership across all four zones is much more likely to be a good principal because she has experienced a much broader range of leadership practices during her time as a teacher leader. However, I acknowledge that these are mere speculations and suggest that further research is necessary to investigate whether good teacher leaders aspire to the post of principal and whether good teacher leaders do, in fact, become good principals.

It should be clear now that we cannot begin to talk about teacher leadership without talking about distributed leadership because, “*implicit within the model of distributed leadership are the leadership practices of teachers*” (Chronicle 5, p. 88)¹⁴⁹. So having discussed how teacher leadership was understood and practiced by the teachers and SMT members in my study, in the next chapter I present my insights gathered in relation to distributed leadership as a broad theoretical frame from which to theorise teacher leadership.

¹⁴⁹ Section 5.3, p. 129

CHAPTER NINE

THE PRACTICE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING CONTEXT: TOWARDS INSIGHTS

9.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter, along with Chapter Eight and Chapter Ten, is dedicated to the insights gathered as a result of the synthesis process of my work. Chapter Eight explored how teacher leadership was understood and practiced by educators in the South African mainstream schooling context. The purpose of this ninth chapter is to extend the discussion around the theoretical framing of distributed leadership, discussed in the third chapter, through the introduction of additional concepts and explanatory tools. As such, this ninth chapter connects the chronicles in response to the second and third research questions and in so doing demonstrates how distributed leadership conceptualised as social practice is an appropriate theoretical framing in which to locate research on teacher leadership. Throughout Chapter Nine, as with Chapter Eight, I have used extracts from the chronicles to support the argument being developed. To indicate these extracts and to set them apart from other literature used, they are presented in italics and are referenced in two ways. In the text, they are referenced according to the number of the chronicle and the associated original journal page in which they can be found. They are also referenced in a footnote according to the chapter and page of the thesis in which they can be found.

I begin this chapter by demonstrating how a conceptualisation of distributed leadership as social practice offers a useful analytical tool to explore the field of education leadership in general and teacher leadership in particular. However, I make the point that power relations and positioning are integral to the practice of distributed leadership and the leadership of teachers and therefore include a section which discusses these issues. Furthermore, within a distributed practice, the nature of the relationships and the interactions between people is of importance and I introduce the

concepts of monologic and dialogic space as well as voice and silencing to help describe the nature of the relating.

9.2. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

I suggested in section 3.2.3 of this thesis that viewing school leadership as a practice offers a valuable explanatory framing for researchers working in the field of education leadership. Following Spillane and his colleagues (2004, 2006), I conceptualised distributed leadership in terms of a leader-plus aspect and a practice aspect which constitutes multiple leaders in a school (either leading formally or informally) who interact with followers in particular situations during the practice of leadership. Thus the practice, which is inclusive of teachers as leaders, is social in nature and involves educators working together in communities as they go about their work.

In the sub-sections sections that follow, I explore the practice of education leadership from a social and distributed perspective. It is my contention that this social and distributed leadership practice, which is inclusive of the leadership of teachers, should be located within schools which are conceptualised as communities. However, in conceptualising ‘schools *as* communities’, we need to recognise that they are ‘communities of difference’ because they are increasingly being made up of different cultures, different races as well as different ethnic and religious groups, as is currently the case in South Africa. Acknowledging and working with the notion of difference within communities is essential in the practice of leadership because it presents the opportunity for new learning and the possibility of transformation in our schooling system.

9.2.1. A social and distributed practice

Let me begin this section by taking the reader back to the fourth chronicle¹⁵⁰ in my synthesis study. In this chronicle I argued that “*a new conceptual framework for understanding school leadership in the South African context is needed*” (Chronicle 4, p. 45)¹⁵¹. This was because I was persuaded that the “*view of leadership as headship*” (Chronicle 1, p. 512)¹⁵², outlined in Chapter Two of this thesis, was limited in its potential to transform South African schools into effective places of teaching and learning because it excluded the leadership potential of teachers. My thinking was in line with those researchers (for example Gibb, 1954; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004; Spillane *et al*, 2004; Gunter, 2005) who contend that orthodox ways of thinking about leadership are outdated and should be replaced with a more expansive understanding of leadership.

The new framework I was suggesting was a conceptualisation of education leadership as a shared activity rather than an individual (or positional) endeavour. I envisaged a form of leadership which involved a range of people interacting with and relating to one another in the pursuit of improved teaching and learning and in the best interests of their learners. My conceptualisation of leadership was not a lot different from the African concept of *ubuntu* which centres on “the acute consciousness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of human beings” (Ramphele, 2008, p. 117). In line with this thinking, I suggested in the fifth chronicle that leadership should be conceptualised as a process which is shared and which “*involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school*” (p. 85 - 86)¹⁵³. In a similar vein, I argued in the eighth chronicle that leadership is “*about accessing the reservoir of strengths of the people in the organisation and using these appropriately in a journey of relating, learning, leading and growing*” (p. 185)¹⁵⁴. Thus, this concept of leadership through accessing

¹⁵⁰ Section 7.2, pp. 215 - 227

¹⁵¹ Section 7.2, p. 215

¹⁵² Section 5.2, p. 105

¹⁵³ Section 5.3, p. 126 - 127

¹⁵⁴ Section 7.3, p. 232

the latent potential in the organisation opens up the space for teacher leadership. And, as I explained in the sixth chronicle, “*teacher leadership offers a radical departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership because it deconstructs the notion of leadership in relation to position in the organisation*” (p. 290)¹⁵⁵. By deconstructing the notion of leadership in relation to position, I am neither suggesting that the leadership of the principal becomes redundant nor am I implying that teacher leadership replaces principal leadership. On the contrary, I am arguing for multiple leaders (teachers and SMT members) operating at a range of levels in the school, interacting and leading at different times and for different purposes but all with the ultimate goal of improved teaching and learning. The role of principals becomes that of “*leaders of leaders*” (Chronicle 4, p. 54)¹⁵⁶ within the hierarchical organisation of schools and I discuss this in more detail in section 10.4.3 of this thesis. The leadership I am calling for from these multiple leaders is primarily about “*agency, change and movement and the creation of productive relationships and dialogic spaces*” (Chronicle 3, p. 12)¹⁵⁷ in the pursuit of ongoing learning and the achievement of organisational goals as we work towards socially just schools.

However, a conceptualisation of education leadership as a shared activity was insufficient as a means to frame teacher leadership in our South African context. To this end I argued further (in all eight chronicles) that a distributed leadership framing was best suited to a South African understanding of teacher leadership, and particularly a conception of distributed leadership which centres on a group-plus aspect and a practice aspect (Spillane *et al*, 2004; Spillane, 2006). To remind the reader, in this conceptualisation of distributed leadership, the practice of leadership is foregrounded and “constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations” (Spillane, 2006, p.26). In line with this thinking, I motivated in the fourth chronicle that education leadership should be “*understood as a practice, a shared activity in which all educators (SMT members and teachers) can participate*” (p.54)¹⁵⁸. Thus the interactions between the people in the practice are pivotal to our understanding of leadership and teacher leadership. However, while this conceptualisation of distributed leadership as social practice offers a broad vision of

¹⁵⁵ Section 5.4, p. 150

¹⁵⁶ Section 7.2, p. 224

¹⁵⁷ Section 6.3, p. 209

¹⁵⁸ Section 7.2, p. 224

how more participatory and interactive forms of leadership can be realised, it is limited in that it does not enable a detailed analysis. In an endeavour to reach a more fine-grained analysis of teacher leadership within the practice of distributed leadership, I turned to the work of Wenger (1998) and his conceptualisation of ‘communities of practice’ as a theory of learning. I found that this theory of learning offered me a useful descriptive tool which I adopted in my study.

9.2.2. Exploring the practice of leadership within ‘schools *as* communities’

In attempting to unpack the notion of practice further, Wenger’s ‘communities of practice’ theory of learning afforded me further insight which I employed particularly in the fourth chronicle in my study. Communities of practice, Wenger (1998) maintains, are a fact of social life. Using the term normatively, Wenger suggests that these communities are social in nature and are important places of negotiation, learning, meaning and identity; they are about “knowing, but also about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity, and altogether being human” (1998, p. 134). In the context of education, Shields (2003) signals that there is often confusion around the use of the term ‘community’ because it is used in two fundamentally different ways. She explains that the first meaning of the term applies to “schools *in* community” (Shields, 2003, p. 37) and focuses on the school’s relationships with parents, education officials and partners in its wider community. The second meaning of the term, and the focus of this thesis, refers to “schools *as* communities” and focuses on the many communities that develop within the school and involve “the creation of a sense of belonging, comfort, friendship, and security within the classroom or school building itself” (Shields, 2003, p. 37).

Within the “schools *as* communities” frame, the communities that develop are professional in nature and can be found where teachers “participate in decision-making, have a shared sense of purpose, engage in collaborative work and accept joint responsibility for the outcomes of their work” (Harris, 2003, p. 321). Learning takes place within these communities as the participation of people in the practice increases (Lave and Wenger, 1999). With this conceptualisation in mind, I asserted that within the school “*the practice of leadership must be characterised by learning as social*

participation through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)¹⁵⁹. Like Ranson (2000), I am of the view that through this social and interactive process of leaders with followers in a community, the agency of the self is able to unfold and find its identity. Furthermore, through the negotiation of a shared understanding with community members, leaders (whether SMT members or teachers) learn “not only to value others but to create the communities in which mutuality and thus the conditions for learning can flourish” (Ranson, 2000, p. 274).

In extending the discussion further, Wenger makes the point that there are many different types of communities, some of which are “sometimes so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons are also quite familiar” (1998, p.7). Based on this understanding of a community of practice, it follows that teachers can belong to many different communities of practice at different times in their professional careers and it is within these professional communities, as can be seen from the fifth chronicle, that teacher leaders may be found. Examples of more formal communities which emerged in my study included *grade or learning area committees* (chronicles 1, 2 and 6)¹⁶⁰, *extra-curricular committees* (chronicle 2)¹⁶¹, *phase meetings* (chronicle 5)¹⁶², *school tasks teams* (chronicle 1), *school committees* (chronicles 1, 5, 6 and 7)¹⁶³ as well as *teacher professional development teams* (chronicle 7)¹⁶⁴. Examples of more informal communities included “*informal group discussions*” (chronicle 5)¹⁶⁵ as well as “*informal in-service education*” (chronicle 5)¹⁶⁶.

It stands to reason then that these different types of communities include a range of different practices and it is through the social participation in these practices that learning will occur and leadership will emerge. However, it is important to note that social participation is a process, over time, of “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these

¹⁵⁹ Section 7.2, p. 222

¹⁶⁰ Sections 5.2, 6.2 and 5.4

¹⁶¹ Section 6.2

¹⁶² Section 5.3

¹⁶³ Sections 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5

¹⁶⁴ Section 5.5

¹⁶⁵ Section 5.3

¹⁶⁶ Section 5.3

communities” (Wenger, 1998, p.4). It follows then that these communities develop histories (Wenger, 1998; Morrow, 2007) as teachers construct their identities and participate in collaborative and mutually beneficial ways with colleagues over time. These functioning communities pave the way for the emergence of teacher leadership from “practitioners who are regarded as having achieved excellence in the practice, and even some who – through their excellence - revealed new ways of participating in the practice” (Morrow, 2007, p. 132). In other words, as Jackson argues, these “professional learning communities are distributed leadership communities” (2003, p.xiii).

9.2.3. Conceptualising ‘communities of practice’ as ‘communities of difference’

However, one of the criticisms of conceptualising schools as communities is that they do not embrace difference and instead “take a relatively homogenous notion of community, assuming a fixed core of norms, belief, and values, into which to socialise others” (Shields, 2003, p. 40). Wenger’s conceptualisation of community, for example, tends to adopt a normative and homogenous approach to the term and, in so doing, “does not offer sufficient insights into understanding inequalities and disadvantage that may be peculiar to individuals within a community” (Maistry, 2008, p. 143). While Wenger does not adequately acknowledge the importance of difference in community and instead assumes a high degree of commonality, he does warn that communities of practice should not be romanticized because they also have the potential to “reproduce counterproductive patterns, injustices, prejudices, racism, sexism, and abuses of all kinds” (1998, p. 132).

In contrast, Ranson (2000) emphasises strongly the importance of difference in communities and argues that communities of difference are critical in the postmodern world. Globally, communities are increasingly being made up of different cultures, different races as well as different ethnic and religious groups, as is the case in South Africa. As such, in the context of South Africa with its racially diverse society coupled with its history of inequality and disadvantage, I am convinced that communities of practice within schools can only be conceptualised as ‘communities

of difference'. In line with this thinking and in the context of my study, I indicated in the eighth chronicle that "*schools are not homogenous entities so the hidden, different and uncomfortable aspects of school life must be allowed to emerge and be given voice*" (p. 188)¹⁶⁷. Accordingly, it is the task of school leaders, whether they are teachers or SMT members, to acknowledge that the communities of practice that exist in their schools are, in all likelihood, communities of difference.

Working from this premise, school leaders then need to create the space within the practice to facilitate the emergence of these different voices in the pursuit of the goal of effective teaching and learning. School leaders need to acknowledge and value the diversity that exists within their schools and channel it appropriately in the best interests of the school. This requires the nurturing of creative communities with differing purposes which are dependent on the unique attributes which its members bring. Acknowledging and working with the notion of difference, I believe, presents the chance of new learning and change and, as such, should not be something that is feared. This requires that "*as educational leaders we have to question our taken-for-granted assumptions about sameness and difference; be honest about who we exclude and who we include; and develop the courage to lead and learn differently*" (Chronicle 8, p. 187)¹⁶⁸. Thus, I contend that the challenge for school leaders is to make "conscious, deliberate use of differences in social class, gender, age, ability, race, and interests as resources for learning" (Barth, 1990, p. 168). However, I concede that when we acknowledge difference and become conscious of issues of inclusion and exclusion, we cannot escape issues of power, and it is to a discussion on distributed leadership and its relationship to power that I now turn.

¹⁶⁷ Section 7.3, p. 235

¹⁶⁸ Section 7.3, p. 234

9.3. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS POWERFUL PRACTICE

In this section I explore the concept of power within a distributed leadership practice and demonstrate how questions of power are fundamental to issues of education leadership and therefore to teacher leadership. As I mentioned in Chapter Three of this thesis, we cannot talk about education leadership without talking about issues of power. Power is visible in the way people are positioned in the practice of leadership, where people are positioned and who does the positioning. I use Bourdieu's theory of power (1977) and particularly his concept of 'habitus' (1993) in this section to describe and explain the different power relations in the practice of leadership in this thesis. I then look specifically at the school management team (SMT) as a democratic structure in schools and explore how the SMTs in my study exploited their power as they controlled the positioning of people in their schools. Finally, I turn to the concepts of 'apprenticeship' and 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to further illustrate the nature of the positioning and the potential for movement within the practice of leadership in my study. I conclude the section by referring to the concept of 'illegitimate peripheral participation', a term I generated in my study in direct response to the illicit positioning of people in the practice of leadership.

9.3.1. Power, positioning and habitus in the practice of school leadership

As alluded to in the previous section, issues of inclusion and exclusion are central to the notion of difference within communities and this positioning of people within these distributed communities immediately raises the question of power; where the power lies and who holds the power. This is where Wenger's theory of practice falters because, as Gunter (2005) explains, it does not fully explore the power relations in the community and the structures that shape our identity and make us who we are. In other words, the theory offers a lens through which to *describe* practice but it does not offer a tool to *explain* practice. In contrast, Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice enables us to describe *and* explain practice through the exploration of power relations in communities or what he calls 'fields'. Bourdieu argues that in every field "we shall

find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked at for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out the competition” (1993, p. 72). It follows that, in order for the field to function, there have to be “stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72 – author’s emphasis).

Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ is similar in meaning to Wenger’s concept of ‘identity’ and the value of the concept of ‘habitus’ is that it enables us to explain how and why people, through the “interplay of agency and structure” (Gunter, 2005, p. 82), either position themselves or are positioned in a field. ‘Habitus’, as the word implies, “is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86). The following excerpt from the first chronicle offers an apt description of habitus and highlights the embedded nature of the concept as well as the sense of security which the concept brings: “*Educators being in a specific mould, a kind of comfort zone in which they feel themselves secured, might be difficult to be compelled to other ways of thinking. The reason for this, I would say, is that things have always been working for them thus far, so why bother?*” (Chronicle 1, p. 527)¹⁶⁹. Habitus is acquired through “implicit or explicit learning” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 76) and is formed

via a process of inculcation which begins at birth. One develops distinctive class, culture-based and engendered ways of ‘seeing’, ‘being’, ‘occupying space’ and ‘participating in history’. The concept of habitus, then, serves to connect the biologic being with the social world via physical and psychic embodiment, a structured and structuring durable, yet flexible, disposition (Carrington and Luke, 1997, p. 101).

¹⁶⁹ Section 5.2, p. 120

To summarise then, if we regard a school as a site within the field of education leadership in which people, through habitus, are positioning and being positioned, then it becomes apparent that “educational leadership meets the issue of power head on” (Gunter, 2005, p. 45). Therefore, I am persuaded that we cannot talk about leadership, and neither can we talk about distributed leadership nor teacher leadership, if we do not talk about issues of power. It follows then that we have no option but to see community as “an arena of struggle and dialogue over purposes” as people within these communities “are positioning and being positioned in particular ways” (Gunter, 2005, p. 107). This requires that the field of education leadership be re-conceptualised as an investment in, or competition for capital. This capital includes, but is not limited to “*the leadership capital of the organisation*” (Chronicle 4, p. 55)¹⁷⁰ as well as the “social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers” (Day and Harris, 2002, p. 960).

I now move on to look at the SMT as a case in point in relation to issues of power in my study. In particular I was interested to see how the SMT, the formal leaders in the schools, positioned both themselves and others within the practice of leadership. I wanted to ascertain whether they held on to their power at all cost or whether they distributed power and authority in certain situations where it was prudent to do so.

9.3.2. SMT positioning in the practice of leadership

In this section I explore the positioning of people in the practice of leadership in the study. In many instances there was little distribution of leadership with power concentrated in the hands of the principal or SMT in the centre of the practice and teachers positioned on the periphery.

¹⁷⁰ Section 7.2, p. 225

9.3.2.1. Central positioning of the SMT

In the context of my study, issues of power and positioning in relation to the social practice of education leadership were pertinent. It will emerge in a more concrete form as this chapter unfolds, that in many of the schools across the chronicles in my study, the locus of power was concentrated in the centre of the practice and was exercised by the principal or, in some cases, the SMT. The institutional recognition of their credentials as members of an elite group (the SMT), together with their symbolic capital, afforded them the confidence to position themselves at the centre of the leadership practice whilst positioning teachers on the periphery. While, this positioning is in and of itself not wrong, I argue in this chapter that power should not remain solely at the centre but should be distributed within the practice of leadership in accordance with the movement of teachers from the periphery to a more central position.

However, in many instances in my study, there was little distribution of leadership (by leadership here I mean the process of fostering purposive and value based change as defined in Chapter Two of this thesis) which resulted in power remaining the domain of those in official positions of authority. Instead, where tasks were distributed, these were often more management-focused (maintaining the status quo of the current organisational arrangements of the school) or administrative in nature (the clerical and technical aspects of the work). The habitus of principals and SMT members accounted for the taken-for-granted assumption that, at the organisational level, it was their role to lead while the role of the teacher was merely to follow through with implementation. Teacher leadership, if it occurred at all, was dependent on those who held official positions in the hierarchy.

In the majority of examples across the chronicles in my study, SMTs positioned themselves in the field as the rightful leadership titleholders and laid claim to central decision-making processes essentially because of the symbolic capital acquired through position. They understood the notion of power as a 'right' (Ramphele, 2008), an entitlement to do as they wanted in the leadership practice of their schools. In the seventh chronicle, for example, it was the perception of about half of the educators

surveyed that *“members of the SMT did not distribute leadership but instead autocratically controlled the leadership process”* (p. 18)¹⁷¹. For 43,9% of the teachers surveyed, their SMT did not trust their ability to lead while some 45,3% believed their SMT did not value their opinion. Furthermore, 44,2% of teachers were of the opinion that only the SMT made important decisions. In keeping with this idea, the first chronicle in the synthesis study acknowledges the SMT as the power base in many South African schools, despite the competitive efforts of some teachers who attempted to position themselves more centrally in the leadership practice. This claim to power by the SMT was reinforced by the organisation of many South African schools which are *“still bureaucratically organised with principals who are autocratic and show negativity to teachers who attempt to take up a leading role outside the classroom”* (Chronicle 1, pp. 525 – 526)¹⁷².

At this point in South Africa’s history, we can assume that the bureaucracy of the education system and the hierarchical organisation of schools are here to stay. However, schools should not have to put up with autocratic principals (and SMT members) who ‘show negativity to teachers’. This, I believe, can and should be disputed. School leaders, who are autocratic and merely instruct their followers about what they are to do, need to be challenged to find alternate and more creative ways to lead and manage their schools. However, this does not mean that SMTs have to relinquish all their power. On the contrary, as an SMT member in the sixth chronicle explained, *“as management we need to make certain decisions ourselves and it should be implemented by educators”* (p. 296)¹⁷³. Thus SMT members, by virtue of their official appointments to management positions, have a legal responsibility to lead and manage their schools effectively. Yet, the key challenge for these SMT members relates to the *“inappropriate nature of many of the existing management systems, processes and structures”* (Department of Education, 1996, p. 25) in their schools. The call is now for school managers to work in more *“democratic and participative ways to build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery”* (Department of Education, 1996, p. 25). However, the data pointed to teachers positioned on the

¹⁷¹ Section 5.5, p. 179

¹⁷² Section 5.2, p. 118 - 119

¹⁷³ Section 5.4, p. 156

periphery of the leadership practice and limited teacher participation in authentic decision-making processes in many of the schools in this study.

9.3.2.2. Peripheral positioning of teachers

This positioning of teachers on the periphery of the leadership practice by principals or SMT members was often accepted by teachers without question. Again, through habitus, the majority of teachers worked from the fundamental assumption that they had no right to lead and that it was also not their job to lead. They therefore chose to remain on the periphery of the practice and resisted the leadership opportunities that opened up for them because they viewed this as additional work. This traditional and limiting view of leadership is captured in the following excerpt: *“Like they have been asked to do extra and they feel it is the SMTs responsibility to lead and they are just there to do the minimum or what they’re expected to do between the four walls of their classroom”* (Chronicle 1, p. 527)¹⁷⁴.

This belief that it was the role of the SMT to lead was further confirmed in the context of the professional development initiative reported on in the fifth chronicle. The teachers from School D reported on in this fifth chronicle appeared incapacitated and unable to present the ideas from the initiative to the staff at a whole school level. One educator explained that *“it was hard for us as teachers to organise a workshop. If somebody higher up had organised it, it would have been easier”* (Chronicle 5, p. 100)¹⁷⁵. These excerpts highlight teacher passivity as a barrier to the take-up of teacher leadership and confirm the view that “teachers are reluctant to think of themselves as leaders” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 41). In other words, these teachers did not see themselves as agents of change in the transformation of their schools and instead were content, through habitus, to remain uncritical followers of the designated schools leaders. This highlights a pre-requisite for teacher leadership which is that teachers need to develop their “self-confidence to act as leaders in their schools” (Harris, 2003, p. 320). Here I use Graven’s (2004) conceptualisation of confidence which differs from the more cognitive definitions. For Graven, the concept is an

¹⁷⁴ Section 5.2, p. 120

¹⁷⁵ Section 5.3, p. 141

additional component of a teacher's way of learning and can be understood as an individual teacher's "movement from the periphery of various education related communities towards more central participation, identification and belonging within these communities" (2004, p. 208). Thus, in order for teachers to lead, they need to develop the confidence and the agency to move from the margins of the leadership practice to a more central position.

However, not only did some teachers choose to remain on the periphery of the leadership practice but some went as far as resisting the leadership initiatives of their teacher colleagues resulting in these potential teacher leaders being positioned on the periphery as well. This reluctance of teachers to view other teachers as leaders and support their teacher colleagues in leadership endeavours was borne out in a few of the chronicles. In the seventh chronicle, for example, this was illustrated when 20,3% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they "*often or always resisted leadership from other teachers* (p. 19)"¹⁷⁶. This resistance to leadership from colleagues resonated with the case study research of Ntuzela (2008) who found that teachers themselves blocked leadership, either by refusing to lead or by resisting leadership from other teachers. I suspect that this may well be because of the egalitarian norms of school culture which "suggest that all teachers should be equal" (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001, p. 4). Accordingly, observing a teacher who does something innovative which results in her being noticed and receiving respect, "intensifies feelings of turf protection and powerlessness in other teachers" (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 41). To conclude then it can be seen that teacher leadership is dependent on the extent to which "teachers accept the influence of colleagues who have been designated as leaders in a particular area" (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. 45).

In summary, the positioning of people in the practice of leadership tells us much about the distribution, or otherwise, of power and authority in schools. I found the idea of central versus peripheral positioning a useful construct when exploring the practice of leadership in my study in relation to issues of power. However, I do not perceive positioning as a fixed concept but understand it in terms of movement from one position to another. Developing this idea of movement between positions, I worked

¹⁷⁶ Section 5.5, p. 180

with the concepts of ‘apprenticeship’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1999) in expanding the notion of distributed leadership as people move within the practice and it is to this discussion that I now turn.

9.3.3. Apprenticeship and legitimate peripheral participation in the practice of distributed leadership

In attempting to describe and explain the distribution of power in the practice of leadership further, a range of possibilities in the movement of and interaction between the ‘newcomer’ (Bourdieu, 1993) or ‘novice’ (Wenger, 1998) and ‘the dominant agent’ (Bourdieu, 1993) or ‘full participant’ (Wenger, 1998) in the leadership practice need to be explored. To this end, I found Lave and Wenger’s (1991) expanded apprenticeship model of learning useful and I adopted their insights in the fourth chronicle in my study. In brief, their model of expanded apprenticeship broadens the traditional connotations of the concept of apprenticeship from a linear and hierarchical master/novice or mentor/mentee dyad to one of “changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 11). I believe that this expanded apprenticeship model creates an intensely relational space which is characterised by authentic interactions within, what Buber (1970, in Gehrke, 1988) calls, the ‘I-Thou’ relationship. During these interactions, the novice and the full participant in the leadership practice each present themselves as authentically as possible in an attempt to truly understand each other and work together. This authentic and dialogic interaction, Gehrke (1988) reminds us, is a mutually driven process in which both parties are enhanced and which results in the confirmation of each other’s potential.

Within the expanded apprenticeship model (Lave and Wenger, 1991), I found the concepts of ‘novice’ and ‘full participant’ particularly useful in describing and explaining the practice of leadership in my study, and in the fourth chronicle in particular. In this chronicle I suggested that “*in order to excavate leadership potential within a school, educators with leadership experience (whether SMT members or teachers) should lead the practice and invite newcomers to join*” (Chronicle 4, p.

52)¹⁷⁷. I explained further that “*newcomers, such as novice teachers or newly appointed SMT members, can begin their leadership journey on the periphery of the practice*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)¹⁷⁸. Thus, to enable teacher leadership in a school, I recommended that the role of the SMT be conceptualised as one which invites a teacher to “*become a participant in the practice of leadership, initially as a novice and then, over time, as a full participant in the practice*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)¹⁷⁹. This initial positioning of newcomers on the periphery of the practice constitutes ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1999) in the leadership practice. Here ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ refers to the gradual process by the newcomers of “both absorbing and being absorbed in”, as well as assembling “a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community” (Lave and Wenger, 1999, p. 22). Wenger (1998) explains that, with time and through interactions with more-experienced others, the intention is for the newcomers to become full participants or insiders in the practice of leadership. However, as I argued earlier in this chapter, the newcomer’s “entry into, and participation within, a community of practice is a dynamic power process” (Gunter, 2005, p. 83) which may also result in participation remaining peripheral or marginal, depending on “the relations of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 167).

From the above discussion, it is clear that the field of education leadership is complex and contested within an ever-changing school context. Given this dynamic terrain, a further attraction of the expanded apprenticeship model from a distributed perspective is that it allows for changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice. The SMT members, while they might begin the trajectory as novices in the practice of leadership, must over time become the full-timers or ‘old-timers’ (Wenger, 1998) in relation to the core leadership practices in a school. However, certain situations may arise requiring new leadership practices which the SMT might not be equipped for and which positions them as novices in that particular situation. In these instances, leadership might then be sought from teachers who have the necessary expertise to lead the practice. This constitutes legitimate peripheral participation on the part of the SMT in a particular leadership practice and

¹⁷⁷ Section 7.2, p. 222

¹⁷⁸ Section 7.2, p. 222

¹⁷⁹ Section 7.2, p. 222

encompasses the notion that “*everyone can to some degree be considered a newcomer as the practices within the leadership community change*” (Chronicle 4, p. 52)¹⁸⁰. This thinking is in line with the view of Graven who acknowledges that “indeed one cannot know everything but one can become a life-long learner within the profession” (2004, p. 205). To this end, Graven uses the phrase ‘level of’ as a qualifier of ‘mastery’ to indicate that her use of the term ‘mastery’ is primarily as an “ongoing process, involving both being and becoming, that at any point in time can be experienced, by teachers, as a product of learning” (2004, p. 206).

In much the same way, I contend that all educators (SMT members and teachers) should consider themselves life-long learners in the practice of school leadership as they experience a level of mastery in relation to a particular situation. In some situations, their participation may be as novices while in other situations they may have the necessary confidence to participate as full-timers in the practice. In other words, as I explained in the fourth chronicle, “*the leadership of the practice will rotate depending on the issue at hand and the strengths and experience of the practitioners in the community to deal with the issue*” (p. 52)¹⁸¹. It stands to reason then that education leadership, conceptualised as a process of life-long learning which involves ‘levels of mastery’ depending on the situation at hand, requires “*a form of emotional maturity*” (Chronicle 4, p. 54)¹⁸² on the part of educators and especially SMT members as the ‘leaders of leaders’ in a school. Here, by ‘emotional maturity’, I mean the “insight to know when you do not know, the confidence to admit this, and the ability to access the necessary information (or experience) and support from the broader professional community” (Graven, 2004, p. 207). This requires that the leadership practice be conceptualised as a space of learning which supports both teachers and SMT members as leaders as they develop “*the courage to take the initiative*” (Chronicle 1, p. 522)¹⁸³, try out new ideas, make mistakes and develop professionally in the best interests of the school.

¹⁸⁰ Section 7.2, p. 222

¹⁸¹ Section 7.2, p. 222

¹⁸² Section 7.2, p. 224

¹⁸³ Section 5.2, p. 115

However, I warned in the fourth chronicle that SMT members cannot remain as novices on the periphery of school leadership practices for too long. As official school leaders, they are required to become full-timers in core practices. Their trajectory (Wenger, 1998) over time in the practice of leadership must be one from the periphery to the centre. Attempts by SMT members to remain permanently as peripheral members in the practice of leadership, regardless of the situation, constitutes what I termed “*illegitimate peripheral participation*” (Chronicle 4, p. 53)¹⁸⁴ in the practice. To illustrate this point, the fourth chronicle describes how the lack of commitment to and investment in the life of the school together with the geographical distances between home and school served to “*separate commuting SMT members from the local community who were more present and grounded in the life of the school*” (pp. 52 – 53)¹⁸⁵. By positioning themselves both literally and figuratively on the periphery of the school community, these SMT members “*could not bridge the ‘insider-outsider’ gap and were unable to participate fully in the leadership practices*” (Chronicle 4, p. 53)¹⁸⁶. This resulted in ‘illegitimate peripheral participation’ in the practice of leadership. In particular, the literal geographical distances between the homes of SMT members and the school resulted in “*a loss of time due to daily travel*” ..., “*absenteeism and ill health*” ...as well as “*high staff turnover*” (Chronicle 4, p. 50)¹⁸⁷. The consequence of these challenges was that SMT members remained on the periphery of the core leadership practices and were unable to take up their rightful role as ‘leaders of leaders’ in their schools. This accounted for the lack of ‘dialogic space’ reported on in the third and fourth chronicles, and it is to this concept that I now shift the focus.

¹⁸⁴ Section 7.2, p. 223

¹⁸⁵ Section 7.2, p. 222 - 223

¹⁸⁶ Section 7.2, p. 223

¹⁸⁷ Section 7.2, p. 220

9.4. DIALOGIC SPACE AND VOICE WITHIN THE PRACTICE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Becoming a participant in the practice of leadership, whether as a teacher or an SMT member, implies finding one's voice, developing one's identity and constituting oneself as an agent of change in the world of the school. In this section I introduce the notion of 'dialogic space' (Rule, 2004) and motivate its value as a conceptual tool in the practice of school leadership. I argue that the practice of leadership should constitute a spacious and safe space which is characterised by dialogue in which educators can find their voice, speak out and transform their schools into effective places of teaching and learning. However, in many of the schools in my study, a dialogic space did not exist in the practice of leadership. Instead what prevailed was what I termed, a 'monologic space', a concept which I also discuss in this chapter. Then, particularly in response to my second research question, this section explores the practice of leadership in relation to two South African scenarios and uses the concepts of dialogic and monologic space as well as voice and silencing to describe and explain the impact of context on the take-up of teacher leadership in schools. The first scenario involves the practice of leadership in relation to the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in schools while the second scenario comments on gender and school leadership, particularly in the context of rurality.

9.4.1. An exploration of the term 'dialogic space'

Working within a theoretical framing of distributed leadership, I argued in the third chronicle that "*the concept of dialogic space is a useful conceptual tool to recognise, describe and apply to the process of education leadership*" (p. 5)¹⁸⁸. I came upon the concept in the work of Rule (2004) who, in the context of adult learning, integrates 'dialogue', 'space' and 'place' into the conceptual tool he calls 'dialogic space'. Very briefly, 'space', as distinct from 'place', is an abstract concept that implies movement and freedom where "one has the power and enough room in which to act" (Tuan, 1977, p. 52). 'Place', on the other hand, "*refers to the concrete location where one*

¹⁸⁸ Section 6.3, p. 202

can pause and dwell” (Chronicle 4, p. 46)¹⁸⁹. And, as I claimed in the third chronicle based on my reading of Tuan (1977), “*the ideas of space and place require each other for definition*” (Chronicle 3, p. 5)¹⁹⁰ because “from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa” (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). ‘Dialogue’, from the Greek word *dialogos*, means ‘conversation’ or ‘discourse’ (Lefebvre, 1991; Rule, 2004). The term implies “*a form of speech between two or more people where the people who take part in the dialogue are individual beings who are separate from each other but who come together through the conversation*” (Chronicle 3, p. 4)¹⁹¹. Rule describes dialogue as

an unfolding process, a search or quest for knowledge and understanding usually through the medium of spoken language, but not excluding written and visual codes, involving partners who are committed to the quest. Thus dialogue assumes relationship and is impossible without it (2004, p. 320).

‘Dialogic space’ then, is “*a space which can be physical (or virtual), intellectual, social or ideological but which is always characterised by dialogue*” (Chronicle 4, p. 47)¹⁹². It is a space in which educators (teachers and SMT members) can find their voice and become agents in the practice of leadership. And, as Ranson explains, “to find a voice is to find an identity and the possibility of agency in the world” (2000, p. 268). Rule (2004) calls for a dialogic space that encompasses movement and freedom, a type of ‘spaciousness’ which is closely associated with the sense of being free. Thus freedom implies space and it means “having the power and enough room in which to act” (Tuan, 1977, p. 52). It also means learning to talk which, according to Ranson (2000, p. 268), means learning to:

- listen as well as express and communicate beliefs, feelings and claims;
- enter into a conversation with others which leads to developing understanding and reflection in contexts of different views;
- discriminate and form judgements; choose and decide for oneself and with others;
- imagine and create a possible future.

¹⁸⁹ Section 7.2, p. 216

¹⁹⁰ Section 6.3, p. 202

¹⁹¹ Section 6.3, p. 201

¹⁹² Section 7.2, p. 217

Building on the work of Rule (2004), I argued in my study that for authentic leadership to occur within communities of practice in schools, there is a critical need “to reconstruct existing spaces or develop new spaces which are safe and spacious and which allow for constant and transparent dialogue amongst all the people involved if real and lasting change is going to happen” (Chronicle 3, p. 14)¹⁹³. These dialogic spaces must be conceptualised as spaces of equality, non-hierarchy, learning and empowerment which “provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds” (Rule, 2004, p. 326). With the reconstruction of spaces as dialogic, the eighth chronicle highlights the need to “give voice to those marginalised from the leadership process” (p. 188)¹⁹⁴. Here the marginalised might include a range of stakeholders including teachers, learners, parents and, at times, SMT members. In an attempt to give voice to the marginalised, the first chronicle suggests that “courage, risk taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm” (p. 529)¹⁹⁵ are needed so that “teachers are able to reclaim their voices” (p. 528)¹⁹⁶ within a “culture of transparency and mutual learning” (p. 529)¹⁹⁷. More particularly, the second chronicle urges teachers, and specifically rural women teachers, to “find their voice, speak out, and support each other in transforming community views on women and leadership” (p. 56)¹⁹⁸.

The possibility of the creation of dialogic spaces in which teachers can claim their voice is critical, I argue, to the development of teacher leadership in South African schools. Without the creation of safe spaces for teachers to dialogue about their teaching, its challenges and its possibilities, the transformation of our schools into effective places of teaching and learning is unlikely. In the sub-section that follows, I explore the practice of school leadership in relation to the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa and use the concept of monologic space to describe and explain the negative impact of the HIV/AIDS context on the take-up of teacher leadership in schools.

¹⁹³ Section 6.3, p. 211

¹⁹⁴ Section 7.3, p. 235

¹⁹⁵ Section 5.2, p. 122

¹⁹⁶ Section 5.2, p. 121

¹⁹⁷ Section 5.2, p. 122

¹⁹⁸ Section 6.2, p. 198

9.4.2. The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on leadership practice: monologic spaces and paralysed leadership

I assert that dialogic space is a necessary condition in the practice of school leadership and it is central to the development of teacher leadership. However, I acknowledged in the third chronicle that *“the antithetical concept of monologic space commonly prevails in South African schools”* (p. 7)¹⁹⁹. The incidence of monologic space in the practice of leadership is problematic because monologic spaces operate in direct contrast to dialogic spaces and are characterised by an absence of community, a lack of authentic dialogue together with a lack of trust and transparency. They are spaces of *“inequality, insecurity and fear”* (Chronicle 3, p. 11)²⁰⁰ where *“the powerful dominate and deny others the right to speak”* (p. 7)²⁰¹. Furthermore, while monologic spaces can emerge anywhere in a school community, the third chronicle found that it is *“most likely to emerge in a regime of autocratic leadership and hierarchical school organisation”* (p. 7)²⁰². The point is further made in the sixth chronicle, where the SMTs *“paid lip-service to teacher participation and dialogue in decision-making, indicating a ‘lack of valuing’ of teacher voice and authentic dialogue space in the school”* (p. 298)²⁰³.

In the third and fourth chronicles of my study, I worked with the tools of monologic and dialogic space in relation to education leadership (and teacher leadership) in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in schools in a small country town in KwaZulu-Natal. In relation to the practice of leadership in the context of HIV/AIDS, attempts to lead remained at the level of the inanimate, or what Wenger (1998) terms the artifacts of the practice. These artifacts included policy documents and curriculum outlines; what Lefebvre (1991) refers to as the ‘representations of space’. For example, the fourth chronicle describes how the schools researched in this country town *“formally covered HIV/AIDS in the Life Orientation curriculum”* (p. 49)²⁰⁴. Furthermore, most of the schools had in place *“their own HIV/AIDS policies and were able to identify*

¹⁹⁹ Section 6.3, p. 204

²⁰⁰ Section 6.3, p. 208

²⁰¹ Section 6.3, p. 204

²⁰² Section 6.3, p. 204

²⁰³ Section 5.4, p. 158

²⁰⁴ Section 7.2, p. 219

staff members responsible for the co-ordination of HIV/AIDS programmes” (p. 49)²⁰⁵. However, there was a disjuncture between these ‘representations of space’ and the ‘representational spaces’ (Lefebvre, 1991), i.e. the “*real, lived spaces of daily existence*” (Chronicle 3, p. 10)²⁰⁶. This is in keeping with the view of Argyris and Schon who use the terms ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories-in-use’ in a similar way to Lefebvre’s use of ‘representations of space’ and the ‘representational spaces’ and they suggest the possibility of “incongruities between espoused theories and theories-in-use” (1974, p. 174). The differences between the espoused theories and the ‘theories-in-use’ that guide daily practice, Spillane *et al* suggest, can be attributed to the fact that “organisational policies can reflect ideal or desired tasks rather than what people actually do” (2004, p. 14). I now want to reflect on what was practiced in the lived space of daily practice.

The lived space of practice in schools in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in my study was best described as a ‘haunted space’ (Ramphele, 2008). This haunted space was characterised by the “*theme of silence*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)²⁰⁷ and the fourth chronicle describes how “*a culture of silence around HIV/AIDS existed; both in the fractured home places and the place of the school*” (p. 49)²⁰⁸. This culture of silence in the haunted space of HIV/AIDS prevented authentic leadership and teacher leadership from emerging because “*instead of dialogic spaces of trust, caring, and inclusion which encouraged critical reflection and action, a form of monologic space prevailed*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)²⁰⁹. This resulted in “*a lack of voice on the part of the educators and the learners and by disengagement from authentic dialogue about the realities of living and coping with HIV/AIDS*” (Chronicle 4, p. 49)²¹⁰. It became clear that the SMT members, the formal leaders in the place of the school, were not actually leading in relation to issues of HIV/AIDS. They seemed unwilling (or unable) to create a sufficiently safe space in which to talk about HIV/AIDS and demonstrated “*a paralysis in respect of authentic dialogue and leadership*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)²¹¹. In relation to the pandemic, they were “*not creating safe and secure places for people to*

²⁰⁵ Section 7.2, p. 219

²⁰⁶ Section 6.3, p. 207

²⁰⁷ Section 6.3, p. 210

²⁰⁸ Section 7.2, p. 219

²⁰⁹ Section 6.3, p. 210

²¹⁰ Section 7.2, p. 219

²¹¹ Section 6.3, p. 210

connect with each other and learn together” and neither were they “*setting new directions and gathering information through dialogue*” (Chronicle 4, p. 51)²¹². They seemed “*unwilling to break the silence around HIV/AIDS for fear of the stigma attached to it*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)²¹³ and instead attended to the more “*superficial and technical interventions (in relation to HIV/AIDS) in response to bureaucratic directives from the DoE*” (Chronicle 4, p. 51)²¹⁴.

This culture of silence which perpetuated the incongruities between the espoused theories and the ‘theories-in-use’ in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in schools is a complex phenomenon which does not have a simple explanation. In an attempt to explore this culture of silence, one has to take cognizance of the interconnectedness and locatedness of the individual in society. At the outset, HIV/AIDS is an extremely individual and private issue. However, it is not only a private issue but it impacts on societies and “raises questions that societies worldwide are reticent about: sexuality, sexual orientation, sexual mores, personal and cultural practices” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 227). Furthermore, in developing countries such as South Africa, the problem is compounded by the high levels of poverty, illiteracy and deep-rooted sexism which make its citizens extremely susceptible to the virus. In particular, the levels of illiteracy and the various cultural practices have contributed to the “*mythicising of reality*” (Chronicle 3, p. 12)²¹⁵ in relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the unconscious “*marginalisation of those people with the disease; an ‘us-them’ dichotomy*” (p.11)²¹⁶.

Thus the call from the fourth chronicle is for the SMT, as the ‘leaders of leaders’, to “*invite and convince teachers, learners and parents to talk more freely about social and personal issues that are experienced in ways which are grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice*” (p. 54)²¹⁷. More specifically in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the third chronicle calls for the reconstruction of spaces in which leaders (including teacher leaders) can “*speak out, name, and demystify the disease and invite authentic dialogue in an open space of*

²¹² Section 7.2, p. 221

²¹³ Section 6.3, p. 210

²¹⁴ Section 7.2, p. 221

²¹⁵ Section 6.3, p. 209

²¹⁶ Section 6.3, p. 208

²¹⁷ Section 7.2, p. 224

trust and non-judgement” (p. 14)²¹⁸. In other words, it calls for the transformation of the haunted spaces of HIV/AIDS through the removal of the monologic spaces and the disbanding of “the school’s ‘egg-carton’ structure” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 27). These transformed spaces require a reconstruction which is characterised by participation, collegial interaction and authentic dialogue in contexts which are safe, spacious and mutually beneficial. It is from within these safe spaces, I argue, that teachers can claim their voice and take-up their leadership as they transform our South African schools into effective places of teaching and learning. With this in mind, the sub-section that follows explores a second scenario which comments on gender and the practice of school leadership, particularly in the context of rurality.

9.4.3. The impact of issues of gender on leadership practice in the context of rurality: positioning, voice and silencing

In response to the second research question, the previous sub-section argued that the context of HIV/AIDS hinders the take-up of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools. In this sub-section I offer an additional response to the second question as I explore the practice of school leadership in relation to issues of gender, particularly in the context of rurality. Here I use the constructs of ‘voice’ and ‘silencing’ to describe and explain the impact of gender and sexism on the take-up of teacher leadership in the rural school context. But before I begin, let me make the obvious point that issues of HIV/AIDS and issues of gender cannot simply be separated out. As societal issues, they intersect at a number of levels and so to separate them out, as I have done in this chapter, is artificial. We know, for example, that “entrenched sexism in our society adds fuel to the HIV/AIDS fire” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 239). However, because of the independent nature of the chronicles and for the purposes of my argument, I have no alternative in a thesis such as this but to present these deeply interconnected issues as separate sub-sections. Unfortunately this runs counter to the logic of connectivity which is central to the thesis.

²¹⁸ Section 6.3, p. 211

In an earlier section of this chapter, I explained how the positioning of people in the practice of leadership tells us much about the distribution, or otherwise, of power and authority in schools. Implicit in this statement are issues of voice and silencing. Let me explain what I mean. The positioning of people in the practice of leadership tells us who has the voice to speak and who is silenced. In general, people at the centre of the leadership practice have developed a relatively strong voice whilst those on the periphery or the margins of the practice have a weaker voice. It is then up to people, wherever they are positioned, how they choose to use their voice and how they choose to interact with the voices of others. As Bourdieu notes, “one of the most effective ways a group has of reducing people to silence is by excluding them from the positions from which one can speak” (1993, p. 92).

The second chronicle in my study offered a good illustration of the silencing of women teachers by excluding them from positions within the practice of leadership from which they could speak. It explores the age-old issue of gender and leadership, particularly in the context of rurality, in South African mainstream schools. In relation to this issue, Magwaza (2001) suggests that many rural communities in South Africa remain largely patriarchal while Ramphele alerts us to the fact that “all South African cultures- black and white – have strong sexist roots” (2008, p. 239). Furthermore, Ramphele contends that “male dominance is still a fact of life at all levels” (2008, p. 239). In line with this thinking, the first chronicle in my study describes how “*in KwaZulu-Natal, both the Xhosa and Zulu cultures are extremely traditional and patriarchal with power being vested in the position of the male*” (p. 526)²¹⁹. Here patriarchy is understood as “the male hierarchical ordering of society, preserved through marriage and the family via the sexual division of labour” (Clarricoates, 1980 in Ball, 2004, p. 7). This division of labour between the sexes, Bourdieu argues, “gives politics to the man, just as it gives him the outside, the public arena, paid work outside the home, etc., whereas it assigns woman to the domestic interior, unrecognised work, and also psychology, feeling, the reading of novels, and so on” (1993, p. 161). This division of labour recognises the man as the leader in the public arena whilst also wielding control over the woman in the home.

²¹⁹ Section 5.2, p. 119

Schools are institutions within the public arena and, as such, they are, in patriarchal terms, the sphere of influence of the man. Similarly, school principalship has traditionally, in patriarchal societies, been cast as the realm of men. This view was confirmed in the context of the second chronicle in my study where the myth was perpetuated: “*effective education leadership is the domain of the man*” (Chronicle 2, p. 48)²²⁰. As a consequence of this myth, leadership positions in many rural schools, where possible, are filled by male applicants who are authorised to speak on behalf of the field. Through habitus, men have the confidence to speak and, in so doing, claim their leadership position. This was illustrated in the second chronicle during a subject meeting in a rural school where a male teacher claimed: “*I will be head of the subject. You know I am supposed to be head*” (p. 48)²²¹.

In direct contrast, the positioning of women in leadership positions, in the context of rurality, is the exception rather than the norm. Because women are not authorised to speak on issues of leadership, they “*have very little credibility as leaders*” (Chronicle 2, p. 47)²²² and have to work “*twice as hard*” (p. 49)²²³ as their male counterparts to earn the respect of their communities. However, it is important to emphasise at this juncture that “*men are not the only group responsible for the masculine portrayal of leadership*” (Chronicle 8, p. 182)²²⁴. I asserted in the second chronicle that “*patriarchy cannot only be understood simply in terms of coercion by one group (men) of another (women)*” (p. 50)²²⁵. Instead, as Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002) suggest, women are complicit in their own gender domination by misrecognising the symbolic violence to which they are subjected. Bourdieu explains this in the following way: “those who disqualify themselves in a sense collaborate in their own disqualification which is tacitly recognised as legitimate by those who are its victims” (1993, p. 162).

This was illustrated in the second chronicle when a teacher explained her response to a male teacher’s claiming of the leadership position: “*You just look at that person and*

²²⁰ Section 6.2, p. 190

²²¹ Section 6.2, p. 190

²²² Section 6.2, p. 189

²²³ Section 6.2, p. 191

²²⁴ Section 7.3, p. 229

²²⁵ Section 6.2, p. 192

you don't say anything" (pp. 48 – 49)²²⁶. Ngcongco refers to this as "women's games of powerlessness" (1983, p. 8) where women remain voiceless in the presence of men and collude in their own exclusion. This powerlessness, Ramphele argues, "makes women vulnerable in many traditional societies" (2008, p. 239). It is through habitus then that rural women teachers accept the norms and values of their community in relation to education leadership and "*do not question or challenge the existing status quo*" (Chronicle 2, p. 52)²²⁷. In this second chronicle, this reflects what Bourdieu refers to as "the phenomenon of abstention" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 159) because it was the women teachers who abstained more frequently than their male counterparts from many of the school leadership practices. Thus contexts of patriarchy in rural schools hinder the take-up of authentic teacher leadership for many women teachers. And, where women teachers are designated as leaders, their roles are often gendered. For example, it emerged in the second chronicle that particularly in rural schools "*cultural committees and catering committees are largely the domains of women while sports committees are the homes of men*" (p. 53)²²⁸. Furthermore, in meetings "*the task of writing the minutes*" (Chronicle 2, p. 53)²²⁹ was the role of women while financial matters were dealt with by men.

These examples confirm the view of Coleman that "stereotypes and theories about leadership are still predominantly male" (2003a, p. 167). However, I made the point in the eighth chronicle that this perception of educational leadership as a male domain "*is not unique to the South African context*" (p. 182)²³⁰. While gender does operate as a barrier to the take-up of leadership for many rural South African teachers, the problem does not only exist in the context of developing countries. On the contrary, Blackmore, in her feminist critique of leadership in the United States, describes how "women leaders have been alienated by the masculinist portrayal of power, leadership and organisational life which emphasises control, individualism and hierarchy" (1989, p. 123). In the United Kingdom, Hall also explains that power in organisations is associated mainly with men, based on a general cultural attitude that men make better leaders (1996, p. 137).

²²⁶ Section 6.2, p. 190 - 191

²²⁷ Section 6.2, p. 194

²²⁸ Section 6.2, p. 195

²²⁹ Section 6.2, p. 195

²³⁰ Section 7.3, p. 229

In summary, I am of the opinion that a spatial discourse (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 1991) offers a useful tool to denote contexts that impact on the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools. Particularly in this study, through a discourse of space, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the take-up of teacher leadership was explored as was the impact of gender on the take-up of teacher leadership in rural school contexts. Furthermore, I have shown how, in tandem with a spatial discourse, a discourse of voice offers a useful tool to unpack further the nature of the interactions and practice of school leadership and the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools.

9.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In response to the third research question, how we can theorise teacher leadership within the South African schooling context, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate how distributed leadership conceptualised as social practice offers an appropriate theoretical framing in which to locate research on teacher leadership. However, the chapter has extended the discussion around the theoretical framing of distributed leadership in order to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework which offers sufficient explanatory tools and concepts from which to understand the practice of teacher leadership in its varying forms. Working with Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory of learning and Bourdieu's social practice theory (1977), I argued that distributed leadership should be understood as a social and powerful practice within schools conceptualised as communities of difference. The positioning of people within this leadership practice, I asserted, was critical to an understanding the distribution of power and the legitimacy of the participation. I also suggested that the conceptual tools of dialogic and monologic space as well as voice and silencing be introduced to further describe the nature of the participation in the practice of distributed leadership.

Whilst extending the theorising of distributed leadership as social practice for the purposes of the study, this chapter also attempted a response to the second research question. In response to the question which asks what contexts support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools, this chapter explored the impact of context on the take-up of teacher leadership in schools. The first scenario involved the practice of leadership in relation to the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in schools and argued that the context of HIV/AIDS hinders the take-up of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools. The second scenario commented on gender and school leadership, particularly in the context of rurality and found that gender and sexism in schools operated as a barrier to the take-up of teacher leadership.

In the chapter that follows, I extend the discussion on distributed leadership by demonstrating how Gunter's (2005) characterisations of distributed leadership, discussed in Chapter Three, worked as a constructive analytical tool as they connect the chronicles across the varying contexts in my study.

CHAPTER TEN

ENGAGING THE CHARACTERISATIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

10.1. INTRODUCTION

As in Chapters Eight and Nine, in this tenth chapter of the thesis, I present further insights gathered as a result of the synthesis process of my work. While Chapter Nine argued that distributed leadership, conceptualised as a social and powerful practice was an appropriate theoretical framing in which to locate research on teacher leadership, the purpose of this tenth chapter is to extend the discussion by introducing Gunter's (2005) three characterisations of distributed leadership and demonstrating how these connected the chronicles in my study. Throughout Chapter Ten, as with the two previous chapters, I have used extracts from the chronicles to support the argument being developed. To indicate these extracts and to set them apart from other literature used, they are presented in italics and are referenced in two ways. In the text, they are referenced according to the number of the chronicle and the associated original journal page in which they can be found. They are also referenced in a footnote according to the chapter and page of the thesis in which they can be found.

I begin this chapter by reflecting on the leadership terrain in our mainstream schools in South Africa and I argue that, in some instances, the locus of power remains concentrated at the centre of the practice and exercised by the SMT or the principal alone. In response, I call for more distribution of leadership which taps the leadership potential of all educators (SMT members and teachers) to become agents of change in schools. However, I acknowledge that developing a culture of distributed leadership is an evolutionary process which requires that schools transform themselves, both in form and in substance. In response, I call for a distributed leadership framing which is developmental in nature and which offer levels of distribution of power within the practice of distributed leadership. Gunter, in reflecting on the location and exercise of

power in the distribution of leadership, suggests that distributed leadership is currently being characterised as “authorised, dispersed and democratic” (Gunter, 2005, p. 51). I have found these three characterisations of distributed leadership useful in my study because they rank the practice of distributed leadership. Following the introduction of the characterisations of distributed leadership, in the subsequent sections I demonstrate how the characterisations are applied in my study and, in so doing, I extend the theorisation.

10.2. THE CHARACTERISATIONS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AS PRACTICE

In the discussion in the previous chapter, I recommended a conceptualisation of distributed leadership as a social, powerful and dialogic practice which, I argued, would facilitate the take-up of teacher leadership in the context of South African schools. However, the reality of many of our South African mainstream schools offers a significantly different picture. It is evident so far from the discussion that in a few of the leadership situations in the schools in my study, the locus of power was concentrated at the centre of the practice and exercised by the SMT or the principal alone. Power remained the domain of those in official positions of authority and there was no distribution of leadership to teachers, by which I mean that neither a leader-plus aspect nor a practice aspect (Spillane *et al*, 2004; Spillane, 2006) operated. In other words, there was no evidence of multiple leaders in a school (either leading formally or informally) who interacted with followers in particular situations during the practice of leadership. Let me illustrate my point with an example from my study. In the second chronicle, I described how leadership “*often remains located in the person of the principal who is sometimes unwilling to relinquish power to teachers*” (p. 55)²³¹. In these situations, I explained that these principals “*simply rely on their senior management team to support them in leadership and decision-making, regardless of the expertise, or lack thereof, of their senior members of staff*” (Chronicle 2, pp. 55- 56)²³².

²³¹ Section 6.2, p. 197

²³² Section 6.2, p. 197 - 198

In response to this lack of distribution of leadership to teachers, and given the context of our young democracy, I claimed in the eighth chronicle that “*South African schools would benefit most from a form of leadership which taps the potential of everyone in the organisation to deal with the challenges and complexities that school communities face on a daily basis*” (p. 185)²³³. In line with this thinking, I called across the chronicles for a distributed form of leadership which acknowledges that “*leadership potential exists widely within an organisation and emerges from different individuals and groups of people at different times as they go about their work*” (Chronicle 6, p. 290)²³⁴. This leader-plus perspective together with its complementary practice perspective which is “constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations” (Spillane, 2006, p. 26) is critical to a conceptualisation of distributed leadership for the South African schooling context. Conceptualised in this way, distributed leadership can then be used “as a sensing device for registering the complex practice of school leadership” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 29). To facilitate the emergence of teacher leadership as a cultural norm within a school, a distributed leadership practice, I am persuaded, is essential because it acknowledges “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture” (Harris, 2004, p. 14).

However, our democracy is still in its relatively fledging state when compared with other democracies, so we should heed the warning of Young and Kraak that “implementation of changes in a system with deep historical divisions and low levels of capacity is inevitably a slow process when compared to the relatively easy task of designing new policies” (2000, p. 4). Equally important to remember is that a school “is not a machine that can be overhauled, but a living organism which grows out of its earlier incarnations” (Hartshorne and Graudy, 1999, p. 89). Bearing this in mind, I made the point in the first chronicle that developing a culture of distributed leadership and teacher leadership in schools “*must be seen as an evolutionary process, underpinned by a new understanding of leadership*” (p. 529)²³⁵. Given the comparative infancy of our democracy, the first stage of this evolutionary journey

²³³ Section 7.3, p. 232

²³⁴ Section 5.4, p. 150

²³⁵ Section 5.2, p. 122

must be “*to try to move schools away from autocratic forms of leadership and an understanding of leadership-as-control towards more distributed forms of leadership*” (Chronicle 6, p. 299)²³⁶. Thus while South African schools have been structurally democratised through the introduction of committees such as the school management team, the school governing body and the representative council of learners, I assert that, in many instances, these are changes of form and not substance. The reality in many schools is that “*while school structures have changed, there is still a profound need for change in the culture and practices of schools towards more democratic forms of participation*” (Chronicle 8, p. 184)²³⁷. And, transforming a school – like a society – entails a “complete change in both form and substance, a metamorphosis” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 13). Thus, it follows that a distribution of leadership is needed which involves a change in substance and the “redistribution of power and a re-alignment of authority within the school as an organisation” (Day and Harris, 2002, p. 960).

Working from the premise that power in schools needs to be redistributed, the questions becomes *how* and *to what degree* the power is distributed (Spillane *et al*, 2004; Gunter, 2005; Spillane, 2006). To this end, Gunter’s (2005, p. 51) characterisations of distributed leadership as authorised, dispersed and democratic (see particularly chronicles 4 - 8) become pertinent because they offer levels of distribution within the practice of distributed leadership. In the sections that follow, I demonstrate the usefulness of the three characterisations in the context of my study, beginning with the first characterisation, that of authorised distributed leadership. Here I argue, in the South African schooling context, for a characterisation of distributed leadership as authorised, despite the contention of its detractors, listed in the next section, who claim that the delegated nature of authorised distributed leadership contradicts the essence of distributed leadership.

²³⁶ Section 5.4, p. 159

²³⁷ Section 7.3, p. 231

10.3. ARGUING A CASE FOR AUTHORISED DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

10.3.1. Authorised distributed leadership: a contradiction in terms?

In the practice of authorised distributed leadership, Gunter (2005) explains, power remains at the organisational level and the distribution of leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions. In this sense, distribution within the practice is initiated by the principal or the SMT and it is where work is distributed from the principal to others in a delegated manner. Gunter suggests that it is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations. Furthermore, it is accepted either because it works in the interests of the school or it serves the professional or personal interests of the teachers who take on the work. Here I want to draw the reader's attention to the distinction between structures and relationships in relation to the practice of school leadership and, as a consequence, hierarchical management structures and hierarchical social relationships. I want to reiterate a point made in the previous chapter that I am not advocating that we overhaul the hierarchical organisation of schools and its associated structures. I acknowledge that these structures are prevalent in schools and are not up for contestation and change at this point in time in our young democracy. Instead, I argue that hierarchical social relationships within the hierarchical school organisation can be challenged and altered. Social relationships between leaders and followers in the various situations in schools can be hierarchical but need not be. As an alternative, they might be more participatory in nature with the power base more evenly distributed between leaders and followers.

In contrast to Gunter's claim that distributed leadership can be characterised as authorised, some researchers (see for example Gronn, 2000; Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods, 2003; Harris, 2003) argue that distributed leadership cannot be authorised since it cannot be equated with delegation because of its emergent quality. As Harris explains, "if it remains the case that the head distributes leadership responsibilities to the teachers, then distributed leadership becomes nothing more than informed

delegation” (Harris, 2003, p. 319). While these researchers have a valid point, I find Gunter’s (2005) characterisation of authorised distributed leadership a valuable conceptual tool in the context of leadership practice in South African schools especially given South Africa’s “*colonial and apartheid history and the resultant hierarchical and bureaucratic management structures that remain the norm in many of our schools*” (Chronicle 6, p. 299)²³⁸. This history of colonialism and apartheid, together with the African traditional system of governance has left South African society, and its schools, with a legacy which is authoritarian at its core. Precisely because of our “authoritarian political heritage” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 113) which expresses itself in “hierarchical social relationships, high-handed leadership styles, intolerance of alternative viewpoints, and disrespectful treatment of the most vulnerable members of our society” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 113), I argue that authorised distributed leadership has its place in the leadership practice of our schools. I make this claim because, in my study, the majority of the leadership situations across the chronicles were characterised as authorised distributed leadership. This was because there was some distribution of leadership, albeit limited. In these situations, a group-plus aspect and a practice aspect (which involved more than one leader interacting with followers in different situations) defined the distribution. However, the nature of the interaction involved the distribution of work from the principal (or SMT) to others in a delegated manner within a hierarchical system of relations. In the following section, through an analysis of the leadership practices in two chronicles, examples are presented to argue a case for authorised distributed leadership.

10.3.2.Examples of authorised distributed leadership practice

There were examples of authorised distributed leadership practices tendered in the fifth and sixth chronicles in my study. In the sixth chronicle, the authorised distributed leadership process was explained by an SMT member in the following manner: “*so you would basically use them and their expertise and appoint them as leaders so they will coordinate and take over this activity*” (p. 295)²³⁹. In this example, there is acknowledgement by the SMT of the leadership expertise of particular teachers and a

²³⁸ Section 5.4, p. 159

²³⁹ Section 5.4, p. 155

move towards the distribution of leadership. However, there was no evidence of teacher agency or the natural emergence of leadership by teachers' themselves. Instead, the decision-making was firmly in the hands of the SMT who understood their power to be more about "control of others than about enabling participatory decision-making" (Ramphela, 2008, 121). Furthermore, social relationships were framed by the hierarchy and rights were allocated "in terms of the logic of the pecking order" (Ramphela, 2008, 121). As a consequence, the SMT determined which teachers had the expertise to lead and in which activities. Relations appeared fairly impersonal as the SMT member responded to teachers as objects to be 'used' in the practice of leadership in a relatively self-serving interaction. There was little evidence of discussion and negotiation of the leadership role which, I contend, is typical of the I-It relationship (Buber, 1970 in Gehrke, 1988) in contrast to the intensely relational I-thou relationships referred to in the previous chapter. Gehrke explains how "in seeing others as objects, we (the I) present ourselves in certain ways that are not authentic, but rather in ways designed to get others to respond to us as we want them to" (Gehrke, 1988, p. 44).

Furthermore, in the context of the sixth chronicle, leadership practices were characterised by I-It interactions between the SMT and teachers where "*teacher participation in school decision-making processes highlighted the mere rhetoric of collegiality*" (p. 298)²⁴⁰. Accounts of how SMT members interacted with DoE artifacts (such as policy requirements and directives) and school artifacts (such as agendas of staff meetings) revealed hierarchical and monologic relations "*within a culture of contrived collegiality*" (Chronicle 6, p. 299)²⁴¹. This is in keeping with Barth's remark of just "how little we see of collegiality and how much our schools suffer because of it" (1990, p. 29). In the example from the sixth chronicle, the distribution of leadership was interpreted by the SMT as "a way of co-opting teachers to fulfilling administrative purposes and the implementation of external mandates" (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 83). Teachers were well aware that they were being manipulated into accepting certain decisions but were compliant in the acceptance of the leadership role which, they explained, was ultimately in the interests of their learners, as the following quotation attests:

²⁴⁰ Section 5.4, p. 158

²⁴¹ Section 5.4, p. 159

... most often the idea has already been formulated; decisions already made by the SMT. We are coerced into accepting it. The strategies they use, tactics are used to get us to take ownership – but it is not so. Ultimately, if it's for the benefit of the children, we agree and accept the idea (Chronicle 6, p. 297)²⁴².

This compliance in the interests of learners confirms the view of Wasley (1991) who explains how incentives for teachers to participate in leadership practices arise out of a sense of personal commitment to provide the best education for their learners. The fact that these teachers took on the delegated leadership tasks in this unauthentic interaction came as a huge relief to SMT members, many of whom felt overwhelmed by the weight of their management responsibility. The following quotation attests to the burden of responsibility: *“I think we as managers are crying out for help so coming from the managers there aren't any barriers, we need the assistance of everybody”* (Chronicle 6, p. 295)²⁴³. This weight of management was echoed in the words of another SMT member: *“In a school there's so much, people have to multi-task all the time, and it's difficult for the management staff to always carry out all the responsibilities assigned to us. You can do it but to do it effectively I feel it's good to have the assistance of educators”* (Chronicle 6, p. 295)²⁴⁴. These quotations illustrate the willingness of SMT members to include teachers in certain leadership/management practices to alleviate their own work overload. However, loading teachers with extra duties indicates a limitation of authorised distributed leadership which is that it can be additive (Gunter, 2005); *“creating more work for teachers and ignoring their agency”* (Chronicle 6, p. 299)²⁴⁵.

The fifth chronicle offers further examples of authorised distributed leadership practices. I described in this chronicle how the power and decision-making at School D was centralised *“firmly in the hands of the principal and deputy principal at the top of the pyramid”* (Chronicle 5, p. 101)²⁴⁶. As a consequence, there was evidence in this school of *“top-down leadership and hierarchical school structure”* (Chronicle 5, p.

²⁴² Section 5.4, p. 157

²⁴³ Section 5.4, p. 155

²⁴⁴ Section 5.4, p. 155

²⁴⁵ Section 5.4, p. 159

²⁴⁶ Section 5.3, p. 142

100)²⁴⁷. However, while the decision-making was centralised *at the top*, it was powerful and offered firm direction to teacher leaders, but with very little negotiation. A participant from the school explains the nature of the leadership distribution: “*We have freedom with consultation or with his approval. He is strong at the top and his management is ... I don’t know, we are all a good team ... There is nobody who is going to challenge him, I don’t think*” (Chronicle 5, pp. 100 – 101)²⁴⁸.

In the same chronicle we have another example of authorised distributed leadership practice at work but in an entirely different staff situation. At School B, the non-participation of teaching staff in the professional development initiative resulted in “*a lack of teamwork, collaboration and shared vision*” (Chronicle 5, p. 99)²⁴⁹, the outcome of which was an SMT-led rather than a teacher-led implementation process. Here the “*feedback to staff was SMT-led through informal meetings and one-on-one discussions with teachers*” (Chronicle 5, p. 97)²⁵⁰. At this school, teachers were faced with the task of introducing Technology as a new learning area into their school curriculum. The value of the authorised distributed leadership practice in leading the curriculum process was acknowledged by the teachers and accepted because it served their professional interests – they received in-service training at their school and, as a consequence, were able to teach Technology in a more creative way. The willingness of the teachers to participate in the authorised practice was illustrated in the following quotation: “*As a school we have just started to look at the importance of Technology and see the need to teach it in a proper way*” (Chronicle 5, p. 97)²⁵¹.

From the discussion it can be seen that examples of authorised distributed leadership practice were in evidence in my study. Nonetheless, I wish to alert the reader to the fact that there is sometimes confusion between what constitutes authorised distributed leadership practices and what constitutes autocratic leadership practices. For me, autocratic leadership practice involves an absolute ruler who insists on leading the practice in his own way and who will not distribute any decision-making processes to others. In contrast, authorised distributed leadership practice involves a leader who

²⁴⁷ Section 5.3, p. 141

²⁴⁸ Section 5.3, p. 141 - 142

²⁴⁹ Section 5.3, p. 140

²⁵⁰ Section 5.3, p. 138

²⁵¹ Section 5.3, p. 138

distributes some decision-making to others (such as teachers) but who controls what is distributed and to whom it is distributed. Furthermore, in this authorised distributed leadership practice, the work is accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations. However, in the context of my study there was an example of an illegitimate leadership practice masquerading as authorised distributed leadership and it is to a discussion of this variance that I now turn.

10.3.3. 'Leadership as disposal' in contrast to authorised distributed leadership

While authorised distributed leadership practice involves the distribution of *legitimate* work from a leader to others within a hierarchical system of relations, I argue that there can be another form of leadership practice where work is distributed within a hierarchical system of relations but which is regarded as *illegitimate* because 'what' is distributed is thought to be 'inauthentic' leadership work. This type of leadership practice is therefore not always accepted by the followers who may well choose to withdraw from the practice in defiance of the non-negotiated process. They choose then to become non-participants or outsiders (Wenger, 1998, p. 167) of the practice. This scenario, I argue, cannot be classified as distributed leadership because of the withdrawal of one of the parties from the practice. Instead I have chosen to characterise this type of leadership practice as 'leadership as disposal' where unwanted technical tasks are unloaded, 'dumped' or disposed of onto teachers. In this characterisation, teachers are also 'at the disposal' of the whim of the SMT.

Let me present an example of the category of 'leadership as disposal' from one of the chronicles in my study to illustrate my point. The sixth chronicle explains how, in zone 3 of the school, interactions between the "*leaders (the SMT), the followers (the teachers) and the situations (school based decision-making and whole school development issues) were hierarchically managed through superior-subordinate relationships*" (p. 299)²⁵². The chronicle further argues that "*the leadership can at best be described as authorised distributed leadership*" (p. 299)²⁵³. The SMT

²⁵² Section 5.4, p. 159

²⁵³ Section 5.4, p. 159

members in this chronicle believed they were distributing leadership to teachers as they “*controlled the leadership practice of the school allowing teachers limited control and superficial involvement in decision-making*” (p. 298)²⁵⁴. Under the guise of participatory decision-making, important leadership decisions were made unilaterally by SMTs who “*paid lip-service to teacher participation and dialogue in decision-making, indicating a ‘lack of valuing’ of teacher voice and authentic dialogic space in the school*” (Chronicle 6, p. 298)²⁵⁵.

Teachers experienced the extra work forced on them as unjust management practice, supporting the view that “teacher leadership roles cannot successfully be imposed by management” (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p. 442), especially if the work is considered unfair. In the light of this conflicting evidence and mindful of Gunter’s (2005) thinking, I was challenged to ask *what* was distributed to these teachers and also *how* it was distributed. In this sixth chronicle many of the teachers resisted the extra work delegated to them by their SMT because the practice was not negotiated but instead involved “*unwanted tasks being passed down the hierarchy to a teacher, contradicting a critical feature of teacher leadership*” (Chronicle 6, p. 296)²⁵⁶. The words of one educator bring this message powerfully home: “*Sometimes you feel it’s management’s job just passed onto you. I won’t consider that as leadership. It is just passing the buck*” (p. 296)²⁵⁷. This reaction suggests that the leadership practice in this situation was, in truth, not authorised distributed leadership but rather ‘leadership as disposal’ where unwanted tasks were disposed of onto teachers who, in protest, chose to withdraw from the practice.

Authorised distributed leadership, while it has value because it makes space for multiple leaders, is restricted in its impact because of the hierarchical nature of the relationships within the practice of leadership. As Gunter (2005) explains, it is a form of leadership which is not a very dynamic or necessarily productive one in regard to sustained activity. Furthermore, Troen and Boles describe how it is “limited in scope and vision and subject to cancellation” (1994, p. 40). Despite the fact that authorised distributed leadership is not the best characterisation of distributed leadership, I

²⁵⁴ Section 5.4, p. 158

²⁵⁵ Section 5.4, p. 158

²⁵⁶ Section 5.4, p. 156

²⁵⁷ Section 5.4, p. 156

continue to be convinced that, in the context of South African schools, it remains a useful characterisation as the first of three incremental levels of distributed leadership practice. Although the leadership interaction in this first characterisation is initiated by the official school leader(s) in a hierarchical system of relations, it still allows for multiple leaders who work with others in interactive ways within a fairly supportive situation. My position is supported by Hatcher who argues that “participatory approaches that operate within a headteacher-dominated hierarchy of power can undoubtedly provide a much more congenial school regime than authoritarian forms of managerialism” (Hatcher, 2005, p. 258). In conclusion, I reiterate that the characterisation of authorised distributed leadership must not be confused with the ‘leadership as disposal’ characterisation because while the one involves some distribution of leadership, albeit hierarchical, the other does not.

10.3.4. Authorised distributed leadership: a risky business?

I have argued so far that the SMT members and, in particular, the principals in my study found it difficult to relinquish power to teachers and instead they fervently controlled the leadership practice in their schools. In an attempt to comprehend the concerted efforts of principals to control these practices in schools, I explore, in this section, the conflicting demands made on these educators in relation to issues of leadership and power. As I mentioned in Chapter Eight, I found the twin concept of “professional-as-administrator” (Hughes, 1978 in Gunter, 2003, p. 261) useful as a possible explanation of the behaviour of the principals in relation to their limited distribution of leadership. Before I move on to the explanation, let me indicate to the reader that the discussion that follows is fairly abstract and does not touch on the specifics of the nature of the tasks that are distributed in the leadership practice as these were comprehensively discussed in Chapter Eight of the thesis.

In response to the view that distributed leadership practice is a risky business, the premise I work from is that the school principal is a professional person in an administrative capacity. Hughes (1978, in Gunter, 2003) explains how principals are expected to be professional educators to their colleagues while, at the same time, operating as managers and administrators of the organisations they head. In other

words, their responsibilities are split off into two, quite contrasting, lines of work. On the one hand, they are meant to function as self-regulated leaders as they challenge the status quo within their schools and bring about the transformation of teaching and learning. On the other hand, because of their structural role, they are required to follow and implement the externally regulated directives of the Department of Education in order that the pre-determined goals of the organisation are met. I argue that acknowledging and understanding these two, quite contrasting identities that face school principals will assist us in explaining the complex practice of official school leadership and, as a consequence, teacher leadership. I now turn to excerpts from my chronicles to illustrate my point.

It was perhaps because of their administrator identity that the SMTs in the chronicles were afraid to relinquish power to teachers. This emerged in the second chronicle in my study where I suggested that “*some principals might argue that because their formal position holds them accountable to the Department of Education, they cannot distribute leadership to others*” (p. 56)²⁵⁸. Their responsibility to the DoE was explicit in their formal position and so relinquishing power to teachers was thought to be “*too much of a risk for these SMT members who felt the sole weight of accountability for the leadership of their schools*” (Chronicle 6, p. 296)²⁵⁹. This is in line with the view of Hatcher who suggests that “*sharing leadership is risky for head teachers*” (2005, p. 260). This highlights one of the criticisms of distributed leadership which is that it “*places the head or the principal in a vulnerable position because of the lack of direct control over certain activities*” (Harris, 2003, p. 319). To minimize these risks of distributed leadership, Hatcher argues that the strategy most commonly adopted by head teachers “*is to restrict its operation to a minority of senior staff*” (2005, p. 260). This was the case in the sixth chronicle in my study where appointments to teacher leadership “*rested on the criteria of experience, seniority and expertise*” (p. 297)²⁶⁰ which resulted in the loss of the leadership potential of the less experienced, junior teachers to the two schools. This perpetuated the “*inequality and power differentials in the two schools as a result of the hierarchical school structure*” (Chronicle 6, p.

²⁵⁸ Section 6.2, p. 198

²⁵⁹ Section 5.4, p. 156

²⁶⁰ Section 5.4, p. 157

297)²⁶¹. This corroborates Ramphele’s argument that hierarchical relationships are often defined by “seniority in terms of the positions people occupy as well as by age” (2008, p. 115).

However, I contend that the above arguments of the principals highlight a confusion of the professional and administrative identities based on “*a faulty premise that leadership means headship*” (Chronicle 2, p. 56)²⁶². Working from the premise that leadership does not mean headship, Gronn offers a sound explanation of the difference between these two terms:

.... whereas leadership denotes influence, headship, on the other hand, denotes authority and describes the exercise of authority by the most senior role incumbent in an executive hierarchy. The confusion is caused, therefore, by the slippage in usage from the person who heads becoming cast as the person who leads (2000, pp. 332 – 333).

In line with this thinking, I made the point in the second chronicle that “*leadership does not mean headship, and so, while principals are accountable to the Department of Education because of their formal position in schools, they do not have the monopoly over influence*” (p. 56)²⁶³. Similarly, in the sixth chronicle I explained that, while school principals were accountable to the DoE because of their formal position in schools, “*this did not necessarily make them good leaders and neither did it give them the monopoly in issues of leadership*” (p. 290)²⁶⁴.

My study revealed that, in the majority of cases, principals (and other SMT members) were at ease in their administrator identity as they satisfied the demands of the DoE in respect of the administrative and management practices allocated to them. In contrast, there was very little evidence of the execution of authentic leadership practices related to their professional identity. In other words, the professional identity of these educators was often stifled by their administrator identity as the demands of the bureaucracy inhibited educator professionalism. My thesis is that both identities are equally important to educators holding official management positions in our South

²⁶¹ Section 5.4, p. 157

²⁶² Section 6.2, p. 198

²⁶³ Section 6.2, p. 198

²⁶⁴ Section 5.4, p. 150

African mainstream schools. However, the point must be made that each of the two identities within the complex ‘professional-as-administrator’ role requires a fundamentally different way of being in the school. Educators need to understand that while occupying an official management position in a school holds them accountable to the DoE (administrative identity), it does not disqualify them from also working in other situations as self-regulated leaders who have the courage to tackle new initiatives in attempts to challenge and transform the teaching and learning process (professional identity). This crucial professional identity is one in which the principal can be conceptualised as ‘head learner’ and involves the principal “engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse- experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating, what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do” (Barth, 1990, p. 46). Within the practice of school leadership, the challenge is for principals (and SMT members) to retain and develop their professional identity as leaders and change agents, alongside their administrative identity. If this process is enabled, then there is the strong possibility that the distribution of leadership will shift up a level from an authorised to a dispersed form which will create the space for the emergence of teacher leadership, initiated by teachers themselves, in schools. It is on this dispersed form of distributed leadership that I now focus attention.

10.4. DISPERSED DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

In this section I discuss dispersed distributed leadership as the second of three incremental levels in Gunter’s (2005) characterisation of distributed leadership and draw particular attention to its emergent quality. I also reiterate the point made earlier in this chapter that the role of the principal as ‘leader of leaders’ in the school is crucial to this characterisation of leadership. I then offer an example of dispersed distributed leadership in action to illustrate the nature of the practice.

Dispersed distributed leadership, as discussed in Chapter Three, refers to a process where many of the leadership practices in an organisation, such as a school, take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. Thus, while the SMT as a formal structure exists in the school, in practice people, regardless of position within the structure,

“work together in ways that work best” (Gunter, 2005, p. 54). By sharing the leadership work more widely and redefining roles, the power relations in the school are shifted away from the formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals as teachers take responsibility and accountability for their leadership practices. Power is less about the control of others and more about “enabling participatory decision-making” (Ramphele, 2008). In other words, dispersed distributed leadership is more autonomous and bottom-up than authorised distributed leadership and it facilitates the emergence of teacher leadership, initiated by teachers, in school.

In my study, I suggested that in order to develop leadership as an authentic social and distributed practice in South African mainstream schools, the first goal was to “*move away from an authorised or delegated form of distributed leadership to a more dispersed form of distributed leadership*” (Chronicle 4, p. 53)²⁶⁵. This was because, while authorised forms of distributed leadership offer a way into the practice of distributed leadership, they are limited and can sometimes “militate against teachers attaining autonomy and taking on leadership roles in the school” (Muijs and Harris, 2003, p. 442). Skeptics might question the feasibility of a complete move away from authorised distributed leadership, given that educators continue to work within a hierarchical school organisation. However, I advocate, like Gunter (2005), that it is possible to work within the formal school structure in ways that are less hierarchical and where relationships and interactions between educators are more participatory and equal in the practice of leadership. This is because dispersed distributed leadership creates the space for SMT members and teachers to work together in more harmonious ways which results in teachers “*playing an integral part in the school*” (Chronicle 1, p. 524)²⁶⁶ because they are not “*just subject to authoritative instruction and rule*” (Chronicle 1, p. 524)²⁶⁷.

²⁶⁵ Section 7.2, p. 223

²⁶⁶ Section 5.2, p. 117

²⁶⁷ Section 5.2, p. 117

10.4.1. The emergent quality of teacher leadership within a dispersed distributed leadership characterisation

As a consequence, it can be seen that dispersed distributed leadership is a more authentic form of leadership than authorised distributed leadership because it cannot be imposed or assumed but instead needs to be bestowed by those who are to be led (Jackson, 2003). It follows then that teacher leadership, in its ideal form, should emerge naturally from teachers when and where the need arises. In keeping with this idea, I suggested in the fifth chronicle in my study that authentic teacher leadership “cannot be imposed but will emerge as teachers embrace new initiatives and innovate in a climate of trust and mutual learning” (p. 89)²⁶⁸. This emergent property of teacher leadership was prevalent in the sixth chronicle and particularly in the area of the classroom (zone 1)²⁶⁹ and where teachers worked with other teachers on curricular and extra-curricular issues (zone 2). Here “teacher leaders (leaders) had relative freedom to interact with other teachers (followers) in the practice of leadership in relation to curriculum and matters of teaching and learning (the situations)” (p. 298)²⁷⁰. These teacher leadership roles in zones 1 and 2 were accepted because of a range of factors, including the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of teacher leaders as they participated in the practice. The following excerpt from the sixth chronicle highlights the importance of the “knowledge, skills and values of teachers who, either individually or collaboratively, lead the practice” (p. 299)²⁷¹. Furthermore, this emergent feature was also emphasised in the first chronicle as the following quotation attests:

It (teacher leadership) can help encourage teachers to change to do things without guidance or influence of principals or heads of department, to move beyond the classroom and start motivating, guiding and creating relationships and connections among teachers so as to improve educational practices (Chronicle 1, p. 520)²⁷².

²⁶⁸ Section 5.3, p. 130

²⁶⁹ These zones (zones 1 – 4) were discussed in detail in the eighth chapter of this thesis in relation to the model of teacher leadership

²⁷⁰ Section 5.4, p. 158

²⁷¹ Section 5.4, p. 159

²⁷² Section 5.2, p. 113

Thus a dispersed distributed leadership practice is more enabling than an authorised one because it creates the space for teacher leadership to emerge as teachers take on new initiatives and innovate when the need arises. A collaborative culture is best suited to a dispersed distributed leadership practice.

10.4.2. The empowerment of teacher leaders through the development of a collaborative culture

In order to facilitate the emergence of teacher leadership, initiated by teachers, in our schools, a culture of collaboration and empowerment (see for example Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Barth, 1990; Griffin, 1995; Smylie, 1995; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Harris and Lambert, 2003) within a dispersed distributed leadership framework is essential. Harris and Lambert contend that “collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised on change that is undertaken collectively” (2003, p. 44). Developing this idea further, Harris argues that in order for teacher leadership to develop, “schools need to build a climate of collaboration premised upon communication, sharing and opportunities for teachers to work together” (2003, p. 321). Within this climate of collaboration, I assert that teacher leadership is a “form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impacts directly on the quality of teaching and learning” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. 43). For me, this empowerment of teacher leaders is enacted through the creation of safe and spacious spaces in schools which are dialogic in nature and which invite teachers to find their voice and take-up their leadership roles as they participate in professional learning communities within the practice of leadership. These dialogic spaces offer teachers the platform to be creative and come up with new ideas as they interact with other educators in participatory and collaborative ways. As an example, the first chronicle in my study calls for a social practice, a learning community, which encourages collaboration, participatory decision-making and vision-sharing “*within a culture of transparency and mutual learning*” (Chronicle 1, p. 529)²⁷³. And, in the seventh chronicle²⁷⁴, this collaborative practice was not perceived as a major

²⁷³ Section 5.2, p. 122

²⁷⁴ Section 5.5

stumbling block to teacher leadership because, according to the teacher voices, *team work was encouraged* (79,9%) and opportunities were created for *teacher professional development* (60,4%).

10.4.3. The important role of the principal as ‘leader of leaders’ within a dispersed distributed leadership practice

I have so far argued that within a dispersed characterisation of distributed leadership, teacher leadership is more likely to emerge (as opposed to being delegated) as teachers are empowered to lead within a school culture which is safe, trusting, dialogic and collaborative. However, in order for teacher leadership to become embedded within this dispersed distributed leadership practice it is imperative that the critical role of the school principal as ‘leader of leaders’ be emphasised. In this regard, Harris and Lambert contend that principals will need to become “leaders of leaders striving to develop a relationship of trust with staff, and encouraging leadership and autonomy throughout the school” (2003, 45). In other words, as I argued in my study, a dispersed distributed leadership practice “*does not suggest that the role of the principal becomes redundant*” (Chronicle 5, p. 89)²⁷⁵. On the contrary, the role of an effective principal, together with the SMT, is crucial in nurturing a culture of teacher leadership in a school and becomes one of holding “the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 28).

The work of the principal, operating from her professional rather than her administrator identity, is to develop the dialogic spaces within the place of the school and adopt an invitational leadership style (Purkey and Novak, 1990 in Stoll and Fink, 1996) which encourages teachers to embark on their leadership journey. However, it must be acknowledged that, in the practice of distribution, “certain tasks and functions would have to be retained by those in formal leadership positions” (Harris, 2003, p. 319). In this regard, the first chronicle in the study calls for “*a principal who has the right balance of confidence and humility to distribute leadership wisely where strengths in colleagues are evident*” (p. 524). It argues that principals “*play a pivotal*

²⁷⁵ Section 5.3, p. 130

role” (p. 524)²⁷⁶ in motivating teachers to become leaders to the benefit of the entire organisation. This requires leaders who are “*courageous, unafraid to take risks and who can use their initiative and work collaboratively with people in achieving the shared school vision*” (Chronicle 7, p. 20)²⁷⁷. In developing this idea further, the fifth chronicle emphasises that

the role of those people in formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership and creating opportunities for teachers to lead through the creation of a culture of collaboration and by using the strengths and talents of the individual teachers (p. 89)²⁷⁸.

10.4.4. Dispersed distributed leadership in action

In concluding this section, let me illustrate how a dispersed characterisation of distributed leadership works in practice. School A in the fifth chronicle in my study offers a good example of dispersed distributed leadership in action. In this chronicle, I explained that dispersed distributed leadership was “*evidenced through the flatter organisational structure, the level of teacher agency and co-leadership*” (Chronicle 5, p. 99)²⁷⁹. In this school, the leadership was “fluid and emergent” (Gronn, 2000) with “*real collaboration where teachers were working effectively, supporting each other and working collegially*” (Chronicle 5, p. 99)²⁸⁰. Furthermore, in the context of the professional development initiative, there was evidence of educators working together informally to discuss the take-up of the new learning from the initiative. Social participation in the form of collaboration occurred during “*numerous informal group discussions, one-on-one talks and even talks to some that were unable to attend the workshop*” (Chronicle 5, p. 96)²⁸¹. At this school, the involvement of the SMT, and particularly the principal, in the professional development initiative benefited collaboration and the take-up of the new learning. The principal in this school

²⁷⁶ Section 5.2, p. 117

²⁷⁷ Section 5.5, p. 181

²⁷⁸ Section 5.3, p. 130

²⁷⁹ Section 5.3, p. 140

²⁸⁰ Section 5.3, p. 140

²⁸¹ Section 5.3, p. 137

“immersed herself in the courses” (p. 96)²⁸² and, as a result, was able to encourage collaboration, support her teachers and facilitate discussions around the new learning. Teachers from School A, when recounting how aspects of the new learning were not implemented in their school, *“did not resort to blaming the SMT for non-implementation of the initiative at a school level but owned the failure for themselves”* (Chronicle 5, p. 99)²⁸³. This illustration of agency and involvement of the teachers in the life of the school was an example of the shift “away from traditional top-down management and getting teachers to take responsibility and to accept some accountability” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 42).

However, while the characterisation of dispersed distributed leadership offers a shift away from traditional top-down management which is one of the major barriers to teacher leadership, there remain barriers to teacher leadership from within this characterisation. In my study, for example, the issue of time was considered a major barrier to the formal take-up of the new learning in School A. This issue is a common barrier to teacher leadership in the literature (see for example Harris, 2003; Harris and Lambert, 2003; Muijs and Harris, 2003). Thus, in response to the second research question, which asks what contexts support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools, the enabling conditions include a culture of collaboration and the creation of trusting and dialogic spaces within a dispersed distributed leadership practice. The leadership practice, conceptualised in this way, offers moral support to its teacher leaders as well as more tangible forms of support such as time, resources and ongoing professional development.

This ends the discussion on dispersed distributed leadership as the second of Gunter’s (2005) three characterisations. In the section that follows, I move on to present democratic distributed leadership as the final characterisation of distributed leadership and, in so doing, demonstrate its value in the practice of leadership for the South African schooling context.

²⁸² Section 5.3, p. 137

²⁸³ Section 5.3, p. 140

10.5. DEMOCRATIC DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Democratic distributed leadership is the third and final incremental level in Gunter's (2005) characterisations of distributed leadership and, in this section, I draw particular attention to the central feature of power within this characterisation – power conceptualised as the “capacity to act” (Ramphele, 2008, p. 121). Thus a democratic distributed leadership characterisation brings a critical lens to the practice of leadership and, in so doing, offers a tool to challenge the power status quo in schools. I demonstrate in this section how the characterisation talks to issues of inclusion and exclusion, challenges issues of power and privilege and works for social change and social justice in the practice of leadership in schools. I explore democratic distributed leadership in the context of communities of difference and I suggest that communities of difference should be conceptualised further as communities of care. In the final sub-section, I explore the possibility of democratic distributed leadership in South African mainstream schools.

10.5.1. Bringing a critical lens to the practice of education leadership

Democratic distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have an emergent character (Woods, 2004) and both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004, p.7). Furthermore, it raises questions of inclusion and exclusion which include “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p.57). Within a democratic distributed leadership framework, the aim of education is “not to carry on business as usual but to work for social change and social justice” (Brown, 2004, p. 96). In other words, as I argued in the eighth chronicle, “*democratic forms of distributed leadership are socially just leadership*” (p. 186)²⁸⁴.

²⁸⁴ Section 7.3, p. 233

Thus, to attain a democratic distributed leadership practice in schools necessitates a reconceptualisation of education leadership and I drew attention to the urgency of this in my study. For example, in the fifth chronicle, I called for “*the radical reconceptualising of leadership and for debates about critical education leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership*” (p. 104)²⁸⁵. I also suggested that we need to foreground a critical education leadership perspective which “*challenges the existing habitus around leadership issues and which raises questions of exclusion, marginalization and silences*” (Chronicle 8, p. 188)²⁸⁶. This requires of leaders a basic activist instinct which enables them “to question, to challenge conventional wisdom, and to take risks” (Ramphele, 2008, 135). It calls for transformative leaders (Shields, 2003; Ramphele, 2008), whether they be teachers or SMT members, who focus on issues of social justice; leaders who transform not only individual understandings of self and others, but who “lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities” (Shields, 2006, p. 77). Transformative leadership is about “credible, visionary leadership that expands the boundaries of possibilities for all citizens, enabling them to contribute their talents, experience and skills to create a successful, prosperous democracy” (Ramphele, 2008, p. 295).

A transformative leader is likely to adopt a critical education leadership stance which enables her to conceptualise teacher leaders as more than mere deliverers of externally determined change. For a transformative leader, teacher leadership “is about action that transforms teaching and learning in a school, that ties school and community together on behalf of learning, and that advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community” (Crowther *et al*, p. xvii). In other words, from a critical education leadership stance, teachers should not be domesticated into existing power structures but instead should be enabled “to work in an emancipatory way with colleagues and students” (Gunter, 2001, p. 60). Understood in this way, teacher leadership must encompass “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p. 57).

²⁸⁵ Section 5.3, p. 145

²⁸⁶ Section 7.3, p. 235

In the context of my study, I argued that a critical perspective on educational leadership permits us to “*challenge issues of power and privilege, inclusion and exclusion, in relation to education leadership*” (Chronicle 8, p. 181)²⁸⁷. For if we do not challenge issues of power and privilege, then, as Delpit asserts, “the power status quo remains the same” (2003, p. 182). And, to challenge this power status quo and transform our schools into democratic learning communities, requires a democratic form of distributed leadership which is “grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice” (Shields, 2004, p. 116). A central tenet of democratic distributed leadership is that it “*raises questions of who is included and who is excluded in relation to leadership and in relation to the multitude of social practices within the school*” (Chronicle 4, p. 53)²⁸⁸. Thus democratic distributed leadership calls for school leaders who “*begin to engage critically with the values, goals and mission of the school and ask questions which begin to challenge the status quo and raise issues of social inclusion and exclusion*” (Chronicle 6, p. 299)²⁸⁹. To achieve this, school leaders require “a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility towards and with others and to society as a whole” (Phendla, 2004, p. 61).

10.5.2. The call to moral leadership and the inclusion of different voices

This sense of social responsibility towards others and to society implies a level of ‘moral’ leadership (Sergiovanni, 1998) within the characterisation of democratic distributed leadership. Moral leadership is also implicit in transformative leadership (Shields, 2003). And, like Sergiovanni, I assert that when leadership is morally based, its effect on “spirit, commitment, and results is not only strong but obligatory, allowing the school to function as a community of responsibility” (2001, p. 61). The moral leadership we require in our schools is underpinned by values such as “inclusion, participation and transparency” (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 152), values such as “*courage, risk-taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm within a culture of*

²⁸⁷ Section 7.3, p. 228

²⁸⁸ Section 7.2, p. 223

²⁸⁹ Section 5.4, p. 159

transparency and mutual learning” (Chronicle 1, p.529)²⁹⁰. Here I am in agreement with Astin and Astin who suggest that the value ends of transformative leadership should be “to enhance equity, social justice, and the quality of life; to expand access and opportunity; to encourage respect for difference and diversity” and to “strengthen democracy.....” (2000, p. 11).

The call to moral leadership requires “courageous, visionary leadership” (Ramphele, 2008, p. 27) on the part of educational leaders; the courage to reflect critically on one’s own leadership practice, the honesty to acknowledge when one’s practices are exclusionary and the will to transform schools into effective places of teaching and learning for all learners. This requires that education leaders, whether SMT members or teachers, are stretched beyond their comfort zones (Brown, 2004), beyond their current habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) of education leadership which, for many South Africans, is “*fundamentally opposed to the empowered participation of all for democratic functioning*” (Chronicle 8, p. 187)²⁹¹. A democratic distributed leadership characterisation offers school leaders a lens through which to recognise “*how the habitus restricts social justice and issues of equity*” (Chronicle 8, p. 189)²⁹² and, in so doing, it assists to “*confront unjust, stereotypical and discriminatory ways of being, and therefore leading, in the pursuit of a more fair and equitable society*” (Chronicle 8, p. 187)²⁹³. This is urgently needed because, as Ramphele contends, we appear as a nation to have lost “the voice of morality in our public discourse” (2008, p. 20). The challenge for school leaders in the quest for social justice is to reinsert the voice of morality through the development of effective participatory structures in which “actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage representation of their distinct voices” (Young, 1990, p. 116). This demands that processes are discovered which “can reconcile the valuing of difference with the need for shared understanding and agreement about public purpose that dissolves prejudice and discrimination” (Ranson, 2000, p. 274).

²⁹⁰ Section 5.2, p. 122

²⁹¹ Section 7.3, p. 234

²⁹² Section 7.3, p. 236

²⁹³ Section 7.3, p. 234

To assist in the process of confronting injustice and learning to value difference in the practice of leadership, I claimed in the eighth chronicle that “*it is through authentic dialogue in a democratic culture that this is most likely to happen*” (p. 187)²⁹⁴. The centrality of voice and dialogic space was discussed in the previous chapter and I remind the reader that dialogic spaces are spaces of equality, non-hierarchy, learning and empowerment which encourage openness and trust and facilitate critical engagement within a safe environment. Shields takes this idea further by suggesting that dialogue is a way of being in the world with one another and is “grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice” (2004, p. 116). I made a similar point when I explained in the fourth chronicle that “*it is through social participation, mutual engagement and dialogue using a shared repertoire about the social issue at hand that will give rise to changed practices and lead to socially just schools*” (p. 54)²⁹⁵. It becomes imperative then that, as school leaders, within communities of difference, we value the inclusion of “different voices in the learning community” (Ranson, 2000, p. 274). These different voices must be “*heard and valued, especially when they present an alternative view which challenges the existing status quo*” (Chronicle 8, p. 188)²⁹⁶. From a critical leadership perspective then, I urged school leaders, SMT members and teachers, to become “*critical reflective practitioners who guide their colleagues on a journey of critical self-reflection in an environment which is transparent and supportive and open to new ideas and new learning*” (Chronicle 8, p. 189)²⁹⁷. These notions of voice and critical dialogue in the pursuit of socially just communities of difference are aptly summed up in the words of Shields who contends that education leaders must continually strive to:

facilitate, model, and encourage dialogue about the multiple realities of the school community, helping students and adults alike to challenge inequities, to develop respect for difference, and to create frameworks and criteria for making tough decisions about right and wrong (2006, p. 64 - 65).

²⁹⁴ Section 7.3, p. 234

²⁹⁵ Section 7.2, p. 224

²⁹⁶ Section 7.3, p. 235

²⁹⁷ Section 7.3, p. 236

10.5.3. Valuing the richness of difference within communities of care

From the discussion above, it is evident that democratic distributed leadership, i.e. leadership for social justice, values diversity and does not ignore it. Here diversity or difference is not something to be feared but instead should be understood, according to Shields (2004), as an integral part of the rich fabric of human existence with which we interact on a daily basis. Conceptualised as part of our very being, difference becomes “the basis for human relationship, for organisational life, and certainly for leading and learning” (Shields, 2004, p. 116). Understood from this perspective, difference enhances our being in the world because, as Ramphela explains, “diversity enriches all participants in the long term” (2008, p. 109). However, while communities of difference are concerned with respect for diversity and difference, Shields argues that they are also concerned with “cohesiveness, caring, and shared goals” (2003, p. 44).

The importance of caring in relation to school leadership and learning is integral to the work of Hall (1996), Shields (2003) and Christie (2005). Building on the work of Starratt (1991) and Noddings (1999), Shields explains that caring involves a “commitment of the will to enter into a relationship” (2003, p. 77) in which we act out of a sense of compassion rather than out of a concern for efficiency. Furthermore, caring involves the acceptance of all individuals and groups in a school, regardless of their differences or whether we like them or not. Hall describes how care in relation to the school leaders in her study “was manifest in actions that were supportive and nurturing, aimed at making someone feel good about what he or she was doing, as well as securing his or her support, commitment and trust” (1996, p. 123). This requires that school leaders demonstrate empathy which is the capacity to put oneself in the place of other persons and is critical to “effective collaboration, building trust and resolving differences in viewpoint” (Astin and Astin, 2000, p. 13). Thus, I argued in my study the need for “*empathic leaders in our schools who have the capacity to put themselves in the other person’s shoes*” (Chronicle 8, p. 187)²⁹⁸. Christie (2005) calls for an ethics of care in schools – a concern not only for the intellectual

²⁹⁸ Section 7.3, p. 234

development of the learners but also a concern for what it is to be a human being. This requires that schools become places where “being human – with all its possibilities and failings – means caring for each other, even those who are not the same as ourselves” (Christie, 2005, p. 246).

This notion of one’s humanity, of being human along side other humans, is central to the African notion of ‘ubuntu’ and, in my study, I connected the notions of care and empathy to the Sesotho term ‘Batho Pele’²⁹⁹, which means ‘people first’. In the eighth chronicle I explained that ‘Batho Pele’ is a collective concept which means that “*the group, the people come before the individual*” (Chronicle 8, p. 187)³⁰⁰. In the same chronicle, I also made reference to the isiZulu phrase ‘Umntu, gumuntu, gabantu’ which means ‘I am who I am because of other people’. Based on this local and communal approach to empathy, I made the argument that “*leaders in our schools need to put ‘people first’ and foreground healthy relationships based on the values of empathy, inclusion, trust and creative action*” (Chronicle 8, p. 188)³⁰¹. Yet, I also cautioned in the same chronicle that “*leading empathically still requires an acknowledgment and confrontation of the conflict and complexities that exists in schools*” (Chronicle 8, p. 188)³⁰². However, in the context of the public service, Ramphele (2008) concedes that it is difficult to recognise any reflection of ‘ubuntu’ in instances where one is confronted with the abuse of power. The same, I believe, can be said in the context of many of our mainstream schools where power is abused in the practice of leadership. I now move on to illustrate the relative absence of an ethos of ‘ubuntu’ and a dearth of care reflected in my study.

The concept of care was elusive across the chronicles in my study. Whilst there was mention of collaboration in some communities and the need for levels of trust, I did not get the sense that a culture of care was evident within the practice of school leadership across the chronicles. For example, there was reference in the eighth chronicle to “*a sense of belonging in schools*” (p. 189)³⁰³. While the first chronicle

²⁹⁹ ‘Batho Pele’ is the name of the South African government’s programme for transforming its public service delivery to a culture of customer care, set out in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Government Gazette No. 18340, 1997).

³⁰⁰ Section 7.3, p. 234

³⁰¹ Section 7.3, p. 235

³⁰² Section 7.3, p. 235

³⁰³ Section 7.3, p. 236

underscored the importance of *trust* (p. 523)³⁰⁴ within collaborative communities, it also asserted that “*hierarchical school organisation controlled by autocratic principals*” (p. 525)³⁰⁵ resulted in a lack of trust and therefore, I argue, a lack of care within the practice of leadership. The chronicle suggested further that “*South Africa’s history has taught teachers to mistrust, to doubt, to work on one’s own and certainly not to trust anyone in authority*” (Chronicle 1, p. 528)³⁰⁶. In addition, in the context of the seventh chronicle, nearly half of the teachers surveyed (43,9%) did not believe that their SMT had trust in their ability to lead (p. 18)³⁰⁷.

When the concept of care arose in my study, it was in relation to a sexist and gendered practice of education leadership. There was consensus on the part of educators in the second chronicle that “*women educators were generally more caring, loving, supportive and nurturing than their male counterparts*” (p. 53)³⁰⁸. One educator explained that “*it is the women that in most cases – I am not saying all- play the nurturing role*” (p. 51)³⁰⁹. This is because, as Ramphele explains, the traditional notion of women is as “*mothers whose proper role is nurture and be subservient to men*” (2008, p. 100). However, it seemed that these traits of ‘caring’ and ‘nurturing’ were not sufficiently valued within the practice of leadership across many of the schools in my study. Instead, in the context of rurality, there was a perception that these nurturing values were “*only useful in the leadership of young children but that they had no place in high school leadership where a rational, hard-line, physical approach was the order of the day*” (Chronicle 2, p. 53)³¹⁰. This is in line with the research of Coleman who found that in South African schools “*there are clear identifications of women with the more pastoral and caring roles and men with aspects of education that are often highly regarded, for example, curriculum roles and time-tabling, roles that may be more likely to lead to responsibility and leadership*” (2003b, p. 185).

³⁰⁴ Section 5.2, p. 116

³⁰⁵ Section 5.2, p. 118

³⁰⁶ Section 5.2, p. 121

³⁰⁷ Section 5.5, p. 179

³⁰⁸ Section 6.2, p. 195

³⁰⁹ Section 6.2, p. 193

³¹⁰ Section 6.2, p. 195

A ‘lack of care’ in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic epitomised the school leadership communities in the third and fourth chronicles. School leaders appeared “*unwilling to break the silence around HIV/AIDS for the fear of the stigma attached to it*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)³¹¹. The chronicle found that “*instead of dialogic spaces of trust, caring, and inclusion which encouraged critical reflection and action, a form of monologic space prevailed, a form of verbalism – empty words*” (Chronicle 3, p. 13)³¹². These monologic spaces were uncaring spaces which “*lacked loyalty and trust*” (Chronicle 4, p. 50)³¹³ and where “*inequality, insecurity and fear prevailed*” (Chronicle 4, p. 49). In response, there was an urgent call from the fourth chronicle for a sufficiently “*safe space in which to talk about HIV/AIDS*” (p. 49)³¹⁴.

Despite this apparent lack of care, fundamental to an ethos of ‘ubuntu’, in many of our South African schools, I contend that in the South African context of poverty, illiteracy and the haunted space of HIV/AIDS, it is essential that schools be conceptualised as communities of care. If they are not, we will be unable to value difference and, at the same time, dissolve prejudice and discrimination. I argue that the concept of care is a central component in democratic distributed leadership practices in schools conceptualised as communities of difference in today’s postmodern world. Furthermore, communities of care as envisaged in this way are built on trust relationships. Therefore, to reintroduce the ubuntu ethos into schools, South African schools need to be conceptualised as places where “the approach to power is one that enables everyone to become the best they can be” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 176). The question that remains is whether democratic distributed leadership practices are a prospect in our South African mainstream schools? It is to this question that I now turn.

³¹¹ Section 6.3, p. 210

³¹² Section 6.3, p. 210

³¹³ Section 7.2, p. 220

³¹⁴ Section 7.2, p. 219

10.5.4. The possibility of democratic distributed leadership in South African mainstream schools

It is well known that schools, generally, are conservative organisations (Smylie, 1995) which attempt to maintain the status quo. Furthermore, as Troen and Boles argue, “teaching is not a profession that values or encourages leadership within its ranks” (1994, p. 40). This is particularly so in South Africa with its history of apartheid schooling and its legacy of authoritarian control. Leadership as conceptualised in this thesis (whether leadership from teachers or leadership from those in formal positions of authority) was actively opposed during the Apartheid era in a bid to control and manipulate the education system to perpetuate an unfair, unequal and discriminatory education system along racial lines. Instead, when the term was used, it was “*understood in terms of position, status and authority*” (Chronicle 1, p. 512)³¹⁵ and, in reality, involved only managerial and administrative tasks.

Fifteen years into our democratic era South African schools remain structured in an executive hierarchy with the principal as the most senior role incumbent and, as I argued in the previous chapter, this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, many of our mainstream schools are still characterised by “*a culture of opposition, dependency and non-participation as a legacy of apartheid*” (Chronicle 1, p. 528)³¹⁶. However, as Jansen reminds us, “despite their obvious limits, schools remain the life-blood of this young democracy” (2004, p. 127). It stands to reason that it is this life-blood that we have to harness as we attempt to challenge the leadership practices in schools. In the majority of our mainstream schools, there remains “*an emphasis on management processes at the expense of leadership*” (Chronicle 6, p. 289)³¹⁷ due, mainly to the fact that in the context of government legislation, “*the term education management is often used in preference to education leadership*” (Chronicle 6, p. 289)³¹⁸. As a consequence, in the context of South African schools, I advocated “*a move away from the nomenclature of leadership which defines itself primarily in terms of policy implementation and the development of school structures*

³¹⁵ Section 5.2, p. 105

³¹⁶ Section 5.2, p. 121

³¹⁷ Section 5.4, p. 149

³¹⁸ Section 5.4, p. 149

in a bid to carry out policy directives within a hierarchical chain of command” (Chronicle 4, p. 55)³¹⁹. Instead, I suggest that the nomenclature include an emphasis on both leadership and management processes where ‘leadership’ is conceptualised as the process which works towards movement and change in a school while its complimentary term ‘management’ refers to the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the school. While effective and efficient management processes are important to hold the school in place and ensure the smooth running of the daily routine, I argue that we cannot lose sight of the leadership processes which move the school forward and embody “the vision, values and the principles of the society we aspire to become” (Ramphela, 2008, p. 295).

At this point in time, I am persuaded that leadership, as conceptualised in this thesis, is a fairly new phenomenon in the context of education in South Africa. As a consequence, the concept of teacher leadership for many South African educators may well be a confusing concept; perhaps even an “oxymoron” (Troen and Boles, 1994). However, I reiterate that the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) does highlight, as one of the eight teacher roles, the role of leader, administrator and manager so the concept of teacher leader may not be entirely foreign. Despite the lack of clarity around the conceptualisation of the terms ‘leadership’, ‘management’ and ‘teacher leadership’, I am persuaded that this should be used as a platform from which to re-educate our educators on how to lead and manage our South African schools more effectively. In line with this thinking, I argued in the seventh chronicle that South African schools require “*leadership, and particularly dispersed and democratic forms of distributed leadership that will challenge the existing status quo and initiate the journey towards teacher leadership and school improvement*” (p. 20)³²⁰. To achieve this, I suggested that it was through increased participation and interaction in the practice of leadership that “*new understandings about education leadership gradually emerge and become distributed among members*” (Chronicle 4, p. 54)³²¹.

³¹⁹ Section 7.2, p. 225

³²⁰ Section 5.5, p. 181

³²¹ Section 7.2, p. 224

In South Africa, we have to acknowledge that because our schooling system is hierarchically structured with power vested in the position of the principal and the SMT, our schools can never be truly democratic. This is in contrast to a minority of European countries where examples can be found of schooling systems that are truly democratic. In these democratic schools, power is not concentrated in the position of the head teacher but instead the schools are characterised by participatory decision-making “as a right, an entitlement, of the teaching staff” (Hatcher, 2005, p. 262) rather than as a management strategy. However, this is not the case in South Africa and, given the infancy of the democratic era, the hierarchical organisation of schools coupled with the legacy of patriarchy which remains a central tenet in many of our diverse cultures and religions; it is unlikely that authentic participatory democracy will be a viable option in schools in the near future. Hatcher, in the context of the UK, argues that any pretense at democratic distributed forms of leadership “disguises the reality of the ultimately coercive power of management” (2005, p. 259). Quoting Wainwright (2003), Hatcher makes his point: “I participate, we participate, but they decide over what kind of issue we can decide” (2005, p. 259). So what does this mean for the distribution of leadership in the South African schooling system?

I am of the opinion that, despite the valid concerns raised by Hatcher (2005), the distributed perspective on educational leadership in our country does have value and I argue that it offers a sound starting point as well as a trajectory for bringing about change in the leadership practices in our schools. In the context of South African schools, we need a conceptualisation of leadership which de-links leadership from an official management position in a school. This the distributed leadership perspective does. Furthermore, when conceptualised as a leader-plus perspective and a practice perspective, distributed leadership assists us to describe and explain how leadership happens as people position themselves and are positioned in the practice. In addition, the characterisations of distributed leadership as authorised, dispersed and democratic are constructive conceptual tools to describe and explain the different ways in which leadership can be distributed.

10.6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

For the above reasons it can be seen that distributed leadership, with its three characterisations, offers a valuable multi-dimensional framework in which to locate and theorise teacher leadership for the South African mainstream schooling context. It should be clear now that we cannot begin to engage with research on teacher leadership without engaging with distributed leadership because, “*implicit within the model of distributed leadership are the leadership practices of teachers*” (Chronicle 5, p. 88)³²². This brings me to the end of the insights chapters of this thesis. In the chapter that follows, I conclude the thesis and reflect on the study at a contextual level, a methodological level as well as at a conceptual level.

³²² Section 5.3, p. 129

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ON TROUBLING THE TERRAIN AND BEING TROUBLED: REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

11.1. INTRODUCTION

While the insights chapters of the thesis, i.e. Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, provided answers to the research questions, this final chapter takes a more holistic and reflective approach to the study. I have entitled this chapter ‘On troubling the terrain and being troubled’. Let me begin by referring to the latter part of this phrase. I was troubled by this thesis at two levels. In the first instance, I was troubled by the thesis because of its unique nature as a publication based study and I reflect on this troubling in the first section of the chapter. In the second instance, I was troubled by the thesis at the level of methodology and I reflect on this troubling in the second section of the chapter. In the third section of the chapter I reflect on the theoretical insights of the study and the troubled terrain of distributed teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools. The chapter concludes by suggesting future direction for research on teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing with a view to the terrain becoming less troubled as we learn more about it.

11.2. REFLECTIONS ON CONTEXT: A THESIS BY PUBLICATION

“Theory begins with wonder” (Shulman and Shulman, 2004, p. 258)

My research interest in teacher leadership, as I outlined in the first chapter of this thesis, commenced in 2004 when I began to ponder about how teacher leadership was understood and practiced by educators in South African schools and what contexts supported or hindered this take up. Thus the motivation for the study came from my increasing ‘wonder’, my interest in the leadership practices of teachers in terms of

their potential as ‘agents of change’ in schools. In response to this preponderance, I embarked on a range of research projects over a five year period, each loosely guided by this question. It was only in 2008 that I formally registered as a PHD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and elected to embark on a thesis by publication. Thus the thesis was retrospectively conceived as a mixed research synthesis study, the core of which was eight academic, peer-reviewed, independent chronicles.

This thesis troubled me because a thesis by publication was an unexplored journey. Not only had I never embarked on a thesis of this nature, it was also a new phenomenon in the Faculty of Education where I work and am a registered student. As a consequence, there were no theses of this type in the libraries for me to peruse and neither was there a detailed set of guidelines which I could follow. For guidance, I turned to other faculties within the University and found a few publication-based studies in the sciences which I glanced through. While these eased my panic to some degree, they were not particularly helpful because they were not located in the field of humanities. Thus mine was a lonely journey, filled with uncertainty in respect of format. The postmodern working of the thesis by publication disrupted the linearity of the traditional research process. Mine was an iterative, back and forth process across chronicles and between chapters as I struggled to organise and make sense of the data in response to the research questions and then endeavoured to design chapters that were relevant and meaningful to the study. I lived through times of incredible self-belief and times of complete bewilderment. There were moments when I confidently claimed the scholarship to design the thesis as I deemed best and other moments when I felt completely disempowered by the daunting task ahead of me. On reflection, I believe my journey was made more complex because of the retrospective nature of the research design.

My purpose in embarking on a thesis by publication was to use my existing published research in the sub-field of teacher leadership, i.e. the eight independent chronicles, and synthesise these in order to develop a coherent body of work and, in the process, make an original contribution to knowledge. As I explained in the introductory chapter, the thesis was designed retrospectively because, at the time of registration, three of the eight chronicles were already published, two were in the process of publication, a further two were almost ready for journal submission, while the final

one was still being written up. This retrospective design was guided by the three research questions which informed the clustering of the chronicles according to a three phase contingent design within the mixed methods research tradition. However, my experience of adopting a retrospective research design in order to find some way of synthesising the already completed chronicles together constituted a problematic. Let me illustrate my point by suggesting an alternative, and perhaps simpler, way of conceptualising a thesis by publication.

I contend that a less complicated thesis by publication route involves the design of the thesis prior to the publication of articles. In this approach, the process is more logical and forward thinking where articles can be conceptualised and written up in direct response to the questions and the requirements of the research design. The publications might then be planned according to the conventional thesis chapters. For example, the first article might be conceptualised as the introductory chapter of the thesis which describes the background and context of the study, the second article might constitute the literature review chapter while the third article might be designed in a way which outlines the methodology underpinning the research. It is my view that a pre-planned research design offers the researcher a simple, yet effective tool – almost like a compass - for moving ahead in the safest possible way. The safety of the tool stems from the fact that it is far easier to plan forwards than to plan backwards. However, I am uncertain just how easy it would be to get articles of this nature published in reputable journals. Many journals have clear guidelines on the aim, scope and format of contributions and it remains to be tested how journals would receive articles as conceptualised in the above example.

In contrast, I grappled with issues of connectivity and faced the challenge of retrospectively clustering the chronicles together coherently and with purpose in my study. The clustering process was driven for the most part by the development of the three research questions. These questions formed the pillars of the study and directed the initial phases of the synthesis process. Yet the process remained a difficult one because the breadth of findings of some of the chronicles related to more than one research question and there were often overlaps between chronicles across the artificial clusters. This impacted on the research design and the original clustering of

the chronicles. Let me explain what I mean by taking the reader back to the proposal phase of the study.

In the proposal I stipulated that the first cluster of chronicles originally included only three chronicles (one, six and seven) with the fifth chronicle allocated to the second cluster. However, as I struggled determinedly through the synthesis process, I realised that this fifth chronicle was better placed in the first cluster of chronicles as it responded directly to the first research question and I therefore rearranged the clustering accordingly. As a consequence of the complexities and back-and-forth maneuvering of this retrospective design process, there were times when I yearned for the security and relative simplicity of a preplanned research design. My retrospective design resulted in a complex connectivity process which at times appeared illogical and downright impossible. There were moments when it felt like I was forcing a fit between the chronicles and the research questions in the ‘unnatural circumstances’ of the synthesis process. Furthermore, because connectivity in this type of thesis is central, I was also aware of the danger of too much repetition. It became clear to me that for my logic of connectivity to work, with as little repetition as possible, the purpose of each chapter had to be unequivocal. It therefore took me multiple drafts involving multiple layers of re-thinking, re-reading, re-writing and re-tensing before the construction of the meta-inference and the construction of the chapters were complete. It is only now, at the end of the process, that I can argue more confidently that the insights – the “meta – inference” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 686) that emerged from the study are greater than the sum of the individual findings from the chronicles and offer an original contribution to knowledge in the sub-field of teacher leadership.

I am persuaded that my retrospective use of publications, whilst not the easiest of research designs, was feasible because of one fundamental condition. My research over the last five years was driven by my passion to find out as much as I could about how teacher leadership was understood and practiced in South African mainstream schools and this sustained interest underpinned all eight chronicles. It was this prolonged interest in one topic together with the conceptual coherence across the chronicles which enabled the synthesis process. Each of the eight chronicles cohered in relation to the broad aims and research questions I posed, the related literature on

teacher leadership I included and through the theoretical framing of distributed leadership. I am of the firm opinion that it would be far more difficult to design a publication-based study retrospectively without this conceptual coherence. Thus, the critical point for prospective students intending to use their publications retrospectively towards a PhD is that their publications should cohere conceptually through their sustained interest in and pursuit of a central topic.

Despite being troubled by the challenges of a thesis by publication, I enjoyed the journey and benefited in many ways from it. The first benefit is that the thesis was completed in a much shorter period of time when compared with the average time taken for a traditional PhD thesis. The second benefit is that I had the privilege of working with students, tutors and colleagues who collaborated with me during a few of the research strands and in the writing up of some of the chronicles. These relationships are ongoing and have contributed to the development of a community of interested researchers in the sub-field of teacher leadership. The third benefit is that I have been approached on a number of occasions to sit on faculty committees to peruse applications and proposals from potential PhD candidates who wish to embark on a thesis by publication. Although daunting, this has been an interesting and thought-provoking experience as the faculty continues to grapple with the possibilities of this new form of PhD. Having reflected on my experiences of doing a thesis by publication, I now turn to reflect on the struggles I encountered in relation to the methods adopted in this publication based study.

11.3. REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGIES: A TROUBLED SPACE

In the previous section I discussed how this thesis troubled me because of its form. In this section, I discuss how this thesis troubled me at the level of methodologies. I was introduced to mixed methods research as a field in its own right for the first time when I presented my PhD proposal to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee in November 2008. The suggestion from the committee was that I design my study using a mixed methods research approach. After extensive reading in the field of mixed

methods research, I felt comfortable with this alternative paradigm to research methods but I was still unsure whether my study – which was underpinned by six individual research studies or strands - could be classified as mixed methods research. It was only when I came across the article by Sandelowski, Voils and Barroso (2006) entitled ‘Defining and designing mixed research synthesis studies’ that I at last found a home, at the level of methods, in which to locate my study. In this article the authors refer to the mixing of methods across *studies* (my emphasis) where the data are “the *findings* (authors’ emphasis) of primary qualitative and quantitative studies in a designated body of empirical research” (Sandelowski *et al*, 2006, p. 29). However, my troubles were far from over.

In the initial stages of the writing process, I grappled with the purpose and design of the methodology chapter. I was unclear about the relationship between the PhD research design and the research designs of the six individual research strands. Because I was so familiar with the research strands which underpinned the chronicles, I kept privileging them in the presentation of the chapter and I was unable to distance myself sufficiently from them in order to be able to present the methods used in the synthesis process of the thesis. It was only once I had begun the synthesis process in practice that I truly perceived the importance of the PhD design, was able to articulate the process properly and grant it the privilege that it warranted in the chapter.

My final struggle at the level of methods was to claim my power as a writer, based on my passion for the research topic and my scholarship as published researcher. While my publication profile was the reason I elected to register for a thesis by publication, it afforded me little help in my personal journey to find what I call ‘my PhD voice’. Despite a publication profile, I lacked the confidence during the writing of the methodology chapter in the thesis to describe boldly what I was doing and claim the right to do so. Instead, as I described in the methodology chapter of this thesis, I felt completely silenced and inadequate as both researcher and writer and was intimidated by the whole process. It was only on reading the article by Richardson (1994) entitled ‘Writing: a method of inquiry’ that I understood and came to terms with what was preventing me from writing. This was a critical moment in my journey, a turning point, and it served as a catalyst to restart the writing process. It was as a result of this

critical moment that I developed the courage to reinsert myself in the writing process and claim my PhD voice.

On reflection, I believe that a mixed methods approach was most suited to my work because of its ability to embrace the multifaceted and complex character of my study and the multiple paradigmatic traditions underpinning it. Adopting a mixed methods way of thinking afforded me a platform from which to use “multiple approaches and multiple ways of knowing” (Greene, 2008, p. 20), each of them inevitably partial, in my exploration of the practice of teacher leadership. In so doing, I believe that my research afforded me the opportunity for “respectful listening and understanding” and engaged me with “difference and diversity in service of both better understanding and greater equity of voice” (Greene, 2008, p. 20).

Having discussed how I was troubled by this thesis because of its unique nature as a publication-based study and because of its complexity at the level of methodologies, I now reflect on the theoretical insights of the study and the troubled terrain of distributed teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools.

11.4. REFLECTIONS ON THEORETICAL INSIGHTS: THE CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In this section, I reflect on the theoretical insights of the study and the troubled terrain of distributed teacher leadership in South African mainstream schools and, in so doing, offer a summary of the contribution to knowledge that this thesis offers.

11.4.1. The model of teacher leadership: a synthesis of insights

A key output of my study is a model of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. This model evolved over the five year period of the study and the developmental phases of the model are captured in the chronicles as well as in the

eighth chapter of this thesis. The significance of the model and its contribution to the field is three-fold. Firstly, the model's value lies in its synthesis potential (after John, 2009). In this first instance, the model as represented in Figure 8.3 of this thesis operates as a tool for looking back on the study and offers a holistic representation of the key elements and understandings of the study. Secondly, the model's value lies in its heuristic potential (after John, 2009). In this second instance, the model operates as a tool for looking forward. It offers researchers a language of description to be able to converse with other researchers about the possibilities of teacher leadership in a particular context and it offers a framework for future studies. In this regard, the second phase of the model, as represented in Figure 8.2 of this thesis, has been used as an analytical tool by researchers in the sub-field of teacher leadership (see for example Khumalo, 2008, Ntuzela, 2008; Chaturgoon, 2008; Govinden, 2008; Pillay, 2008). Finally, the model operates as a tool for expansion and development. The model is by no means perfect and it can be improved as we learn more about the enactment of teacher leadership in the South African schooling context. In the context of this study, I became aware of some of the glitches and anomalies in applying the model to data and I regard as my task, post PhD, to work in a more focused way with the model and to improve it in the light of its application in the completed empirical research studies.

As a tool for looking back on the study, I argued that the model offers synthesis potential. Let me illustrate what I mean by representing the key elements and understandings of the study using the model. Across the chronicles in the study, there was evidence of teacher leadership in each of the four zones as depicted in the model. Authentic teacher leadership practices were most convincing in zones one and two and considerably less so in zones three and four. In zones one and two, teacher leadership was practiced and its emergent property (Bennett, *et al.*, 2003) was prevalent. Examples of teacher leadership in these two zones included teachers as curriculum leaders, grade heads, mentors, peer observers and committee leaders. In these zones, teacher leaders had relative freedom to interact with other teachers in the practice of leadership in relation to matters of teaching and learning.

It was clear from the chronicles that educators' understandings of teacher leadership were that teacher leaders were first and foremost successful teachers who paid careful

attention to the teaching and learning process in the best interests of their learners. They were innovative practitioners who demonstrated high levels of knowledge competence and a variety of effective teaching methods. As teacher leaders, they were involved in a range of learning communities within zone two. Examples included the more formal communities such as grade or learning area committees, extra-curricular committees, phase meetings, school tasks teams, school committees as well as teacher professional development teams. Further examples were more informal in nature and included informal group discussions as well as informal in-service education. Across the chronicles, teacher leadership was also evident in zone four (leadership beyond the school into the community), although to a much lesser degree than teacher leadership in zones one and two. Examples included teachers engaged in leadership activities within district learning area committees and union structures.

In contrast, while there was a commitment to teacher leadership in zone three in the study, there was little evidence of this in the practice of leadership at a whole school level. The natural emergence of teacher leadership, based on the strengths and experiences of teachers, was largely absent in this zone. Instead, the interactions between the SMT members and the teachers in school-based decision making operated along a chain of command. In these situations, power was firmly located at the organisational level and controlled by the SMT (in their administrator role) within a hierarchical system of relations. Within an authorised distributed leadership frame, tasks were delegated to a select group of teachers, either through SMT appointment or through formal committee nomination. In this zone, teacher leadership was thus largely understood in relation to formal, democratically constituted structures or communities such as school task teams, the school development team and the school governing body. However, it is well documented that school structures are not always enabling and can instead “militate against teachers attaining autonomy and taking on leadership roles within the school” (Harris, 2003, p. 319). It became apparent in the study that, at times within zone three, the school structures constrained leadership activity in their endeavours to demarcate responsibility and give sole attention to issues of management and administration at the expense of leadership. Teacher leadership within informal learning communities within this third zone was therefore the exception rather than the norm.

To conclude, educators in the study demonstrated a restricted understanding of teacher leadership (Harris and Muijs, 2005), based on a common sense perception of the term. This was no different to Wasley's research where "most of the teacher leaders and their colleagues had not given much thought to teacher leadership, how it might be defined, or what it might look like in practice" (1991, p. 145). As a consequence, the educators in my study exhibited no real insights into the transformative power of teacher leadership and were ignorant of their role as change agents in the transformation of schools.

11.4.2. Distributed teacher leadership: an expanded theoretical framing

One of the prerequisites for teacher leadership, according to the model, is distributed leadership. Thus this thesis rests on the assumption that, to explore the practice of teacher leadership, teacher leadership needs to be situated – nested - within a broader theoretical framing of distributed leadership. Understood from this perspective, teacher leadership is but one manifestation of distributed leadership and it is the framing of distributed leadership that gives form and explanatory power to the complex and multi-dimensional character of teacher leadership.

In this thesis, I adopted as a starting point, a conceptualisation of distributed leadership which is founded on two perspectives; the leader-plus perspective and the practice perspective (Spillane *et al*, 2004; Spillane, 2006). Within the practice of distributed leadership as conceptualised in this way, the constituting elements include multiple leaders (either SMT members and/or teacher leaders) engaged in activities with others (followers) in particular situations (supportive or unsupportive) around specific tasks. The focus of the distributed perspective becomes that of the "dynamic interactions between multiple leaders and followers" (Timperley, 2005, p. 396) as well as on "artifacts and how they are used" (p. 414).

However, in discussing the insights across the chronicles it was immediately clear that further concepts and theories used in the chronicles were useful in expanding the theoretical frame. To this end I argued that leadership (and therefore teacher leadership) be conceptualised as a social practice within communities in which there

is the potential for learning through mutual engagement and the negotiation of meaning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Yet, these theorists are silent on issues of power and difference in communities and so, to present a more comprehensive discussion, I conceptualised communities of practice, not as homogenous communities but as ‘communities of difference’ (Ranson, 2000; Gunter, 2001; Shields, 2003). This conceptualisation, I contend, is more relevant to the reality of practice because our postmodern world is increasingly comprised of difference; difference, for example, in terms of race, culture, religion, sexuality and ethnicity. Furthermore, in the context of South Africa, our Constitution respects diversity and is all about diversity. In relation to issues of diversity within communities, Ranson, building on the work of Mouffe (1992, 1993) and others, warns of “the mistaken illusion of a unified polity, of homogenous communities forming a universal citizenry and civic public” (2000, p. 265). Thus, to my mind, there is no alternative but to conceptualise communities as ‘communities of difference’.

In addition, I am persuaded that issues of power are central to discussions about leadership practices in these communities of difference (Bourdieu, 1977; Gunter, 2001, 2005). This centrality of power raises critical questions such as who holds the power and whether the power is distributed or not. Thus the positioning of people within these powerful communities is significant in relation to education leadership as it incorporates multiple levels of involvement and raises issues of inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation. In this regard, the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) and illegitimate peripheral participation (my term), embedded in an expanded apprenticeship model of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), as well as the concept of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1977) enable us to explain ‘how’ and ‘why’ people either position themselves or are positioned in the field of education leadership. Furthermore, the concepts of dialogic space (Rule, 2004) and monologic space (my term), together with the notion of voice (Ranson, 2000), are related to positioning in the field of education leadership and are helpful conceptual tools to describe and apply to the leadership practice.

Within this expanded theoretical framing, I also adopted the characterisations of distributed leadership as authorised, dispersed and democratic (Gunter, 2005) and used them sequentially rather than as discrete concepts in describing and explaining

the different situations in the practice of distributed leadership. This ranking of the levels within the practice of distributed leadership from level one (authorised) through to level three (democratic) mirrors the increased distribution of power from restricted (authorised) to expansive (democratic) and stands in direct contrast to 'leadership as disposal', a characterisation which emerged in the study masquerading as distributed leadership. This 'leadership as disposal' characterisation offers a further tool to researchers to assist in differentiating between authorised distributed leadership and autocratic leadership operating under the guise of distributed leadership practice.

11.4.3. Challenging the imaging of teachers: the policy/practice divide

Teachers are positioned as leaders in terms of policy imaging in South Africa. In particular, the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) as well as the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996) challenge schools to adopt a participatory and democratic form of management and these documents make reference to the leadership role of teachers. However, as Ramphele (2008) reminds us, all South Africans are newcomers to democracy. As such, many educators find it difficult to take initiative and work in ways which are autonomous and self-regulating because they are products of authoritarian homes and authoritarian schools. As a consequence, authoritarianism and the dominant discourse of managerialism inherited from apartheid and colonialism continue to perpetuate schools. In fact, the study revealed a relative absence of leadership, from teachers and SMT members alike. In some instances, teachers perceived their role as implementers of the new curriculum rather than as change agents; they appeared passive and were content to reproduce the status quo. A lack of oppositional dialogue was evident in schools and little opportunity was created for new ways of thinking, being, learning and leading. Thus despite an enabling education policy framework, participation and collaboration of all educators in essential leadership practices such as school-level decision-making, remained largely at the level of rhetoric and ignored the "realities on the ground" (Sayed, 2004, p. 252). And, as Shields (2003) and Ramphele (2008) remind us, good intentions are not enough.

Furthermore, espoused practices within the policy documents, while they are readily accessible to society at large, “serve insufficient road maps to practice” (Spillane *et al*, 2004, p. 15). As a consequence, this disjuncture between policy and practice has resulted in school change in South Africa remaining at the level of ‘form’ but not ‘content’ (Sayed, 2003; Soudien, 2007; Ramphele, 2008). The challenge for educators and researchers alike then becomes one of finding ways “to close the gap between the rhetoric of education aims and the hard, professional work of practice” (Glickman, 2002, p. 6). To close this policy/practice gap in the field of education leadership requires a radical shift in school culture and the deconstruction of prevailing orthodoxies around leadership. In its place, leadership must be reconstructed as transformative and “it must embody the vision, values and principles of the society we aspire to become” (Ramphele, 2008, p. 295). The thesis calls for dialogic spaces within the practice of transformative leadership where teachers can begin to re-think, re-work and re-image themselves to become change agents and not only classroom curriculum deliverers. These dialogic spaces are not linear or fixed but instead offer multiple opportunities for possibility and the take up of the leadership potential of teachers. Leadership becomes evident when multiple voices start conversing and where teacher leaders engage in the practice, move fluidly in response to different situations and take up different leadership positions, depending on the context.

11.5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Whilst this thesis does contribute towards new knowledge in the sub-field of teacher leadership within a distributed leadership framing for the South African schooling context, it is not without its limitations. In this section of the chapter, I discuss some of the limitations of the thesis and highlight areas that need further empirical research.

The first limitation of my study is that it was based on research which, to a large degree, constituted self-reported data and relied on the perceptions of educators about teacher leadership. And, as Spillane *et al* usefully remind us: “there is often a difference between what people do and what they say about what they do, a

distinction that can be maintained without duplicitous intent” (2004, p. 14). My study concentrated on the insights of educators which were gathered through individual and focus group interviews, open-ended questionnaires, closed-questionnaire surveys and self-reflective journaling. Thus the data were at the level of perception and were not corroborated through observation across the chronicles thus limiting the trustworthiness of the study. In this regard, Timperley (2005) highlights the importance of observation when researching the distribution of leadership. In her words, “given that leadership activity, together with the artifacts and relationships that form an integral part, form the essence of a distributed leadership analysis, such on-the-ground observations are essential to developing these important concepts further” (Timperley, 2005, p. 398).

While I acknowledge the value of observation as a powerful data collection tool, my study was already very large in its attempt to chronicle the voices of educators on their perceptions of teacher leadership and I argue that it was therefore beyond the scope of the present study to explore teacher leadership in practice. However, I acknowledge that in the context of researching teacher leadership in South Africa, further empirical work is needed and, in particular, research which provides rich case studies of teacher leadership in action, using observation as a primary data collection tool. In this regard, I conceptualised my synthesis study as the starting point – the commencement - of an ongoing *live chronicle* to which I, and other researchers, can “add to the chronicle in a regular fashion, recording contemporary events shortly after they occur” (Wikipedia, downloaded 04/02/09). In line with this notion of adding to an ongoing *live chronicle*, I referred in the closing comments of the fourth chapter to a teacher leader group project which I coordinate and which involves a group of 11 Master of Education students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. To reiterate, the project explores the enactment of teacher leadership in schools and adopts a collective case study approach using a range of data collection tools, including participant observation. Thus it can be seen that my study was responsible for “informing future research and leading to new or reformulated research purposes and questions” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21). I have every confidence that the findings of the 11 case studies in the group project will go some way to extending the insights gained in my study by providing rich portraits of teacher leadership in action in schools.

Given that my study did not include the observation of teacher leaders in various situations in schools, a second limitation is that it did not explore the interactions between teacher leaders and other teachers and between teacher leaders and the SMT members. Further research is necessary which explores, in a fine-grained analysis, how teacher leaders work with colleagues in various learning communities within the school (zone 2). These communities may include, for example, a grade or learning area committee and the task of the researcher would be to track the teacher as a curriculum leader within a specific learning area and to investigate how she interacts with other teachers and leads the practice over an extended period of time. Here I argue that the concept of ‘confidence’ is useful to establish the teacher leader’s movement “from the periphery of various education related communities towards more central participation, identification and belonging within these communities” (Graven, 2004, p. 208). Alternatively, the community may be a staff meeting, and the task of the researcher would be to track, over an extended period of time, the principal or SMT as they interact with teachers during a sequence of meetings and to investigate how the meetings are structured, how decision-making happens and whether dialogic spaces are created for authentic teacher collaboration in the zone of the school (zone 3).

The third limitation of my study is that it explored teacher leadership *per se* and did not investigate the concept in relation to student learning. Timperley is of the view that the ultimate goal of educational research, whatever the question, should be “of benefit to students” and “enhance student learning” (Timperley, 2005, p. 398). In line with this thinking, a further line of research is to track a teacher leader as a facilitator of learning within a specific learning area and to investigate how she interacts with her learners and leads the practice within her classroom (zone 1). This requires a fine-grained analysis of the practice of classroom leadership as it relates to learner achievement.

A fourth limitation of my study is that it did not differentiate between the roles and job descriptions of the SMT members. Instead, it clustered principals, deputy principals and HODs together into one, seemingly, homogenous SMT group. However, we know from experience that the SMT is by no means a homogenous

entity. It follows then that it too should be conceptualised as a ‘community of difference’ within which the power differentials are acknowledged. Further research is necessary which explores the distribution of leadership within the SMT as a community of practice. Alternatively, another line of research is to track a HOD as a teacher leader to determine how the HOD balances her middle manager identity with her curriculum leader identity. Similarly, it would be interesting to track a principal (or deputy principal) in her professional-as-administrator role and investigate how she juggles these two different identities.

A final limitation of my study is that it was restricted to the schooling context and did not set out to explore teacher leadership in any other educational setting. Given that I work in a university, it seems that an obvious next step in my research trajectory would be to explore the enactment of teacher leadership in my own higher education institution. Doing this would privilege both the research agenda and the teaching agenda of the university simultaneously. In this regard, Pounder suggests that “examining the transferability of the teacher leadership notion to a higher education context seems to be a potentially rich area for further study” (2006, p. 542).

11.6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

So how do we encourage educators to think about teacher leadership in our schools and to begin to conceptualise it beyond its common sense understanding? How do we ensure the take up of teacher leadership in schools in the ongoing quest for improved teaching and learning? In closing, I argue that the journey will not be easy because it is likely to require a radical change in identity and way of being in the institution of the school for many South African educators, both teachers and SMT members alike. To bring about this transformation, I suggest that, at the level of practice, three things need to happen. Firstly, an understanding of teacher leadership from a distributed leadership perspective should inform higher education curricular for educators at both the in-service and the pre-service levels. Secondly, teacher leadership understood as one manifestation of a distributed leadership practice should be “facilitated and embraced as a cultural norm within the school” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 120)

through the teaching and support from the DoE. Finally, in addition to the traditional staff meetings which focus on the management of systems and processes in schools, I propose that a second forum be introduced which revolves around professional conversations. I suggest that it occur on a regular basis, rotate its leadership and, rather than prescribe a formal agenda, suggest a topic or a reading for discussion in the pursuit of ongoing professional development.

In closing, I endorse the view of Lieberman and Miller (2004) that being a teacher leader is not easy. This is because teacher leadership implies agency and change and, as we all know, change is complex and often leads to conflict. However, I would like to end with the words of Lieberman and Miller who suggest that

despite all of this, our study of teacher leadership imbues us with hope; it helps us envision a future in which teachers lead toward more democratic and enlightened schooling. The teacher leaders we have come to know are committed for the long term; they do not intend to give up on their students or on one another. They plan to continue to assume responsibility for the deepening of their own practice and that of their colleagues. They are determined to become the architects of vibrant professional communities in which teachers take the lead in inventing new possibilities for their students and themselves (2004, p. 92).

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT OF MY CONTRIBUTION TO CHRONICLE THREE INCLUDED IN THIS DOCTORAL THESIS BY PUBLICATION

Student name: Carolyn (Callie) Grant Student Number: 841843618

Title of the chronicle: 'In this culture there is no such talk': monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS

Authors: Callie Grant and Praveen Jugmohan


Journal: South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management, 1(1) April 2008, 3 – 16.

Involvement:

The School of Education and Development within the Faculty of Education, UKZN, in which I work, with its vision of research collaboration, set up a number of group research projects, one of which was the National Research Foundation (NRF) funded project that aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small rural town in KwaZulu-Natal. One aspect of this large research project was to explore the perceptions of the School Management Teams and the District Official on their views regarding HIV/AIDS as one of the major barriers to basic education for learners in schools. Together with my colleague, Mr. Praveen Jugmohan, we formulated the research questions and designed the study. We worked collaboratively in the data collection and data analysis processes. Furthermore, we were both involved in writing up Chapter Four, *The voices of School Management Teams*, of the final research report, *Mapping barriers to basic education in the context of HIV and AIDS* edited by Prof Nithi Muthukrishna and published by the National Research Foundation in 2006.

In contrast, the conceptualisation and creation of the article entitled '*In this culture there is no such talk: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS*', which was based on the research project discussed above and published in South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management, 1(1) April 2008, 3 – 16, was entirely mine. However, within an ethos of collaboration, I have included my colleague, Mr Jugmohan, as 2nd author.

We declare this to be a true reflection of our contributions to this journal article.

Signature: 

Date: 16/10/09

Signature: 

Date: 16/10/09

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

STATEMENT OF MY CONTRIBUTION TO CHRONICLE SIX INCLUDED IN THIS DOCTORAL THESIS BY PUBLICATION

Student name: Carolyn (Callie) Grant Student number: 841843618

Title of the chronicle: Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!


Authors: Callie Grant and Hitashi Singh

Journal: Perspectives in Education, 27 (3), September 2009, 289 - 301.

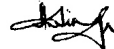
Involvement:

I am prime author of Chronicle 6, entitled *Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!*, and Ms Hitashi Singh, a graduated Master of Education student of mine, is 2nd author. The chronicle is based on the research contained in Ms Singh's Master of Education dissertation. Building on the work of Ms Singh, I did a 2nd level of analysis of her data using my model of teacher leadership presented in Chronicle 5 and discussed in my thesis. With Ms Singh's permission I wrote the entire chronicle while she fulfilled the role of critical reader.

We declare this to be a true reflection of our contributions to this journal article.

Signature: 

Date: 26|10|09

Signature: 

Date: 27-10-2009

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

STATEMENT OF MY CONTRIBUTION TO CHRONICLE SEVEN INCLUDED IN THIS DOCTORAL THESIS BY PUBLICATION

Student name: Carolyn (Callie) Grant Student number: 841843618

Title of the chronicle: Perceptions and realities of teacher leadership: a survey

Authors: Callie Grant, Karen Gardner, Farhana Kajee, Ronnie Moodley and Sharila Somaroo

Journal: Submitted to South African Journal of Education (June 2009).
In peer-review process.

Involvement:

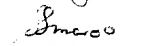

Chronicle 7 is based on data gathered from a large group research project into teacher leadership involving 17 *Education Leadership and Management* Bachelor of Education Honours students in 2008. As project leader, I formulated the research questions and designed the study. The data were collected by the team of 17 students and the students were taught how to input the data into SPSS. The statistical findings gathered from the 1055 questionnaires were then analysed independently by each student in the group for their Honours module. In tandem with the module, four students from this group volunteered to collaborate with me in writing and presenting a paper, based on the research, for the CCEAM international conference in 2008.

During the first semester of 2009, I initiated a writing process with this group of four students who had now completed their Honours Degree. We met regularly to rework the conference paper and write it up as an article for submission to a journal. In June 2009, we submitted the article to the *South African Journal of Education*. I am prime author of this chronicle and share the authorship with Ms Gardner, Ms Kajee, Mr Moodley and Ms Somaroo.

We declare this to be a true reflection of our contributions to this journal article.

Signature: 

Date: 23/10/2009
23/10/2009

Signatures: 


Date: 28/10/2009

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Faculty of Education



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

1.1.1.1.1 PhD Research Proposal

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Proposed title of thesis	Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools			
School	School of Education and Development, Faculty of Education			

Student's Signature		Date	
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Supervisor		Institution	
Signature		Date	

Submitted to Postgraduate Degrees Committee: (Deputy Dean)	Date	
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FULL PROPOSAL

1. Working Title

Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools

2. Background and Context of Study

2.1 INTRODUCTION

My research for the past five years has focused on the voices of educators, both teachers and School Management Team (SMT) members, about their perceptions and experiences of ‘teacher leadership’ in a range of school contexts in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Teacher leadership is conceptually linked to and a facet of distributed leadership theory which is located within the broad field of education leadership and more particularly school leadership. When I began my research into teacher leadership in 2004, I decided that I did not want to explore perceptions and experiences of teachers from private or ex-model C schools because I did not want the ‘privilege’ of these schools to, in any way, sketch an unrealistic picture of teacher leadership in our country because, as Christie, Butler and Potterton argue, the privileged schools are at the edge, not the centre of the system (2007, p.100). Instead I deliberately targeted educators who had experience of teaching in schools in relatively poor socio-economic circumstances, schools with a history of previous disadvantage. Christie *et. al.* usefully refer to this majority of schools as ‘mainstream schools’ and, in so doing, they challenge us to reposition the mainstream and value it because the mainstream is “important in finding strategies to achieve equity and quality for all” (2007, p.100). I attempted, through my research, to foreground ‘this mainstream’. Against this backdrop is my interest in ‘researching the vulnerable’ in relation to education leadership and teacher leadership. I want to understand better and give voice to those groups of people, and especially teachers, who are often marginalised or excluded from the processes of leadership. So it makes sense that I am interested in the ethics and morality of leadership and in socially just leadership, as can be seen from my book chapter (Grant, 2008a)³²³.

My interest in and research into teacher leadership resulted in a range of conference papers and journal publications. In 2007, it was suggested to me that I think about a PhD by publication because of my passion for teacher leadership as a research interest and because I had published a few articles in this area. For these reasons, I have elected the PhD by publication route. Given that there are very few guidelines, and others yet in their development phase, both within the Faculty of Education handbook and the University of KwaZulu-Natal student rule book regarding this format of the

³²³ The chapter is called ‘Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively’ and can be found in the edited book by A. Muthukrishna entitled “*Educating for social justice and inclusion: pathways and transitions*”, published in New York by Nova Science Publishers.

degree, I have taken the liberty to construct my research proposal in a way that I believe best reflects my research and publication process.

2.2. RATIONALE FOR RESEARCHING 'TEACHER LEADERSHIP'

During the period of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, government legislation perpetuated a society of inequality based on race class and gender. To control this inequality, government policies promoted centralised, authoritarian control of education at all levels within the system (Grant, 2006). Today, within a democratic South Africa, the *South African Schools' Act* (1996), the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) as well as the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996) challenge schools to review their management practices, which have traditionally been top-down, and create a whole new approach to managing schools where management is 'seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage' and should 'not be seen as the task of a few' (DOE, 1996, p.27). And yet a closer look at this government legislation reveals that the term 'education management' is often used in preference to 'education leadership'. I argue that this signals either a potential slippage in usage of the two terms or an emphasis on management processes at the expense of leadership³²⁴.

For me, within the concept of leadership (including teacher leadership) lies the potential for change and therefore for school improvement. In her book, *The good high school*, Lightfoot, maintains that the literature tends to agree that "an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership" (1983, p.323). Here leadership is understood as the process which brings about change in the organisation and which "mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants or the status quo" (Donaldson, 2006, p.7). In other words, Donaldson continues, "leadership helps the school adapt to its changing function in society" (2006, p.8), while management ensures the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Leadership, however, need not be located only in the principal of a school but should be "stretched over multiple leaders" (Spillane, 2006, p.15). Like Kotter (1990), I believe that the two processes of leadership and management complement each other and *both* are essential for the improvement of our South African schools. This understanding of the terms leading and managing concurs with that of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) which moves from the premise that while leading and managing are qualitatively different activities, in reality they complement one another, and are vital to the effective performance of complex organisations and groups (Andrews and Lewis, 2007).

The extensive range of education policies which emerged so soon after 1994 reflect our democratic government's commitment to change, and its determination to "construct an inspirational and viable vision of post-apartheid South Africa's education and training system" (Parker, 2003, p.18). However, despite these well intentioned policies, their implementation has been disappointing and this gap between educational policy and implementation in the South African context has been

³²⁴ Article 2: Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!

well documented (see Harley, Barasa, Bertram and Mattson, 1998; Jansen, 2000; Mattson and Harley, 2002). Similarly, when writing about teacher leadership in the context of the United States, Katzenmeyer and Moller contend that “educational policy is easier to change than schools are” (2001, p.1). I believe the same can be said for South African policies about education leadership and management. While we have a range of very progressive educational policies, post 1994, which create the framework for teacher leadership to emerge in schools, changes in leadership practice in schools are the exception rather than the norm. Silences in these policy documents about how leadership is defined, what teacher leadership is as well as a lack of guidelines on how to introduce teacher leadership into schools gives rise to “confusion and misunderstanding among educators about the role of the school management team in developing teacher leadership and how level one educators can lead beyond the classroom” (Singh, 2007). This weak leadership call together with a general lack of clarity about the different leadership roles has contributed to what Moloji (2002) describes as many schools remaining unresponsive and retaining their rigid structures with principals unable to shift from their patriarchal and hierarchical ways of thinking.

Against this backdrop and as an alternative to traditional forms of education management inherited from our apartheid and colonial past, I became interested in shared forms of leadership practice and particularly the leadership practices of teachers; i.e. ‘teacher leadership’, as can be seen from my publications profile on pp. 8 - 10 of this proposal. Teacher leadership offers a radical departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership because it moves away from the premise of leadership in relation to position in the organisation and instead views leadership as a process which is shared and which “involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school” (Grant, 2008b)³²⁵. In its simplest form, teacher leadership is understood as leadership exercised by teachers regardless of position or designation (Harris and Muijs, 2005). Although the concept of teacher leadership is understood and defined differently by many different writers internationally, the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that “teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.44). They further explain that teacher leadership has as its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43).

A further reason for my interest in teacher leadership is that it is a relatively new and undeveloped area of research in the South African context. Much research has been done into teacher leadership in the United States and Canada over the last few decades (see for example Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Wasley, 1991; Little, 1995; Ash and Persall, 2000; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Lieberman and Miller, 2004) and, more recently, in the United Kingdom (see for example Muijs and Harris, 2003; Harris and Muijs, 2005; Gunter 2005, Pounder, 2006). This gap in the literature not

³²⁵ Article 5: ‘We did not put our pieces together’: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

only motivated me to pursue research into the area of teacher leadership but also motivated a group of my honours and masters students at UKZN to pursue research in this area as well (see Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008).

So having immersed myself in this area of research since 2004, this PhD thesis seeks to draw my individual studies on teacher leadership together, reflect on them holistically and explore their interconnectedness. Their interconnectedness will be explored in relation to:

6. the clustering of conference papers and published articles around three research questions
7. the theoretical framework of distributed leadership theory
8. the development of an overarching analytical framework – a framework for analysis of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context (see pages 32 - 33 of this proposal for further discussion).

Based on the three levels of connectivity listed above, nine pieces of work have been selected for inclusion in my PhD:

Of the nine pieces of work:

- five³²⁶ are already published in SAPSE accredited or internationally acclaimed peer-reviewed journals,
- two³²⁷ have been submitted to SAPSE accredited journals and are in the process of peer-review,
- two³²⁸ are in the form of conference papers which were presented at the *Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management* International Conference in Durban in September 2008. It is my intention to develop these two conference papers into either one or two articles for submission to a peer-reviewed journal(s) in the next few months. The published article(s) will then be included in the PhD instead of the papers as they presently stand.

³²⁶ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views, Article 4: Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations, Article 5: 'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens, Article 6: 'In this culture there is no such talk': monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS and Book Chapter 8: Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively and transformatively

³²⁷ Article 2: Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership! and Article 7: Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space and practices

³²⁸ Conference paper 3a: Emergent teacher leadership within the local context: a survey in the Umlazi District and conference paper 3b: The restricted reality of teacher leadership: a South African survey

Of the nine pieces of work:

- I am sole author of five³²⁹ and primary author of the other four
- The School of Education and Development in which I work, with its vision of research collaboration, set up a number of group research projects, one of which was the National Research Foundation (NRF) funded project that aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small rural town in KwaZulu-Natal. My colleague, Mr Praveen Jugmohan, and I collaborated on the data collection process for Article 6 but the authorship of the written article was entirely mine. However, within an ethos of collaboration, I included Mr Jugmohan as 2nd author.
- I am prime author of Article 2 and Ms Hitashi Singh, a graduated Master of Education student of mine, is 2nd author. The article is based on the research contained in Ms Singh's dissertation. Building on the work of Ms Singh, I did a 2nd level of analysis using the model of teacher leadership developed in Article 5. With Ms Singh's permission I wrote the article while she fulfilled the role of critical reader.
- I am prime author of conference paper 3a and Ms Jabulisiwe Khumalo, a graduated Master of Education student of mine, is 2nd author. The article is based on the research contained in Ms Khumalo's dissertation and we were both involved in writing the conference paper.
- Conference paper 3b is based on data gathered from a large group research project into teacher leadership led by me and involving 17 *Education Leadership and Management* Bachelor of Education Honours students in 2008. I am prime author of this paper and worked together with four students, Ms Karen Gardner, Ms Faharna Kajee, Mr Ronnie Moodley and Ms Sharila Somaroo, to put the conference paper together.

The table on the following three pages offers the reader a profile of the nine pieces of work which I plan to include in my PhD:

³²⁹ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views, Article 4: Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations, Article 5: 'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens, Article 7: Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space and practices and Book Chapter 8: Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively and transformatively

2.3. PUBLICATIONS PROFILE

	Title	Author ship	Status of publication	Research Inquiry	Research Design and Methodology	Findings	Theory Used	Research Question
	CLUSTER 1							
1	Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views	Sole	Published <i>Education Management, Administration and Leadership</i> 34(4) 2006, pp. 511 - 532	Explores experience of educators about concept and experiences of teacher leadership	Qualitative study 11 educators, Purposive sampling Educator journals, focus group interviews Thematic content analysis Grounded Theory	Initial: leadership equated with headship Emerging model –4 zones Pre-requisites Barriers	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003) Teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001)	<u>One</u> : How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context?
2	Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!	Primary Co-author M Ed student Singh	Submitted to <i>Perspectives in Education</i> , May 2008, Awaiting response	Explores how leadership of SMT either promoted or hindered teacher leadership	Qualitative study: 2 schools Purposive sampling SMT and teachers Questionnaires, interviews Grounded Theory Re-analysis: TL model	TL restricted to Zone 1 Restricted teacher management within discourse of delegation SMT controlled TL – senior teacher culture Rhetoric of TL, contrived collegiality	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003; Gunter, 2005) Teacher leadership (Harris and Lambert, 2003)	<u>One</u> : How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context?
3 a	Emergent teacher leadership: a survey in the Umlazi District	Primary Co-author M Ed student Khumalo	CCEAM conference paper, Sept 2008	Explores teacher perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership	Quantitative study Survey, Questionnaires Random sample; 396 teachers. Analysis SPSS, TL model, Grant 2008b	Leadership perceived as shared endeavour TL Zone 1 and 2 – less in Z3 Important decisions in SMT hands Emergent TL	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Goleman, 2000) Collegiality model (Bush, 2003)	<u>One</u> : How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context?
3 b	Restricted reality of teacher leadership: a SA survey	Primary Coauthors Gardner, Kajeje, Moodley, Somaroo	CCEAM conference paper, Sept 2008	Explores teacher perceptions & experiences of teacher leadership	Quantitative study Survey, Questionnaires Purposive sampling 1055 teachers, SPSS, TL model Grant, 2008b	Supported notion of shared leadership TL restricted to Zone 1 SMT main barrier – no trust, No TL in decision-making	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, 2006) Teacher leadership (Harris and Lambert, 2003)	<u>One</u> : How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context?

CLUSTER 2								
4	Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations	Sole	Published <i>AGENDA</i> No 65, 2005 pp. 44 – 57.	Explores relation between gender and leadership; gendered roles of teacher leadership	Qualitative study Purposive sampling 18 educators Focus group interviews Thematic content analysis	Context matters: rural/urban divide Leadership male domain/strong man view; Gendered roles Challenges status quo and calls on women teachers to find voice	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004) Habitus (Bourdieu, 1972)	<u>Two:</u> What factors support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools?
5	‘We did not put our pieces together’: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens	Sole	Published <i>Journal of Education</i> Vol. 44, 2008 pp. 85 - 107	What leadership role do teachers play in take up of new pedagogic learning and what challenges do they face?	Qualitative case study, 4 schools, SMT members, teachers and project leaders Methods: questionnaires, interviews, document analysis Thematic content analysis TL model (Grant, 2008b)	TL restricted to Zone 1 and 2 No take up in Zone 3. Barriers reside in school culture, time, micropolitics, hierarchical school structure and autocratic principal Argues for critical importance of linking professional development initiatives to issues of leading	Distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Bennett <i>et al</i> , 2003; Gunter, 2005) Professional learning communities (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001)	<u>Two:</u> What factors support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools?
6	‘In this culture there is no such talk’: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS	Primary Co-author Colleague Jugmohan	Published <i>South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management</i> 1 (1), 2008 pp. 3 - 16	Explores school leadership in context of HIV/AIDS pandemic	Qualitative study Purposive sampling SMT and District Official perspectives Methods: Questionnaires and interviews Thematic analysis using NVIVO	Representations of space: policy documents Representational spaces: monologic, myths marginalization Paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS Leadership should embrace concept of dialogic space and give voice to those marginalised	Distributed leadership (Harris, 2004) Space (Lefebvre, 1991) Dialogic space (Rule, 2004) Socially just leadership (Shields, 2004, 2006)	<u>Two:</u> What factors support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools?

	CLUSTER 3							
7	Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space & practices	Sole	Resubmitted to <i>Education as Change</i> September 2008, Awaiting response	Explores a conceptual framework for leadership through the use of a vignette	VIGNETTE Qualitative study Purposive sampling SMT and District Official perspectives Methods: Questionnaires and interviews Thematic analysis using NVIVO	SMTs not leading in relation to HIV/AIDS – not creating safe spaces, attending to technical aspects Leadership paralysis due to their being outsiders – illegitimate peripheral participation	Democratic distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) Space, place (Lefebvre, 1991 and Tuan, 1977) Community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) Socially just leadership (Shields, 2004, 2006)	<u>Three:</u> How can we theorise teacher leadership within the South African schooling context?
8	Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively & transformatively	Sole	Chapter in edited book Muthukrishna, A. (2008) <i>Educating for social justice & inclusion: pathways & transitions.</i> NewYork: Nova Science.	No empirical research – chapter is an argument		Argues from critical perspective that schools require a democratic distributed form of leadership which is inclusive and which makes place for the inclusion of those previously disadvantaged, particularly teachers and women.	Democratic distributed leadership (Gunter, 2005) Habitus (Bourdieu, 1972) Socially just leadership (Shields, 2004, 2006)	<u>Three:</u> How can we theorise teacher leadership within the South African schooling context?

2.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As can be seen from the 'Publications Profile' on pages 8 - 10, the following three PhD research questions were generated from the nine pieces of work:

4. How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context?
5. What factors support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools?
6. How can we theorise teacher leadership within the South African schooling context?

Research question 1 is the primary question. However, this question presupposes that teacher leadership is already understood in contexts other than South Africa and I make reference to the extensive body of literature on teacher leadership in the literature review section in this proposal. The responses to Research question 1 can be found in articles 1, 2, 3a and 3b (referred to as Cluster 1) listed in the 'Publications Profile' table in the previous section of this proposal.

Research question 2 is the secondary question which proceeds from the responses received to Research question 1 and explores three domains which hinder the take-up of teacher leadership: i) gender within a rural context, ii) the domain of HIV/AIDS and iii) a teacher professional development initiative de-linked from issues of leadership. The responses to Research question 2 can be found in articles 4, 5, 6 (referred to as Cluster 2) and to a lesser extent 7 listed in the 'Publications Profile' table in the previous section of this proposal.

The final question, Research question 3, aims to develop a theoretical dimension to our understanding of teacher leadership for the South African school context. Initial responses to Research question 3 can be found in articles 7, 8 (referred to as Cluster 3) and to a lesser extent 4 and 6 listed in the 'Publications Profile' table in the previous section of this proposal. The 'Insights Chapter' of the thesis itself (see structure of the thesis on p. 35 of this proposal) will extend this discussion further and develop a theoretical framework for understanding teacher leadership in the South African context.

In the next section of this proposal I move on to introduce the reader to some of the literature on teacher leadership and develop an argument for researching teacher leadership in the South African schooling context.

3. Literature Review

Towards And Understanding of Teacher Leadership

3.1. INTRODUCTION

There appears to be little agreement on the exact definition of the term teacher leadership and using the words of Wigginton (1992), cited in Murphy (2005), I would like to state up-front that teacher leadership is devilishly complicated and the phrase itself is frustratingly ambiguous. Given the contested nature of the terrain, and for the purposes of this proposal, I begin this literature review with a section which explores some of the many definitions of teacher leadership and in this first section I position myself firmly in the field by including my own definition of teacher leadership developed for the South African school context. In much of the early literature, the term teacher leader was defined in terms of dimensions and roles and I include a discussion on this in the first section of the review. This discussion is important as it culminates in Devaney's (1987) six areas of teacher leadership which I found useful in analysing teacher leadership for the South African context. I therefore reordered and incorporated her six areas into my analytical framework for teacher leadership (see pp. 32 - 33 of this proposal). The next section of the review explores reasons why teacher leadership gained such prominence in the United States over the last two decades and suggests that, as interest in teacher leadership grows in South Africa, we should learn from the experiences of the US and be careful not to repeat the mistakes made in that context. I have also argued that teacher leadership must be understood in relation to the context in which it occurs (Grant, 2005³³⁰; Grant, 2006³³¹) and so, in the next section of the review, I discuss the cultural and structural conditions necessary for teacher leadership to emerge. This section highlights collaboration and shared decision-making as being central to effective teacher leadership and argues for the take-up of teacher leadership within professional learning communities. However, agency of the individual cannot be overlooked when trying to understand teacher leadership and so I include a section on some of the personal attributes and interpersonal factors of teacher leaders that have emerged from the research. The final section of the review highlights the critical role of the principal in creating a school culture which encourages and enables the emergence of teacher leadership.

3.2. WHAT IS TEACHER LEADERSHIP?

Before defining teacher leadership, I need to define leadership. As mentioned earlier, I work from the premise that leadership is the process which brings about change in the organisation and which "mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants or the status quo" (Donaldson, 2006, p.7). The simplest definition of teacher leadership is offered by Harris and Lambert (2003) who suggest that it is a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the

³³⁰ Article 4: Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations

³³¹ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

opportunity to lead. Howey's (1988) definition of teacher leadership emphasises the visionary and affective dimensions of teacher leadership. For him teacher leadership is "ultimately proven in the efforts of others to attempt to scale heights of human achievement and plunge depths of human caring not otherwise envisioned" (1988, p. 28). In exploring teacher leader programmes in the context of the US, Rogus (1988), using Purkey and Smith (1983), works from the premise that teacher leadership involves more than providing effective classroom instruction. He argues that in addition to interacting with learners, teacher leaders also "work with peers, administrators, and parents to build a school community that is characterised by faith in people's ability to work toward common ends and a commitment to assist others in achieving those ends" (1988, p. 46). Wasley's stories of three teacher leaders set within their own lives and the context of the reform movement in the United States in the 1980s highlights the classroom and instructional focus of teacher leadership. In the context of this research, she defines teacher leadership as "the ability of the teacher leader to engage colleagues in experimentation and then examination of more powerful instructional practices in the service of more engaged student learning" (1991, p. 170). More recently, Katzenmeyer and Moller write that "teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice" (2001, p.17). Still within the US context, Lieberman and Miller's work (2004) reports on the National Writing Project which develops teachers of writing who are also teachers of teachers and school leaders and the Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools, a regional collaborative that grows teacher leaders for its schools and districts. They came to the conclusion that "when teachers lead, they help to create an environment for learning that influences the entire school community" (Lieberman and Miller, 2004, p. 91).

Theorising and researching teacher leadership is a more recent phenomenon in the United Kingdom. Muijs and Harris (2003), whilst working on a project which focused exclusively on teacher leadership as a distinctive form of professional collaboration for school improvement, defined teacher leadership as "the capacity for teachers to exercise leadership for teaching and learning within and beyond the classroom" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p. 9). Pounder (2006) describes the development of teacher leadership over time, articulated in terms of three waves that progressively de-link the idea from the formal organisational hierarchy. He argues for a forth wave of teacher leadership that includes transformational classroom leadership as one of its qualities. More recently, Muijs and Harris have suggested that teacher leadership be conceptualised as "a set of behaviours and practices that are undertaken collectively. It is centrally concerned with the relationships and connections among individuals within a school" (Muijs and Harris, 2007, p. 112).

In the South African schooling context, the *Norms and Standards for Educators* document (RSA, 2000) envisages a teacher as an extended professional who is expected to perform seven roles; amongst them that of leader, manager and administrator. Teachers are firstly formal leaders in their classrooms as they lead and manage the teaching/learning process. Teacher leadership can be further understood as a form of leadership beyond headship which refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond (Grant,

2005³³²). However, my research into teacher leadership during 2006 and 2007 pointed to this understanding being too restrictive – too limiting in terms of how teacher leadership ought to be defined. While the emphasis on teachers in informal positions of leadership in the South African context must remain central to any understanding of teacher leadership, I argued more expansively that the concept itself must include teachers leading in formal positions outside of the classroom (such as Head of Department) as well. With this distinction in mind, I defined teacher leadership as:

a form of leadership beyond headship or formal position. It refers to teachers becoming aware of and taking up informal and formal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust (Grant, 2008a)³³³.

However, defining teacher leadership is more complex than what it appears at first glance. In much of the early literature on teacher leadership, the concept was defined in terms of formal roles that teachers might undertake and so I move on, in this section, to explore the roles, both formal and informal, that are sometimes attributed to teacher leaders.

3.2.1. Defining teacher leadership in terms of roles / dimensions

The formal roles that teachers leaders might undertake have traditionally included head of department, subject coordinator, union representative, association leaders, master teacher and member of school governance council (see Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Gunter, 2005; Harris and Muijs, 2005). However, in these roles teachers have often served as “representatives of change rather than leaders who enact or initiate change” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.16). More recently the term teacher leadership has expanded to include informal roles where teachers volunteer for or initiate new endeavours in the school.

Zimpher, reporting on state and district Department of Education initiatives in the US, takes the view that any new roles must require that the teacher leader possess significant and exemplary experience in the classroom and she endorses the point that “teacher leadership must be an outgrowth of expert practice and of expert knowledge” (1988, p. 54). In a similar vein, Ash and Persall reject the notion that only activities outside the classroom constitute leadership. For them the process of teaching is central to teacher leadership and involves “working collaboratively to improve teaching capabilities, designing learning activities and engaging in school based action research” (2000, p. 20). Rogus (1988) too emphasises the centrality of the effective classroom teacher in deliberations on teacher leadership programmes in the US context. For him effective classroom teachers are

reflective practitioners who know the research and the literature on teaching; they model the best practice in instruction; they are well grounded in their discipline(s) and they are liberally educated; they place their classrooms in a

³³² Article 4: Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations

³³³ Book Chapter 8: Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively and transformatively

larger social context and understand alternative visions of school and how external political and cultural factors influence these variables; they demonstrate command of programme regularities; and they have internalized the wisdom of daily practice (Rogus, 1988, p. 48).

The work of teacher leaders has also been described in terms of leadership positions and the roles attached to that position. According to Howey, these positions enable teachers to model methods of teaching, serve in an advisor capacity to other teachers, coach, mentor beginning teachers, study aspects of classroom life, jointly develop curriculum, structure problem identification and resolution, strengthen school-home relationships, or develop instructional materials (1988, p. 30). Many of these teacher leadership roles listed by Howey have been the centre of study for other researchers. For example, Joyce and Showers (1982) describe an innovative programme which involves peer coaching as a fundamental aspect of teacher leadership. The mentoring role of teacher leaders has also been a notable focus of research (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988) as has peer assessment (Zimpher, 1988). Zimpher argues for teacher leaders to be involved in the continuing professional development of other teachers as professionals, particularly with regard to “organised in-service and staff development programmes at the school level” (1988, p. 55). Against a backdrop of decentralised decision-making, Gehrke (1991) emphasises the importance of conflict resolution and communication skills while Lieberman, Saxl and Miles (1988) list rapport building, organisational diagnosis, dealing with the change process, finding and using resources, managing the leadership work and building skills and confidence in others as important aspects of the teacher leader role. Involvement of teachers in school-based planning, decision-making and assessment (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997) is yet another aspect of teacher leadership.

Day and Harris (2002, p. 973) suggest that there are four dimensions to teacher leadership:

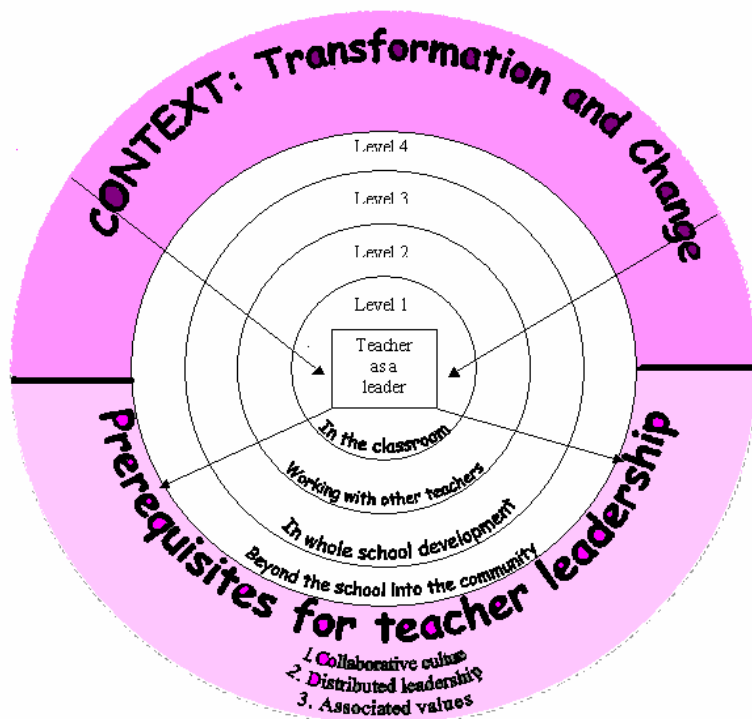
- i) the way in which teachers help translate the principles of school improvement into the practices of individual classrooms
- ii) participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership
- iii) the mediating role
- iv) forging close relationships with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place.

These four dimensions relate closely to the four levels of teacher leadership which emerged from my initial research into teacher leadership³³⁴ and which I developed for use in the South African context. The four levels of teacher leadership include teacher leadership within the classroom, teacher leadership as working with other teachers, teacher leadership as part of whole school development and finally teacher leadership as an extension beyond the school (Grant, 2006, p. 519). Day and Harris’ (2002) 1st dimension is similar to my level one, their 2nd dimension is similar to my level three while their 4th dimension is similar to my level two. Finally, their 3rd dimension, the mediating role, permeates my levels four, three, two and one. The figure below illustrates the four levels of teacher leadership and locates them within the South

³³⁴ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

African context of transformation and change. Furthermore it identifies some of the prerequisites necessary for the take-up of teacher leadership.

Figure 1: Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa



(Grant, 2006, p. 525)

In attempting to capture the essence of teacher leadership, the Carnegie Foundation in the United States tasked Devaney (1987) with the responsibility of developing a description of what teacher leadership might look like. Her paper entitled *The lead teacher: Ways to begin*, describes the following six areas in which teachers might demonstrate leadership at school level and which might assist them to become “architects of school reform” (Wasley, 1991, p. 20):

7. Continuing to teach and improve one’s own teaching
8. Organising and leading peer reviews of school practice
9. Providing curriculum development knowledge
10. Participating in school level decision-making
11. Leading in-service education and assisting other teachers
12. Participating in performance evaluation of teachers

Each of the six areas of teacher leadership listed above is broad and captures many of the individual roles mentioned earlier. For example, **area one** is similar to Day and Harris’ (2002) 1st dimension where teachers help translate the principles of school improvement into the practices of individual classrooms. This area also includes the centrality of expert practice and of expert knowledge (Zimpher, 1988), the design of learning activities and engagement in school based action research (Ash and Persall, 2000) as well as the process of reflective practice (Rogus, 1988). Organisational diagnosis and dealing with the change process (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988),

action research (Ash and Persall, 2000) as well as the mediating role (Day and Harris (2002) constitute roles within **area two**. Joint curriculum development (Howey, 1988) is clearly a role within **area three** while **area four** is about participative leadership where all teachers feel part of the change or development and have a sense of ownership (Day and Harris, 2002) and includes problem identification and resolution (Howey, 1988), conflict resolution and communication skills (Gehrke, 1991) as well as school-based planning and decision-making (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997). **Area five** incorporates forging close relationships with individual teachers through which mutual learning takes place (Day and Harris, 2002), staff development (Zimpher, 1988; Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997), peer coaching (Joyce and Showers, 1982) and the mentoring role of teacher leaders (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988) as well as rapport building, together with building skills and confidence in others (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) while **area six** includes peer assessment (Zimpher, 1988).

Devaney's (1987) six areas have been central to my work on teacher leadership. I have reorganised her six areas and mapped them onto my original teacher leadership model, discussed earlier, in an attempt to expand the model of teacher leadership for the South African context (see Grant, 2008b)³³⁵. This expanded model can be viewed on page 33 of this proposal. But why should we have a model of teacher leadership for the South African context, the reader might ask? Is the study of teacher leadership even important for the South African schooling context? In the next section I look at why teacher leadership has become an essential feature in the professionalisation of schools in the United States and reflect on the importance of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context.

3.3. WHY TEACHER LEADERSHIP?

In the United States teacher leadership has become a defining characteristic of efforts to professionalise teaching and reform schools (Smylie, 1995). Teacher leadership, Hart (1995) suggests, is promoted for the following reasons:

- to nurture a more democratic, communal or communitarian social system for schools and schooling,
- to draw on teachers' expertise and experience as a school resource by providing teachers with more power and voice in matters related directly to teaching and learning,
- to provide more appropriate work designs and incentives for teachers, and
- to create a more professional workplace in schools.

US policy makers, argues Barth (1990), support the notion of teacher leadership for the following reasons: Firstly, more able people will be attracted to the teaching profession, secondly, more people will choose to remain in the profession and, thirdly, leadership opportunities will bring out the best from teachers which will result in a raise in pupil achievement. He cites research which suggests that "the greater the

³³⁵ Article 5: 'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

participation in decision-making, the greater the productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment” (Barth, 1990, p. 130).

As a mechanism to recruit and retain high caliber teachers in the US, the notion of career ladders for teachers was introduced and has been extensively researched (see for example, Howey, 1988; Mertens and Yarger, 1988; Zimpher, 1988; Barth, 1990; Hart, 1995). The concept of career ladders distinguishes hierarchical levels of teaching, with the highest being the lead teacher and the concept has also been linked to differentiated salaries over a teaching career (Mertens and Yarger, 1988).

In contrast, teacher leadership is not a defining feature of school improvement discourse and neither are there national programmes for aspiring teacher leaders at this juncture in South Africa’s democratic history. Recently the National Department of Education introduced and formalised the positions of ‘senior’ and ‘master’ teacher in schools [see Department of Education (2008), Annexure A of the Occupational Specific Dispensation document] in an attempt to offer a career path opportunity for classroom teachers who choose not to apply for promotion into school management posts. However, in the way this new policy has been introduced, it would seem that we are repeating the career ladder implementation problems of the US where implementation occurred “in the absence of consensus regarding how the teaching roles should be differentiated along hierarchical levels” (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 33). The new senior and master teacher roles tend to be awarded to teachers based on years of service rather than on competence and expertise as teacher leaders. As we see the beginnings of teacher leadership being introduced in our country, we need to heed the warning of Muijs and Harris that “teacher leadership roles cannot successfully be imposed by management” (2003, p. 442). I argue strongly that where there are attempts by government to formalise teacher leadership through policy directives, the opposite tends to happen and I agree with Jackson (2003) that teacher leadership cannot be imposed or mandated or assumed but instead needs to be bestowed by those who are to be led (Jackson, 2003).

It is my view that teacher leadership is a concept which is essential to school improvement (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997) because of its power as an “instance of change as well as a vehicle for change” (Smylie, 1995, p. 6). Like Clemson-Ingram and Fessler (1997) I do not believe that teacher leadership is a fad or passing fancy but a concept and reality which can be initiated at several points in the career cycle of a teacher and which has the potential to transform our South African schools into democratic learning communities. However, as mentioned earlier, teacher leadership is an under-researched area in South Africa and further research is necessary before we can begin to understand how teacher leadership can work in our South African schools. I argue that, for teacher leadership to be successful in our country, “it has to be a carefully orchestrated and deliberate process” (Muijs and Harris, 2007, p. 129) within a supportive school culture.

3.4. BUILDING A CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Research suggests that a supportive school culture is essential to the emergence of teacher leadership. In this regard, Yukl (1994) reminds us that leadership generally, and teacher leadership specifically, is an organisational phenomenon. Teacher

leadership then needs to be understood in relation to the context in which it occurs (Grant, 2006³³⁶) and, as Smylie argues, “it may be difficult to develop teacher leadership to its full potential without also developing its contexts” (1995, p. 6). In order for teacher leadership to emerge in a school, I have argued (see Grant, 2008b)³³⁷ that certain structural and cultural conditions are necessary. Structural changes involve time being set aside for teachers to “meet to plan and discuss issues such as curriculum matters, developing school-wide plans, leading study groups, organising visits to other schools, collaborating with Higher Education Institutions and collaborating with colleagues” (Muijs and Harris, 2007, p. 113). On the other hand, cultural changes, which are more difficult to bring about, involve collaboration (Little, 2000) and shared decision-making within a culture of mutual trust, support and enquiry (Harris and Lambert, 2003). For Barth (1990), collegiality is essential to the development of teacher leadership and shared decision-making where collegiality arises from “the trust within a group; and trust is a requisite when an institution of consequence – a school – depends on the honest expression of trust” (Sizer, 1990, p. xi). I would agree with Harris and Muijs that the answer to improving schools “resides in cultural rather than structural change and in the expansion rather than the reduction of teacher ingenuity and innovation” (2005, p. 2).

3.4.1. Teacher leadership and shared decision-making

While teacher leadership requires a school culture which is supportive and collaborative, it also requires that teachers become more involved in decision-making. While research into teacher leadership has focused on the role of the teacher in decision-making (see for example Griffin, 1995; Muijs and Harris, 2007), historically teachers’ involvement in decision-making has been restricted to the classroom and to decisions such as what and how to teach and assess. However, decision-making processes beyond the classroom have traditionally excluded the voices of teachers. In contrast, Clemson-Ingram and Fessler advocate that public education requires teachers to be “full partners in school-based planning, decision-making and assessment” (1997, p. 95). Supporting this view, Mertens and Yarger argue strongly that “teaching will not be professionalised until teachers become more involved in making decisions that affect not only their classrooms, but also their professional lives beyond the classroom” (1988, p. 35). Extending the argument further, Troen and Boles (1994) contend that teacher leaders are unlikely to emerge in contexts where teachers are powerless to affect school-wide policy. They go on to suggest that teacher leadership should enable practicing teachers to reform their work and provide a means for altering the hierarchical nature of schools. In other words they should be seen as “fully empowered partners in shaping policy, creating curriculum, managing budgets, improving practice, and bringing added value toward the goal of improving education for children” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 40).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) call for schools to become professional learning communities where democratic and participatory decision-making exists and where teachers can thrive and make a difference through the actions they take in such school contexts. However, they warn that shared decision-making which is designed to advance administrative agendas is not a democratic model but rather a controlling

³³⁶ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

³³⁷ Article 5: ‘We did not put our pieces together’: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

model which “ignores the intellectual capacity of teachers to make wise decisions” (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001, p. 27). It stands to reason then that authentic teacher leadership cannot be imposed but will emerge as teachers embrace new initiatives and innovate in a climate of trust and mutual learning. Explained slightly differently, teacher leadership is more a “form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43). It can involve teachers working for change in a school by changing classroom practice itself, by working together with other teachers on curriculum issues, by working at a whole school level to bring about change or by networking across schools (Grant, 2006³³⁸). However, it is important to note that the leadership role of teachers within the school as a community is just one aspect of their continuing professional development. In the words of Zimpher, “professional development is an ongoing activity for which teacher leadership is only one of the multiple phases of teacher development” (1988, p. 55).

3.5. TEACHER LEADERS: PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

The previous section sketched teacher leadership as an organisational phenomenon and highlighted the centrality of collaboration and shared decision-making to effective teacher leadership. However, the individual agency of a person cannot be overlooked when trying to explore the concept of teacher leader. Each teacher is unique and brings their own identity and way of doing things to the construct of teacher leader. In trying to understand this construct better, we must be careful not to overlook, as Glickman (2002) reminds us, identity factors of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class and life histories as well as the “talent, energy, thought and knowledge” (p. 93) of individual teachers. Research has shown that, for teachers to function as leaders, a healthy mix of personal attributes and interpersonal factors are necessary. These include a “positive morale derived from confidence and pride in one’s competence” (Mertens and Yarger, 1988, p. 35), “purposefulness” (Donaldson, 2006, p. 181), the courage to take initiative (Grant, 2006³³⁹), the strength to take risks (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) and the ability to “work collaboratively with peers” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.24). Teacher leaders are required to be:

risk-takers, willing to promote new ideas that might seem difficult or threatening to their colleagues. Their interpersonal skills- they know how to be strong, yet caring and compassionate – helped them legitimate their positions amid hostile and resistant staffs (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988, p. 150).

Research has pointed out the many benefits of teacher leadership, both to the school as well as to the individual teacher leader. Some of the individual benefits, benefits to the teacher leader, include a healthy self-esteem, a sense of autonomy and a level of self-actualisation (Clemson-Ingram and Fessler, 1997). However, it must be pointed out that having many effective teacher leaders in a school does not suggest that the role of the principal becomes redundant. On the contrary, research has shown that a strong principal is crucial in nurturing a culture of teacher leadership and I move on to discuss this in the next section.

³³⁸ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

³³⁹ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

3.6. LEADING TEACHER LEADERS

The introduction of teacher leadership in a school does not spell redundancy for the principal. Instead, the role of people in formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership within different communities of practice in a school. It becomes the role of the principal and the SMT to create opportunities for teachers to lead by developing a culture of collaboration within the school and by identifying the strengths and talents of the individual teachers and inviting them to lead in areas where they have the potential to succeed. The task of the SMT becomes one of holding “the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.28). The work of the principal, according to Ash and Persall, begins with “spending time – lots of it – with teachers, in and out of classrooms, engaged in conversations about teaching and learning” (2000, p. 18) within a school culture which is open and inviting. Establishing a “climate of trust, eliminating the fear of failure and encouraging innovation” (Ash and Persall, 2000, p. 21) are actions of the principal and the management team. For Barth, the most important item on a list of characteristics of effective principals, then, is “the capacity to relinquish, so that the latent, creative powers of teachers can be released” (1988, p. 640). However, for schools to improve, not only do principals need to distribute authority, but teachers also need to claim and take up their agency role. As Harris and Muijs argue:

Both senior managers and teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers and try to bring about fundamental changes. Essentially, school improvement requires a conceptualization of leadership whereby teachers and managers engage in shared decision-making and risk-taking (2005, p.133).

In this literature review I have explored some of the definitions of teacher leadership, many of which have outlined various roles that teachers take up as they lead in schools. I have also briefly summarised the reasons why teacher leadership has become so popular in the United States and have argued, based on this learning, for teacher leadership in South Africa so long as we heed the warnings highlighted in the US research. I have also endeavoured, in the review, to emphasise teacher leadership as both an individual phenomenon and an organisational phenomenon and have argued that teacher leadership thrives in schools with a collaborative culture which encourages shared decision-making within professional learning communities. I also highlighted the critical role of the principal in facilitating the school culture necessary for teacher leadership to emerge. In the next section of this proposal I introduce the reader to the theoretical frameworks which I will be using in my study of teacher leadership.

4. Theoretical frameworks

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this section of the proposal I do three things. Firstly I introduce the reader to three possible theoretical underpinnings of teacher leadership (Rogus, 1988) and locate my research accordingly. Secondly I refer briefly to the contested field of education leadership discourse and locate myself and my work within a discourse of educational leadership as a group activity in which all people have potential to participate. Within this sub-field, I draw particularly on distributed leadership theory as the overarching theoretical framework for my research (see my publications profile on pp. 8 - 10). I then move on to link distributed leadership to communities of practice theory and argue for education leadership to be viewed as a practice. Working from the premise of education leadership as a practice, I find the concepts of apprenticeship, mentoring and legitimate peripheral participation within communities extremely useful for my study and discuss these in some detail. Finally I raise the issue of education leadership as a dynamic power process which involves the development of and struggle for capital and signal its power in positioning people and either including or excluding.

4.2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

What are the theoretical underpinnings of teacher leadership? Rogus (1988) suggests three possible underpinnings of teacher leadership programmes in the United States; school improvement, teacher effectiveness and leadership. My research into teacher leadership in the context of South Africa is primarily informed by the literature and research on education leadership. However, I am not interested in researching education leadership for leadership's sake but my interest is to understand, describe and explain how education leadership – and specifically teacher leadership - influences school improvement. I support the view of Clemson-Ingram and Fessler (1997) that teacher leadership is a concept which is essential to meaningful school improvement and transformation. Like Barth (1990), I believe that school reform comes about by improving schools from within rather than relying on reform initiated by national policy. And, in the process of improving schools from within, there is a wealth of latent leadership potential amongst teachers, parents, principals and learners that can be tapped and used as a resource for improvement. I now move on now to indicate to the reader how I understand the contested term of educational leadership, following which I then explore, in more depth, the theoretical frame of distributed leadership theory which I use for my teacher leadership study.

4.3. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP THEORY³⁴⁰

Conceptions of leadership which are premised upon individual endeavour where leadership is equated with headship are, as Day and Harris argue, “unnecessarily limited and do not adequately explain or expose how leadership contributes to school improvement” (2002, p. 958). In direct contrast to theories of leadership such as the depressing ‘great man’ theory of leadership which implies leadership as individual, predetermined and gendered, I work from the premise that leadership should be a group endeavour. Leadership as a group activity is not a new phenomenon. Over a half century ago Gibb, in analysing leadership behaviour, wrote that “leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group” (1954, p. 884). Within this understanding of leadership as a group quality, I work from a second premise which is that within the group all people have potential to lead, regardless of their formal position or status, and the challenge is to develop the appropriate culture and strategies to tap this latent potential³⁴¹. Working from a vision of a school as a community of leaders (including teachers, parents and learners), Barth argues that leadership involves a process which is simply about “making the things happen that you believe in or envision” (1990, p. 124). To achieve this vision requires that leaders think more about the relationships and connectedness of people as they work together to transform schools. As Day and Harris contend, education leadership is:

a dynamic between individuals within and without an organisation in which effective leaders focus on the relationships among individuals within a school and the promotion of pedagogic leadership which places an emphasis on the development of the school through shared purpose and the development of others (2002, p. 960).

Gunter takes this thinking further when, theorising from a critical perspective, she argues that:

education leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others’ learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning (2005, p.6).

In attempting to understand the shift from control to connectivity to which Gunter refers, I argue that orthodox ways of thinking about leadership be replaced with a distributed form of leadership (Gibb, 1954; Gronn, 2000, Spillane, 2006). There is little agreement about the meaning of the term ‘distributed leadership’. For Gibb, the leadership functions which must be performed in any group can either be ‘focused’ or ‘distributed’ where “leaders will be identifiable both in terms of the frequency and in terms of the multiplicity or pattern of functions performed” (1954, p. 884). Gronn, working within the frame of distributed leadership as activity (and activity theory in particular), is of the opinion that “leadership is more appropriately understood as a

³⁴⁰ The theoretical frame for all nine pieces of work (see publications profile on pp. 8 - 10)

³⁴¹ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views and Article 4: Teacher leadership: gendered responses and interpretations

fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed, phenomenon” (2000, p. 324). He highlights how distributed leadership brings about the “abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles” (2000, p. 325). For Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods, distributed leadership is a way of thinking about leadership which can be described as “not something done by an individual to others” (2003, p.3) but rather “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise” (2003, p.3). For them it is a form of leadership which is “fluid rather than located in specific formal roles or positions, blurring the distinction between leaders and followers” (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, p.6). This blurring of the dualism, Gronn (2000) contends, results in a different power relationship within the school.

Working within a theoretical frame of leadership as practice, Spillane argues that a distributed perspective on school leadership is about leadership practice as the unit of interest, framed as “a product of the joint interactions of school leaders, followers and aspects of their situation such as tools and routines” (2006, p. 3). For him, the critical issue is not whether leadership is distributed but *how* it is distributed. It therefore presses us to investigate “how leadership practice is stretched over two or more leaders and to examine how followers and the situation mutually constitute this practice” (Spillane, 2006, p. 15). For Gunter (2005) distributed leadership has value because it raises questions about the location and exercise of power and examines what is distributed; mere technical tasks or authority, responsibility and legitimacy?

I am drawn to distributed leadership theory because it is separate from an automatic connection of leadership with headship and offers a framework for thinking about and analysing leadership. Contrary to certain views, distributed leadership is “neither friend nor foe” (Spillane, 2006, p. 10), neither is it “a blueprint for doing leadership more effectively” (p. 9) Instead the framework allows for the flow of influence and the redistribution of power in organisations and offers a way to “generate insights into how leadership can be practiced more or less effectively” (Spillane, 2006, p. 9).

Gunter (2005) offers a useful characterisation of distributed leadership which is significant for my study and I take the liberty of sharing her ideas with the reader. Gunter suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic (2005, p.51). Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership is where work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations and because it gives status to the person who takes on the work. This type of leadership can also be termed ‘delegated leadership’ and is evident where there are “teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation” (Woods, 2004, p.6). Teachers often accept the delegated work, either in the interests of the school or for their own empowerment. However, power remains at the organisational level and teacher leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions. Secondly, *dispersed* distributed leadership refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous, bottom-up and emergent and is accepted because of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of organisational members who, either individually or in autonomous work groups, develop the work (Gunter, 2005). This type of leadership centres on spontaneity and intuitive working relations (Gronn, 2003) and, as Gunter

explains, “while formal structures exist with role incumbents and job descriptions, the reality of practice means that people may work together in ways that work best” (2005, p.54). Through sharing the leadership work more widely and redefining roles, the power relations in the school are shifted away from the formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals. Thirdly, *democratic* distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005, p.56) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely (Woods, 2004). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004, p.7) and raises questions of inclusion and exclusion which include “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p.57). In other words democratic distributed leaders transform not only individual understandings of self and others, but that they “lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities” (Shields, 2006, p. 77).

I am particularly interested in socially just forms of leadership, as my book chapter³⁴² suggests, and I therefore believe that the democratic form of distributed leadership is what we should be trying to achieve within schools. I plan therefore, in my thesis, to explore distributed leadership and, more specifically, democratic distributed leadership in an attempt to conceptualise teacher leadership within this framework. I plan to argue that teacher leadership within a democratic distributive leadership perspective has the power to transform schools into professional learning communities – communities of practice.

4.4. DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THEORY

How and why we work together, and how we might work together better, argues Gunter (2005), are issues underpinning the discussions about distributed leadership. As discussed in the previous section, Spillane works from a distributed perspective and foregrounds leadership practice and suggests that “leadership practice is constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations” (2006, p.26). I have argued that education leadership should be viewed as a practice, a shared activity in which all can be involved³⁴³ and I have found Wenger’s (1988) ‘communities of practice’ as a theory of learning a useful starting point in conceptualising leadership for the South African schooling context. Communities of practice are a fact of social life and people can belong to many different communities of practice at different times in their lives, some of which are “sometimes so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons are also quite familiar (1998, p.7). They are important places of negotiation, learning, meaning and identity; they are about “knowing, but also about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity, and altogether being human” (Wenger, 1998, p. 134). These professional learning communities are characterised by learning as social participation where participation is a process of “being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p.4). And as Jackson argues, these “professional

³⁴² Book Chapter 8: Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively and transformatively

³⁴³ Article 7: Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space and practices

learning communities are distributed leadership communities” (2003, p.xiii). These communities have histories and within those histories there are “some practitioners who are regarded as having achieved excellence in the practice, and even some who – through their excellence - revealed new ways of participating in the practice” (Morrow, 2007, p. 132). However, we would do well to heed the warning of Wenger that communities of practice should not be romanticized because they also have the potential to “reproduce counterproductive patterns, injustices, prejudices, racism, sexism, and abuses of all kinds” (1998, p. 132).

In thinking about education leadership as a community of practice, this community would be one of the many communities of practice in which teachers might participate. And, as I have argued, any educator can participate in the practice of leadership, regardless of position or designation, because all people have potential to lead. Obviously SMT members are integral to this leadership practice but so are teachers. The leadership potential of teachers constitutes a wealth of human capital but it is so often unacknowledged and untapped (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001; Muijs and Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006). Often too, the leadership potential of SMT members lies dormant because of the multitude of managerial and administrative tasks imposed on them from within the hierarchy of the education system. These structural constraints within the school can hinder the take-up of teacher leadership³⁴⁴.

4.4.1 Enhancing teacher leadership through apprenticeship and mentoring within community

To enhance teacher leadership in a school then is to invite teachers to become participants in the practice of leadership, initially as novices and then, over time, as full participants in the practice. Lave and Wenger’s expanded apprenticeship model of learning is useful here in that it broadens the traditional connotations of the concept of apprenticeship from a master/student or mentor/mentee relationship to one of “changing participation and identity transformation in a community of practice” (see Wenger, 1998, p. 11). Within this expanded understanding of apprenticeship, Anderson’s (1987) definition of mentoring is appealing. For him, mentoring can be defined as:

A nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé (in Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988, p. 40).

Gehrke (1988) contends that mentors have always been much more than mere master teachers. Using Buber’s (1970) notions of I-It and I-thou to describe how mentors and protégés might relate to each other, Gehrke (1988) argues for the abandonment of the objectifying (I-It) mode and the adoption of the more powerful (I-thou) relationship

³⁴⁴ See for example Article 5: ‘We did not put our pieces together’: Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens, Article 7: Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space and practices and Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

where there is entry into an authentic relationship. She further argues that “to encourage mentoring relationships, dialogue – and not monologue – must be nourished” (Gehrke, 1988, p. 45). Briefly, the word ‘dialogue’ comes from the Greek word *dialogos* which means ‘conversation’ or ‘discourse’ (Lefebvre, 1991; Rule, 2004). The term implies a form of speech between two or more people where the people who take part in the dialogue are individual beings who are separate from each other but who come together through the conversation. Dialogue is

an unfolding process, a search or quest for knowledge and understanding usually through the medium of spoken language, but not excluding written and visual codes, involving partners who are committed to the quest. Thus dialogue assumes relationship and is impossible without it (Rule, 2004, p. 320).

I have argued the need for dialogue within the context of safe spaces for teachers in the practice of leadership³⁴⁵; dialogic spaces of equality, non-hierarchy, learning and empowerment which “provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds” (Rule, 2004, p. 326). These dialogic spaces operate in direct contrast to monologic spaces. Monologic spaces are characterised by an absence of community, a lack of authentic dialogue together with a lack of trust and transparency. They are places of inequality where the powerful dominate and deny others their voice and their right to speak.

Together with this expanded conception of apprenticeship and this powerful ‘I-thou’ relationship, I also find the concept of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1999) useful in understanding and explaining the practice of leadership. In order to excavate leadership potential within a school, educators with leadership experience (whether SMT members or teachers) should lead the practice and invite newcomers to join. Newcomers, such as novice teachers or newly appointed SMT members, can begin their leadership journey on the periphery of the practice. This constitutes ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ in the leadership practice which refers to the gradual process by the newcomers or apprentices of participating in, “of both absorbing and being absorbed in”, as well as assembling “a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community” (Lave and Wenger, 1999, p. 22). With time, the newcomers will learn, through participation in the practice and from those with more experience, to become full participants in the leadership practice. However, we know that leadership is a complex practice within an ever-changing school context. As such it consists of multiple existing strands, often inter-related and occurring simultaneously with new strands emerging all the time. It follows then that the legitimate peripheral participation in the practice of leadership is not only the domain of newcomers but that everyone can to some degree be considered a ‘newcomer’ as the practices within the leadership community change. In other words, the leadership of the practice will rotate depending on the issue at hand and the strengths and experience of the practitioners in the community to deal with the issue.

³⁴⁵ Article 6: ‘In this culture there is no such talk’: monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS and Article 7: Towards a conceptual understanding of leadership: place, space and practices

4.4.2. Community as an arena for the development of and the struggle for capital

The positioning of people within communities immediately raises the question of power; where the power lies and who holds the power. Gunter emphasises that “educational leadership meets the issue of power head on” (2005, p. 45) and argues that “our entry into, and participation within, a community of practice is a dynamic power process” (2005, p. 83). We cannot talk about leadership if we do not talk about issues of power. The centrality of power is highlighted in Day and Harris’ model of leadership for the 21st century which implies “a redistribution of power and a realignment of authority within the school as an organisation” (2002, p. 960). The question is essentially about the locus of power and whether the power is concentrated in the centre and exercised by an individual or whether it is dispersed or decentred among a plurality of people (Gronn, 2000). And, as Delpit asserts, “to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same” (2003, p. 182).

In thinking about education leadership within a community of practice, there is some commonality with the work of Bourdieu (1977) where ‘community’ can be compared with ‘cultural field’ and ‘identity’ with ‘habitus’. And, while Wenger’s ‘communities of practice’ theory is strong because of its emphasis on individual agency as well as its emphasis on “how to improve organisational performance rather than on how to understand and explain social practice (Gunter, 2005, p. 81), it is weak in that it in that it does not fully explore the power relations in the group and the structures that structure our identity and make us who we are. Bourdieu’s (2000) theory of symbolic capital, through which people are socially recognised within a group, constitutes a theory of power because “belonging to a group is something you build up, negotiate and bargain over, and play for” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 75). Furthermore, his concept of ‘habitus’ (1977) is useful in that it enables us to talk about issues of power through the interplay of agency *and* structure as people position themselves in a field and position others in a stake for capital. Carrington and Luke describe how:

The particular features of the habitus are formed via a process of inculcation which begins at birth. One develops distinctive class, culture-based and engendered ways of ‘seeing’, ‘being’, ‘occupying space’ and ‘participating in history’. The concept of habitus, then, serves to connect the biologic being with the social world via physical and psychic embodiment, a structured and structuring durable, yet flexible, disposition (1997, p. 101).

If we regard a school as a site within the field of education leadership through which the habitus of those for whom the school serves is revealed within practice then “we can begin to see community as an arena of struggle and dialogue over purposes, and we can understand the dispositions of those who are positioning and being positioned in particular ways” (Gunter, 2005, p. 107). In other words the field or community of education leadership becomes an investment in or competition for capital; “social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers” (Day and Harris, 2002, p. 960). Leadership must begin to take on a moral purpose because “when leadership is morally based, its effect on spirit, commitment, and results is not only strong but obligatory, allowing the school to function as a community of responsibility (Sergivanni, 2001, p. 61). Within this community of responsibility, dialogic spaces must be created for teachers to find their voice because

“to find a voice is to find an identity and the possibility of agency in the world” (Ranson, p. 268). Ranson further argues that

the unfolding agency of the self always grows out of interaction with others. It is inescapably a social and creative making. The self can only find its identity in and through others and membership of communities. The possibility of shared understanding requires individuals not only to value others but to create the communities in which mutuality and thus the conditions for learning can flourish (2000, p. 274).

To summarise, the two broad theoretical frameworks for my PhD are distributed leadership theory and communities of practice theory. Within these two theoretical frameworks I will be using concepts such as ‘apprenticeship’, ‘mentoring’, ‘legitimate peripheral participation’, ‘dialogic space’ as well as ‘monologic space’, ‘habitus’, and ‘capital’ to theorise my work. In contextualising teacher leadership for the South African schooling context, I, like Gunter (2005), argue that teacher leaders are more than deliverers of externally determined change. Teacher leadership must be conceptualised within a democratic distributed leadership framework which encompasses “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, p. 57). Education leadership for the South African context, and particularly teacher leadership, must be “grounded on the norms of inclusion and respect and a desire for excellence and social justice” (Shields, 2004, p. 116) if we are serious about transforming our schools into democratic institutions. Education leaders, including teacher leaders, within communities of practice must continually strive to:

facilitate, model, and encourage dialogue about the multiple realities of the school community, helping students and adults alike to challenge inequities, to develop respect for difference, and to create frameworks and criteria for making tough decisions about right and wrong (Shields, 2006, p. 64 - 65).

In the next section I turn to the research that underpinned each of the pieces of work selected for my PhD and discuss the design, methodology and methods of the seven individual studies as well as the design of the thesis.

5. Research Design and Methodology

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this section of the proposal I give a brief overview of the research design, methodology and methods used in the seven individual studies which underpinned the nine pieces of work. Building on these designs enabled the PhD design to emerge and I discuss complexity theory and its potential for holding the PhD research design together. I then turn to the issue of connectivity in the thesis and highlight three levels of connectivity across the nine pieces of work which hold the thesis together and ensure coherence. Following this I move on to indicate to the reader how my PhD by publication will be structured and outline what will be in each of the chapters. In the latter part of this section I sketch a projected time frame for my PhD and a tentative budget.

5.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: AN UNFOLDING PROCESS

The Publications profile on pages eight to ten of this proposal outlines a brief description of the research design and methodology of each of my nine pieces of work. It can be seen from the profile that my primary aim was to obtain in-depth (thick) descriptions and understanding of teacher leadership in specific contexts. As such, my study was located within the qualitative research paradigm as I attempted to describe and understand human (educators') perceptions and experiences (of teacher leadership) from the perspective of the social actors themselves (Babbie and Mouton, 1998). Because I wanted an 'insider' or 'emic' view, my participants were educators, either teachers or SMT members, selected purposefully. My research design was emergent because, in researching teacher leadership, I had no idea what it was I did not know and so, as my design proceeded, I had to seek continually "to refine and extend the design – to help it unfold" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 in Babbie and Mouton, 1998, p. 275). During this unfolding design process, I adopted theoretical sampling which is described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison as the process where "data are collected on an on-going, iterative basis, and the researcher keeps on adding to the sample until there is enough data to describe what is going on the context or situation under study and until 'theoretical saturation' is reached" (2007, p. 492). Through this process of theoretical sampling, I extended my research design until I gathered sufficient data to create a theoretical explanation of how teacher leadership was understood and experienced in the South African schooling context and could determine what factors supported or hindered the take-up of teacher leadership.

Thus the research design for my PhD finally included five small qualitative studies (see Articles 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6/7 on the Publications Profile, pp. 8 - 10) and used a combination of qualitative methods of data collection. These methods included open-ended questionnaires, self-reflective journals, focus group and individual interviews as well as documents such as reports. To enhance validity and reliability and give breadth to the qualitative methods of data collection, I included two studies designed as quantitative surveys; one using random sampling and the other using purposeful sampling (see papers 3a and 3b on the Publications Profile, p. 8). Through the use of multiple methods of data collection, I was able to triangulate data and, in so doing, reduce the chance of researcher bias and increase the trustworthiness of the data. During the data reduction process, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows (Einspruch, 1998) was used in the analysis of the two quantitative surveys (conference papers 3a and 3b), while thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data in each of the five qualitative studies. Cohen *et al*, borrowing from Flick (1998) and Mayring (2004), define content analysis as "a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data" (2007, p. 475).

Complexity theory is an emerging new paradigm for research which I have recently read about and think might be pertinent to my PhD. Very briefly, complexity theory looks at situations through the eyes of as many participants as possible; it enables multiple causality, multiple perspectives and multiple effects to be charted and, through self-organisation, argues for "participatory, collaborative and multi-

perspectival approaches to educational research” (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p. 34). My PhD by the publication route offers multiple views, voices and perspectives on teacher leadership and involves, in some instances, a participatory and collaborative research approach. Complexity theory does not deny ‘outsider’ research – and I was definitely an ‘outsider’ through the research process - but it emphasises that “outsider research has to take in as many perspectives as possible” (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p. 34), which I attempted to do. Furthermore, I am drawn to complexity theory because, not only does it accord with the need for several perspectives on a situation but it also “resonates with those tenets of critical research that argue for different voices and views to be heard” (Cohen, *et al*, 2007, p. 34). And, as discussed throughout this proposal (and especially page 3), I wanted to understand better and give voice to those groups of people who are often marginalised or excluded from the processes of leadership. So my work in the PhD will include an exploration into Complexity Theory to determine its relevance, if any, for my study. Regarding ethical issues related to my PhD, ethical clearance for all research projects was applied for prior to embarking on the individual projects and ethical clearance was approved by the Faculty of Education Research Committee.

5.3. CONNECTIVITY AND A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The PhD involves three levels of connectivity. The 1st level of connectivity is in relation to the clustering of work around the three research questions as can be seen in the publications profile on pp. 8 - 10. To remind the reader, the three research questions are as follows:

1. How is teacher leadership understood and experienced in the South African context? (Cluster 1: Articles 1, 2, 3a and 3b)
2. What factors support or hinder the take-up of teacher leadership in South African schools? (Cluster 2: Articles 4, 5, and 6)
3. How can we theorise teacher leadership within the South African schooling context? (Cluster 3: Articles 7 and 8)

The 2nd level of connectivity of all 9 pieces of work is through the theoretical framework of distributed leadership discussed earlier in this proposal (pages 23 – 29) and summarised in the publications profile on pp. 8 - 10.

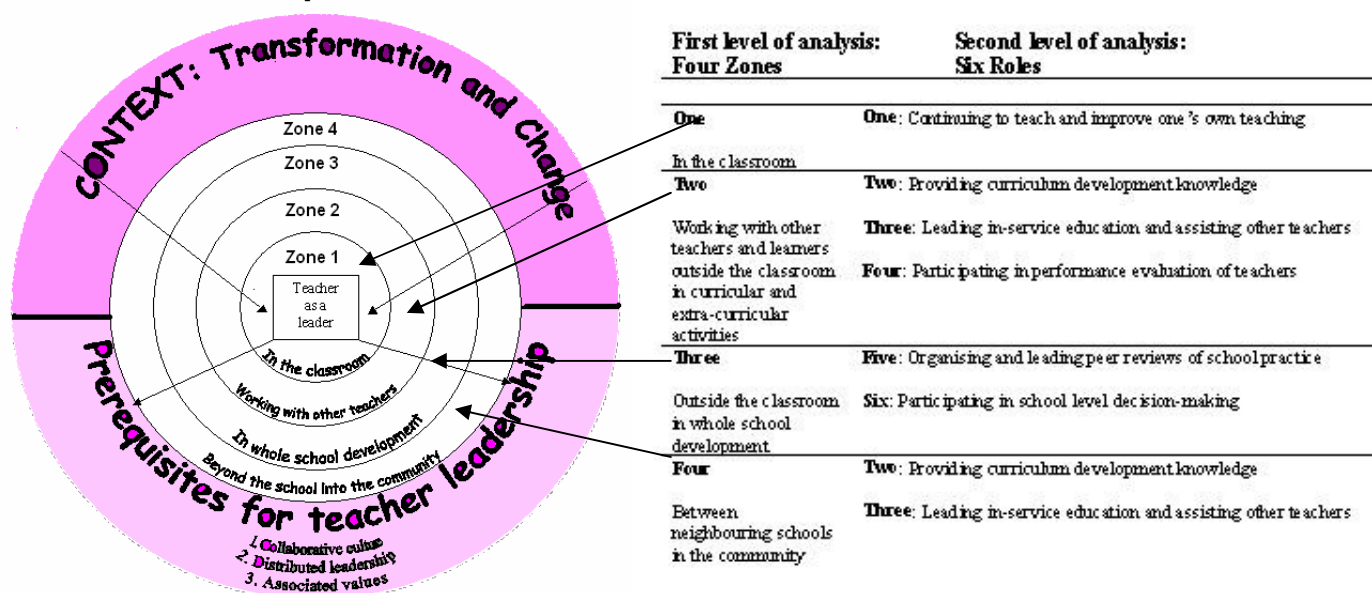
The 3rd level of connectivity across the pieces of work is the development of an overarching analytical framework – a framework for analysis of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. The 1st phase of the framework emerged in Grant (2006, p. 525)³⁴⁶ and constituted the four semi-distinct levels or zones of teacher leadership. In that paper, I argued (see also literature review, p. 16 of this proposal) that teacher leadership exists within the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Secondly, it exists between teachers when they discuss curriculum issues and work together in order to improve their teaching and learning. Thirdly, it extends beyond separate learning area foci into whole school planning, development and decision-making. Finally it exists beyond the school boundaries into the community and between neighbouring schools.

³⁴⁶ Article 1: Emerging voices on teacher leadership: Some South African views

The 2nd phase of the framework emerged in Grant (2008b)³⁴⁷. I realised that analysis of teacher leadership within the four zones was insufficient in developing a comprehensive understanding of teacher leadership. I therefore turned to the international literature on teacher leadership and explored the various roles of teacher leadership in more detail. I found the six areas of teacher leadership, identified by Devaney (1987), [see page 16 – 17 of this proposal] useful and re-ordered them and mapped them onto my four zones. The diagram below illustrates how the levels of *zones* and *roles* work together as a tool for analysis.

Figure 1: Towards a model of understanding of teacher leadership in South Africa

TEACHER LEADERSHIP



The diagram above was used as a tool for analysis in the article sent to *Perspectives in Education*³⁴⁸ as well as in the conference papers³⁴⁹. I am presently working to extend the model further by sketching indicators of each of the six teacher leadership roles (see pages 16 - 17 of this proposal).

5.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

I envisage my PhD being structured in the following way:

Chapter One

Introduction: Background and context of the study

³⁴⁷ Article 5: 'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens

³⁴⁸ Article 2: Passing the buck: this is not teacher leadership!

³⁴⁹ Conference paper 3a: Emergent teacher leadership within the local context: a survey in the Umlazi District and conference paper 3b: The restricted reality of teacher leadership: a South African survey

This chapter will essentially offer an executive summary of the thesis. It will begin with a clear statement of the form of the thesis – thesis by publication and will outline the background and context of the study. It will include my rationale for the research, my publications profile (pp. 8 - 10) as well as the PhD research questions which emerged from the clustering of pieces of work. Finally it will offer a framework for how the various chapters articulate with each other and contribute to the overall integrated argument of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Towards an understanding of teacher leadership

This chapter will include a comprehensive and critical literature review that locates my research in relation to the relevant published work on teacher leadership. I will link the relevant sections of the literature review to my articles through the use of my Publications Profile (pp. 8 - 10 of this proposal) as well as through the use of footnotes, as I have done in this proposal. The literature review will follow the format used in this proposal. It will begin with a section which explores some of the many definitions of teacher leadership and here I will include definitions of teacher leadership defined in terms of dimensions and roles. The next section of the review will explore reasons why teacher leadership gained such prominence in the United States over the last two decades with a view to understanding and planning for teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. The review will also explore the cultural and structural conditions necessary for teacher leadership to emerge and will highlight the importance of collaboration and shared decision-making within professional learning communities. However, agency of the individual cannot be overlooked when trying to understand teacher leadership and so a section on some of the personal attributes and interpersonal factors of teacher leaders will be included. The final section of the review will highlight the critical role of the principal and SMT in creating a culture which encourages and enables the emergence of teacher leadership in schools.

Chapter Three

Research Design: Towards an analytical framework for teacher leadership

As summarised in the Publications Profile on pages 8 - 10, Chapter Three will present an overview of the methodologies used in the nine pieces of work. This will include study sites, research participants, research methods and methods of analysis on which the publications are based. It will then explore complexity theory as a possible research paradigm within which to locate the research holistically. Issues of connectivity are critical to this PhD by publication and this chapter will present a detailed account of the three levels of connectivity. The chapter will also reflect on issues pertaining to ethics. Its strategic importance will be in linking the previous sections to the forthcoming publications.

Chapters Four, Five and Six Publications / Findings

These chapters will consist of the nine pieces of work which will be organised around the three research questions. Chapter Four will be organised around Research Question 1 and will include the 1st cluster of articles (1, 2, 3a and 3b). These articles

have been clustered together because they provide answers to the 1st research question. Chapter Five will be organised around Research Question 2 and will include the 2nd cluster of articles (4, 5 and 6). These articles have been clustered together because they provide answers to the 2nd research question. Chapter Six will be organised around Research Question 3 and will include the 3rd cluster of articles (7 and 8). This chapter will indicate how each of the articles 7 and 8 respond to the 3rd research question. Responses to each of the research questions will be constructed as a coherent argument which will answer the questions and address the gap in the literature on teacher leadership in South Africa. Although each article is a stand alone publication, they will articulate with each other through preceding and concluding sections (I plan to use inter-textboxes to signal the articulation).

Chapter Seven

Insights: Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools

This will be a substantial chapter that synthesises the preceding sections and provides an argument for how together the chapters constitute an original contribution to the existing knowledge on teacher leadership in the field. It will be organised around insights gained from responses within each of the three clusters, and particularly the 3rd cluster. The chapter will show how the nine pieces of work cohere through the theoretical framework of Distributed leadership theory and Communities of Practice theory. The chapter will also include a reflection on the research process and its limitations, the implications that flow from the research and recommendations for further research.

Reference list

Appendices

5.5. PROJECTED RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Given that I already have five published articles and that two articles are in the process of peer-review, I hope to complete the thesis within a two year period. Furthermore, it is my intention to achieve a level of academic rigour in my thesis equivalent to the level of rigour expected from a PHD by the more conventional route. It is my intention to work according to the following projected timeframes:

Dates	Tasks
15 – 19 th September 08	Rework and resubmit Article 7 to <i>Education as Change</i>
22 September 08	1 st meeting with supervisors
23 Sept – end Oct 08	Development and submission of proposal
Nov – Dec 08	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work on development of papers 3a and 3b into articles for journal submission 2. Rework Article 2 once feedback from <i>Perspectives in Education</i> is received
1 st quarter 2009	Develop literature review (Chapter 2)
2 nd quarter 2009	Work through and reanalyse all 9 pieces of work according to research questions. Develop the preceding and concluding sections

	of Chapters 4 – 7 (inter-text boxes) to ensure coherence within and across chapters
3 rd quarter 2009	Develop methodology section (Chapter 3)
4 th quarter 2009	Develop Chapter One (Introductory section)
1 st semester 2010	Develop Chapter 8 – Insights Chapter
August 2010	Submit 1 st draft of full thesis to supervisors
2 nd semester 2010	Work on revisions Submit thesis for examination 15 December 2010

5.6. DETAILS OF BUDGET FOR THE STUDY

Item	Cost
Travel: monthly visits to supervisors	20 x R350 = R7 000
Paper	R500
Printer cartridge	R700
Copying and binding of thesis (8 copies)	8 x R400 = R3 200
Total	R11 400

6. References

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APPENDIX E

Minutes of the meeting-PhD Proposal Presentation held on 7th November 2008 in Faculty Boardroom Room, Edgewood Campus

Members of Panel

Prof D Bhana (Chair)
Dr J Wassermann
Dr D Pillay
Prof R Sookrajh (supervisor)
Dr V Chikoko (co-supervisor)
M C Grant (student)

In attendance

Ms V Ngidi

Title of the thesis: *Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools*

The panel recommends acceptance of the proposal. They panel also congratulated the student on comprehensive work done and an excellent example of the PhD by publication route.

The proposal was accepted.

The following recommendations were made to enhance the study:

1. Critical Question 2- Reconsider the word factors to practices or discourses
2. Methodology- Mixed-mode methodologies suggested (See Cresswell's work) and explore explanatory and sequential content.
3. Articles that deal with HIV and AIDS and gender – the student needs to add the theories that will support obstacles that hinder efficacy in leadership and relate issue of gender and HIV and AIDS with theoretical framework
4. Ethical Clearance- The student must collect all the ethical clearance certificates of the studies that will be used in the thesis; declaration letters from co-authors that state the primary status of the student, and from NRF together with a new application to the research office that provides overall clearance for the study.
5. Assessment - The assessment follows the same route as a normal PhD thesis. The thesis to the examiner will contain the letter stating that it's a PhD by publication.

Prof D Bhana
Chairperson

APPENDIX F

Room 42A
School of Education and Development
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01
Scottsville
3209

Derek Buchler
Research Office
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal
3210

13 February 2009

Dear Derek

As you know I am registered as a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my student number is 841843618. My PhD is by publication and provisionally titled *Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools*. It is based on a selection of 9 published (or in process) articles and I use the PhD research questions to pull the findings of the 9 articles together (see attached proposal which was passed by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee in May 2008).

I would like to know whether there is a need to apply for ethical clearance for my PhD, given that ethical clearance was granted for the independent research projects on which the published articles were based. To clarify, my PhD involves no new collection of data.

The seven projects underpinning my PhD study are as follows:

The first project (on which Article 1 is based) was implemented in 2004 as a qualitative study and explored the perceptions of a group of 11 educators on the concept of teacher leadership for the South African schooling context. The educators were all tutors involved in a professional development initiative which I coordinated and which ran parallel with a B Ed Honours module they were teaching at UKZN. The study was designed as a tutor self-reflective journaling process over a six month period. The primary data source was the 11 tutor journals while a focus group interview offered a further data collection method. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data and the categorizations of the data gave rise to the beginnings of a model of teacher leadership (see Grant, 2006, p. 525), in essence a grounded theory approach. All tutors' consented to participate in the research project and I ensured that the project was implemented in an ethical manner to safeguard the participants, myself and the university. However, at the time of the project, there were no formal ethical clearance processes in place at the then University of Natal.

The second project (on which Article 4 is based) emerged out of the findings of the first project. I was concerned that “while the findings of the first study contributed to knowledge production on teacher leadership in South Africa, there was almost no mention of teacher leadership as it related to issues of gender” (Grant, 2005, p. 46). This silence in the research motivated me to explore, in 2005, the relationship between gender and teacher leadership. This second study which was also qualitative in design explored the gendered nature of the distribution of school leadership. It did this through a focus group interview process with 18 KZN educators and used thematic content analysis to analyse data. All educators (B ED Hons tutors and MED students) consented to participate in the research project and I ensured that the project was implemented in an ethical manner to safeguard the participants, myself and the university. However, at the time of the project, there were no formal ethical clearance processes in place at the university.

My third project (on which both Articles 6 and 7 are based) was located within a larger National Research Foundation (NRF) Project - Grant No. 2054168 - which aimed at mapping barriers to education experienced by children and adults in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a small country town in KwaZulu-Natal. The project leader was Prof Nithi Muthukrishna and the ethical clearance approval number for the project is HSS/06062A.

The fourth project (on which Article 5 is based) was also located within a larger research project. This project arose from a partnership established between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and Bridgewater State College, Massachusetts in the United States. The goal of the project was to develop and research a replicable and effective school-based model of professional development for teachers in KwaZulu-Natal. The project leader was Prof Volker Wedekind and the ethical clearance approval number for the project is HSS/06301A.

The fifth project (on which Article 2 is based) was designed as a small qualitative study and implemented in two previously disadvantaged urban primary schools in Pietermaritzburg in 2006. It aimed to explore notions of distributed leadership within the two schools in order to determine whether the SMT either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership. The project applicant was M ED student Mrs Hitashi Singh and the ethical clearance approval number for the project is HSS/06227.

The sixth project (on which Conference Paper 3a was based) took place during 2007 and involved survey research into teachers’ perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership. Quantitative data in the form of self-administered, closed questionnaires were gathered from 396 post level one teachers in a random sample of 19 schools in the Umlazi District, KZN. The project applicant was M ED student Mrs Jabulisiwe Khumalo and the ethical clearance approval number for the project is HSS/0094/07M.

The seventh project (on which Conference Paper 3b is based) was designed as a post-graduate student group research project under my coordination and leadership in 2008. It aimed to teach and support Bachelor of Education Honours students in doing research using quantitative methods. It involved survey research into teachers’ perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership. I was the project leader and the ethical clearance approval number for the project is FRC/0003/08MOD.

The 9th piece of work to be included in my PhD is a book chapter entitled “Distributing school leadership for social justice: finding the courage to lead inclusively & transformatively”. It is a conceptual chapter which does not report on any research project or findings. The chapter can be found in the edited book by Prof Nithi Muthukrishna, A. (2008) *Educating for social justice & inclusion: pathways & transitions*. NewYork: Nova Science.

Regarding my PhD by publication, I need to know whether all ethical clearance approval criteria have been met. If ethical approval has been met for the PhD, please forward me written confirmation of this approval. If further conditions need to be met, please let me know what I need to do to obtain approval.

Kind regards

Ms Callie Grant
Lecturer
Staff Number: 24502

APPENDIX G



APPENDIX G

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL: sshrec@ukzn.ac.za

25 FEBRUARY 2010

MS. C (CALLIE) GRANT (841843618)
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT
PIETERMARITZBURG CAMPUS

Dear Ms (Callie) Grant

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0085/10D
PROJECT TITLE: "Theorising teacher leadership: Changing scenarios within South African Schools"

FULL APPROVAL NOTIFICATION – COMMITTEE REVIEWED PROTOCOL

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above was reviewed by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Committee in 2009, has now been granted full approval following your responses to queries previously addressed:

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Collings".

PROF. S COLLINGS (CHAIR)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Prof. R Sookrajh)
cc. Dr. Vitalis Chikoko
cc. Mrs. R Govender & Ms. T Khumalo

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

APPENDIX H

APPENDIX H



04 November 2009

Student No: 841843618

Ms C Grant
School of Education & Development

Dear Ms Grant

Change in Title: Doctor of Philosophy

The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee at its meeting held on 02 November 2009 approved your change of title as follows:

From:
Theorising teacher leadership: changing scenarios within South African schools.

To:
Distributed teacher leadership in South African schools: Troubling the terrain.

Yours sincerely,



Nomsa Ndlovu
Postgraduate Administration

cc: Professor R Sookrajh, School of Education Studies
Dr V Chikoko, School of Education and Development

**Faculty of Education
Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Studies and Research)**

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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville