

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL**

**FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION TO  
ENABLE VISION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE METHODIST CHURCH**

**By**

**Simphiwe Siyabonga Mthembu**

**212558328**

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**Graduate School of Business and Leadership**

**Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches**

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## DECLARATION

I, Simphiwe Siyabonga Mthembu, declare that:

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- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) is recognised as one of the biggest churches in South Africa. It operates in Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and South Africa. The current Secretary of Conference of the Methodist Church has commented that the Church has three times branches as compared to PEP stores around the Connexion. This testifies that the Methodist Church is a very large organisation which has influence and touches lives of many people.

In 1999 the Methodist Church adopted a vision which is 'A Christ healed Africa for the healing of the Nations' and a mission statement of 'God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for Healing and Transformation'. In 2005 there was a special Mission Congress to evaluate and identify obstacles that were hindering the implementation of the vision. Since 2012 there was still not clear indication of how the church is implementing its vision. The conference raised questions whether the vision is still relevant and if it is achievable, if the ministers understand it and if there is something the church needs to do differently. These questions were the motivation of this study.

The study employed the Learning Organisation disciplines as they are presented by Peter Senge to assist the MCSA to respond to these questions and to implement the vision and mission statement. The qualitative research method was used for the purpose of this study. The study focused on the ministers who are custodians of strategy implementation in local churches. In-depth interviews were held with ten ministers. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The research discovered that there is a lack of strategic leadership, ministers are not taking ownership and there is a lack of knowledge sharing. Another critical finding was the lack of passion for continuous training and learning beyond ordination of

ministers. The research also discovered that there was a lack of systems of monitoring and evaluation. This was critical because other ministers felt that they were working towards the vision but there are no systems for monitoring and evaluating their work. The study concluded with recommendations that are in consideration of the findings and are inspired by learning organisation disciplines.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Many organizations formulate visions and strategies as a way of achieving their goals and objectives. These are often aimed at growing the organizations thereby making them successful (Bligh, Carsten and Kohles, 2012). A vision assists leaders, managers and followers to see the future together. The challenge comes when the vision remains a vision without any implementation (Jick, 2001). This research explored the possibility of using learning as a disciplinary tool to implement an organisation's vision. According to Garrant (2005), learning is a crucial variable which allows sensitive balancing by directors, managers and staff of stability and change in their organization. Bligh et al. (2012) state that even though vision is viewed to be at the hands of managers and leaders, but for the vision to be achieved it needs to be clearly articulated so that followers can take ownership of the vision as well. This means that organisations which seek to implement their vision should learn to rigorously translate their vision to all the members.

The study was conducted within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Highveld and Swaziland district, a church organization that has a vision which it finds hard to implement. There has been a view that the Methodist Church vision and mission which are "The Christ Healed Africa for The Healing of the Nations" (MCSA Yearbook, 1999/2000: 2) and "God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for Healing and Transformation" (MCSA Yearbook, 1999/2000: 2) is unrealistic, irrelevant, too ambitious and cumbersome (MCSA Yearbook, 2013). The assumption within the MCSA is that people on the grassroots do not understand the vision and are not clear with what it entails. This study used Peter Senge's Fifth Discipline Learning Organisation (Senge, 2004) in exploring the possibility of creating vision learning for all the members of the MCSA in order to improve their application and implementation of the vision in their different contexts.

This chapter presents an overview of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the motivation and focus for the study, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study, the research questions, a preliminary literature review, the contribution of the study, the research methodology, the limitations of the study, and an outline of the chapters.

## **1.2 Background of the problem**

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa has a vision of “A Christ-healed Africa for the healing of the nations” (Yearbook, 2004) with the mission statement, “God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation” (Yearbook, 2004). Although the vision and mission statements were adopted in the 2003 Conference, the build up to the adoption started in 1999/2000 which shows how well thought through the vision was. Vision and mission statements were built up strategic goals of the Journey to New Land which was a renewal program for the church in the new South Africa (Kumalo, 2006). The background work to vision and mission statements that came through Journey to New Land brought Six Calls as areas of focus for the church:

- A deepened spirituality in the life of our Church
- An assurance that our life is guided by God’s mission
- A rediscovery of “every member ministry”; or the priest-hood of all believers
- An engagement with what it means ‘to be one so that the world may believe’
- A re-emphasis on servant-leadership and discernment as our model for ministry
- A redefinition and authentication of the role of the clergy in our church (MCSA Yearbook, 1999/2000).

In 2004, the MCSA resolved to hold a Mission Congress in trying to find ways to implement the vision and mission statements. According to the Mission Unit Director of that time, Rev Gcobani Gideon Vika, despite the fact that the Methodist Church

has a sound Mission Strategy, it is clear that a lot of work is crucial to educate the members about this vision which is only concretized at local level (Mission Congress Report, 2006). The mission congress came up with Mission Pillars, which were to help members of the church to be focused on vision and mission implementation.

The Mission Pillars with Co-ordinators are:

- Spirituality
- Evangelism and Church and Church Growth
- Justice and Service
- Development and Economic Empowerment (Mission Congress Report 2006; Yearbook 2006).

The Mission Congress also produced a Mission Charter (Appendix 1) and Mission Objectives which are:

1. Healing ministry
2. Deepening of our understanding of Africa and other Spiritualities
3. Co-ordinate programmes for Christian Education, information and communication
4. Building meaningful relationships that transcend racism, sexism and all other forms of discrimination
5. A vigorous response to the crises of HIV/AIDS
6. Informing our prophetic ministry by researching socio-economic issues
7. Identifying land for sustainable livelihood
8. Sacrificial giving
9. Becoming a church in solidarity with the poor
10. Providing training in Evangelism
11. Training ministers for the African context
12. Implementing anti-bias training
13. Becoming a more youth and child centred church (Mission Report 2006).

The Mission Congress then put in place an implementation system where all four mission pillars were listed with areas of Objective, Actions, Responsibility, Time Line

and Monitoring. There is no proof that the church has done any monitoring and there is no system to measure the work that has been done in local churches. Although these calls or strategic focus points have been amended several times over the years, the vision is still the same. Despite some questions regarding the vision's relevance and achievability that have been raised, the church still confirms that this is what it is called to achieve (MCSA Yearbook, 2013).

One of the questions that have been asked is whether the ordained ministers of the church clearly understand the vision. This study sought to work around this question. It was identified through personal experience, as an ordained minister of the MCSA, that no direct introduction to the vision is done during training of ministers, although some courses, such as conflict resolutions, African spirituality, leadership and management and many other studies, which could equip the ministers with skills to contribute towards the attainment of the vision, are done but the courses are done in a reductionist way. Ministerial training then becomes mechanistic rather than looking at the whole (Minutes of Secretary of Conference 2011).

The Methodist church is a 'connexional' church, which means that all ministers and churches are under the governance and directives of a conference that sits yearly (Methodist Book of Order 2014). In the context of the study, the vision that the church currently has, has been a directive of the conference which means that all local churches need to embrace the vision and somehow work towards its accomplishment.

The Connexion is made up of twelve districts which are:

1. Cape of Good Hope District (which operates in the Western Cape Province of South Africa and some portion of Namibia)
2. Grahamstown (which operates in some portion of the Eastern Cape)
3. Queenstown (which operates in some portion of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa)

4. Kimberly, Namibia and Bloemfontein (operates in the Free state Province of South Africa and Namibia)
5. Northern Free state and Lesotho (operates in the Free State Province of South Africa and the whole of Lesotho)
6. Natal Coastal (operates in The KwaZulu Natal Province of South Africa)
7. Natal West (operates in The KwaZulu Natal Province of South Africa)
8. Central District (operates in Gauteng and North West Provinces of South Africa)
9. Highveld and Swaziland (operates in parts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga Provinces of South Africa and the whole of Swaziland)
10. Limpopo (operates in parts of Gauteng and Mpumalanga Provinces and the whole of Limpopo Province)
11. Mozambique (operates in the whole country)
12. Clarkebury (operates in parts of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal Provinces) (MCSA Book of Order 2014).

Therefore this study looked at how ministers, leaders of the church understand and interpret the vision. Even though the study has a 'connexional' interest, it focused on one District (Highveld and Swaziland) which fairly represents the connexional dynamics in terms of demarcations, race, ethnic groups and economy.

### **1.3 Motivation for the study**

The researcher, as an Ordained Methodist minister, has come across some frustrations with his local church when trying to implement the vision of the church. The main frustrations emanated from the lack of understanding of what exactly this vision means to his local church and its immediate community. Other local churches were consulted with the aim of hearing and assessing their approach in aligning their local church with the broader vision of the MCSA. It was discovered that the other churches were also confused and were struggling to make meaning of the vision and its application to their societies.



Those who attempted to implement the vision worked in silos, without any systematic approach. It was also found out that some organisations within the church would be focusing on the vision, while others would feel that the vision is irrelevant to them. This challenge was confirmed by the General Secretary of the MCSA in his reports that many societies (local churches) are struggling to implement the vision. In one of his reports he raised these questions on the implementation of Church's vision:

- "Is it still relevant?"
- Is it achievable?
- Do our ministers understand it?
- Is there something we need to do differently?" (Yearbook: 2012, p 12).

Although this research does not focus on these questions, they are the motivation to investigate why such a good and inspiring vision of "Christ healed Africa for the healing of the nations" is difficult to implement.

#### **1.4 Focus of the study**

The focus of the study is on organisational strategic leadership and management disciplines. Kantabutra and Avery (2010) emphasize that any organisation that wants to succeed must have a clear vision that resonates with the team members or followers. In this study the learning organisation discipline was used to link vision and people. Senge (2006) in his seminal book "The Fifth Discipline" points out that organisations that want to succeed need to be learning and should master the five disciplines of a learning organisation. This study focused on implementing the five learning disciplines in the Methodist Church for vision and mission execution.

#### **1.5 Problem statement**

The study assumes that the challenge with vision implementation in the MCSA is

caused by the lack of ability to be a learning organisation. The church has, over the years, produced documents of policy and strategies for vision implementation yet people on the ground still struggle to grasp and implement the vision because the church as an organisation fails to be a learning organisation. The structures that develop the vision and mission statement were the mainly top leadership of church. Clearly throughout the process and over the years of this vision and mission statements there has been no clear indication of people involvement.

In 2003, Vernon Rose, a private consultant, worked on governance and Mission work of the church. She found that although the vision and mission of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is relevant to its general course, there are however a few shortcomings. She concluded by saying:

- “There is limited debate on the implications of the vision --- What does, A Christ Healed Africa” mean? (Rose, 2003: 5)
- In this regard there are limited discussions on the scope and the theology of the vision.
- There seems to be a disjuncture between the vision and the scope of the current focus.

This research, therefore, explores whether Peter Senge’s “The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization” can be used as a tool to overcome the shortcomings that were identified by Rose.

## **1.6 The purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to relate the lack of vision implementation to the organisation’s failure to be a learning organisation. The vision needs to be shared by all stakeholders, and it should be cascaded to every member, regardless of their position within the church. To achieve the purpose of the study, a qualitative research was conducted on Methodist Church Ministers. Their experience and

presumptions will test whether the Methodist Church is a learning organisation or not. The learning organisation disciplines, namely Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning were used against the experience of the Ministers and Stewards. The research was conducted in all parts of the Highveld and Swaziland District.

### **1.7 Aim and objectives**

The aim of the study was to assist the Methodist Church of Southern to understand the importance of a vision for the church, to identify challenges associated with understanding and promoting the vision and to determine how the church can develop into a learning organisation to enable vision implementation.

The objectives of the study were:

- To understand the importance of a vision for the church.
- To identify challenges associated with understanding and promoting the vision.
- To determine how the church can develop into a learning organisation to enable vision implementation.

### **1.8 Preliminary Literature Review**

The literature was examined the implementation of vision and mission statements using learning organization disciples. The study will be mainly focusing and centred around Senge's fifth discipline, which includes Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning and Systems Thinking (Senge, 2006).

Other aspects and influences of learning organisation discipline such as Learning Climate Drivers were considered (Carrin and Bassom, 2013). Vision and mission

statements are a process that belongs within organisational strategic management. Theories of formulating and implementation the vision will be explored (Gadiesh and Gilbert, 2001). The process of vision execution should be understood within context, and it should be understood that context and environment is ever changing which causes complexity for organisations. Srivastava and Sushil (2014) present a link between strategy management and strategy execution which is adaptability of the organisation to ever changing environment through using learning organisation disciplines.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was employed for the study as it gives understanding on human behavior. This study was conducted within an organisation. According to Creswell (2009) a qualitative study helps to understand culture, social control, stability and change or social organisation.

In-depth interviews were conducted with ten Methodist Ministers on their role in implementing the vision. The interviews were conducted in the form of open discussions. The data was collected and analysed through themes. Thematic analysis was used to identify key subject that affect the vision implementation.

## **1.10 Contribution of the Study**

The MCSA is planning to hold another strategic planning process in 2016 (Yearbook 2015). It is a norm that every ten years top leadership meets to evaluate the vision and direction that the church is taking. In 1981 they came with the Obedience 81. In 1990 it was "Journey to the New Land" with six calls, in 1999/2000 it was "A Christ healed Africa" which was confirmed in 2006 conference after 2005 mission congress (Yearbook 2006). Therefore the study will be contributing by introducing the learning

organisation as a key strategic process to evaluate and give direction to the church. It will assist the church to take a broader consultative process with the majority of its members. The study will also reveal and expose current challenges with the intention to avoid them in the future.

### **1.11 Limitations of the study**

The main limitation of the study is that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is a very big organisation, which operates in six different countries. The church also is multiracial and very diverse in terms of ethnicity and literacy levels. These challenges were addressed by focusing on one District which is Highveld and Swaziland. The District operates in part of Gauteng, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland. The District has four sub-regions which are Vaal, Eastern Gauteng, Far East and Swaziland. The interviews were conducted in all these regions and were sensitive to race, gender and age.

Another limitation is the availability of documents and formal/academic records of the church process in vision development. This challenge was addressed by mainly using Yearbooks is minutes of Conference and other records of meetings. It would have been helpful if notes and comments that were used to shape decisions were available.

### **1.12 Structure of the Dissertation**

The study will be presented in six chapters, which will cover the following areas.

#### **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter introduced the research subject of “Facilitating the development of the learning organisation to enable vision implementation in the Methodist Church”. The chapter also gave the direction which the dissertation will take. It gave an

introductory background to the research topic and provided the context of the study. It further outlined the aim and research objectives and also the motivation for the study. The aims and objectives of the study were presented with the full outline of the study.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The study is centred on the development of the learning organisation in a church context for the purpose of vision implementation. Therefore literature review explored books, journal articles, internet sources and other academically accepted resources. Theory was used to back the assumptions of applying the learning organisation concept to the church. The main research topics on theory will be the Church, the Learning Organisation as a concept of organisation improvement, and vision implementation process.

## Chapter Three: Research Methodology

There are two main research methodologies which are used as techniques to collect data which are quantitative approach and qualitative approach. This chapter will describe the qualitative research methodology applied in the study. It will explain the research design, methodology applied, sampling process and data collection system.

## Chapter Four: Results

This chapter will present the findings of the study.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The findings of Chapter 4 will be discussed in relation to previous literature on the topic.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations

This will be a concluding chapter, which will present the recommendations which will be to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

This chapter is an introduction to the subject of learning organisation and its implementation in an organization. It gave an explanation on what Peter Senge's tools for learning organization are; and how they can be used to assist an organisation to find direction and realize its dreams through empowering its members.

The next chapter will explore literature on vision implementation and the learning organisation discipline.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two explores literature that has been used in facilitating vision implementation processes. The history of vision development and its application by leaders and organisations will be explored. Most literature attributes vision implementation process to the ability of leaders and their leadership styles, visionary leadership in particular; and others attribute vision implementation to effective style of management systems (Meyer and Botha, 2005). Therefore, the process of vision implementation is tied up in both leadership and management disciplines. Concepts, tools and strategies that are traditionally used in vision implementation will be explored in this chapter as well.

The main focus of the literature review will be on the learning organisation concept. The study is within the church context, therefore literature that links vision and church will be also explored to give meaning to the study. Documents and various publications that have been produced in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa will be also presented. This will provide the background of the church's vision. This review should be able to assist the research to theoretically affirm that vision in the church can be implemented using learning organisation concepts.

### **2.2 Strategic Management**

The first stop in dealing with the subject of vision implementation process is to understand that it falls under the strategic management discipline. Management is the process of dealing and controlling people for the attainment of the task. Strategic management can be defined as the set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives (Pearce and Robinson, 2011). The strategic management process includes three main levels, which are, strategic formulation, strategic implementation and strategic evaluation (Pearce and Robinson, 2011). The process of strategy in an organisation

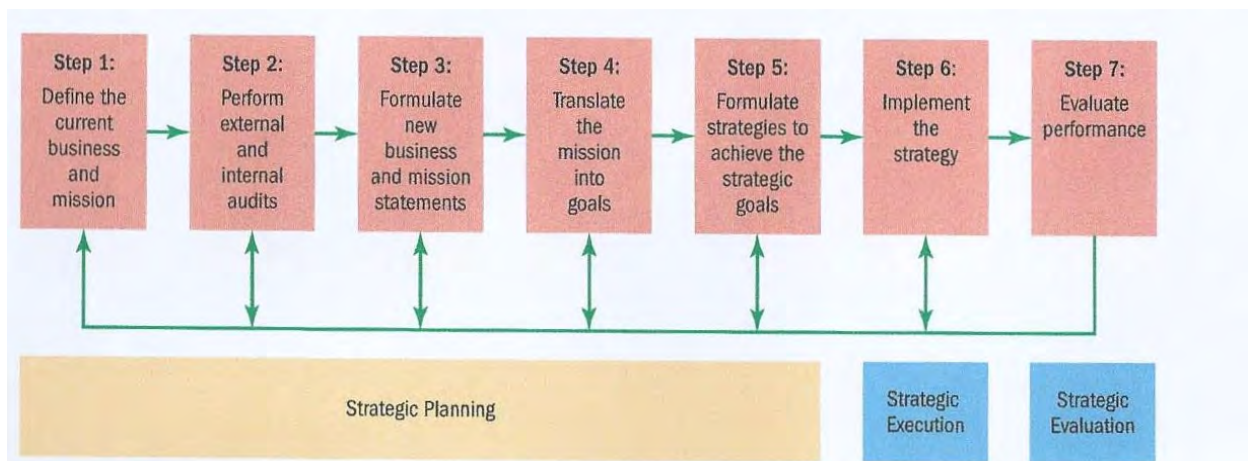


is useful for the attainment of a vision of the organisation. Gadiesh and Gilbert (2001) give seven steps of strategic management, which are:

- Step 1: Define the Current Business (VISION)
- Step 2: Perform External and Internal Audits
- Step 3: Formulate New Business and Mission Statements
- Step 4: Translate the Mission into Strategic Goals
- Step 5: Formulate Strategies to Achieve the Strategic Goals
- Step 6: Implement the Strategies
- Step 7: Evaluate Performance

In short, strategic management is a process of outward focusing, forward-thinking and performing based on what the organisation has agreed upon.

**Figure 2.1: Strategic Management Process**



**Source: Gadiesh and Gilbert (2001: 79)**

Figure 2.1 depicts that vision implementation involves intense steps that should be carefully monitored. Strategic Management Process should be followed step by step and each step is as important as the next. The strategic management process involves strategic planning, strategic execution and strategic evaluation. Vision and mission formulation are part of the strategic planning part of the strategic management process.

## 2.3 Vision

Vision is defined by Collins and Porras (1996) as the act or power of anticipating that which will or may come to be. It is also defined as the ability to see the future with imagination or wisdom (Oxford Dictionary, 2007). Vision is something that is conceptualised for the achievement of a specific goal. It can be the vision of an individual, a group, a community or an organisation. Visions are created to help organisations to be imaginary and focused on what they want to achieve (Senge, 2014).

Kantabutra and Avery (1997) state that there is no clear way of defining what a vision of leaders or organisations is. The reasons behind leaders and organisations visions differ; some organisations have goal-oriented visions, others have visions for personal and collective motivation, while other visions are for product focus. Vision development is entirely dependent on the context and stage of development of the organisation or the individual, and definitely on individual or group formation. A vision should be clear and easily understood by the people it is intended for.

Vision statements are developed from missions, which define the purpose and primary objectives of the organisation. According to Swales and Rogers (1995), mission statements stress values, positive behaviors, and guiding principles within the framework of the corporation's announced belief system and ideology. A mission statement of an organisation addresses the fundamental reasons of why that organisation exists. The above is contradictory to what is proposed by Hariparsad (2005) who says that the mission statement explains the role that the organisation plays in making its vision come through. Therefore, mission statements become instruments of ethos, culture, and ideology of an organisation (Fairhurst et al., 1997) and they give a bigger and clearer picture of what the organisation is all about. Thorough understanding of the mission statement of an organisation is, therefore, necessary before the process of vision development can be embarked on.

A vision is made up of five key elements (Fon, 2011). A vision should be emotional, participatory, exciting, and complementary and must bring about enthusiasm. An organisational vision should, therefore, be continuously learnt by the organisation to

evaluate if the organisation is still on track towards achieving its desired state. According to Meyer and Botha (2004) vision building must involve all relevant stakeholders such as senior management, middle management and all employees. However, the vision should also be flexible and adaptive as it will come across challenges as the organisation develops and progresses. The team should be continuously inspired by the vision, so vision should be also relevant to the cause. A vision should not be cast in stone; rather it should be something that keeps people going as its continuous relevance is crucial to the organisation's survival.

In order for a vision to be implemented, strategies of its implementation need to be in place. The people who develop these strategies in an organisation are usually managers or leaders of that organisation. Organisations are expected to develop a vision that will be shared by everyone in the organisation. Shared vision is what brings people to commonality with an organisation. When each individual takes ownership, loyalty to the core existence of the organisation increases (Senge, 2006). Siu Loo Hoe (2007) emphasizes the importance and relevance of shared vision in organisations by stating that it provides general guides to knowledge needs. Shared vision empowers individuals to act and take decisions with confidence as all members are empowered to lead and take decisions. Information dissemination and sharing becomes more effective in an organisation that has a shared vision.

## **2.4 Vision implementation**

Implementation is a process of putting an idea or plan into effect, i.e., it is a process to achieve a goal. Vision implementation is not an achieved state, but it is the process to get to the achievement of goals. Organisations find it difficult to implement their visions because "making sense of a vision is not simply a matter of being able to repeat a mission statement, it is about the materiality of identities and lives, since it affects what people do in performance of their everyday work" (Reeves and Boreham, 2006: 39). Vision implementation requires intense work and devotion by leaders and managers of an organisation (Senge, 2014). After a vision has been developed it should be followed by three other steps, which are strategy, goals and action (Raynor, 1998).

## **2.5 Role of Leadership in Vision Implementation**

The definition of the traditional role of leadership is based on the great man theory. According to this theory, a leader is a great man who has answers to all questions; a perfect and supernatural human being who possesses all the wisdom in the world. Even though leadership theories have evolved (Ngambi, 2011) over the years from Great-Man Leadership theory, Situational Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Community Leadership Theory and other theories, organisations still need visionary leaders.

Sosik and Dinger (2007) argue that visions are owned and are centred on a leader and that leadership is about being visionary and charismatic. According to these authors, vision achievement or implementation is realised by how well a leader presents, articulates and mobilises buy-in to his leadership. Bass (2007) argues for transformation leadership as the theory that better shares vision as compared to transitional leadership.

Transformational leadership is based on charisma, inspirational, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass, 2007). The main attribute of transformational leadership is the change and the commitment of leadership to ensure implementation of organisational transformation, through individuals in an organisation (Ngambi, 2011). This, therefore, means that transformational leadership is critical for vision implementation within an organisation as it emphasises that there should be a good relationship between leaders and followers. There are six measures of transformational leaders, namely:

1. Articulating a Vision,
2. Providing an Appropriate Model,
3. Fostering the Acceptance of Group Goals,
4. High Performance Expectations,
5. Individualized Support, and
6. Intellectual Stimulation (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

Transformational leadership has the ability to inspire confidence to the members of the organization. They keep check of the ever changing internal and external

environment. They seek to keep people united to the purpose and goals of the organisation regardless of the change (Hazy, 2006).

## **2.6 Role of Performance Management in Vision Implementation**

Performance management includes activities which ensure that goals of an organisation are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner. Staff appraisal is just one of the ways at the disposal of organisation to manage performance (Davies, 1999). Performance management can focus on the performance of an organization, a department, employee, or even the processes to build a product of service, as well as many other areas. Performance and rewards is a process of guiding the organisation to pay and reward employees according to the value and input they have in the organisation. In order for the organisation to fulfill its vision and mission there are main four prerequisites:

1. They must be able to do what is required
2. They must be allowed to do it
3. They must want to do it
4. They must know what “it” is (Greene, 2010)

Performance and rewards are for the good of an organisation to excel and achieve its goals.

## **2.7 Vision Development and implementation in the Methodist Church**

### **2.7.1 Methodist Historical Background**

The Methodist Church of Southern has its origins in England (The Methodist Book of Order 2014). It was founded by two brothers Rev John Wesley and Rev Charles Wesley who were both Priests of the Church of England. The Methodist Church started as a Holy Club, which was a group of Theological Students at University of Oxford who sought to live out their faith. Their work translated into the establishment

of a movement that evolved to be known as the Methodist Church. There is no proof or evidence that Rev John Wesley intended to start a church, although there is much evidence that he never intended to be separated from the Church of England as an Ordained Priest.

John Wesley's vision was to spread a Scriptural Holiness, Christianity that was based on learning and understanding. Meyer (2006:12) states "John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was convinced that making Christians was a process requiring diligent, dedicated time and effort to teach people how to become Christians. He emphasized that the spiritual life must be nurtured at every age. He organised class meetings for adults and schools for children and youth. He believed that Christian maturity was the result of personal and corporately practicing spiritual disciplines. Christians are made not born". To this day Methodists still emphasise the meeting of small groups of about 12 people. These small groups are known as Class Meetings, under a class leader. They meet for a mutual purpose of encouragement, support, and pastoral care (Artwell, 2005).

### **2.7.2 Establishment in Southern Africa**

The establishment of the MCSA was a result of John Wesley's vision of spreading Scriptural Holiness with the slogan 'The World is my Parish'. The British Conference in 1814 commissioned the mission to Southern Africa (Methodist Book of Order, 2014). MCSA was established through the missionary work of Rev William Shaw between 1820-1856 (Bentley and Forster, 2008). Although other history of Methodism brought to Southern Africa points to the arrival of British Army to Cape of Good Hope in 1806. The Methodist Book of Order (2014) states that the first conference in Southern Africa was constituted in 1882 under the British authority. After electing the first chairperson, Rev John Walton in 1883 Methodist Church (Yearbook 2015) was duly established in Southern Africa and retained all powers to run an independent Connexion.

### 2.7.3 Development of Methodist Vision

The Methodist has always positioned itself as a church that fights for social justice basing this on Rev John Wesley's conviction for:

- Aid to the poor
- Engagement in Economic Ethics
- Education and training
- Battle Against Slavery
- Concern for Prisoners and Prison Reform (Marquardt, 1992)

Storey (2006) adds that the Methodist Church exists to express and live out their internal experience. Table 2.1 below is the explanation and interpretation of how Methodist people should live and express that conviction to Christianity. There should be a balance between private/inner spirituality and outward/outer conduct.

**Table 2.1: Methodist life**

	Works of Piety	Works of Compassion
<b>Private</b>	Acts Devotion (private)	Acts of Charity
<b>Public</b>	Acts of worship (Public)	Acts of Justice

**Source: Storey (2006: 39)**

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa's establishment focused mainly on education by establishing school. Gqubule in Malinga and Richardson (2005: 79) states that "During the period 1850-1870 there was tremendous progress in African education, a phenomenal growth in the number of schools and the number of children attending these. It was during this period that some of our great missionary institutions were established. They include Healdtown (1855), Buntingville (1857), Indaleni (1865)". The Methodist church prides itself to this day by the contribution it made in shaping struggle leaders through education. Mandela attested to this as both a Methodist Church member and a student in a Methodist school. The

Methodist missionary work through education is visible to this day. Schools have been built throughout Southern Africa, to list the few are:

- Kearsney College (Pinetown)
- St Stithians College (Johannesburg)
- Epworth College (Pietermaritzburg)
- Healdtown College (Grahamstown)

The Methodist Church in Southern Africa was changed by the emergence of the Apartheid. The changes in political spheres of the country tested mission and existed of the Methodist who all are long it has never saw anything wrong with the coexistence of black and white in both the church and society. Although Methodists were not free from imperialist and colonial conducts of those days (De Grunchy, 2005: 14). The emergence of Apartheid made the Church to notice and take charge. This became the milestone that would shape the existence and future visioning of the church.

## **2.8 Vision in Church Context**

Visioning in is not a strange concept for the church as it can be traced back as referenced in biblical comments. It is one of the clear instructions in the Bible that people of God should embrace for their destiny and aspirations. In the Bible, vision is presented for sustenance and longevity of life, for those who are clear with what they want to achieve in their lives (Proverbs 29:18). Visions in the Bible are associated with God who provides the state or nature of the future. Mainly, vision was carried by leaders who were specifically called and inspired by divine power. We can name Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) who was instructed to relocate to a land that God was going to show him. Joseph in Gen 37 had a vision of becoming a ruler of great nation. Moses in Exodus 2 was commissioned to liberate the people of Israel from Egyptian king Pharaoh.

People with a vision endure struggles of life but, above all, visioning brings unity and commonality to the people of God (Habakkuk 2:2-3). In the ministry of Jesus Christ



the founder of the Church, we clearly see his vision, which was to save the world from sin and reconcile it with God the father (John 3:16). It is with Paul one of the great leaders of the church, where we can see the functioning of vision in the church.

Throughout the Bible visions were associated with the Calling from God and with the services that God will bring about using His appointed leaders. Berkley (1994) states that Biblical leadership takes place when divinely appointed men and women respond in obedience to God's call. They recognize the importance of preparation time allowing the Holy Spirit to develop tenderness of heart and skill of hand. Biblical, visions come through God's call, that be laid upon the leaders that God calls, for a certain purpose. According to McAllister-Wilson (2004) vision is the core of Christian leadership, it comes from God to his people to inspire and encourage for hope of great things to come. Vision is at the centre of church ministry. The above references highlight four main themes that are the core in understanding and implementing vision in the church and these are: Calling and Biblical Leadership principles.

### **2.8.1 Calling**

God reveals himself in visions to individuals (Joshua 1:6) or communities (Joshua 22:30). Berkley (1994) refers to such revelation as "divine appointment". God shares his vision with individuals and communities to fulfill his desire for the people. If we observe great leadership characters in the bible, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Paul and John, it is seen that all of them have a clear divine vision and calling from God. This calling obliged them to share the vision with their communities. So the calling was not for an individual certification rather it was to be shared with the communities. McAllister-Wilson (2004: 87) states that "Leadership that is spiritual takes seriously that there is a force at work in every organisation. The energy for change is not a function of how hard the leader pushes. There is something else at work that transcends the time-management chart and the performance indicators. It is the difference between the job and the vocation-the calling".

### **2.8.2 Biblical Leadership**

Biblical leadership style has always mainly been linked with transformation leadership and servant leadership (Tucker, 2011). Scarborough (2010) advocates for Christian Transformational leadership, which seeks to embrace collaboration of certain kind of leadership theories which are amongst the others are servant leadership, transforming leadership, spiritual leadership, courageous leadership and some other theories. The main argument is that Christian leadership cannot and should not be classified and be limited to a style or a theory. Scarborough further argues that giving a Christian Leadership a “title” could be misrepresenting the genuine leadership and therefore concludes that Christian Transformation leadership is leadership which declares a Biblical or Christian foundation, or specifically directed to Church. It holds that a leader’s vision, character, persuasiveness, and ability to strategize guarantee that he or she will be influential to achieve shared goals (Scarborough, 2010).

There are other theories that are emerging, that seek to challenge the definition and characteristic of Biblical/Christian leadership. Kessler (2013) argues that the Bible mainly contextual and culture influenced, therefore, it cannot be clearly defined, but rather it should be understood and interpreted within the context and culture in which it is being practiced.

## **2.9 Methodist Church as an Organisation**

The church is founded on the teaching of Jesus Christ, based on the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-20), where Jesus sent his eleven disciples to go to the whole world, to all nations to teach them all the things that he taught. Mainly they had to teach people to love one another and love their neighbours (church exists to create a world ruled by fellowship, peace and harmony among people and nature). They were tasked to go and make disciples (church exists to bring people to fellowship with God), baptize them (church should bring hope, unity and reconciliation in the world), teach them to obey (church exist to let the world know about God, educating them about his love and grace that can save all those who believe).

The church, being an organ, is called to do all these things and cannot pick and choose from the five aspects listed above, which are the core objectives of the church. The church draws its vision discipline from the biblical tradition that says where there is no vision; people perish (Proverbs 29:18). The church has always operated in a structured and planned formation. Paul presented the church functionality as that of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and Ephesians 4). In the same biblical reference, Paul added that all people have responsibility and are mandated to function with the presented structure.

“Just as body, though one, has many parts, but all its parts form one body, so it with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body-whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free-and we were all giving the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but many...”(1 Corinthians 12: 12-31).

Gray (2008) gives a perspective that a church beyond just an organisation is also structured to fit Systems Thinking understanding. The church represents Christ who is of two natures (Human and Divine). The church in Phillipi (Philippians 2:5-11) had symbolism of systems thinking and chaos theory. Gray concludes with the idea that “the embodiment of church was community based on shared purpose calling to the higher aspirations of people” (Gray, 2008: 14). The church as body of Christ is diverse and embraces the community in which it exists. This can be testified by the diversity and multitude of churches, each with its own unique identity, as compared to others.

## **2.10 Vision and Complexity Theory**

Complexity theory is a study that seeks to acknowledge that the future is uncertain and unpredictable. It is an interdisciplinary study of complex and chaotic systems that can be influenced within and out of the system itself. It is for making it known to people that systems can bring about order out of disorder; and can also bring about disorder out of order unintentionally and unintended (Anderson, 1999). This can occur within a clear structure with patterns and processes. Because of the

components that make up a system being interdependent, they influence each other for better or worse (Anderson, 1999).

Complexity theory brings about awareness that components are spontaneous and are mostly unpredictable. In short, complexity is an interdisciplinary field of research that seeks to explain how large numbers of relatively simple entities organise themselves, without the benefit of any central controller, into a collective whole that creates patterns, uses information, and, in some cases, evolves and learns (Mitchell, 2009).

In organisational disciplines, developing organisational strategy has become more complex (Beinhocker, 1999). Our minds should adjust to the fact that they can't predict the future and the world we live in is unpredictable so developing any plan should be in consideration of those facts. The world is ever changing, the environment is turbulent and there are ever piling problems such as unemployment, fluctuating markets, crime, climate change, political instability and even the religious sector is unstable and unpredictable. So creating a strategy that is based on the straight and narrow direction undermines the inherent uncertainties that exist in the world. The system is also resilient by being flexible and open to learning in order to create growth while being sturdy and constant with its schemata – purpose, values and rituals (Hazy et al., 2007).

Hazy et al. (2007) recognise novelty as the growing edge of healthy adaptive systems, and provides a consistent framework for tracking and understanding how and why novel order emerges in complex systems, including novelty in the dynamics of leadership and organizations. Leadership is not invested or expected from an individual and as a result, vision implementation or the success of the organisation is thus expected and awarded to all members of the organisation. Leadership, in complex systems, takes place during interactions among agents when those interactions lead to changes in the way agents expect to relate to one another in the future. This change can be due to changes in a perceived purpose, strategy or

objective, or to changes in perceived norms as to acceptable choices, behaviours and communication.

Prewitt (1999) compares the traditional strategic approaches to the complex adaptive systems approach. Prewitt points out that traditional strategy development looks at mission, vision and values of the organisation. It mainly adopts a linear, futuristic determination. Traditionally, developing a vision and mission was the responsibility of only the top management, external/internal consultant and some organisations would even have a strategy portfolio whose responsibility is to oversee that the organisation is in line with the strategy that they have developed. Prewitt (1999) and Stacy (2001) state that strategy should be approached with the mindset of understanding that the future is unpredictable and uncertain. Strategic planning should be open to adaptability and flexibility to change because of other internal or external influences that one cannot be certain about.

## **2.11 Learning Organization and vision implementation**

Organisations need alert, innovative, proactive, adaptive and continuous learning in order to survive and live longer in these complex and ever-changing environment (Torlak, 2004). The concept of learning organisation has been subjected to a great debate and has attracted attention from some leading management and organisation behavior thinkers and practitioners (Phillips, 2003). The debates are on the process and procedures of how to apply learning more effective in the organisations. The root of learning organisation can be traced back to 1920s. The learning organisation is a concept that seeks to ensure that organisations are in a continuous mode of learning.

The concept of learning organisation looks internally, by facilitating growth and improvements of its members and, externally by being vigilant of the competitors to keep the competing edge. The concept of learning organisation is centred on systems thinking, which Peter Senge refers to as the fifth discipline. In his own definition Senge states that learning organisations are “organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create their true desire, where new expansive

pattern of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990:3). Senge’s definition tells us that learning organisation is based on freedom of people; that people are nurtured, not bought; and that people are inspired, not just followers.

Senge proposes that people put aside their old ways of thinking (mental models), learn to be open with others (personal mastery), understand how their company really works (systems thinking), form a plan that everyone can agree on (shared vision), and then work together to achieve that vision (team learning). In other words, Senge is saying that human beings are in a process of learning, unlearning and relearning and that life should be seen as a journey that will consistently expose people to new knowledge, individually or as groups. Learning organisation becomes a process where an organisation’s life is exciting and interactive. “Learning organisation focuses on such things as managing chaos and indeterminacy, flattening hierarchies, decentralization, empowerment of people; teamwork and cross-functional teams, network relationships, adoption of elaborate technologies, and new forms of leadership and mentoring” (Rifkin and Fulop, 1997: 137).

Learning organisation is centred on people using their ability to learn, their innovative ability and their creativity. Alipour et al. (2011) add on to the definition of a learning organisation by stating that it should be contextual and should be used as a ‘strategic process’. Senge believes that “the learning organisation exists primarily as a vision in our collective experience and imagination” (Senge, 2006: 5). He defines the core of learning organisation based on five learning disciplines namely, systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning as depicted in figure 2.2. These disciplines will be briefly unpacked to clearly understand them.

**Figure 2.2: The learning organisation**



**Source:** <http://communicationinbusiness.co.uk/vision-and-leadership/learning-organisations>

### **2.11.1 Systems Thinking**

Systems thinking is a concept of understanding that things within a system influence each other and need to be viewed from a holistic view. It is the realisation that all things are interrelated and therefore impact and influence each other positively or negatively. According to systems thinking, a solution to any problem solution lies in looking at the problem in a systematic way instead of looking at them in fragmented and isolated ways. In an organisation, systems consist of people, structures, and processes that work together to make an organisation healthy or unhealthy. “Systems dynamics sees the key to system behavior as lying in the interrelationship between the positive and negative feedback loops within which important system elements are bound” (Jackson, 2003: 25). Feedback loops become a key in understanding vision implementation process as it gives back information and evaluations of how the organisation is doing. Feedback loops are useful in assessing whether the organisation meets its goals and objectives.

### **2.11.2 Personal Mastery**

Human beings are born with a certain level of aspiration and there is a need to continuously clarify those aspirations. This means that people should be in a desiring mode of learning about themselves and the environment in which they operate. Personal mastery is based on the fact that humans have a high level of proficiency and a desire to achieve more and excel in what they do. Personal mastery is when people learn to increase their potential to achieve their goals. This requires organisations to create enabling environments for their members to develop themselves for the purpose of achieving their goals and the organisation's goals (Senge, 2006). Personal mastery should move from the premise of personal conviction; and in church terms one can call this "a call from God". People with personal mastery always have passion, dedication and personal motivation and this can be advantageous to any organisation.

### **2.11.3 Mental Models**

Mental models are influences that people gain from internal development of what they desire to see or what they hope for. It is a state of mind that has 'assumptions', 'generalisations' and pictures or images that influence how a person understands the world. These assumptions and generalisations influence how one takes actions and how one responds to problems and the world in general (Senge, 2006). Learning organisations encourage their members to bring their mental models to the surface and allow them to be scrutinised by others in a manner that leads to their thoughts being open to influence by others.

### **2.11.4 Building Shared Vision**

Building a shared vision is about holding and sharing the desired state of the future where goals, values and mission are shared. This is aimed at increasing the level of commitment of the members of the organisation, which obviously is an advantage for the organisation. This not only involves sharing the vision, it also involves sharing the



process and guiding practices that will lead to the realisation of the vision (Senge, 2006).

#### **2.11.5 Team Learning**

Team learning is about using collective thinking skills so that groups of people can develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members' talent. This requires an organisation to be in a "dialogue" where members are allowed to think together, therefore, discovering insights that would not be reached individually (Senge, 2006).

#### **2.12 Vision implementation in Learning Organisations (Why Peter Senge?)**

Peter Senge's view of the Fifth Discipline is an acknowledgement that for a vision to be implemented all five disciplines are needed, with systems thinking being at the core. "Vision without systems thinking ends up painting lovely pictures of the future with no deep understanding of the forces that must be mastered to move from here to there. This is one of the reasons why many firms that have jumped on the vision bandwagon" (Senge, 2006: 13).

Without systems thinking, the seed of vision falls on harsh soil. If non-systemic thinking predominates, the first condition for nurturing vision is not met: a genuine belief that we can make our vision real in the future. We may say "We can achieve our vision" (most American managers are conditioned to this belief), but our tacit view of current reality as a set of conditions created by somebody else betrays us" (Senge, 2006: 6). According to Senge (2006) a vision can only have meaning if people participate and all stakeholders share in vision implementation. Vision can be achieved by implementing the five disciplines of learning organisation. In this view Senge (2006) sees vision as a responsibility of a leader that unless the leader

articulates the vision clearly and has the necessary honesty and truth in them, people can really commit to the vision.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

In the chapter the process of vision implementation was explained in the form of visionary leadership, strategic management and performance management. The chapter gave background that the church is not a stranger in vision as discipline of achieving its designed goal. The chapter also introduced learning organisation as a concept that can be used by organisations to improve the processes of achieving their goals.

The premise from which the vision building and vision implementation is based is a holistic approach to visionary leadership, strategic management and performance management. The concept of learning organisation, if practical at organisational level will mean achievement of organisational goals. It is, thus, necessary to view learning organisation against this background. Hodgkinson (2002) gives a clearer summary in literature that supports vision implementation and learning organisation that learning organisation disciplines makes vision implementation possible.

Research methods that were employed in this study will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter three of this study will deal with identifying and choosing the research methodology. The study will be mainly qualitative and the research design will take a case study approach. The chapter will outline the manner in which information was collected and how it will be presented. The chapter will conclude with a summary of what the information means in terms of this research project.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design is the process of identifying, planning and processing a research project. According to Creswell (1999), it is a plan and the procedure that emanates from broad assumptions to narrowed details from data collected and analysed. Research is formed by an interest of the researcher informed by the philosophical world view with the interest of exploring what impacts that particular environment (Creswell, 1999).

Research methodology is a scientific and systematic approach to acquire knowledge and information. de Vos (2005) emphasises two points with regards to research, which are systematic and controlled research. He also emphasises that research is empirical, which means that it should be accompanied by facts, and accuracy of knowledge and information. There are two main approaches to acquire information, namely qualitative and quantitative, and they can also be used as mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). The differences between these approaches will be further explained below.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research Method Approach**

The qualitative approach is used to explore the problem. This kind of research method is used to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and to explore how such behaviours influence other people. In qualitative research the researcher can be involved directly or indirectly to the researched environment. This gives a researcher an allowance of accessing the information from experience or being affected by the issues that are being engaged on. de Vos (2005) states that this method of research allows participants to bring out of the situation their accounts of meaning, experience and perceptions. This will mean that results are interpreted based on the understanding of participants. Then results of the collected information shared by participants can trigger improvement of their own situation.

### **3.4 Quantitative Research Method Approach**

The quantitative approach mainly uses quantity, numbers to look at the problem, without touching on the feelings and understanding of the people involved. The problem in quantitative research is addressed by understanding factors or variables (Creswell, 2009).

### **3.5 Mixed Methods Approach**

Creswell (2009) presents mixed method approaches, as another alternative to research work. This approach incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches as presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Comparing Research Methodologies**

<b>Tend to or Typically</b>	<b>Qualitative Approaches</b>	<b>Quantitative Approaches</b>	<b>Mixed Methods Approaches</b>
<b>Use these philosophical</b>	Constructivist/ advocacy/ knowledge claims	Post-positivist knowledge claims	Pragmatic knowledge claims
<b>Employ these strategies of inquiry</b>	Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative	Surveys and experiment	Sequential concurrent, and transformation
<b>Employ these methods</b>	Open-ended question, emerging approaches, text or image data	Closed-ended questions, predetermined approaches, numerical data	Both open-and closed-ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches and both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis
<b>Use these practices of research as the researcher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions him- or herself</li> <li>• Collects participant meanings</li> <li>• Focuses on single concept or phenomenon</li> <li>• Brings personal values into study</li> <li>• Studies the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test or verifies theories or explanations</li> <li>• Identifies variables to study</li> <li>• Relates variables in question or hypotheses</li> <li>• Uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collects both quantitative and qualitative data</li> <li>• Develops a rationale for mixing</li> <li>• Integrate the data at different</li> </ul>

	context or setting of participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validates the accuracy of findings</li> <li>• Makes interpretation of the data</li> <li>• Creates an agenda for the change or reform</li> <li>• Collaborates with participants</li> </ul>	standards of validity and reliability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observes and measures information numerically</li> <li>• Uses unbiased approaches</li> <li>• Employs statistical procedures</li> </ul>	stages of inquiry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents visual pictures of procedures in the study</li> <li>• Employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative</li> </ul>
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**Source: Creswell (2009:17)**

### **3.6 Strategy of Inquiry-Qualitative Method Selected for this Study**

The research method that was employed in this study is the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach is suitable for the study because the study is to explore and bring about understanding for both the researcher and the Methodist Church of Sothern Africa of the situation of vision implementation. Qualitative approach is the right tool to achieve the credible outcomes for the research as the study used the case study strategy. According to Creswell (1998: 78) “a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of bounded system (bounded by time and/or place), or a single or multiple case, over a period of time”.

Baxter and Jack (2005) also explain that qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather through a variety of lenses, which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. The purpose of this study was to explore challenges of vision implementation in an organisation using the learning organisation concept to improve those challenges. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Highveld and Swaziland District was used as the case study. The exploration and descriptive of the case study took place through interaction between the researcher and the participants. This interaction took place through data collection methods, and according to de Vos (2005) they may include interviews, documents, observation and archival records.

### **3.7 Data Collection**

According to de Vos (2005) cited in Mark (1996: 219) there are three types of case study strategies. These are:

- The intrinsic case study which mainly focuses on an individual case, without looking on the broader scheme of things.
- The collection case study which focuses on the achievement of the research, as the study is conducted in comparison with other studies.
- The instrumental case study which is mainly for the research to understand the situation better, through gaining knowledge about the case at hand. The research has a purpose to impact the environment concerned with the knowledge gathered. This particular study can be regarded as an instrumental case study as it will improve the knowledge of the researcher, participants and the organisation at large.

### **3.7.1 Participant observation**

This approach of information collection was used to clearly understand the challenges and frustrations of the hierarchy of the church with regard to vision implementation. Continuous discussions with the General Secretary of the Methodist Church gave the researcher an idea about all the frustrations that the church was going through in trying to overcome the difficult task to implement the vision. The purpose of this was to give the researcher a better understanding of the problem he was researching about. Participant observation gives an opportunity to have discussions outside the formal interviews with people who are somehow connected with the situation. The case study focused at the Highveld and Swaziland district which reports to the general secretary.

### **3.7.2 Interviewing**

The study mainly focused on how ministers can implement the connexional vision in their local churches using the Fifth Discipline perspective. Therefore, a total number of ten ministers were interviewed with regard to their perspectives and experiences concerning vision implementation. The interviews were semi-structured, one-to-one between the researcher and participants. de Vos (2005) defines semi-structured interviews as suited for complex process where issues seem controversial and personal. The ministers who were interviewed were expected to discuss their area of work, that which they do every day. Their expertise was scrutinised as part of improving their practice as ministers in the Methodist Church. The researcher gave an opportunity for the participant to give more examples and advice from their experience as ministers in the church and how they think the system can improve.

The interview schedule is attached in Appendix 2. This was meant to guide the researcher with predetermined questions. These questions were in line with the application of Senge's Fifth Discipline on Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning. These questions were designed



so that ministers can share their experience on whether they see the church as a learning organisation and how they view the vision implementation process from a learning organisation perspective.

During the interviewing process notes were taken and all interviews were recorded by the means of Blackberry Cell Phone and Apple iPad devices. Interviews were scheduled for different venues at different times as it suited the respondents. The times for interviews varied because of how conversation intensified. The interviews that took place at Emseni, in Benoni, were conducted during the minister's retreat where ministers gather twice a year to reflect on their ministerial convocation. Others were done at the offices of the participants after prearranged meetings. Table 3.2 gives a summary of the duration, location and venue of the interviews.

**Table 3.2: Interview Schedule**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>1</b>	17/10/2013	Emseni (Benoni)	30 Minutes
<b>2</b>	16/10/2013	Emseni (Benoni)	36 Minutes
<b>3</b>	16/10/2013	Emseni (Benoni)	31 Minutes
<b>4</b>	20/11/2013	Standerton (Mpumalanga)	45 Minutes
<b>5</b>	13/05/2013	Vereeniging	30 Minutes
<b>6</b>	14/05/2014	Three Rivers (Vereeniging)	38 Minutes
<b>7</b>	19/09/2014	Kempton Park	52 Minutes
<b>8</b>	14/10/2014	Emseni (Benoni)	46 Minutes
<b>9</b>	15/10/2014	Emseni (Benoni)	39 Minutes
<b>10</b>	15/10/2014	Emseni (Benoni)	42 Minutes

### **3.7.3 Documents**

The other approach for information collection that was adopted by the researcher is that of referring to the documents of the church. The main documents that are available within the church are the Laws and Disciplines (L and D) of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the minutes of the conference, also known as the yearbook.

### **3.7.4 Archival and Records**

The archives of the Methodist Church at the main offices in Bruma, Johannesburg, were utilised. The main interest was on two documents, which are known as Obedience 81 and Journey to the new land (1992 and 1995). These two documents are very critical in the Methodist Church and are relevant to the study as they are viewed as the two stages in the church's life that informed the current vision. Other documents, such as minutes of the conferences, synods, circuit quarterly meetings were consulted for gaining further understanding of the church processes.

## **3.8 Sampling**

The boundary of the case study is within the Methodist Church, where Methodist Ministers were interviewed for the purpose of getting their experiences on the vision implementation process. While there are no defined rules for sample size (Baum, 2002; Patton, 1990), sampling in qualitative research usually relies on small numbers with the aim of studying in depth and detail (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Seeking a richness of data about a particular phenomenon, the sample is derived purposefully rather than randomly (Reed et al., 1996; Mays and Pope, 1995; Ezzy, 2002).

The purposive sampling method was chosen and the participants were grouped together and belong to the same structure and are equal in terms of roles and responsibilities they play within the Methodist Church. Purposive sampling is important when the researcher has an idea of the environment in which he is conducting the research. People with the skills, ability and experience of the environment are crucial in purposive sampling (Tongco, 2007). Ten ministers within the district were selected for interview purposes.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was adopted to interpret and analyse data that was collected through one-on-one interviews that were conducted with the participants. Ryan and Bernard (2003) argue that at the heart of qualitative data analysis there must be themes. Themes were thus identified by analysing the data from the interviews.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

The research was authorised by the General Secretary of The Methodist Church of Southern Africa. A gatekeeper letter (Appendix 5) was issued to give the researcher the authority to use its name and its organisational structures for any information required to make this research a success. The University of KwaZulu-Natal granted the researcher ethical clearance approval (Appendix 4). All the respondents were issued with Informed Consent Forms (Appendix 3) which they completed. The form explained the background of the research which included the title of the research, aims and objectives of the research. Participants were informed that all interviews were recorded using devices. When reporting on the findings, the names of participants were not mentioned but were instead referred to in codes of P1-P10.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter research methods were presented and explained. The qualitative approach was chosen to conduct the study as the method to be applied. Data collection was used in the form of participation observation, interviews, documents, archival and records. The research integrated all the collect data to for interpretation and application. Questions were formulated based on the prior information possessed by the researcher. Questions were also informed by the idea of learning organisation disciples by Senge (2006). The researcher and participants were guided by ethical procedures.

The next chapter will present the findings of the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present data analysis that will best articulate the findings of the research. The researcher will apply the interpretation of data using themes and subthemes to clearly articulate the findings of the research.

### 4.2 Respondents

Ten ministers of the MCSA were interviewed and are as depicted below.

**Table 4.1: List of respondents**

Participant	Position	Ordination Status	No. of years in Ministry	Gender	Qualification
P1	Circuit Superintendent	Ordained	30 years	Male	BTH (Hons)
P2	Circuit Superintendent	Ordained	9 years	Male	BTH
P3	Minister	Probationer	7 years	Male	BTH (Hons)
P4	Minister	Ordained	9 years	Male	DipThMin
P5	Minister	Ordained	14 years		BATh (Hons)
P6	Minister	Ordained	18 years	Male	BCom&BTh
P7	Minister	Ordained	11 years	Male	MA Theo

P8	Minister	Ordained	10 years	Male	DipTheo
P9	Minister	Probationer	4 years	Female	DipTheo
P10	Minister	Ordained	11 years	Female	DipThMin

The questions were divided in to six categories. The first category was to give a clear background to participants and how they relate to the subject matter which is work of vision implementation. These questions sought to unravel the contextual and connection of the participant within the MCSA.

The second category of questions was systems thinking questions which were meant to address the participants' role with the system of the MCSA. These questions were constructed to help the researcher understand how the different programs that are used within the church are interlinked and how that interlink helps the church to implement it vision.

The third category of questions related to personal mastery questions. This category meant to see the commitment from ministers but also to evaluate their personal commitment towards vision implementation. Category four questions sought to bring to light the realisation of the achieved state of the vision so that we could test whether ministers are in clear with what needs to be achieved. The fifth and sixth categories were meant to evaluate the shared understanding and also how the ministers are working together as a team to achieve the common vision.

#### **4.3 Analysis of research data**

There are five main themes that were identified through interviews with the ministers. These are Strategic Leadership; Knowledge Management; Continuous Training; Taking Ownership; and Monitoring and Evaluation as depicted below.

**Table 4.2: Themes and sub themes identified**

Theme	Sub Theme
Strategic Leadership	Vision Articulation Leadership Visibility
Taking Ownership	
Knowledge Sharing	
Continuous Training and Learning	
Monitoring and Evaluation	

#### **4.3.1 Strategic Leadership**

Strategic leadership is the ability to combine visionary operational management, i.e., the spread of ideas, but also the ability to embed these ideas in company operations taking into account their limitations (Maluweska and Sajdak, 2014). The participants felt that it is important to link the top leadership and members of the church.

*God calls people to be transformed; people should be made aware of the vision through formal meetings (P1).*

*The church has been silent on vision implementation and that in recent years not much has been put on the church's agenda concerning the vision (P5).*

*Nothing has been said about the vision, the organisation such as YMG (Young Men's Guild) does nothing towards vision implementation because the top leadership is quiet, and as a result there is a disjoint between top structure and grassroots membership (P1).*

*Vision does not relate to any of the local structures because nothing much is visible to people that has to do with vision and therefore there is lack of motivation (P2).*

*The presiding Bishop must speak more to the vision (P6).*

#### **4.3.1.1 Vision Articulation**

It emerged from the interviews that at some point the vision was articulated well by previous leaders of the church, but somehow changes in leadership have affected vision articulation. This seemed to be a concern with almost all participants stating that the changes of leadership offices have caused a decline in the drive of vision articulation.

*During my training/probation at the Jabavu John Wesley College, the presiding bishop and secretary of conference of that time visited and shared passionately and clearly about the vision of “Christ healed Africa for the Healing of nations” (P6).*

*Only a few people get the message of the vision; therefore less people are impacted and get convicted by the message of the vision (P5).*

#### **4.3.1.2 Leadership Visibility**

The indication from the interviews was that the Presiding Bishop, Secretary of Conference and other Connexional figures (top leadership) should be more visible to the local churches as they sometimes feel that they are neglected and are only expected to pay assessments (money contributions from local churches to the Connexional office).



*The vision is not clear because the leaders are not visible to interpret and explain the vision to people (P2).*

*Nothing has been done for people to relate to the vision; the vision is only 'up there' with top leaders; people have never been told about the vision (P1).*

*The church is not focusing externally, rather internally. As a result the focus is on the money that is collected for the Methodist Connexional Office (P6).*

#### **4.3.2 Taking Ownership**

Ministers that work for the MCSA are in a covenantal contract with the church and are not in an employment contract as it is with other organisations. Therefore, each minister has a responsibility to add value to his or her ministry and the ministry of the church, which subsequently will improve the effectiveness of vision implementation. The interviews indicated that ministers do not initiate training programs to ensure that members of their local churches understand the vision and how it was developed.

*No programs have ever been introduced to achieve the vision in my local church (P3).*

*We are called by God to minister to the people and the vision implementation needs all of us in order for it to be effectively implemented (P4).*

*The local members, including organisations such as the Young Mens Guild (YMG), do not know the vision and as a result they do not link it to the organisation and their organisations (P6).*

*I have never attended any training sessions or workshops regarding vision implementation (P6).*

*Ministers should be in continuous training even beyond Ordination (P7).*

*The implementation of the vision cannot be carried only by the higher structures rather all the ministers need to take ownership (P1).*

#### **4.3.3 Knowledge Sharing**

Ministry in the MCSA is itinerant, with ministers moving from church to church after an average period of 5 years. Indications from the interviews were that this itinerant nature of MCSA ministry leads to lack of continuity and consistency as there is no proper transitional system to ensure that the incoming minister is made aware of progress of vision implementation in a particular church. This is often because of ministers wanting to out-compete each other. The incoming minister often starts new programs as a way of out-competing the predecessor. It was also indicated that the circuits that are in more affluent areas of the connexion do not share information on how they manage to facilitate their successful programs.

*The ministry is very lonely and sometimes one finds himself in difficult situations and one does not know how to deal with such situations (P1).*

*Ministry is a very lonely place; as if you are working against each other or we are in competition as ministers, we can't even share our burdens (P4).*

*The church moves us from station (church) to station, after you have tried working in your station and when you get to the other station you find that nothing has been done, from the vision implementation and you never have time for proper handover (P8).*

*Ministry is competition, instead of helping one another we are competing amongst ourselves (P7).*

*Churches that are well resourced or seemingly successful should share their means of success (P6).*

*The church needs to begin to learn and use new technologies such as social media, live broadcasting of conference and sharing of information quicker (P6).*

*There are lots of resources that are supposed to be accessed by ministers to enhance their ministers (P9).*

#### **4.3.4 Continuous Training and Learning**

Indications from the interviews were that ministers should be encouraged to study further and that the church should be deliberate in organising short training courses for ministers, especially in the vision and its implementation.

*The MCSA can empower me further to understand and implement the vision by offering training (P2).*

*There should be workshops for members and indabas for ministers. Ministers must be introduced to formal management training programs (P5).*

*After ordination individuals focus on their local churches and forget to engage in further studies (P9).*

*There should be pamphlets or brochures that will have a brief message on the vision and what is expected from churches so that such information can be shared to help local churches in a simple way (P2).*

*Workshops and presentations should be done because even during our training we were not exposed to strategies of vision implementation; we were only taught how to preach, pray and be pastoral (P6).*

*The church should inspire, encourage and challenge ministers to study further (P1).*

#### **4.3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The MCSA has no proper system of monitoring and evaluating the impact that the vision has had in the societies. As a result of this the ministers that have worked hard on vision implementation get demoralised. It was clear from the interviews that some kind of monitoring and evaluation system needs to be developed.

*The MCSA has to develop strategies of monitoring ministers and church members, to evaluate if they are meeting the obligations in terms of the work they are supposed to be doing (P10).*

*There should be a feedback or report to evaluate how far have we have gone with this vision and what are the things that need improvement. We cannot go on and on, without proper monitoring and evaluation of the process and progress (P8).*

*Systems such as SWOT Analysis to give feedback and investigate challenges of vision implementation should be implemented (P4).*

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

All the participants were convinced that the vision of Christ healed Africa for the healing of the nations is relevant and achievable. They pointed out that there is a need for cooperation between the higher and grassroots structures. There are challenges that make it seem impossible for the vision to be implemented and in some churches they are working towards achieving the vision, but there are no systems in place to clearly identify and notice such successes. There is individual conviction and commitment towards the vision achievement, which can be assisted by the church committing to empower ministers beyond their ordination. The church can assist by providing a conducive environment and providing financial assistance for minister to further their studies.

The chapter that follows presents a discussion of the results by drawing on previous studies.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter highlighted findings that were presented in data from the interviews with the ministers. In this chapter, the findings will be discussed using the themes that were highlighted. In this discussion, literature and other works will be integrated to the study.

### **5.2 Strategic Leadership**

The theme of strategic leadership was formulated from the responses of the participants to the section one of the interviews. The interviews were seeking to evaluate how clear the vision is to the ministers and how they understand it as well as to see if they understand what is expected from them by the church.

Leadership is the ability to influence people and it plays a very important role in developing a learning organisation and implementing a vision. People need to be inspired and challenged to greatness. Vision implementation requires leaders with strategic abilities. According to Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2007: 375) strategic leadership “is the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary”. Most participants spoke of the disjoint between the top leadership and the local church including the ministers that serve these local churches.

Leadership involves determining the direction of an organization (vision), and then leading the organization in that direction (strategy). It is the existence of vision, out of which evolves strategy. This differentiates leadership from management, though

some of the actual activities of the individual encompass both management and leadership (Mariese, 1985).

Strategic leadership is the “ability to combine visionary operational management, i.e., the spread of ideas, but also the ability to embed these ideas in company operations taking into account their limitations” (Maluweska and Sajdak, 2014: 45). There was a clear indication from the study that there is a lack of strategic leadership as far as vision implementation is concerned in the MCSA.

The different organisations within the church, and its leaders, should also be reminded of the vision on a continuous basis. The emphasis should be on developing organisational leaders that understand the discipline of a visionary leadership and transformational leadership. At the centre of visionary leadership is that leaders must understand that achievement of a goal is centred on mobilising, inspiring, motivation and encouraging the people. These expressions on the importance and criticality of strategic leadership for vision implementation in a church context are consistent with Kouzes (2004) who says that Christian leaders should have five elements of leadership which are: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process and enable others to act. Top leaders should display these characteristics so that ministers can be inspired to do the same.

### **5.2.1 Vision Articulation**

Some participants acknowledged that some of the previous MCSA leaders were passionate about sharing the vision to ministers in training but with changes in leadership, this passion has died down. There seemed to be a concern with almost all participants that the changes of leadership offices have caused a decline in the drive of vision articulation. de Geus (2014) supports that a vision should be consistently clarified, communicated and embedded by leadership both inside and outside the organisation. Smith and Yanowitz (1996) are in support of the need for

leaders to consistently articulate their vision. They even emphasise that leaders in a learning organisation have the responsibility of creating creative tension. They further argue that many people in senior roles think that a shared vision emerges when they go off by themselves, come up with a vision, and then call everyone together and share their vision in a speech or a presentation. According to them, that is not actually a shared vision, even though it can be a good start. They believe that a true shared vision emerges only when each member of a team or organization has an opportunity to first come up with his or her own vision for life and work, then shares that vision with other members (Smith and Yanowitz, 1996:3). This means that leaders have a responsibility to do beyond talking about the organisational vision but must also understand what the members of the organisation aspire to be.

### **5.2.2 Leadership Visibility**

Linked to strategic leadership is visibility of leaders. Visibility is the extent to which a person's attributes and/or behavior are a focal object of others' attention in a particular situation or context (Ellis, 2009). There was an indication that the Presiding Bishop, Secretary of Conference and other Connexional figures should be more visible to the churches as ministers sometimes feel neglected and are only expected to pay assessments (money contributions from local churches to the Connexional office). Visibility of leaders inspires confidence to the followers; as a result people get cultivated and work even harder to achieve set goals (Ellis, 2009).

### **5.3 Taking Ownership**

The second theme that came from the interviews designed under personal mastery, where participants were asked to respond on what they have done from a personal level towards vision implementation.



Under questions of mental models and personal mastery participants generally admitted that they lack personal conviction and the desire to execute the vision. Although they stated general challenges such as busyness and demands of the local church which may not be directed to achieving the vision of the church. The participants emphasised that the implementation of the vision cannot be carried only by the higher structures rather all the ministers need to take ownership. McCatty (2013) states clearly that employees should take ownership at their work place and this ensures that employees are motivated to improve their performance.

**Table 5.1: Organisation Positive Outcomes**

Increased business flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes become changeable</li> <li>• Continuous improvement and problem prevention become the norm</li> </ul>
Increased commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees can sustain positive motivation</li> <li>• Employees make positive contributions</li> </ul>
Increased satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce is more stable</li> <li>• Turn-over, hiring, and training costs are diminished</li> <li>• Employees are more satisfied</li> <li>• Supervisors have an easier job managing the employees</li> </ul>

Improved business results

- Management experiences a profitable balance sheet

**Source: McCatty (2013: 2)**

What is suggested in Table 5.1 above can improve commitment of ministers for attainment of the vision. If Ministers are committed to their work and are motivated to produce the results expected from them, the whole organisation will be encouraged and inspired.

The findings revealed that ministers are “called by God to minister to the people”. So vision implementation needs all of us to be effectively implemented. Especially because of the fact that in the church, ministers are on a covenant contract with church and are not employed. Therefore each minister has a responsibility to add value to his ministry and the ministry of the church, which subsequently will improve the effectiveness of vision implementation.

Ministers should be clear about their aspirations, hopes and future determination. It should be consistently checked if their aspirations are still in line with the vision of the church. When the question of personal mastery was raised with the participants it was clear that there is no connection between personal vision or ministers’ aspirations and the church’s vision.

## **5.4 Knowledge Sharing**

According to Gold and Malhotra (2001) knowledge sharing is when individuals within the organisation share information for the enhancement of their profession and

execution of the goals of the organisation. This may be applied through formal and informal processes within the organisation.

Almost all participants raised concerns regarding how knowledge is shared within the organisation. They expressed that ministry is very lonely and when one finds himself in difficult situations and one often does not know how to deal with them. The findings indicated that ministers are often in competition with each other and as a result they do not share knowledge. There are many reasons that people are sharing or not sharing knowledge, it could be out of pride and envy that people are not sharing knowledge but also it could be out joy and passion that people are sharing knowledge (Yu et al., 2010). The study by Yu et al. (2010) showed that organisations with people who are willing to share and receive information from their colleagues were the organisations that were more effective and efficiency.

Knowledge sharing can also be used as tool to facilitate transition, as the study revealed that changes of leaders in office and changes of ministers in station had crippled the vision implementation process. Knowledge sharing system could really help the church when changing stations of minister to ensure that achievements of predecessors are preserved and to assist in improving working relations of ministers.

Knowledge sharing is one of the branches of Knowledge Management. Knowledge sharing focuses on how members of the organisation share knowledge for the organisation to become more effective. Many researchers have argued that knowledge sharing is an essential part of effective knowledge management; they considered knowledge sharing as the core of continuous improvement process for transforming an individual's process improvements into actual learning (Abu-Shanab, et al., 2014). To gain a competitive advantage it is necessary but insufficient for organisations to rely on staffing and training systems that focus on selecting employees who have specific knowledge, skills, abilities, or competencies or helping employees acquire them. It was raised by all participants, that ministry is lonely and isolated work. Ministers focus on their place of ministry and their local churches. If

ministers can share their experiences and challenges, others can be inspired and be determined to do more.

There were indications from the findings that the church needs to begin to learn and use the new technologies such as social media, live broadcasting of conference and sharing of information quicker. There was a concern that the church is slow in processing information, particularly from the top structures, with minutes of the annual conference taking up to four months to be accessed by ministers after the sitting of conference. There needs to improvement of knowledge sharing using advancements in technology.

The participants expressed that the church should be intentional in creating communities of practise among ministers, where knowledge and new ways of learning are shared. All fields of profession are expected to have formal or informal environments where ideas are shared over their working experience, where they learn from each other in order to improve their professions and to retain knowledge within an organisation. Wenger (1998) explains communities practice as a group of people belonging together according to what they do in life, sharing about their work experience.

## **5.5 Continuous Learning**

The third theme that came from the interviews was: understanding the environment in which the ministers are doing their ministry. In particular it was looking to give ministers an opportunity to suggest solutions from their perspective.

The findings indicated that ministers embrace the idea of continuous training and learning as a discipline to improve their performance and enhance their vision implementation process. They acknowledged that training in the MCSA focuses

mainly on preparation for ordination and limited training is offered beyond ordination. Continuous learning is about expanding one's ability to learn by regularly upgrading one's skills and increasing his/her knowledge. Successfully adapting to changing work and life demands requires strong continuous learning skills (McNamara, 2005).

Continuous learning is the ability to apply strategies which support learning and the ability to adapt to change. It is the ability to learn to learn, where individuals and organisations improve their performance by intentionally seeking and accessing new knowledge (McNamara, 2005).

The findings revealed that workshops and presentations should be done on a continuous basis to expose ministers to new strategies of vision implementation. This is what is expressed by Torlak (2004) that organisations should embrace single, double and triple loop learning. Information, knowledge and experimenting should never cease to flow in the organisation if it wants to be effective and efficient. This type of learning is embrative of all members of the organisation, where debate and diverse perspectives are viewed as part of growth instead of being viewed as threats.

## **5.6 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The concept of monitoring and evaluation was revealed as one of the critical ways that would assist the process of vision implementation within the MCSA. Indications were that the MCSA should introduce a system of monitoring the work throughout all circuits in order to evaluate whether they are working towards vision implementation. Since the church launched the vision there has been no reflection of how far the church has gone with the vision. Although there are voices questioning the relevance and achievement of the vision, there has been no clear and proper work that critically looked at the vision in order to see if the church is going forward or it is on a stand still. The suggestions were not meant to be mechanisms of baby-sitting ministers,

rather that within circuit reports there should be areas that specifically guide and encourage ministers to keep focus on the vision.

Monitoring can be defined as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, program or other kind of support to an outcome (Sera and Beaudry, 2007).

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, and its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (Sera and Beaudry, 2007).

The study revealed that the MCSA has to develop strategies of monitoring ministers and church members, to evaluate if they are meeting the obligations in terms of the work they are supposed to be doing. These strategies should also include mechanisms that are aimed at highlighting areas of improvement with clear guidelines of what needs to be done for ministers and members to improve where they are lacking.

Monitoring and Evaluation can be implemented if the organisation is willing and embraces a learning culture (Roper and Pettit, 2002). Any organisation that seeks to achieve its goals must have systems in place to continuously reflect on its being and its relevance. Monitoring and evaluation clearly gives compass guidance to the organisation on its effectiveness and efficiency, otherwise the organisation can be stagnant.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

All the participants were convinced that the vision of Christ healed Africa for the healing of the nations is relevant and achievable. They pointed out that there is a need of cooperation between the higher structures and grassroots. The challenge that makes it seem impossible for the vision to be implemented is that there are no systems in place to clearly identify successes and areas where improvement is required. There is individual conviction and commitment towards the vision achievement but this can be assisted by the church committing to empower minister further beyond their ordination. The church can assist by providing a conducive environment and providing financial assistance for minister to further their learning and training.

The study recommendations and conclusions will be presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The Methodist Church has struggled for years to implement its vision which was adopted in year 1999. The previous chapter has revealed that there are many factors that led to this challenge. The vision in the church is still important and relevant. The findings indicated that the church needs to improve in order to meet its goals. The Methodist Church has to reflect on specific programs within the organisational development discipline, to review, renew and revive its structures for effective vision implementation progress. The church as an organisation has to be influenced by secular disciplines, especially because its members are influenced and are well informed by the highly effective and efficient leadership and management disciplines that operate outside the church.

The objectives of the study were:

- To understand the importance of a vision for the church.
- To identify challenges associated with understanding and promoting the vision.
- To determine how the church can develop into a learning organisation to enable vision implementation.

The literature review focused mainly on organisational design and development, particularly on the subject of leadership and management. This study focused on Learning Organisation principles, particularly the work of Senge (2004). The benchmark of Senge's work that make it distinct from other work is found in his assumption that organisational members are willing and desire to learn and increase the capacity to create desired results. Senge's discipline was used as a guide to evaluate the learning capability of the Methodist church of Southern Africa and also to investigate their learning ability to implement the vision of the church.



The study has indicated that the Church is an organisation, like any other organisation in business or corporate. It should have the operational edge to compete. The challenges of vision implementation we clearly revealed. Ministers are the key stakeholders in the process of vision implementation as they are the agents of the church in the grassroots. Therefore, ministers should be clear about the vision and own it as their own, what Senge calls a shared vision. Ministers can improve their engagement with the vision by improving through learning and exposing themselves to more training on strategic work.

The executive leadership of the church also has a role to play in terms of visibility and vision promotion. MCSA, being a big church in terms of numbers, top structures can use other means of communication such as social media to reach out to the members.

There is consensus that the vision is relevant and is very important for the church. Challenges that are a hindrance to vision implementation were revealed. There is a clear need for a church as big as the MCSA to develop to a learning organisation. Steps to be taken by the MCSA for developing itself as a learning organisation will be detailed below as recommendations.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

### **6.2.1 Leadership Development Program**

The findings indicate that there is a need for a leadership development program to be initiated in order for the church to improve its structures and systems. The church cannot rely on the traditional theories of leadership. In both the literature review and interviews it was clear that the church is still relying on the Great-Man theories of leadership. The Church should facilitate, throughout its structures, a leadership

program that is based on systems approach, so that there may be a shift from current practises and expectations that it is the responsibility of the top leadership to implement the vision. Senge et al. (1994) emphasises that organisations are systems and therefore leadership should understand it from that perspective. In Senge et al. (1994) there is a perspective that there should be a shift from the traditional leadership styles which mainly follow a top-down approach. Rather organisations are to exercise a decentralised form of leadership. In learning organisations, leadership is viewed as a calling rather than dominance. Senge advocates for a three-level dimension of leadership in a learning organisation:

- Leader as designer
- Leader as steward
- Leader as teacher (Senge, 1990).

The five steps of leadership development by Otto Scharmer's (2007) Theory U: Leading from the future could be employed to assist for leadership development programs in the MCSA. In organisations there could easily be a blame game, people avoiding to take responsibility. At the centre of Scharmers Theory U concept is the ability of a leader to access knowledge from both the past experiences and future possibilities, to be able to work and facilitate the presences. Scharmer (2007) describes four types of "listening": downloading, factual, empathic, and generative. The generative state requires a deep, focused awareness that is boundless (Potter, 2015).

**Figure 6.1: Five Movements of the U Process**



**Source: Scharmer (2007: 12)**

### **6.2.2 Continuous Learning**

Studies have shown that lifelong learning can have positive outcomes for individuals, communities and the economy. Participation in learning activities has been shown to improve an individual's life satisfaction, well-being and self-confidence (Hyde and Phillipson, 2014). The church should develop a clear program for all individuals to desire and commit themselves to excel first for themselves and then for the organisation. There is a clear need for development of personal mastery values. Such values can be developed by applying programs such as Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" (Covey, 1994). These habits are desired to help individuals to take responsibility and be accountable to their being first and then to the organisation or structure that they are part of. The habits are:

## **Independence**

- Proactive
- Begin with the End in Mind
- Put first Things

## **Interdependence**

- Think Win-Win
- Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood
- Synergize

## **Continuous Improvements**

- Sharpen the Saw

Continuous learning may be viewed as falling under personal mastery of Senge's disciplines. It involves an individual's commitment to continue to search and empower themselves. Personal mastery draws individuals to the centre and encourages them to feel that they are part of the organisation and that their contributions are valuable and their visions are taken to consideration. Senge et al. (1994) indicates that a person with mastery creates an orientation of their lives by articulation of their personal vision and see current reality clearly.

### **6.2.3 Strategy Implementation Review**

In both the literature review (particularly of the MCSA) and from the findings it is clear that there is no clear strategy on how the Church should execute the vision implementation. Looking at the seven steps of Gadish and Gilbert (2001) on

strategic management process, the MCSA does have implementing strategies and mechanisms of evaluating performance.

Implementing strategy concerns translating strategy into action throughout the organisation looking at both internal and external factors (Pearce and Robinson, 2009). They further suggest five key considerations for implementation process which are: short-term and long-term goals setting, functional tactics, employee empowerment, compensation rewards, and setting of objectives. An implementation strategy, focusing on short and long terms goals, employee tactics and setting of objectives should be developed in order for the MCSA and its ministers to have a clear guideline of what is expected from them.

In Senge's learning organisation disciplines, strategy is mainly considered under shared vision and systems thinking. It may be viewed as the combination of embracing and holding both the vision of the organisation with the complexities on the day.

#### **6.2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The development of evaluation and monitoring systems in the MCSA is very important for two reasons. Firstly, there is a sense that people in small but effective ways are implementing the vision and mission of the church. The lack of monitoring and evaluation makes acknowledgement of this work done to be unrecognizable which leads to demoralisation. Secondly, there is a need to develop facts on the true process of any on the work done and work that still needs to be done in order to apply corrective measures where necessary. The lack of Evaluation and Monitoring leads to despondency and frustration for all stakeholders.

Guijt et al. (1998) state the critical importance of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) for the purpose of encouraging and inspiring members of the organisation. PM&E could be of great value to the MCSA as it will not only focus on tracking performance of ministers but will rather seek to make work more integrated, where all members feel valued.

### **6.2.5 Knowledge Sharing**

The church needs to familiarise itself with the latest theories in leadership and management disciplines. Churches are organisations that need to acknowledge the discipline of systems thinking and complexity theories. These should assist the church to understand interlinks and interdependences in its operations. That should be a foundation towards addressing the challenges of vision implementation.

Another important factor is that all the recommendations should cut-across all the members of the church. Learning organisation disciplines cannot be recommended for others and leave others out. Learning organisation disciplines should be practised in all levels of the organisation.

Sharing of knowledge has become very critical for organisations to keep up with changing times (Abfilter et al., 2012). What could really work in the Methodist Church is Community of Practice (CoP) as a discipline of knowledge sharing. In CoPs, the levels of participation are used for learning purpose. Newcomers receive knowledge from experienced members, whereas core members can benefit from new ideas expressed from the periphery (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

There are available technology systems that can be used, such emails, websites, whatsapp groups where informal sharing of knowledge can be exercised. Ministry and church environment is very formal and serious work. The church should encourage

more social gatherings and create an environment where ministers can relax and has enjoyment on their work. Abfilter et al. (2012) speaks about knowledge sharing in music festival context, that same approach can be applied in church where music competition can be used to inspire and encourage sharing amongst.

Skinnarland and Sharp (undated) links knowledge sharing with organisation learning and this improves understanding and dynamics of the organisation. Continuous learning falls under the team learning of Senge's learning organisation discipline, where learning and understanding in organisation is shared amongst members equally.

### **6.3 Recommendations for future research**

Further research should be conducted on vision implementation in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. A quantitative study could be conducted to evaluate the learning impact in the organisation, and could focus on other districts. This study could be enhanced by further exploring the influences or could motivate ministers to further their learning.

### **6.4 Conclusion**

The church needs to familiarise itself with the new or latest theories in leadership and management disciplines. Churches are organisations that need to acknowledge the disciples of systems thinking and complexity theories. These should assist the church to understand the linkages and interdependence in its operations. That should be a foundation towards addressing the challenges of vision implementation.

Another important factor is that all the recommendations should cut-across all the members of the church. Learning organisation disciplines cannot be recommended

for others and leave others out. Learning organisation disciplines should be practise in all levels of the organisation.



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## APPENDIX 1: METHODIST CHURCH MISSION CHARTER

### THE CHARTER OF THE MISSION CONGRESS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IN JOHANNESBURG ON THE 30<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2005

Where there is no vision the people perish.  
Where there is no passion the vision dies.

God has given us the vision of  
"A Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations".

As members of the Methodist Family our challenge is to share more deeply God's passion for healing and transformation. We believe the Holy Spirit is guiding us to continue the pilgrimage which has led us through Obedience 81 and the Journey to the New Land to the present day.

We recognise the importance of the local church and rejoice in the many  
Circuits and Societies where life-giving mission is taking place

In trust and obedience we commit ourselves anew to the four imperatives for mission in our time:  
A deepened Spirituality as individuals and a Christian Community. Justice and Service in Church and Society. Evangelism and Church growth which build up the people of God. Empowerment and Development which give dignity and new purpose to those who have been deprived.

We resolve to take intentional and sustained action to implement these imperatives in such areas as:

The Healing Ministry.

Deepening our understanding of African and other Spiritualities. Co-ordinated programmes for Christian Education, information and communication. Building meaningful relationships that transcend racism, sexism and all other forms of discrimination. A vigorous response to the crisis of HIV and AIDS. Informing our prophetic ministry by research into socio-economic issues. Identifying land for sustainable livelihood. Sacrificial giving. Becoming a church in solidarity with the poor. Providing training in evangelism. Training Ministers for the African context. Implementing Anti-Bias training. Becoming a more youth and Child centred church.

We invite the people of God throughout Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland, to join us as we put ourselves at God's disposal to carry forward God's mission in this sub-continent.

Let us each renew our personal commitment to Jesus Christ and seek to grow in grace and in love for God, one another and the world.

Let us ensure that our mission of healing and transformation is holistic, embracing all the imperatives for mission.

Let us participate in God's mission in ways that are appropriate to our local contexts and in partnership with the wider church and community.

Let us celebrate our diversity and the gifts God has given to each of us; support each other, challenge each other and pray for each other.

Finally, we encourage every Circuit to set aside the last Sunday in May each year to celebrate what God is doing among us and to commit ourselves once again to our high calling in Christ.

God bless this Africa which is our home.  
Give us grace to follow  
Jesus the healer,  
Jesus the peacemaker,  
Jesus the Saviour of the world,  
Jesus the Lord of all life.  
Restore us and make your face shine on us  
That we may be saved.

## **APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **1. Personal, contextual and background**

- Are you a Member/Minister of the MCSA?
- What position do you hold within the church? What challenges does it hold?
- What other positions have you held? What challenges did they hold?
- What is the Vision of MCSA?
- How do you understand and apply this vision in your position?

### **2. Systems Thinking Understanding Questions**

- How does the vision impact your local church environment or society?
- How do your local members relate to the vision? (including other related organisations, e.g. Young Men's Guild?)
- How is the vision intended to impact on those outside the church?
- How does hierarchy of the church leadership influence the implementation of the vision?

### **3. Personal Mastery Understanding Questions**

- What have you done at the personal level to implement the vision?
- Have you ever created a project or anything that will be directed towards vision implementation?

### **4. Mental Model Understanding Questions**

- What is your conviction toward the vision? Is the vision relevant and achievable?
- What is your pictured state of vision achievement?

#### 5. Shared Vision Understanding Questions

- How clear are you with what the MCSA is trying to achieve? Can you relate it to your life?
- Are the members of your local congregation and organisation clear? Give examples.

#### 6. Team Learning Understanding Questions

- Have you ever attended training or workshops about the vision? Is any program at your local church focused on the vision?
- How can the MCSA empower you further to understand and implement the vision?

## **APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

#### **MCLS Research Project**

**Researcher:** Rev Simphiwe Mthembu (0827597581)

**Supervisor:** Ms Cecile Proches (031-2608313)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba (031-2603587)

Dear Respondent,

I, Rev Simphiwe Mthembu am a Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “*Facilitating the development of the learning organisation to enable vision implementation in the Methodist Church*”. The aim of this study is to investigate the role and importance of the learning organisation practices in achieving vision implementation.

Through your participation I hope to understand your role as minister / pastor in the Methodist Church and how the learning organisation can assist with vision implementation. The results of the interview are intended to contribute in assisting the church to better deal with the challenges.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, you may

contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The interview should last about 45 minutes. I hope you will take the time to participate in the interview.

Sincerely,

Investigator's signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**MCLS Research Project**

**Researcher:** Rev Simphiwe Mthembu (0827597581)

**Supervisor:** Ms Cecile Proches (031-2608313)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba (031-2603587)

**CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (full names of participant)  
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARENCE



C2 April 2014

Reverend Simphiwe Siyabonga Mthembu (212558328)  
Graduate School of Business and Leadership  
Westville Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0201/014M  
Project title: Facilitating the development of the learning organization to enable vision implementation in the Methodist Church

Dear Reverend Mthembu

**Full Approval – Expedited**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

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 discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Ms Cecile Gerwel Proches  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr E Munapo  
cc School Administrator: Nonkululeko Shabalala

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximhap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximhap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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## **APPENDIX 5: LETTER OF PERMISSION/ /GATE KEEPER**

15 February 2013

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This serves to confirm that Rev. Simphiwe Mthembu is an ordained minister of The Methodist Church of Southern Africa, who is intending to do study research on the effective and efficient implementation of systems thinking theory and tools in promoting organisation vision, through the investigation of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa processes and systems.

He has been granted permission to interview appropriate people within our Church as well as access to relevant documentation for purposes of fulfilling his study obligations.

Kindly assist him in every possible way.

Yours faithfully



---

**VUYANI NYOBOLÉ**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

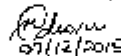
## APPENDIX 6: LETTER FROM EDITOR

---

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I edited the academic work of Rev Simphiwe Siyabonga Mthembu titled **FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNING ORGANISATION TO ENABLE VISION IMPLEMENTATION IN THE METHODIST CHURCH.**

Yours truly



**Muzi Ndlovu**

68 Steenbok Avenue  
Bassonia

011 376 1083 (work);  
071 671 6974 (cell)

## APPENDIX 7: SUPERVISOR PERMISSION TO SUBMIT



**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**College of Law and Management Studies**

### **Supervisors Permission to Submit Thesis/ Dissertation for Examination**

Name: Simphiwe Mthembu	No: 212558328		
Title: Facilitating the Development of the Learning Organisation to enable Vision Implementation in the Methodist Church			
Qualification: Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies	School: Graduate School of Business and Leadership		
	Yes	No	
To the best of my knowledge, the thesis/dissertation is primarily the student's own work and the student has acknowledged all reference sources			
The English language is of a suitable standard for examination without going for professional editing.			
Turnitin Report %			
Comment if % is over 10%			
I agree to the submission of this dissertation for examination			
Supervisors Name: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches			
Supervisor's Signature:			
Date:			