

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN CULTIVATING MORAL  
PURPOSE IN LIMPOPO SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**By**

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## STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

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*I declare that “The role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools” is my own work, and that no other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the twenty-first century, many educational systems are embracing a new paradigm of educational management that utilises team management in schools. The democratic nature of this notion in South Africa involves the use of School Management Teams (SMTs). Reflecting on this movement, this research explored the capacity of these SMTs to cultivate moral purpose in six purposively sampled schools in Limpopo Province. The data collection methods included a series of semi-structured interviews with SMT members, examination of relevant documents, and scheduled observations. The data from the interviews was transcribed manually and this, together with document analysis and scheduled observations, was analysed in three interrelated stages using the four research questions as guides (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The research highlighted that the moral purpose is a relatively new concept to the majority of SMTs. Only a few school managers presented explicit references to the notion, perceiving it as a “compelling moral imperative” or “moral goal of achievement” or “whole-school vision for academic success” or simply “respect”. Notwithstanding the different perceptions, this moral purpose is directed towards raising the level of learner achievement and it is realised when the SMTs articulate the values of commitment, discipline and responsibility. The SMTs members affirmed their commitment to various aspects of instructional leadership. Furthermore, teamwork exemplified in participative decision-making was highlighted as a notion that enhances learner achievement. The findings also affirmed the opportunities that shared leadership offered schools to share moral purpose.

However, the findings also enumerate lack of parent involvement, learners discipline, and teachers’ lack of commitment to moral purpose as crucial factors that inhibit the sharing of moral purpose in schools. The two critical responsibilities accepted by the

SMTs to address the constraints of sharing moral purpose are highlighted as consulting with legitimate stakeholders and reinforcing policy in the schools. As a result of this research, a number of recommendations and opportunities for further research are offered to Limpopo schools and their SMTs, the systemic authorities responsible for Limpopo education and for those responsible specifically for policy making and curriculum development in the South African education system.

### **KEY TERMS**

Moral purpose, Shared leadership, Teamwork, Motivation

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***To God be the Glory!***

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>DoE</b>	<b>Department of Education</b>
<b>ELRC</b>	<b>Education Labour Relations Council</b>
<b>HoD</b>	<b>Head of Department</b>
<b>LDoE</b>	<b>Limpopo Department of Education</b>
<b>LTLL</b>	<b>Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners</b>
<b>NCSL</b>	<b>National College for School Leadership</b>
<b>RCL</b>	<b>Representative Council of Learners</b>
<b>SACE</b>	<b>South African Council for Educators</b>
<b>SASA</b>	<b>South African Schools Act</b>
<b>SGB</b>	<b>School Governing Body</b>
<b>SMT</b>	<b>School Management Team</b>
<b>WCDoE</b>	<b>Western Cape Department of Education</b>

## **Chapter 1**

### **The overview of the study**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

One of the most significant changes that have occurred in my life in the past sixteen years has been a transition from being a school teacher to being a head of department (HoD) in the school management team (SMT). It was this transition that became the first factor that aroused my research interest to pursue an exploration of the capacity of SMTs to cultivate moral purpose. Secondly, it was influenced by the underperformance of our school, with the department I managed as HoD being the worst performer. Thirdly, my interest arose as a result of my curiosity about the way in which the SMT in my school works. For five years I have been observing that there is lack of realignment of the leadership practices of the formal management team in the school to include teachers as leaders. I also became aware that the majority of heads of departments were working in isolation from the top management (school principal and deputies) and teachers in their departments. There was no efficient and effective communication amongst the SMT members themselves and also teachers were not consulted in decision making.

Therefore, the underperformance of my school, the lack of cohesion within the SMT, and the apparent absence of shared leadership prompted me to investigate if there is any blind spot in the leadership practices of the SMT. I then wanted to explore if moral purpose could be that blind spot in school management, and to investigate how infusing this sense of purpose within SMTs can enhance leadership and learning practices. It is against this background that this research explores opportunities that moral purpose offers SMTs that wish to raise the levels of achievement for all learners in their schools while moving towards greater levels of team cohesion and shared leadership.

## 1.2. Research background

The advent of democracy in South Africa resulted in many significant changes in the education system. One of these changes was the introduction of the concept of school management teams (SMTs). The Task Team on Education Management Development submitted a report detailing strategic recommendations to improve education management in the South African education system (DoE, 1996). It argued for a new model in which school management is not located only in the formal positions of the school but it can be stretched over a range of people in the school including teachers. This is the model that represents a “post-industrial paradigm of leadership” that advocated a replacement of the hierarchical leader-as-hero model by a culture of shared leadership within schools (Spry, Duignan & Kelly, 2004:9). This is the notion that encourages participative decision-making in which “... all members have the right to be heard, to have their views considered, to express feelings, to offer knowledge and information” (Owens, 2001:288).

Whether labelled ‘shared leadership’ (Duncan & Scroope, 2008), or simply ‘collaborated leadership’ (Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005), this approach reflects the move away from a heroic model of leadership to a leadership approach that potentially unlocks the capabilities and talents of individuals (Darren, 2010:63). It also describes a group or team of people working together towards an agreed objective (Spillane *et al.*, 2005). This strongly suggests that there is the existence of the element of teamwork in shared leadership. Thus, Medwell (2009) asserts that teamwork is a gathering of a workgroup of individual experts with prescribed purposes, they communicate, cooperate, and make decisions together, and have the knowledge and ability to work together to make work plans to accomplish goals. This definition highlights that, within the shared leadership approach teams should be established and allowed to own goals.

This means that to achieve the goal of enhancing leadership and learner achievement, SMTs ought to perceive that leadership can be effective when it is shared or distributed. They ought to acknowledge that the complexity of school leadership in the twenty first century requires greater collaboration as a means to an effective distribution of tasks and responsibilities (Cannon, Delaney & Host, 2007). The factors that attract organisations to opt for shared leadership are that the approach actually works in practice and it builds commitment among those involved (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006). Wallace (2001) claims that the value of this paradigm is that staff empowered to collaborate can create an excellence institution, and empowerment through mutual commitment enables staff to achieve more together than they could do as individuals. Therefore, schools embracing the shared leadership approach are more likely to enjoy high performance levels of teachers and learners than those that are still opting for the one-hero model of leadership.

While articulating the merits of greater collaboration and distribution of leadership, there are also a range of factors that challenges the efficacy of shared and/or collaborated leadership in schools. According to Cole (2006) and Williams (2011), some of the factors that inhibit collaborated or shared leadership include: the authoritarian ethos of school principals, cultural and gender biases, teams meeting infrequently, and teachers' reluctance to participate in leadership roles. In support of the above are two South African studies, one by Bush and Glover (2008) and the other by Grant (2006) which found that many SMTs in South Africa do not operate effectively, either because they rarely meet or because of the practice where 'top-down' decisions are still the norm. Bush and Glover (2008) further report that fractured interpersonal relationships often make effective team work impossible.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned challenges, the shared leadership perspective practiced by teams can be seen as an important vehicle by means of which moral purpose is given expression (Bezzina, 2010). Bezzina (2007) argues that shared leadership is a

primary way of enhancing the pursuit of and commitment to moral purpose. This means that shared leadership and moral purpose can connect to enhance and enrich the teaching and learning practices in the school. This argument affirms a place of shared leadership and moral purpose in the pursuit of authentic learning. Authentic learning is infusing academic learning with a personal dimension, thereby enriching the whole learning process (Starratt, 2004). According to Bezzina (2007), authentic learning is the central pillar of moral purpose and challenges educators to constantly transform the learning of learners and improve the achievement levels of all learners in the school.

Thus, the central moral purpose consists of constantly improving learner achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps between higher and lower performing learners or schools are narrowed (Barber & Fullan, 2005). This description highlights that the central goal of moral purpose is to transform the learning of all learners and to raise their levels of achievement. In addition, Fullan (2003) states that moral purpose also involves treating people with commanding respect. This implies that in order to achieve the crucial goal of moral purpose, the SMTs need to create an atmosphere where teachers, learners and parents treat each other with respect. Treating people with respect involves controlling any impulses that adversely affect other people in the school. The element of respect points to the importance of moral leadership in the cultivation of moral purpose.

Moral leadership is premised on the assumption that the critical focus of leadership ought to be on the values, beliefs and ethics of the leaders themselves (Bush, 2007). For example, if integrity is the leader's core value then this will come through in his or her leadership and the way he or she interacts with others. Integrity is particularly associated in people's minds with the qualities of honesty and consistency (University of Pretoria, 2010:7). Therefore, leaders acting with integrity are straightforward with people so that they know where they stand, and they apply the same value system in all situations, whether in private or public. Leading with this value enables leaders to penetrate the

follower's conscience and brings about desirable behaviours such as openness, freedom and respect. However, the University of South Africa Study Guide (2007) argues that because of the ethical complexity surrounding us it is not always easy to lead with integrity.

Furthermore, realising the central goal of moral purpose requires school managers who are committed to instructional practices which are at the centre of all that schools do. According to Robinson (2007), the impact on student outcomes is likely to be greater where there is direct leader involvement in the oversight of, and participation in, curriculum planning and co-ordination and teacher learning. These are key aspects of instructional leadership which cast the school principal as the central, key person in promoting and sustaining improvement in learner achievement. Thus, Robinson (2007:21) stresses that, "The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to students". However, Bush and Heystek's (2006) study shows that South African principals do not conceptualise their role as instructional leaders. Chisholm, Hoadley and Kivilu (2005) add that the principals' time is consumed by administrative activities.

### **1.3. Research purpose**

The purpose of this case study was to explore in-depth and describe the capacity of school management teams to identify, envision and share the moral purpose of secondary schools in Limpopo Province. The major focus was on how school management teams perceived as moral purpose of their schools and how it is enacted in their different school contexts.

### **1.4. Research problem and questions**

Team management in South African education has been the focus of a great deal of discourse but less attention has been paid to its connection with moral purpose.

Evidently, there seem to be a knowledge gap in how SMTs translate moral purpose into practice in the pursuit of improved school management and learner achievement. The exploration of this gap is also necessitated by the pressing need that has emerged over the past four years in Limpopo Province to improve school management and learner achievement, the need that culminated in the development of a turn-around strategy (Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE), 2011:29). Therefore, this research reinforces the importance of moral purpose in teams, but also seeks to give explicit attention to how managers understand moral purpose and how conscious engagement with it can bring about change in schools.

Flowing from the above, this study was guided by the following primary question: *How can school management teams cultivate moral purpose in secondary schools?* In order to explore in-depth the primary question, the following sub-questions need to be addressed:

- What do the members of school management teams identify as moral purpose?
- How can school management teams share moral purpose?
- Which factors inhibit school management teams to enact the moral purpose of the school?
- How can school management teams overcome factors inhibiting moral purpose?

### **1.5. Theoretical framework**

This theoretical framework encapsulates two major themes which are drawn from two significant frameworks developed by international researchers to guide and support leadership and moral purpose in schools (Fullan, 1993, 2001, 2002a, Bezzina, 2007, 2008, 2010). The first theme represents the central foci of this study, namely, moral purpose and how it enhances relationship building and knowledge creation and sharing. The second theme reflects the concept of team management as a core aspect of shared leadership, which is, in turn, the fundamental component facilitating moral purpose. The

first theme explored in this conceptual framework informs chapter three of this study while the second theme forms the background of chapter two.

In his leadership framework, Fullan (1993, 2001) perceives moral purpose as one of the core components of leadership. Implicit within this framework, the concept of moral purpose is seen as inculcating in leaders a sense of making a positive difference in the lives of learners, teachers, parents and society as a whole. Thus, Fullan (2002b:4) asserts that leaders with moral purpose espouse the goal of making a difference in the lives of students, they have a “commitment to improving standards, no matter what, and ensuring that the gap between students is narrowed when it comes to achievement” (DoE, 2008b:27-28). This moral purpose would also permeate how SMTs treat others whether they are learners, teachers, or parents (Bezzina, 2007, 2010).

Therefore, moral purpose is the basis for relationship building (Fullan, 1993, 2002a). SMTs guided by moral purpose grounded on the aspect of respect are consummate relationship builders in their schools. They constantly foster purposeful interactions and problem solving in their schools. Collins (2011) argues that in great organisations the leader gets relationships right first and then deals with [moral] purpose. Fullan (2011) concurs that if you want to challenge someone to do better you had better build a relationship first. He suggests that building relationships starts with leaders conveying respect before people have earned it and doing everything possible to create conditions that make people lovable (mainly by creating circumstances that favour success).

Once leaders have built positive relationships with staff, learners and parents, they need to make conscious adaptation to their practices by adopting leadership based on “broad directional vision” (Fullan, 2009:109). In accordance with this, he argues that for the moral society to thrive on a deep and continuous basis, it must have a moral compass (Fullan, 2001). Broad directional vision or moral compass is the shared value and compelling imperative that remodels a school into a moral society that is galvanised into

achieving objectives. Moral society is directed towards the learning of all learners, and reflects a greater reliance on collectivity to reinforce objectives, rather than on individual autonomy. This reinforces the importance of moral purpose to establish collaboration in teams, and this collaboration leads to knowledge creation and sharing (Fullan, 1993).

Fullan (2001) claims that knowledge creation and sharing is central to effective leadership. He emphasises the relationship between a knowledge society and moral purpose. For me, knowledge creation implies a constant generation and exchange of information inside and outside the school through purposeful social interactions. For the school to thrive, SMTs should understand the value and role of knowledge by reinforcing habits of knowledge exchange among staff members. This informs the context of this study as it integrates the most current ideas and theories that support and illustrate how SMTs mediate the cultivation of moral purpose in complex times. This mediation comes about through relationship building and knowledge creation and sharing.

Finally, closely connected to the first theme is the challenge explored in this study, the degree to which shared leadership enhances the sharing of moral purpose. There is a need for this moral purpose to be shared and its purpose should be grounded in a shared commitment to explicit values (Andrews & Lewis, 2004). It is within the context of shared leadership that moral purpose is explicit and shared (Bezzina, 2008). This means that moral purpose can be shared when leadership practices are not limited to those in formal positions. Therefore, the literature on shared leadership will contribute to an increased understanding of how SMTs foster synergies and teamwork. These synergies and teamwork are guided by a moral purpose where a compelling idea or aspirational purpose galvanises a group of educational leaders, allowing them to achieve significantly more than they could as a set of individuals working independently (Darren, 2010:65).

## **1.6. Significance of the study**

The investigation of the role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose grounded on issues of learner achievement and leadership development in Limpopo Province makes this study both significant and opportune. It reflects the call by the Limpopo Department of Education for ways to improve school management and learner achievement (LDoE, 2011:29). The aspects of learner achievement and effective school management underline the goals promulgated by the Limpopo Department of Education. Therefore, exploring the concept of moral purpose in this context serves as a framework by which SMTs can ensure commitment to and translation into action of these goals.

This study is also significant as it fills the gaps existing in the literature on how principals and/or school management teams translate moral purposes into practice. As discussed early, most of the sources cited in this study give strong support to moral purpose, devoting more attention to sharing than to the detailed understanding of how this moral purpose can be surfaced in schools. The exploration of how SMTs work towards an elaboration of moral purpose in a pursuit of enhanced learner achievement is a gap to be deeply explored. Therefore, the findings and recommendations of this study will create significant literature to form the basis for other studies to be undertaken in South Africa. This study is also significant because it is the first time that the concept of moral purpose is explored in relation to SMTs in the context of the Limpopo Province.

## **1.7. Research design**

The qualitative approach was preferred as most suitable for the interpretation and understanding of the experiences of SMTs members. The research was conducted in the interpretive or constructivist paradigm where as a “qualitative researcher [I] stressed the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln,

2000:19). This approach focuses on what the participants view as reality within their context and reality is then portrayed in the form of individual reality. In pursuit of the understanding and interpretation of the role of SMTs in cultivating moral purpose, I chose to use the case study design which involved six secondary schools. I chose case study approach for this research for several reasons. Firstly, there was limited or no research done so far in South Africa on the enactment of moral purpose in schools by school management teams. Therefore, given the limited or no research done in this area it would have been difficult to construct a data collection approach based on existing evidence. Secondly, the research questions focus around building theory on the process of cultivating moral purpose in schools. This means that the research is trying to establish how and why school managers enact moral purpose. Such how and why questions are also considered to be particularly suited to a case study approach (Yin, 2003).

The secondary schools were sampled from different contexts (rural and urban) on the basis of their representativeness, convenience and their varying levels of learner performance in terms of grade twelve examination results. The participants within these six case studies (secondary schools) consisted of principals, deputy principals and heads of department. These participants were selected by means of purposive sampling. Schools and SMT members were selected on the basis of their availability. This means that the participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in my research. Data collection for this research was undertaken through the use of three separate yet complementary instruments: semi-structured interviews, document collection and analysis, and observations. The major focus was the use of individual semi-structured interviews with all members of the SMTs of the selected secondary schools.

The interview questions were developed from the four research questions with initial piloting followed by revision and rewriting. Although these questions formed the scaffold around which the interviews were conducted, care was taken to allow sufficient

flexibility within each interview to pursue themes and issues as they arose at the time. Data obtained through the interviews was supplemented by material from key documents from the research contexts. These documents included Schools' mission statements, strategic plans, minute books, annual reports and school improvement plans as well as guiding documents from systemic authorities. I also received hard evidence of new ideas on the cultivation of moral purpose in schools by conducting structured observations. The major constructs observed involved elements such as SMT meetings, morning briefing meetings, lesson presentations and intangible aspects of school culture and climate such as punctuality, parent involvement and celebration of excellent achievements.

To ensure meticulous recording of data, I used a tape recorder with the permission of the participants to record the interview data (Maree, 2007:89). Wanting to situate myself in the data and the intent of the interviewees once the primary data collection phase had been completed, I transcribed the interviews manually. Data was examined and organised according to the four research questions and key conclusions and recommendations reflecting these in the final chapter (Chapter eight). However, to ensure trustworthiness of the data analysis, I employed the key strategies of credibility, transferability and dependability. Furthermore, written consents to conduct research were obtained from relevant systemic authorities. A detailed account of the research methodology employed in this research appears in Chapter four.

### **1.8. Definition of concepts**

- **Team** – Is a group of people actively cooperating to achieve the same goal or purpose (Hayes, 1997:52). For Everard and Morris (1996:156), a team is “a group of people that can effectively tackle any task which it has been set to do”. A team therefore consists of active members who are involved in the process of pursuing team goals.
- **Teamwork** – According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2001), teamwork is a group or team that contains a common purpose, crystal clear roles, accepted leadership,

effective processes, solid relationships, and excellent communication. Similarly, teamwork consists of two or more individuals who must interact to achieve one or more common goal(s) that are directed towards the accomplishment of productive outcomes (Ejimofor, 2000:9).

- **Moral purpose** – Bezzina (2010) argues that the ultimate goal of moral purpose is to gradually transform learners into fuller, richer, deeper human beings. The central moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, wherever they exist, are narrowed (Barber & Fullan, 2005). Drawing from these two contested definitions, the operational definition that applies to this study is that “Moral purpose is a compelling moral imperative to gradually transform learners into fuller, richer and deeper human beings by focusing on ways that constantly improve their academic achievements and ensuring that achievement gaps between them are narrowed.”
- **Shared leadership** – Duignan and Bezzina (2006) describe shared leadership as a leadership approach where authority, direction-setting and decision-making are democratic. It is a product of the ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation amongst all school members as they go about the construction and reconstruction of the reality of living productively, yet compassionately together each day.

## **1.9. The structure of the thesis**

CHAPTER 1: *The overview of the study*

This included the introduction to the problem, a brief description of the research procedures, the significance of the study, and the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 2: *The development of school management teams and the implications of team leadership perspectives*

This chapter began with an outline of the development of school management teams as a means by which the Education Department responded to a call for more collaborative and participative approaches in educational leadership. The chapter concludes with various perspectives influencing moral purpose.

*CHAPTER 3: Exploring the significance and fundamental elements of moral purpose*

This chapter articulated the theoretical framework through which the research questions are explored. It provides a literature study regarding moral purpose and its expressions.

*CHAPTER 4: Research methodology*

This chapter presents and describes the research design employed to collect and analyse data.

*CHAPTER 5: The research findings*

This chapter presented an analysis and organisation of qualitative research results into research question and sub-questions. In this chapter, themes are explored using data from each of the data collection instruments.

*CHAPTER 6: Discussion of the findings*

This chapter is a reflection on the findings and provides a discussion based on these findings.

*CHAPTER 7: Conceptual model for cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools*

In this chapter, a model is generated with generic suggestions on how moral purpose can be introduced and cultivated in Limpopo schools.

*CHAPTER 8: The conclusion of the research*

This final chapter serves as a synthesis, including the examination of the empirical findings, theoretical implication of the thesis, policy and practical recommendations as well as some suggestions for further research.

### **1.10. Chapter summary**

This chapter begins with introductory remarks offered with respect to the importance of conducting this research in Limpopo Province. It also introduces the research problem, identifies the broad contexts for examination and, from these, a specific research purpose was articulated. From the research purpose, four research questions were developed. These research questions provided the basis for the development of the semi-structured interviews with school management teams. A brief outline of the research design preferred for this study is included. The chapter concluded with an examination of the significance of the research and an overview of the organisation of the study in terms of each chapter. The next chapter examines the school management teams as a context within which the research problem is situated.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The development of school management teams and the implications of team leadership**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to examine the capacity of the school management teams to identify and share moral purpose in schools. As postulated in this study, moral purpose becomes explicit and shared within contexts that foster shared leadership, a notion that emphasises some form of participation and teamwork approach within team management. Thus, teamwork is understood as an important aspect underlying the practice of shared leadership. In this literature review I also attempt to find conceptual and practical coherence between two inter-related concepts, namely, shared leadership and distributed leadership. The coherence established clarifies why, within the context of this study, SMTs are studied as structural sites of participative management within schools. Furthermore, for teamwork to succeed leadership needs to be driven from the values and ethics of leaders themselves, hence the chapter also explores moral leadership.

#### **2.2. The development of the model of team management in the context of South Africa**

During the apartheid era, educational leadership was often equated with headship and understood in relation to formal position, status and authority (Grant, 2006). The educational system granted the manager in the school system the highest authority, having unassailable power and control over all activities within a particular institution. The position granted the manager the power to make unilateral decisions with very little or no input from the staff and the parents. Mda and Mothata (2000) espouse that in the top-down form of school management parents and teachers waited for directives and

dictates from the principal This means that school principals passed tasks and directives down to subordinates without consultation or negotiation. Any action or statements that conflicted with the ideologies of the principal were regarded as insubordination.

The principals' ideologies and directives were respected by parents and teachers because the department portrayed principals as the only departmental representatives at school level and, thus, they were regarded as being solely accountable to the Department for the departmental policies they had to adhere to, implement and monitor (DoE, 1996). Their role was to ensure effective implementation of government policies and they were rated effective when they were successful in implementing those policies. The principal was accountable for his decisions and actions only to the Department of Education to which the school was affiliated. Although Muijs and Harris's (2003) research findings were acquired from a different context, they suggest that while these principals were accountable to the Department of Education because of their formal position in schools, this did not necessarily make them good leaders and neither did it give them monopoly in issues of leadership. This school management system created passive individuals who focused mainly on following rules and directives from the principal without questioning his or her authority.

The emergence of passive teachers and parents is a practical symbol of weakness inherent in the top-down school management system to effectively enhance leadership development in schools. To address the weakness of top-down management model, The Task Team on Education Management Development (DoE, 1996) submitted a report at the end of 1996 detailing numerous strategic recommendations for a new approach to management development. The report argued for "an emphasis on relationship building, stakeholder participation, the management of diversity, and development" (DoE, 1996:25). Informed by the Task Team's report, the notion of using decentralised management structures such as the School Governing Body (SGB), School Management

Teams (SMTs) and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) was born. This notion stressed that school management needs not be located only in the position of the principal but can be stretched over a range of people who have the “interest of its clientele at heart” (Tyala, 2004: 4). This facilitated that “decision-making processes, the crafting of a vision and mission of the school, the setting of the school ethos rest with the schools’ stakeholders in schools” (DoE, 2002:2).

The devolution of the decision-making process and accountability reinforces the idea of having a model that is premised on the elements of “participative ‘democratic’ management, collegiality, collaboration, schools as open and learning organisations, and, importantly, site-based management” (Van der Mescht, 2008:14). These key elements demonstrate the challenge facing members of the SMT to work democratically together and collaborate as they embrace the responsibility for the oversight of the functioning of the school. Therefore, the concept of team management is not only compatible with democratic principles, but also provides opportunities for school principals to redistribute power and responsibilities to others, and hence, easing pressure on themselves and improving their administrative efficiency. Sergiovanni (1984:13) concurs that “The burdens of leadership will be less if the leadership functions and roles are shared”. This means that the formation of team management enables school principals to spread the workload of managing schools among staff members.

It is apparent from the above arguments that the principal’s role remains central to the practice of school management and leadership, holding “the pieces of organisation together in a productive relationship” (Harris & Muijs, 2005:28). This implies that the role of the school principal in the SMT is to establish a productive environment that encourages the formation of a unified and coherent school workforce. This productive environment allows that all the custodians of education within the school can share in the broader decision-making processes. In this productive environment there is a

commitment to working as a team and to developing a team approach to the major issues facing the school, team members contribute their expertise, experiences and insights to team planning and decision-making processes, and the team meets regularly to reflect on the impact of leadership decisions (Cole, 2006).

However, it is not easy to establish an environment that fosters the sharing of leadership functions and roles. There are individual behaviours that are counter-productive, hampering the establishment of the productive working relationship. Cole (2006) identified individual behaviours such as SMT members feeling that their primary role is to be a champion and defender of the area or function they are leading, individuals relying on the principal to identify improvement areas and suggest solutions, a team that meets infrequently, and a lack of commitment evident with respect to the decisions made by the team. Therefore, the starting point in enhancing team effectiveness is to diagnose and remedy these challenges in schools.

### **2.3. The composition and roles of school management teams (SMT)**

Team composition is important as it defines the size of the team and the roles of the team members. However, Tyala (2004) argues that teams are sometimes formed without a thought to the composition and the end result of this approach is ineffectiveness and, in acute cases, “dysfunctional teams” (Tyala, 2004:25). In line with this view, Sheard and Kakabadse (2001:137) assert that “the team may be apparently functional, but some individuals have no intention of accepting any decision that involves them personally doing anything differently”. In this regard, I argue that the ineffectiveness and dysfunctional state of most of teams in schools, including SMTs, is largely due to certain combinations in which team size is not taken into account and team members’ roles are not clearly defined. This can result in members not pulling together, and only certain members of the team doing their job.

Accordingly, Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001) assert that team size affects effectiveness through its effects on team structure as well as on team processes. Organisational theorists have defined structure as the configuration of relationships with respect to the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and authority (Greenberg & Baron, 1997, Jones, 1995). Team structure is thus defined here as team relationships that determine how tasks, responsibilities and authority are allocated to team members. Therefore, reasonableness in team size allows for effective tasks allocation leading to effective team performance. Thus, Mears and Voehl (1994:7) argue that, in practice, effective teams are actually small, with the ideal team size between six and seven people on the average. This means that school management teams with a small number of members are likely to perform more effectively than those with a larger number of members in their composition.

In the South African Education system the size of school management teams (SMTs) is determined by the number of teacher posts per staff establishment. For example, in addition to the school principal, post number six on the staff establishment is the first head of department (HoD) while post number fifteen is the first deputy principal. On this account, the SMT comprises of all educators with management roles, the principal, deputy principal(s) and heads of department (DoE, 2008b:19). However, in order for the school management teams to be effective, the SMT members should be fully aware of their roles. Being aware of their roles, they must unflinchingly accept the obligation to take the lead in performing them with dedication (Lukhwareni, 1995). Education Law and Policy Handbook (DoE) (2001:3c-9) describes the duties and responsibilities the school principal, deputy principal and HoD should accept and perform with dedication.

According to the policy handbook, the duties and responsibilities the principal and deputy principal should perform include the administrative, personnel, teaching, interaction with stakeholders, extracurricular and communication. The administrative role

involves keeping records, both on financial matters and school events, the allocation of resources for the maximum benefit of learners and the school as a whole. Personnel duties involve providing professional leadership within the school, the development of staff training programmes, guiding, supervising and offering professional advice where needed and ensuring equal distribution of workloads among the staff. The principal's and deputy principal's teaching responsibilities include engaging in class teaching when necessary and assessing and evaluating the attainment of teaching objectives that learners are taught. They should also participate in various committees such as disciplinary committees, fundraising committees and community-based structures as required and serve on the governing body structure.

In addition, the principal and his or her deputy should play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners' voluntary participation in sports, educational and cultural activities. They should also communicate with members of the school staff and the school governing body in maintaining the efficient and smooth running of the school. They also need to liaise with the circuit/district office concerning administration, staffing, accounting, purchases of equipment, research and updating of statistics in respect of educators and learners. The core duties and responsibilities of the job of a head of department are to engage in class teaching, be responsible for the effective functioning of the department and organise relevant or related extracurricular activities so as to ensure that the subject, the learning area or phase and the education of the learners are promoted in a proper manner.

The head of department should also assist with administrative responsibilities such as planning and managing the budget for the department and school stock, textbooks and equipment for the department. On responsibilities related to personnel, the head of department should advise the principal regarding the division of work among the staff in

his or her department. He or she should also participate in agreed school or educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practices with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management. The HoD's teaching responsibilities include assessing and recording the attainment of learners he or she is teaching. They also need to open channels of communication in their departments and with educators of other schools to initiate continuous improvements in their departments. To be able to carry out the above duties effectively, the SMTs need to first have specific management or leadership skills and behaviours. These skills do not develop accidentally; training is important to prepare the SMT members for their roles.

#### **2.4. The implications for teamwork within the school management teams**

When people label a group of leaders a 'team' they do so to articulate the notion of teamwork sparked by a common goal. This means that teams must "integrate, synthesise, and share information, and they need to coordinate and cooperate as task demands shift throughout a performance episode to accomplish their mission" (Salas, Cooke & Rosen, 2008:541). Hayes (1997:52) defines a team as a group of people actively cooperating to achieve the same goal or purpose. It would appear from this definition that the SMT is called a "team" because its members are expected to make sound decisions together and implement those decisions to achieve the common goal. The absence of a common goal can mean that the group of people cannot function as a team or that it cannot function at all. Therefore, a common goal transforms a group of people into a team in which individuals work together to achieve more than the sum of individual contributions.

For teams to be effective, team members have to articulate, agree upon, and work towards specific common goals to demonstrate a commitment to the values and beliefs that guide democratic collaborations. According to Hellriegel *et al.* (2008), goals are the results to be attained, and thus indicate the direction in which decisions and actions should be aimed. The advantages of having goals are that, "they give direction to the

efforts of staff, parents and learners, motivate staff, parents and learners, and serve as a yardstick for measuring progress” (University of South Africa, 2007:133-134). As a measuring stick for school progress, a goal is an important requirement for effective management of teaching and learning in schools. Accordingly, Stroller, Mark and Lee’s (2004:692) research findings show that “under performing schools function without the basic team requirements such as goals”. Therefore, in order to improve school performance, the school management teams need to set goals for the school and allow them to spread to the rest of the stakeholders.

When team members engage in interdependent interactions as they perform their tasks, when they share responsibilities and accountability for the outcomes of the tasks in pursuit of their goals, they enter into teamwork processes. According to Mendwell (2009), teamwork is a gathering of workgroup of individual people by prescribing purposes or goals and encouraging effective communication and cooperation within the workgroup. In essence, teamwork encourages the transference of certain powers and responsibilities about the task to be done to the team in order to accelerate team effectiveness. The word “effective” suggests that the quality of the task accomplishment is the best available and achievable within the time available, and that the team makes full and economic use of the resources available (Everard & Morris, 1996:156, 2006:156). This word suggests that team goals or outcomes of the task performed are achieved within a prescribed timeframe with resources well utilised.

Thus, Hackman (1987) defines team effectiveness as an evaluation of the outcomes of team performance processes relative to some set of criteria. These criteria can include evaluation of task completion, team development and stakeholder satisfaction (Helriegell *et al.*, 2008). With regard to task completion, the criteria can involve measuring aspects such as accuracy, speed, creativity and cost. This means that effective teams should be able to complete team tasks with accuracy, speed, creativity while making good use of

the available resources. Team development also includes team cohesiveness, team flexibility and team preparedness for new tasks. This means that any team develops into an effective team when its members are committed to that team and also have the desire to remain in the team.

Therefore, “effective teams are identified by the following features, namely, a willingness by members to share, even to sacrifice, having an agreed purpose or mission, and the team achieving more than the sum of its constituent parts” (Darren, 2010:71). Darren’s (2007) claim is reinforced by the Department of Education’s Education Law and Policy Handbook when it states that “teams that produce good results usually have a common purpose, clearly defined roles for each team member, a leader, team members that support one another, a free flow of information, set ways for resolving conflict, and members who can see benefits in working together” (DoE, 2000:26).

However, teamwork effectiveness could be challenged by factors inherent within the school context. Perhaps this is as Stott and Walker (1999:55) warn “Teamwork effectiveness could be seriously impaired in schools that foster secrecy and suspicion. In such conditions, people play safe and pursue low-risk strategies. An absence of interdependence and the pressure of high levels of animosity between team [members] may affect overall organisational performance”. Stott and Walker’s warning is genuine because in an environment where distrust and disloyalty prevail, team members prefer to work in isolation. In this way the expertise and abilities of members become dislocated and isolated, resulting in team’s failure to achieve expected outcomes.

#### **2.4.1. The merits of teams and teamwork in schools**

The importance of teams and teamwork are fully documented. Scott and Walker (1999:51) identified collaboration, empowerment, co-operation and consultation as the benefits of teamwork. They further cite arguments that teamwork provides teachers with

a “significant role in school decision making”, and “control over their work environment”. This claim finds support in Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008:230) who assert that problems can be solved more creatively if the SMT functions as a team rather than as individuals. The availability of teams ensures that a wider range of problem solving than a single individual could cope with is covered. This means that working as a team promotes problem ownership in which team members view problems as team problems and jointly contribute their expertise and capabilities to resolve those problems.

Therefore, teams are desirable because during the process of problem solving creative talents are harnessed and maximised within the school and learning is promoted. Teams are, therefore, learning units because they encourage the transfer of knowledge as well as skills. School teams have a potential to nurture and optimise the talents and skills of those involved in them. I argue in this way because I believe that, when team members interact, they sharpen each other’s skills and talents. It is a notion of “iron sharpening iron”, when each member is given enough opportunity to exercise his or her skills and talents to benefit and equip others. Teamwork also provides opportunity for members’ skills and capabilities to be evaluated throughout and in so doing adjustments could be made in order to have them functioning to their maximum (Tyala, 2004). The optimum functioning of every team member makes the school achieve its core duty of educating learners.

#### **2.4.2. Threats to teams and teamwork in schools**

While the benefits of team management and teamwork are widely articulated, there are challenges to teamwork or to keeping the team together. Tondeur (2008) identifies trust, communication lines, keeping morale, good leadership and responsible membership at the highest level as challenges affecting teamwork. Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) include “various levels of competence among team members” as a threat to teamwork as distributing responsibilities to members who may not be competent might threaten the

effective functioning of the school. In this regard, relying on other team members may mean that the school might not meet due dates and “the major thing is to meet due dates by the department” (Tonduer, 2008:302). On the other hand, laziness of some of the educators who want to do the basic minimum is also a challenge (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). A team member (principal, head of department or deputy principal) who is lazy may lead to some members of the team being overloaded, and this threatens the team-building process in the school.

Another challenge that hampers teamwork in school relates to delegation and job satisfaction. Sometimes principals find it difficult to delegate responsibilities to other team members because they believe the job may not be done the way they would like it, and they then may not get that personal satisfaction. The need for personal satisfaction with job well done could drive principals to tackle projects individually rather allowing the participation of other team members (Tonduer, 2008). When school principals start to express reservations about delegating responsibilities, perhaps because they doubt the abilities of their colleagues, they create a tension between “holding on and letting go” (MacBeath, 2005:354). To overcome this threat, school principals should focus on professional and human resource development. Once team members are capacitated, the principal should decide to build a school culture premised on trust which will facilitate the distribution of leadership. Trust is acknowledged as being the root of success or failure in relationships, and communicates credibility in leadership.

However, MacBeath (2005) warns that building a culture of trust in the face of accountability pressures implies a risk. The risk is that trust may be placed in people who do not honour that trust and, in so doing, only the principal is left accountable to the Department and other stakeholders for the task poorly done. This is because within the legal framework of South Africa’s education system, school principals are ultimately accountable because they possess statutory delegated authority (Mbatha, Grobler &

Loock, 2006). But the alternative of working in a culture of mistrust is equally unappealing because “without mutual trust, relationships and respect are compromised and mistrust exerts a corrosive influence” (MacBeath, 2005:353). Thus, the development of mutual trust is a non-negotiable in the practice of team management and the challenge for SMT members, especially the school principal, is to find and utilise areas of expertise in colleagues because trust is earned through expertise (Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley & Somaroo, 2010).

The challenge facing principals is how to balance the important issue of developing trust with the equally important issue of accountability. In response to this challenge, Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008:227) suggest that the principal’s role becomes “a balancing role” where the principal is challenged to determine, in line with legislation, what practices can be distributed and how the distribution will happen. When the “balancing role” of the school principal is performed effectively, team members bond and respect each other while satisfying expectations of the Department, for example, meeting all due dates, while relieving accountability pressure on the school principal.

In direct contrast, school principals who fail in their “balancing role” usually collapse under the pressure of accountability, and under these circumstances they end up not consulting other team members. Ultimately, as a result of this pressure, these principals end up hiding under the accountability niche of “I am the accounting officer” to justify their lack of consultation. Sometimes resorting to this accountability niche is not voluntary, but is indicative that the “school manager is torn between efficiency, that is, making quick decisions without consulting and real teamwork, i.e. taking time to consult and really listen to others’ views” (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008).

Furthermore, lack of consultation is interpreted by most school principals as merely a matter of not having time to consult or the decision couldn’t wait a day or two. The challenge is seeing teamwork as time consuming as it takes time for team members to

reach common opinion about something and issues that need urgent attention sometimes do not get it (Tondeur, 2008). While it is true that some decisions need to be made quickly and therefore can and should be taken by the principal, it is equally true that most really important decisions can be delayed. In this regard, Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) argue that perhaps failing to consult and really use teams stem from lack of real commitment to the process of decision-making through which personal and professional growth is enhanced. They further argue that leaders who insist on consultation and constantly look for ways of achieving group decisions are simply expressing their respect for their colleagues, and reinforcing their commitment to relationships and personal growth. It is therefore argued here that teams' survival depends on the level of consultation expressed by the school principal and other members of the SMTs.

## **2.5. Two important leadership perspectives influencing the role of SMTs**

The development of SMTs resonates with approaches that emphasise distributed leadership, with teamwork being at the heart of this distributed leadership. In the context of this study, the practice of distributed leadership in schools requires moral leaders who are able to operate from the perspective of their values and ethics. Therefore, moral leadership reflects an approach that can potentially enhance interactions and build relationships necessary for teamwork and distribution of leadership tasks in the schools. Thus, the next section explores the two important perspectives that can influence teamwork in schools, namely, distributed leadership and moral leadership.

### **2.5.1. Distributed leadership perspective for effective teaching and learning**

A large body of international research supports the view that school leadership can have a significant indirect impact on student learning outcomes (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006, Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). In South Africa, Ngcobo and Tikly (2008) concur that school effectiveness and improvement depend on effective leadership. School leadership

achieves this indirect impact by shaping conditions that build school capacity for change and foster effective teaching and learning (Southworth, 2002). In a similar vein, Harris and Chapman (2002) argue that there are claims that school improvement and effectiveness are associated with democratic and participatory styles of leadership. On the basis of their research with students, Ruddock and Flutter (2004:133) concluded that ‘opportunities for consultation and enhanced participation in schools have a direct impact on pupils’ engagement’. Hallinger and Heck’s (2010) study that attempted to locate what forms of leadership practice contribute to sustained school improvement proved that some forms of distributed leadership (collaborated) leadership has an impact on school effectiveness and improvement.

Descriptively, though challenging, distributed leadership allows for the possibility of a range of modes of co-ordination and role interdependencies such as spontaneous collaboration between actors, synergistic partnerships (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004). It is based on trust and requires “letting go” by senior staff rather than just delegating tasks and “redistribution of power” (Grant, 2010:57). Therefore, distributed leadership is based on the premise that teachers can and must lead. This implies that leadership needs not be located only in the formal management positions, but should be “stretched over multiple leaders” (Spillane, 2006:15), including teachers. In essence, expertise needs to be engaged whenever it exists within the school rather than seeking this only within formal positions or roles. In line with this thought, Harris and Muijs (2005:133) contend that “both senior managers and teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers and try to bring about fundamental changes”. It is this fundamental change that can enhance moral purpose in schools as teachers start to contribute towards school improvement.

Allowing teachers to work as a collective provides them with a legitimate source of authority (Williams, 2011). However, inviting teachers into the practice of leadership does not displace the crucial role of the school principal. This means that the practice of

distributed leadership does not undermine the legal framework of the South African's education system that place the school principal as an ultimate accounting officer. Arguing in accordance with this, Mbatha, Grobler and Looock (2006) state that within this framework the school principals possess statutory delegated authority. By virtue of their positional power, school principals cannot abdicate their accountability but must instead become the leader of leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000, Harris & Lambert, 2003). As 'leaders of leaders', it is their responsibility to build a school culture premised on trust and mutual learning, both of which, are key to ensuring that distributed leadership takes place (Grant, 2006).

In addition to the principal taking a role as the 'leader of leaders', Fullan (2003:22) argues that "for distributed leadership to come to full fruition the structural framework which is provided by hierarchical forms of leadership is prerequisite". This means that, in practice, the SMT members serve as gate-keepers to distributed leadership in the school, and should, therefore, have a powerful and real relationship amongst themselves and teachers who take on leadership roles as they emerge. Furthermore, SMTs should know how distributed leadership looks like in practice, that is to know which leadership responsibilities and activities to distribute and how. The distributed leadership studies by Spillane (2006) and Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, and Coldren (2005) claim that distribution of leadership activities can be modeled as collaborated distribution, collective distribution or coordinated distribution.

They argue that collaborated distribution characterises practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to perform the same organisational routine or task, while collective distribution characterises practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who co-perform a leadership routine by working separately but interdependently. In contrast, coordinated distribution refers to situations where leadership routine involves activities that have to be performed in

particular sequence. All these forms of distribution clarify how school management teams can engage in distributed leadership as a means of ensuring that all members of staff in the school engage in activities that promote the sharing of moral purpose.

The claimed benefits of the distributed leadership approach are that “it improves effectiveness, increases engagement and self-esteem, enhances organisational capacity, and leads to greater organisational capability to deal with challenges of complexity and work intensification” (Woods, 2005: 30). Flowing from this, distributed leadership can be seen as an approach that can assist school management teams in tapping the ideas, creativity, skills and energies of the staff, thus unleashing a greater capacity for organisational responsiveness and sustained improvement. Unleashing greater organisational capacity can also improve the organisational capability to deal with challenges of complexity and work intensification. This suggests that since instructional improvement requires that people with multiple sources of expertise work in concert around a common problem, distributing expertise will lead to school improvement.

Despite the prominence of and possibilities provided by distributed leadership enshrined in the international literature, Grant’s (2008) study of the reality of distributed leadership in a small sample of schools in KwaZulu Natal revealed that in practice distributed leadership and teacher leadership were not something that schools embraced. Elements of distributed leadership were found in the SMT structures but in most cases this did not extend to all teachers. In this regard, Williams (2011) enumerated factors that can inhibit distributed leadership in South African schools. In his interrogation of factors militating against distributed leadership becoming actualised, Williams use three categories suggested by Woods (2005:73-86), namely, context, people and practice.

Firstly, in the context-based factors category, Williams (2011) identifies that the authoritarian ethos that existed before 1994 still pervades the education system at the micro and macro levels. These entrenched bureaucratic and hierarchical management

practices inherited from the apartheid tradition inhibit distributed leadership at different levels of the system (DoE, 2003). At school level, Grant (2006:513) asserts that school principals are only exhibiting a “rhetorical commitment” to democratic deliberations. This implies that most school management teams, though claiming to be committed to democratic principles, their practical interactions with the staff prove otherwise. Williams (2011) further states that context-based factors result in people-based factors. This means that factors such as strict bureaucratic and hierarchical management practices in school can result in the evolvment of people who develop certain attitudes in order to adapt and survive in such schooling contexts.

Secondly, people-based factors are factors that are associated with the school principal that perpetuate “autocratic affinity in South African schools” (Grant, 2006:525). These factors include authoritarian mentality, fear of the loss of power, values and skills as well as ethnicity, cultural and gender biases. Grant (2006) furthermore identified teacher-related factor that promote hierarchical management practices in schools, namely, a sense of insecurity on the part of the teachers, perhaps due to official policy which emphasises principal accountability. As such teachers are relegated to a “mere ciphers or automatons devoid of any semblance of human agency” (Williams, 2011:194). Consequently, the persistence of the authoritarian ethos in schools hinders the establishment of the free collaborative space where creative interactions take place.

Thirdly, practice-based factors, like people-based factors are influenced by context-based factors. Another consequence of the authoritarian form of leadership has been the development of a tradition of non-participation in the decision-making process at the school level on the part of the teachers (Williams, 2011). This tradition has led to uncertainty about the value of greater participation and insufficient skills and lack of confidence to use these skills. The practice-based factors involve those factors which cause other members of the staff to become sidelined from participating in leadership and

management activities or functions in schools. Notwithstanding the foresaid inhibitors, the distributed leadership has major benefits for this study. It foregrounds the understanding of how SMTs have to operate to enact moral purpose because it is regarded as being characterised by a strong framework of values, purposes and structures (Wood, 2005:87). This framework is fundamental to this study as it provides a sense of values and common purpose which reflect essential elements of moral purpose in a school.

### **2.5.2. The moral leadership perspective for influencing the values and behaviour of teachers**

As seen from the foregoing discussions, for distributed leadership to succeed in schools, there is a need for a framework defining underlying values that characterise schools as moral enterprises (Greenfield, 2004). For the purpose of this study, moral leadership must become the framework characterising a school as a moral enterprise, defining the way things are done in schools (Sergiovanni, 1984). Therefore, moral leadership is fundamental to this study for two reasons. Firstly, it aligns a school as a moral enterprise to its goal of equipping learners with intellectual knowledge, practical skills and habits of mind. Secondly, it guides any leadership approach emphasising teacher participation because of its focus on the values and behaviours of the teachers. Values underlie everything we do and how teachers work with learners in the classrooms and interact with their leaders and colleagues.

According to Maldonado and Lacey (2001:80), moral leadership is “behaviour that influences followers’ values, beliefs, and behaviours so organisational objectives can be achieved through the followers”. This means that in order to influence the values and beliefs of the teachers and learners, the principals’ authority and influence should be derived from the conception of what is right or good or what is in the best interest of those he or she leads. To consider what is in the best interest of others resonates with

what Sergiovanni (2007:58) calls “servant leadership”. He argues that moral leadership has close connections to servant leadership which involves ‘serving others but its ultimate purpose is to place oneself and others for whom one has responsibility in the service of ideas’. From this, it can be argued that leadership carries responsibility not just to be personally moral, but to be a servant who leads with intent to contribute to the transformation of the society.

However, the tension facing servant leaders is to choose between serving people or the values of the school. Thus, Sergiovanni (1992) argues that servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that serving others is important but that the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help to shape the school. It is, therefore, important for leaders to serve people within the guidance of the values genuinely held by their schools. The responsibility of the leader is that, in the process of serving others, the values held by the school become visible in the life of the school. These leaders, who are characterised by the spirit of service exemplified in their will to have a positive, lasting effect or influence on others and/or the school while safeguarding the values and the well-being of the whole school, can be referred to as moral leaders. These are managers who are deeply certain about their moral beliefs and draw on a lifelong capacity to learn from others, and they demonstrate a humbleness and willingness to risk their own self-interest for the sake of their moral goals (Colby & Damon, 1992).

A participant in Maldonado and Lacey’s (2001:80) qualitative study that explored the meaning of moral leadership with twenty one leaders compared moral leaders to leaders of jazz: “they stand in the middle, listening, knowing the skills of all of the members as well as their own skills, and therefore, they call forth the value and the talents of each person, this leads to harmony”. This means that moral leaders lead through personal example, standing in the middle, speaking for others, and calling forth the best in others,

learners and teachers, in the school. Therefore, moral leaders strive to release the potential and initiatives of each individual and direct the team towards a goal of service orientation for common good and to ensure personal and social transformation. To this end, the main characteristics of moral leadership are trust and a spirit of service and are exemplified in the model of collaborative leadership envisioned by effective SMTs (Darren, 2010:53).

In this study I argue that moral leadership can succeed only when the behaviour of SMT members is guided by certain principles premised on moral dimensions that involve moral integrity and authenticity. Moral integrity plays an important part in the notion of moral purpose and moral leadership. In order for the actions of school managers to be trusted, they must act from a position of moral integrity. According to Branson (2006), moral integrity is the capacity to instinctively do what is right for the good of others in the absence of incentives or sanctions. Hence, processing moral integrity is about achieving an inner victory where the interests of others, rather self-interests, are spontaneous motivation. Leading with integrity involves being motivated to do what is right or good by considering the benefits it has on those we lead without necessarily expecting to benefit from such action.

However, because of the ethical complexity surrounding us it is not always easy to lead with integrity (University of South Africa, 2007:87). Therefore, in order to lead with integrity members of the school management teams need self-control. Every time our conscious is influenced by a lack of self-control, our moral integrity is compromised and our selfish desires outweigh our moral purpose. The school managers' capacity to address school improvement is largely dependent on how effectively they confront and overcome their lack of self-control and impulsiveness in order to suppress their egocentric desires. Another concept of equal importance that informs my study is authenticity. According to Starratt (2004:70), authenticity is "the challenge of connecting oneself to a wider whole,

of finding one's life in dialogue with wider whole, discovering that the deepest character of all beings is their rationality, their participation in the larger life around them”.

In short, authentic leaders are leaders who are true to themselves and strive for a mutually affirming relationship with others. Thus, Begley's (2006) conception of an authentic form of leadership emphasises authenticity as something that begins with self-knowledge and then becomes extended to sensitivity to the perspectives of others. In that context it is argued that leaders should know their values and ethical predispositions as well as become more sensitive to the values orientation of others (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). In accordance with Starratt's (2004), this study views authenticity as a core relational and inter-connected virtue that is articulated through “leaders exhibiting a range of values including trust, service, integrity and a sense of ethics and morality” (Darren, 2010:53).

Demonstrating authentic leadership challenges the SMT members to bring the reality of a school's operation as close as possible to the ideals articulated in the moral purpose of the school. According to Duignan and Bhindi (1997), authentic leaders breathe life force into the workforce and keep the people feeling energised and focused. The foregoing discussion of the moral dimensions reinforces the need for school managers to lead with moral leadership in the school. Therefore, the moral leadership approach lays the groundwork for the understanding of the meaning and significance of the concept of moral purpose, the real nitty-gritty of which is discussed in Chapter three.

## **2.6. Chapter summary**

The examination of the development and nature of school management teams was necessary to situate the research in the South African context. The chapter has described the development of school management teams as a response to a call to greater collaboration or participation within the management of schools. Distributed leadership is explored as a leadership approach that promotes teamwork and teacher leadership in

schools. This led to the examination of teamwork and its implications in the SMTs and how teamwork influences their capacity to cultivate moral purpose. Moral leadership was also examined with the major focus being on moral authenticity and integrity. It seems an apt way to conclude this chapter before the next one, the conceptual framework chapter, focuses on the meaning, significance and the core elements of moral purpose.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Exploring the significance and fundamental elements of moral purpose in schools**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, relevant literature and themes that informed the purpose of this study and its four consequent research questions are examined. This review of literature forms the background to this study, a review whose conceptual framework has as its basis moral purpose as a central theme. Thus, this broadest theme, moral purpose, is explored first with clarification of its meaning. The core elements of moral purpose are also investigated. These fundamental elements are the core expressions of moral purpose and include values and ethics, authentic learning and educative leadership. The chapter also looks at how these elements interact with moral purpose to transform the lives of learners. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of focusing on moral purpose.

#### **3.2. The meaning and significance of moral purpose**

In the context of management and leadership, moral purpose is mostly accepted because it is regarded as a legitimate force that drives leaders to engage critically with organisational values and goals (Duignan, 2006, Sergiovanni, 1992, 2007, Starratt, 2004). This implies that in addition to possessing character, competence and commitment, moral leaders must make a strong commitment to their schools, their values and their constituents. Implicit within the framework of team management, the notion of moral purpose can be seen as being at the centre of leadership practices of the SMT in the school. It assists in establishing relationships and connections within the school management team, and its presence challenges teachers and leaders to move in one accord towards attaining common vision and goals.

The notion of moral purpose is, however, understood differently and has been labelled in various ways by many different international scholars. Notably, Cuttance, Stokes, McGuinness, Capponi, Corneille, Jones and Umoh (2003) labelled it ‘whole school vision and goals’, and Andrews and Lewis (2004) labelled moral purpose as ‘community values’. Fullan (2001) and MacBeath (2005, 2006) simply use the label ‘moral purpose’. Notwithstanding these descriptions, there is a general recognition in the literature that moral purpose is one of the fundamental necessities for bringing about the kind of change and improvement that will deliver desirable student learning in schools (Bezzina, 2007, 2010). Thus, “The central moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, wherever they exist, are narrowed. In short, it [moral purpose] is about raising the bar and narrowing the gap”. (Barber & Fullan, 2005:3).

Barber and Fullan’s (2005) definition provides a background against which the concept of moral purpose is explored in this study. Their definition shows how moral purpose might facilitate the work of teachers and leaders in producing improvements in learning and learner achievement. This means that teachers and leaders who possess and understand their moral purpose have commitment to ends that express underlying values and ethics, and the commitment is ultimately to the gradual transformation of the learner into a fuller, richer, deeper human being (Bezzina, 2010). Commitment to ends implies clarity of the purpose of leading and teaching. Flowing from this argument and for the purpose of this study, moral purpose can be understood as the compelling motive that drives teams towards a gradual transformation of learners and improvement in learners’ achievements by closing the gap between higher performing and lower performing learners.

Therefore, a moral purpose of the team is postulated as a pressing imperative that facilitates commitment to the goal of making a genuine difference in the lives of the

learners by transforming their learning. However, making a genuine difference in the lives of learners and improving their academic achievement is possible when moral purpose is enacted. This is because there is a “gap between moral purpose and moral performance” (Thompson, 2004:27). That is, while a deep moral purpose is generally admirable, it can have no impact on school improvement if it is not linked to performance, if it is not translated into action. Bezzina and Tauna (2012:11) link moral purpose and moral action through the important influence of moral potency. To them, moral potency involves “not just ownership [of moral purpose], but courage and a sense of efficacy [and] disposition to act morally and translate it into moral action”.

This is a very powerful notion that challenges school managers not only to believe in moral purpose and its underlying values, but also have a firm commitment to actualise it with the desire and belief in their power and ability to do so, that is a “sense of their own capacity to make a difference in pursuing this [moral] purpose, and ultimately act courageously in its pursuit” (Bezzina & Tauna, 2012:11). Moral potency, therefore, means moving from moral purpose to moral action or “realized moral purpose” (Fullan, 2010: 15). When outlining strategies for realising the moral purpose, Fullan (2011) suggests that school managers must develop the collaborative among other things. He argues that achieving the moral imperative or purpose is only possible via the collaborative, and when the group is mobilised with force and specificity, it can accomplish amazing results.

Therefore, moral purpose is enacted when there are shared values and vision directed towards the learning of all students, and greater reliance on collectivity to reinforce objectives, rather than on individual autonomy. Thus, a moral purpose belonging to an individual is “moral martyrdom” (Fullan, Bertani & Quinn, 2004:3). To me “moral martyrdom” simply means that moral purpose belonging to an individual brings great satisfaction to an individual soul, but it does not lead to sustainable school leadership and

improvement. This argument finds support in Bezzina (2010:5) who argues that moral purpose has many expressions, but almost all of them include the notion that such purpose be shared and/or pervasive. He adds that, rationally, a purpose which is not shared belongs to the individual rather than the organisation, and is unlikely to impact on overall performance. Moral purpose becomes compelling when it is shared or owned by a team. This means that moral purpose needs to be widely shared to move schools substantially towards sustainability.

Therefore, school management teams should think of moral purpose as a quality of the school that should not be allowed to reside in an individual heroic teacher, principal, deputy principal or head of department. Once it is widely shared within the SMT and the school, moral purpose becomes the basis for all team interactions and engagements, with these engagements leading to commitment to and ownership of moral purpose. When leaders and teachers feel ownership of moral purpose, they become fully energised to participate in school improvement with greater commitment. Motivated leaders and teachers can engage in a dialogue around moral purpose with enthusiasm and, in so doing, they create and share knowledge. This means that when team members share moral purpose through interactions, they are automatically engaged in the process of sharing learning. As members of a team, individuals learn from and with each other and, in so doing, their leadership and teaching abilities improve.

Essentially, the sharing perspective addresses the purpose of this study. In this sense when all members start to share learning, they construct and reconstruct knowledge through interactions. In line with this thinking, Fullan (2002a:7) asserts that “information only becomes knowledge through social process”. Social processes such as dialogue among team members translate information into knowledge, with this knowledge becoming a basic device to accelerate teams to a level of team effectiveness. Team effectiveness is a zone where team members are able to solve problems together and have

control over their work environment. In this regard, the major role of the SMT is to create the context conducive to the sharing and creation of knowledge.

The norm of contributing one's knowledge to the other is the key to continuous growth for all. This demonstrates the existence of the relationship between a knowledge society and moral purpose. Contemplating this relationship and its significance in schools, Fullan (2002a) states that for a knowledge society to thrive on a deep and continuous basis, it must have a moral compass. The knowledge society and moral purpose need each other. It is easy to see why moral purpose will not go very far without knowledge, but I am also saying that the knowledge society literally will not sustain itself without moral qualities. It is argued therefore, that a balance needs to occur between moral purpose and knowledge generation and sharing if teams are to grow. This implies that the new ideas and new approaches generated from an encounter of multiple perspectives within team engagements cannot serve the purpose if they are not aligned to and guided by the moral purpose of that particular team.

Simply having stated the good consequences of the existing relationship between moral purpose and knowledge creation does not wipe away all obstacles that can challenge its realisation in practice. The sharing of knowledge requires mutual trust. Trust can be seen as being the issue that brings credibility to leadership and relationships. It is seen as being central to leadership and relationships because it develops an ethos of honesty, integrity and fairness, aspects on which leadership and relationships are most dependent on. This means that in the atmosphere of trust team members are being straightforward with each other and apply the same value system in all situations, whether in private or public life. Trust is thus acknowledged to be the root of success or failure in a relationship. For this reason, Covey (1990:31) described it as an "emotional bank account between two people", that enables them to have healthy, engaging relationships.

In line with this, Bezzina (2007) argues that anxiety and lack of trust can work to prevent people acting in ways that will reflect their espoused values [moral purpose]. This implies that even in the presence of moral purpose anxiety resulting from lack of trust can act as an obstacle to sharing of knowledge, moral purpose and, ultimately, to shared leadership. I therefore argue that it is in the network of trusting relationships that leadership and moral purpose can intertwine to benefit the schools. Mutual trust establishes coherence in which all the components of the school are brought together to make a whole. Fullan (1993, 2001) calls this coherence 'building relationships'. According to Fullan (2011), building relationships is critical with not just the cynics but with all people involved in enacting moral purpose is critical.

Therefore, Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) view cohesion as the extent to which team members 'cohere', feel that they belong and are happy to work together. This is the "degree to which members of a team are motivated to remain on the team" (Shelly *et al.*, 2004:181). In my view, cohesion is the extent to which right people are self-motivated to be part of the team that wants to create something great; hence, they are willing to remain in relationships that makes the creation of something great (academic success for all learners) possible. People remain in teams when trust has matured to produce openness amongst the people and willingness to participate in team activities.

Therefore, openness and participation are the other key values underpinning cohesion (Josephs & Winston, 2005, Bauer & Bogotch, 2006). The relationship between trust and openness in relationships testifies to the assumption that the levels of trust in SMTs can potentially affect the building of relationships in schools, hence affecting the sharing of moral purpose. The low levels of trust may result in members being reluctant to express their ideas and opinions openly, or contribute their knowledge and expertise as they will suspect others of being less receptive and cooperative. In addition, low levels of trust could affect new initiatives in the team as individuals question the true intent of the

initiative. When individuals become highly suspicious of the motives of the individual presenting the initiative, they can exhibit distractive behaviours that reflect their unwillingness to embark on these initiatives.

Conversely, high levels of trust encourage people to communicate openly and productively and with empathy and synergy. Openness breeds an atmosphere where members participate in other members' initiatives. Members can only participate in these initiatives when they have confidence that other members say what they say and do what they do out of a sense of responsibility to the team. According to Owens (2001:284), "participation is the mutual and emotional involvement of a person in a group situation that encourages the individual to contribute to group goals and to share responsibility for them". When team members feel that they are part of the team, they begin to own the team goal, and also feel obliged to be involved in team activities and are willing to take responsibility in the team and commit to the tasks without being coerced to do so.

As seen from above assertion, trusting relationship depends on open and simultaneous flow of information and ideas. In the context of the SMT, this flow may be either top-down or bottom-up, resulting in a meaningful transfer of understanding from one person to another. In the process of communication, the moral purpose of the school is gradually painted until every member of the SMT understands and embraces it. Therefore, communication can be seen as the primary method by which the education leader can influence groups and individuals, and convince them to do their best for the learners in the school. This means that a team can only be task focused and coordinated only if its members learn to effectively share ideas, values, opinions and facts, thus encouraging each other to achieve the school goals and to ensure that action is taken to cultivate the moral purpose.

However, to succeed in communicating moral purpose, every manager's communication role needs to be purpose directed and should in addition to other methods include

strategic conversations (dialogue) (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003). Buber (2007:26) agrees that “SMTs need to practice dialogue rather than monologue in their communication with those they care about”. Team members practising dialogue would openly and authentically engage with each other, that is, they would be who they are, rather than seeming to be someone they are not. As a result, they would engage in inclusion in that they would try to understand the experiences of their teammates. By understanding the experiences of their teammates, they create an atmosphere conducive to cooperation. For this reason, Tonduer (2008) views communication as the very means of cooperation. Teams that communicate effectively are able to elicit behaviours that promote cooperation rather than unhealthy competition within the team.

### **3.3. The overarching goal of moral purpose**

According to Fullan (2002a:4), “In addition to the direct goal of making a difference in the lives of students, moral purpose plays a large role in transforming and sustaining system. Within the organisation how leaders treat others is also a component of moral purpose”. In line with this view, the ACE Module, *Understanding school leadership and governance in the South African context* (DoE, 2008a: 27-28), states that leaders with strong moral purpose, “have commitment to improving standards, no matter what, and ensuring that the gap between all students narrows when it comes to achievement, treat people ethically – with respect and concern – be it adults or learners”. Flowing from these two citations, the study postulates that the major goal embodied within moral purpose is to make a difference in the lives of learners by committing to transforming the learning of all learners in the school.

Therefore, leaders with moral purpose lead with a sense or vision of transformed learners, which is exemplified by their desire to raise the standards of achievement for all learners within the school. The vision embodied in moral purpose gives rise to a particular set of aspirations for the learners. The leaders’ and teachers’ aspirations for the learners results

in learners taking delight in both the subject and the process of learning, for which they take responsibility as part of a life-long journey (Bezzina, 2010). Bezzina adds that their growing understanding reflects a rigorous, critical and respectful approach to the subject matter and their fellow learners. However, achieving the goal of transforming the learning of learners and raising the achievement levels for all learners in the school requires the creation of a school culture that fosters respect for learners, teachers and parents.

Treating people with respect, particularly learners, means making decisions that are in the best interests of the learners. To do this, teachers and members of the SMT need to show respect for the uniqueness and diversity of learners in the school. The respect for the uniqueness of learners involves understanding that learners learn in different ways and at different paces. Therefore, SMTs have the responsibility to create this culture in their schools. If a culture in which respect is universal and expression of commitment to each other as human beings is created, then schools will have a foundation for designing ways for collaboration and mutual empowerment that are simply not possible in the absence of authentic respect. This means that without respect there will never be any possibilities for trust, sharing a vision, for empowerment or for creating powerful teams in schools.

### **3.4. The core elements or expressions of moral purpose in schools**

Paying attention to the conceptual framework developed from the *Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners* (LTLL) project, the project that explored moral purpose in Australian Catholic schools, Bezzina (2007, 2008, 2010) and Bezzina and Burford (2010) identified fundamental elements of moral purpose which are also relevant to my study. These elements encompass values and ethics, the teacher as a leader, and authentic learning as core expressions of moral purpose. Bezzina (2008) asserts that moral purpose is expressed in the values and ethics espoused by the school. This moral purpose influences the exercise of leadership and the approaches taken to authentic learning and

gives rise to a strong sense of the teacher as a leader. These researchers suggested that leadership and learning practices based on moral purpose can facilitate the work of teachers and leaders in enhancing student learning. In the next section I describe the elements of moral purpose and how they impact on the vision of making a difference in the lives of learners by transforming their learning.

#### **3.4.1. Values and ethics**

Within a particular school context, the set of values and ethics capture the shared sense of moral purpose, with these values and ethics central to understanding the culture of that school. I reason this way in line with the definition of culture provided by Bush and Middlewood (2005:47) who assert that “culture relates to the informal aspects of organisations rather than their official elements. They focus on the values, beliefs and norms of individuals in the organisation and how they coalesce into shared meanings”. Emerging from this definition is the view that values and ethics not only underline school culture but also provide us with deep understanding of certain attitudes, behaviours and routine practices within the school management teams. Leaders work and interact with their colleagues according to their value system.

According to Hodgkinson (1978), values are a motivating force that is a characteristic of individuals, groups, organisations and societies, and influences choices they make from available resources and means. In line with this thinking, Begley (2006) describes the influence of values within individuals as the internal psychological reflections of more distilled levels of motivation that become tangible to an observer in the form of attitudes, speech and actions. This means that values are shapers of the human behaviour, and thus are seen as conscious or unconscious influences on attitudes, speech and actions of people within the school. Therefore, values held by the school are manifesting in the way people in that school do and say things. Values are central to the activities and practices

of any school and the SMTs should ensure that there is an explicit and owned platform for these sets of values.

According to Bezzina (2010), by the end of their involvement with the LTLL programme schools were able to identify a broader range of evidence for the existence of the set of values which included commitment, integrity, justice, excellence and the common good. The forms of evidence for the value of justice included inclusion of special needs students, acceptance of diversity, equitable access to resources and equitable workload for staff. With regard to the value of excellence, it emerged schools experienced explicit articulation of the nature of good teaching and learning. This means that as evidence indicating the presence of excellence, the schools set high standards or expectations for student learning, achieved quality of student outcomes, and teachers, learners and their leaders jointly celebrated achievement. It also became apparent that schools set in place professional and staff learning programmes as evidence of their desire to achieve excellence in their classroom and leadership practices.

The major evidence for the value of common good was collaborated leadership practices and clarity of vision. This means that teachers and leaders were clear about the central vision of teaching and leading, and leadership was spread over multiple people. According to Bezzina (2008), the value of integrity was evidenced in the way the leaders interacted with other leaders, teachers and learners in the school. This means that if a leader highly prizes integrity as a core value, then this value would come through in the form of the following evidence, namely, their honesty (being straightforward with others) and truthfulness (DoE, 2008b). This manual further shows that the forms of evidence for the value of commitment can include “leaders meeting goals and targets”. If achievement is a central value for a leader, then his or her behaviour will show this. He or she will want the best for himself or herself and for others.

In addition to values, Robertson (2011) asserts that when leaders reclaim and strengthen their moral purpose they move into what Starratt (2004) called 'ethical leadership'. While Starratt (2004:5) distinguishes between the two terms, 'ethics' and 'morality', he claims that they can be used to mean the same thing when characterising the work of leaders. He says 'ethics' is the 'study of what constitutes a moral life' and 'morality is the living, acting out of ethical beliefs and commitments'. In line with this assertion, Bezzina (2010) argues that ethics are the way values are lived out, and are sometimes viewed as some sort of absolute values. Ethics are regarded as absolute values because Starratt (2004) understand them as maps to consult only when the terrain we are traversing becomes a tangle of underbrush. He names three significant ethics that leaders should consult when they are called upon to clear a path through the dense undergrowth conflicts within the SMT that challenges relationships between members, hence compromising teamwork. These are authenticity, presence, and responsibility.

The ethic of authenticity points educational leaders towards a more self-responsible form of relationships and leadership and they should act with the good of others as primary reference. Bezzina (2010) simply refers to it as calling for integrity in interactions, suggesting that its existence in schools can be evident in relationships and communication. The forms of evidence for the ethic of presence include collaborated learning and teacher reflective learning, which are the two important aspects of achieving the goal of raising achievement levels of learners (Bezzina, 2008). This means that teachers sit and plan together and reflect on their teaching together. For the ethic of responsibility, teachers become more focused on their responsibility for the learning of all students, showing a sense of accountability. Although, these ethics and values cannot fully address all the questions of this study, they inform the research observations. Therefore, it is assumed that the existence or non-existence of the values and ethics can prove to the existence or non-existence of moral purpose in the school.

### **3.4.2. Authentic learning**

According to Bezzina (2010), moral purpose is seen as fundamental to the educative enterprise in school. Authentic learning is therefore a “central pillar of shared purpose in schools” (Bezzina, 2007:62). This implies that moral purpose can potentially facilitate the work of teachers and learners in enhancing and enriching the learning processes in schools. To enrich the learning of learners, teachers and leaders with moral purpose learn to infuse classroom practices and leadership approaches with a dimension of personal meaning. That is, in order to transform learners, teachers and leaders ought to first take delight in both the subject matter and the process of learning before the learners can do so. This will result in authentic learning, which, according to Bezzina (2010), is the most profound manifestation of moral purpose. In the same vein, Hodgkinson (1991) argues that the facilitation of authentic learning is a fundamentally moral activity because it engages students in a deeper understanding of the nature and purpose of their lives.

Thus, Starratt (2004) argues strongly that learning that is not authentic to the needs of the students’ life or world is not only inappropriate but unethical. In other words, educators who contribute to practices which are not focused on transforming the lives of learners deeply are engaging in behaviour which is morally wrong. It is important to argue here that learning that is unauthentic cannot yield perceived improvements in the achievements levels of learners. Therefore, authentic learning is more than just imparting new knowledge and skills to learners but it means transforming learners for the long term and challenging them to engage actively with society as engaged citizens seeking to make a difference. In line with this thinking, Darren (2010:54) asserts that “authentic learning takes students and teachers within a school into a broader community, challenging them to work for the greater good of all”. It is about connecting the subject of learning to the lived experience and cultural context of the learner, where the learning connects the learner to some aspect of his or her world.

Thus, Duignan and Bezzina (2004) state that, among other things, authentic learning would promote: development of personal meaning, awareness of the relationship between the self and the subject or object of study, respect for the integrity of the subject or object of study and transformation into a more fully human individual. From the above assertion, it can be argued that teachers and leaders engage in authentic learning when they think about what is really meaningful for learners. This means that throughout the learning process in the classroom, teachers should think critically about why they do what they do and ask what impact, short term and long term, will that have on learners. Similarly, by designing activities that are linked to real life, teachers will make learning fun, engaging and motivating. This learner centred approach stimulates learners to question the value of their learning, and as they start to do so, they effectively engage with the subject matter resulting in improved learner achievements.

Therefore, raising the level of achievement of all learners in the school is a moral purpose of the highest order and specifically appeals to teachers and SMTs to have a sense of moral purpose in what they do, believing that “education is about success for all students” (Levin & Fullan, 2008:294). The belief that education is about success for all learners is a greater motivator and challenges teachers and leaders to engage in leadership practices that involve those who enable the creation and support of the conditions under which high quality teaching and learning take place. These leadership practices can promote the highest possible standards of learner achievement within the school. Bezzina (2010) concurs that authentic learning is only possible when there is effective leadership. For leadership to have an impact on classroom teaching and, ultimately, learner achievement, the school principal should adopt a proactive approach and become an instructional leader who engages in the management of teaching and learning.

However, Bush and Heystek’s (2006) baseline study conducted with 500 Gauteng principals shows that South African principals do not conceptualise their role as

instructional leaders. Bush and Heystek's (2006:68) study revealed that of the ten leadership activities, "managing teaching and learning" was ranked only seventh, with school principals much more concerned with financial management, human resource management, and policy issues. This mindset needs to be transformed in order to achieve improvements in learner achievements. Managing teaching is a crucial leadership activity and achieves enhanced learner achievement because it involves the monitoring of teaching and learning. Monitoring teaching and learning standards of educators and learners is one of the major contributions to school improvement. This means that the SMTs need to design the monitoring and support programme which should be communicated to the teachers.

It is against the above backdrop that the study argues that the presence of moral purpose that is widely shared in the school will enable all members of the SMT to enter into a new domain of instruction. In this instructional domain, SMTs perform various activities related to the management of teaching and learning, namely, spend time analysing learners' results, jointly develop departmental improvements plans with their educators, set improvement targets with educators, and establish direct observation of educator teaching. At this domain, each and every member of the SMT is challenged to engage effectively in his or her specified duties which are focused on managing teaching and learning in the school. This leads to the next section where I pay attention to teacher leadership or shared leadership as a primary approach that can influence enhancement in school improvement.

### **3.4.3. Educative leadership: Shared leadership**

According Bezzina (2007), shared leadership is seen as a primary way of enhancing the pursuit of and commitment to moral purpose. He adds that within the context of shared leadership, moral purpose can be shared, becomes explicit, and the more clearer it is, the more it is understood by individuals within the school, and the more individuals

understand it, the more they own it. This means that moral purpose becomes widely understood and shared when leadership processes naturally exist in schools beyond the formal leadership exercised by principal (Harris, 2002, Lambert, 2002). The LTLL project found that shared leadership is one of the important consequences of focusing on moral purpose (Bezzina, 2010). In the LTLL pilot study, a focus on moral purpose saw schools moving to greater levels of shared leadership where leadership practices were not limited to those in formal positions of responsibility. The existence of shared leadership in selected schools pointed to the presence of commonly owned values (Bezzina, 2008).

In supporting a move toward the shared leadership model, Duignan (2007) argues that the idea of sharing the leadership responsibilities more widely in schools is desirable because the leadership of a contemporary school is too much for any one person. He then cited the value of diversity in decision making and that engagement and involvement build trust and can lead to commitment and ownership. It is, however, fundamental for the purpose of this study to clarify the choice of terms to describe the form and process of sharing leadership responsibilities widely in the school. The dilemma is that there is no agreed terminology for what might be loosely described as a beneficial form of working jointly for the common good. This is simply because the term use covers a range of phenomena, with arguments for this form of leadership using many labels: ‘shared leadership’ (Lambert, 2002), ‘distributed leadership’ (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004), ‘collaborative leadership’ (Hall, 2002) or ‘parallel leadership’ (Crowther, Hann & Andrews, 2002, Ferguson & Hann, 2002).

Seen in the light of this discussion, this form of leadership can be confusing as different people search and attach meaning. This is elucidated by means of the tabulated descriptions of the five interrelated concepts (Table 3.1).

No.		Description	Source/Reference
1.	Shared Leadership	Describes a leadership approach where authority, direction-setting and decision-making are democratic.	(Duignan & Bezzina, 2006)
2.	Distributed Leadership	Leadership is shared amongst a number of colleagues or peers, rather than focused in one role, level or individual.	(Gronn, 2002)
3.	Collaborative Leadership	A group or team of people working together towards an agreed objective.	(Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2005)
4.	Parallel leadership	A relationship between teacher leaders and principals grounded in mutual trust and shared direction.	(Andrews & Crowther, 2002)
5.	Teacher leadership	A model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead.	(Harris & Lambert, 2003)

**Table 3.1 Approaches to shared or collaborative leadership (Darren, 2010).**

Drawing from the table above, this study embraces a view that teacher leadership can be seen as a particular form of shared leadership that can influence and can be influenced by moral purpose resulting in enhanced learner achievement. According to Duignan and Bezzina (2006) and Harris (2002), the quest to transform the learning of students challenges teachers to engage in leadership in new and more authentic ways. Bezzina (2010) argues that it is through the actions of teachers living out their values and ethics as educative leaders, and in the provision of authentic learning for students that this

transformation will take place. This means that as teachers engage in leadership, they become positioned to create authentic learning experiences and contribute to the educative leadership of the school.

Harris and Lambert (2003) claim that teacher leadership has at its core a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth. Therefore, the main idea underpinning this view is that leadership is not individual or positional but instead is a group process in which a range of professional teachers collaborate, leading to their development and growth. The professional development and growth may include development of confidence to lead colleagues as teachers attempt new initiatives in the pursuit of excellence in the practice of teaching and learning. In other words, teacher leadership is concerned with “enhanced leadership roles and decision-making powers to teachers” (Harris & Muijs, 2005:16). This means that sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers maximises their expertise and abilities to lead. Furthermore, engaging teachers in the formulation of decisions about change or development in the school may likely make them committed to their implementation.

In addition, Grant (2006:514) argues that teacher leadership is critical in the transformation of South African schools by tapping the potential of all staff members and allows teachers to experience a sense of ownership and inclusivity and to lead aspects of the change process. It is this sense of ownership and inclusivity that empowers teachers to effectively lead within and beyond the classroom as they identify with and influence others towards improved educational practice. However, achieving teacher leadership is not effortless; it requires a substantial change of focus for many school management teams, especially school principals. This change of focus involves surrendering some power by senior leaders and empowering their educators to lead and manage teaching and learning effectively. Thus, Grant (2006) identifies three factors likely to promote teacher

leadership, namely, a collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision sharing, a set of values which assist in developing this collaborative culture, and distributed leadership on the part of the principal and formal management teams.

### **3.5. The implications of moral purpose**

The results of the LTLL yielded a picture of a group of schools that underwent genuine change both in leadership and learning practices and outcomes (Bezzina, 2008, 2010). The implications of focusing on a moral purpose in the LTLL project encompassed areas such as leadership practices, classroom practices, and student outcomes. Since other aspects (leadership practices and authentic learning) were discussed previously, my discussion on the consequences of focusing on moral purpose has on schools is confined to classroom practices and learning outcomes. This means that a focus on moral purpose renewed interest in applying student centred teaching approaches with a view to addressing the needs of all children in the school. As a result of this, learners become more motivated and engaged, taking responsibility for their learning.

Engagement is not being simply active in the classroom. It involves self-responsibility, challenge, self-direction and collaboration. These elements of engagement transform the classroom into a more interactive environment with learners taking ownership of their learning and sharing ideas. In these classrooms, the learners' cognitive skills are developed through integrating some high order thinking tasks into the assessment practices of the teacher. Therefore, an attention to authenticity results in enhanced student engagement and satisfactory student outcomes. The sense of learner transformation is given expression in terms of student outcomes.

When reporting on the results of the LTLL project, Bezzina (2010) states that the students' outcomes were in the areas of performance, engagement and depth of learning. He asserts that schools reported incredible reading skills and the depth of language usage

and confidence as observable outcomes. Schools that choose to focus on examination results, reported growth in the area of Literacy and Numeracy. This means that different schools may determine their own outcomes that are associated with the goal of improving the achievement levels for all learners, which they achieve by focusing on their moral purpose. In this sense, their moral purpose becomes explicit and is expressed when the outcomes are achieved.

However, Fullan (2011) argues that a deep moral purpose or imperative, while praiseworthy, is of little value if there is not a strategy to enact it. One of the strategies he provides is focusing on instructional practice which, he says must be at the centre of all that schools do. This is focusing on literacy and numeracy, deep assessment, improvement in pedagogy, constructive monitoring and paying attention to the individual needs of students. This strategy is congruent with Southworth's (2004) notion of learning-centred leadership, the leadership that targets the school's central activities, teaching and learning. This notion casts the principal as the central, key person in both initiating and sustaining educational change in the school setting. Thus, Kruger, Witziers and Slegers (2007) state that effective principals are characterised by the performance of leadership tasks that are positively connected to learner achievement, such as coordination of instructional programmes, supervising and supporting teachers.

In a study of schools that performed well under adverse circumstances, Coor (2008) found that factors outside the principals' control - class size, funding, parental involvement, length of school day - were not the reasons one school was higher performing than another. Rather, it was the practical disciplines or areas they could control that made the difference. The research has found that one of these areas or disciplines in higher performing schools was that the principals focused on instructional practice or leadership. However, Bush and Heystek (2006) show that South African principals are mainly concerned with financial management, human resource

management, and policy issues. Chisholm et al. (2005) adds that principals' time is largely consumed by administrative activities. Hoadley (2007) espouses that South African principals have little experience of instructional leadership. Therefore, this lack of experience in instructional leadership is a factor that explains why moral purpose does not have far reaching implications in many South African schools.

### **3.6. Chapter summary**

In line with the conceptual framework developed for this study, I attempted to review the following broader themes: the meaning and significance of moral purpose, authentic learning and moral leadership. The crucial section of the literature review investigated the concept of moral purpose and its relation to knowledge creation and relationship building. The framework for describing moral purpose and guiding my approach to this phenomenon was developed and was drawn from the work of Fullan (1993, 2001, 2002a) and Barber and Fullan (2005). This framework highlighted the goals and dimensions of moral purpose as well as its impact on the social environment. Authentic learning is explored as a core vehicle by which moral purpose can be expressed in the school.

The exploration of the core elements of moral purpose was largely informed by the conceptual framework developed for the LTL project (Bezzina, 2007, 2008, 2010, Burford & Bezzina, 2007, 2010). The data from this project was used to clarify the implications of focusing on moral purpose. These implications of a focus on moral purpose included improvement in leadership and classroom practices and student outcomes. In chapter four the research process underlying this study is described.

## Chapter 4

### Research methodology

#### 4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the capacity of school management teams to identify and share the moral purpose in secondary schools. This chapter presents a discussion of the research design developed to examine the purpose stated in this research. In order to collect thick descriptions from SMT members (school principals, deputy principals and heads of departments), the researcher used a qualitative approach. This approach was most suitable for the interpretation and understanding of human experience. The data was then obtained in the form of words and not numbers. Therefore, this study is based on the research paradigm of constructivism or interpretivism, the approach that focuses on what the participants view as reality within their context. Working in this paradigm implies that I investigate SMT members within their contexts and attempt to make sense of their interpretation and experiences of moral purpose.

I thus used semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations as data collection techniques. The major part of this data collection consists of fifteen semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the school management teams of the six selected schools (Apple High School, Orange High School, Peach Secondary School, Banana Secondary School, Grape High School and Strawberry High School). The purpose of this research is to provide results that are trustworthy. The strategies that were employed to ensure trustworthiness included credibility, transferability and dependability. Therefore, data analysis occurs through a multiple-method approach where data gathered from interviews, observations and documents supplement each other as part of analysis. The chapter concludes with an examination of ethical measures associated with the research, and an examination of the limitations and delimitations of the study.

#### **4.2. The constructivism or interpretive paradigm: The worldview of the researcher**

Any paradigm reflects the worldview an individual researcher constructs. It is “the basic set of beliefs that guide actions ... or the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:19). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:36), “Paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation”. Therefore, a paradigm is not only a worldview or philosophy, but it also frames the approach and methodology of enquiry. It has an abstract or philosophical reference as well as being a practical guide to the researcher. Research literature generally distinguishes four chief orientations to research, namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and post-structuralism.

The interpretive approach is well suited to social science research because of its constructivist base, that is, it seeks to uncover how actors make sense of their reality. Thus, Richardson (1991) argues that the world in which we live and, by extension, the world of educational institutions, is social, and that its participants demand that their stories be told authentically and accurately. Therefore, the constructivist approach provides unique opportunities for me as a researcher to “write the lives of individuals, groups, and collectives, grounding social theory in people’s experiences and celebrating diversity and multiplicity” (Richardson, 1991:175). This thesis is an example of qualitative research and its goal is the explication of the ways the SMT members come to understand and manage their day-to-day endeavours as educational leaders. This research acknowledges the challenge offered above with the methodology of the research designed to allow the rich stories of individuals and groups (SMT members) to be told, and thus allowing a co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants.

Therefore, this research that has, as its essence, the co-construction of knowledge through the use of semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participants is situated in the constructivist paradigm. According to Charmaz (2003), a constructivist paradigm recognises the relativism of multiple social realities, the mutual creation of knowledge by viewers and the viewed, while aiming towards the interpretive understanding of subjects' meaning. Hatch's (2002:49) discussion of the role of research participants highlights the opportunities offered by constructivism, stating that, "Constructivists think of their participants as co-constructors of the knowledge generated by their studies". Within a constructivist perspective, the emphasis is on joint construction of knowledge, a reciprocal relationship.

My selection of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method reflects strongly on the notion that relationship facilitates access to the depth data so important to qualitative research. In order to effectively explore the role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose, I entered the social world of the participants and engaged in the co-construction of knowledge through a series of semi-structured interviews between myself and the participants. Thus, working in the constructivist's paradigm has been appropriate because it has afforded me opportunity to enter varying contexts to find out what the SMT members think about moral purpose. I asked them several questions and observed them when they attempted to make sense of their interpretation and experience of moral purpose in their schools. In this research, I relied, therefore, on what the participants told me and subsequently tried to unearth 'reality' from their responses.

According to Bassey (1999:43), "... reality is seen as a construct of human mind". To Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19), "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry". Since I believe that social interaction of people is a cornerstone of individuals constructing meaning and reality, my central

endeavour was to interact with SMT members, ask questions and observe their behaviour relative to leadership and moral purpose. Through these interactions participants were then able to express their lived experiences. The expression of the SMT members' lived experiences depends on the presence of some elements of constructivism identified by Creswell (2009:6), namely, "understanding and multiple participant meanings". These elements justify the use of a qualitative research design as a means by which I looked at the complexity of the views of the SMT members and described their actions based on social meanings and observed how these meanings changed through social intercourse.

My choice of constructivists' paradigm is thus rooted in the recognition that by exploring the richness, depth and complexity of phenomena I can begin to develop a sense of understanding the meanings imparted by people to phenomena and their social context (Maree, 2007). My background as a secondary school teacher and head of department better positioned me to make this choice of interpreting the meanings of the actions of the school management teams, hence able to participate effectively in the process of the co-construction of knowledge. Creswell (2009) is of the view that the researchers' backgrounds shape their interpretations and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge their interpretations from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. For this reason, I argue that since my study provided an opportunity for me as a manager to interact with many SMT members within school contexts different from mine, it granted me an opportunity to make sense of how social meanings and the reality of the surroundings are changed through the sharing of moral purpose.

#### **4.3. The qualitative research design**

For this qualitative research, articulating the SMTs' motivations, considerations and concerns for raising the levels of learner achievement and improving school leadership is the key challenge. However, contemporary schools are complex environments and require powerful data analysis tools to illuminate them. Therefore, the multiple

methodologies inherent in qualitative research necessitated the production of “a bricolage, that is, a piece-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete solution” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:5). These authors further celebrate qualitative research as aesthetically reflecting montage and/or bricolage, “a complex, dense, reflective, collage-like creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003:5). Therefore, working in this paradigm was like creating an interesting collage of the experiences of SMT members in the process of leading and translating moral purpose into practice. This explains one of the many reasons I preferred to employ a qualitative design and not a quantitative design in this research.

Another reason is that the aim of this research was not to examine the relationship among variables or generalise the findings to individuals, sites or places outside of those under study (Creswell, 2009). The aim was rather to gather “thick descriptions” (Eisner, 1991:35), and use rich, thick description of the findings to uncover real-life settings and to understand the infinite complexity of the school situation. Furthermore, exploring the capacity of school management teams to identify and nourish moral purpose is an area that has not been subject of significant research in Limpopo Province. For this reason, the context may be very complex to gather data through a quantitative design. This is because the structure of quantitative technique in which variables are determined beforehand couldn’t have allowed me to have a holistic account of the problem under study.

It is therefore argued that a qualitative research design was relevant to explore meanings in these complex contexts because of its flexibility. In line with the above view, Creswell (2009:176) argues that “in qualitative research design the researcher’s initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, with all phases of the research process allowed to change or shift after the researcher has entered the field and began to collect data”. Thus,

the qualitative approach provided the possibility for me as a researcher to develop an explicit picture of the problem which involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. In view of the foregoing, it was reasonable to opt for a qualitative research design because it uses a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study (Janesick, 2000).

In line with my research methodology or design (see above) and in order to do justice to the complexity of the social setting by understanding one phenomenon under analysis, the case study approach was used. Such a design is effective when the issues of the problem under investigation are overlapping and have not previously been examined (e.g. moral purpose) (Fisher & Ziviani, 2004). According to Maree (2007:75), a case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest”. Other scholars (Bergen and While, 2000, Yin, 2003) propose that such an approach is effective when a contemporary phenomenon is studied in its natural context and the focus is in understanding the dynamic interaction between different individuals in that setting. More specifically, the case study approach is appropriate when: (a) research questions are asking “how” and “why” a phenomenon occurs, (b) the link between the participants and the “real-life context” is not evident and (c) the researcher has little control over events (Bergen & While, 2000, Yin, 2003).

When the nature of this research and its research questions are examined against the above criteria, it is apparent that such approach is effective for my research. For example, research focused wholly on process, examining “how” school management teams enact moral purpose in their schools. Likewise, this research was undertaken in a natural setting (schools) and it was not possible to control the events as they happened (e.g. during classroom observations and meetings). This approach allowed me to retain the holistic

and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003). In essence, case study design in this qualitative research allowed me to frame data analyses so it focuses on *one* phenomenon, which I selected to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites, participants, or documents for study (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

#### **4.4. Case studies and sampling procedures**

In this research I have studied six secondary schools as case studies, all designed to investigate common phenomenon (school management teams enacting their moral purpose). The details on the six secondary schools are given in the discussion of sampled schools and their participants in chapter 5. The six schools were drawn as case studies simply because “they just happened to be conveniently situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection” (Marshall & Rossman, 2007:7). Thus, five schools were based in Mopani district as I am located in this area and currently working in this district, and this gave me easy access to schools. One school was chosen from the Capricorn district because of its convenient geographical proximity as approximately two hours is required to drive from my hometown to where this school is based. Generally, I chose these six schools on the basis of their “availability [willingness to participate], accessibility and theoretical interest” (Schwandt, 1997, 140-141).

Also, on the basis that the moral purpose studied in relation to SMTs is a recent phenomenon in South Africa, it would be interesting to see how different schools are responding to this challenge. Hence, I selected these schools specifically to find the general understanding of the perceptions of the SMTs of moral purpose and how they nourish it in their schools. And for the reason that moral purpose involves narrowing the gap between higher performing and lower performing learners and schools, there was a need for these schools to be at various levels of learner performance in order to provide valid data for the research questions under investigation. Other considerations that have

become predictive of the decision regarding the number of the secondary schools to be studied is the length that was to be taken to transcribe the interviews and the amount of data generated and my capacity to handle all materials effectively.

Given the focus of the research questions on the school managers' experiences, each member of the school management team within each school was of interest. The SMTs' members were sampled on the basis of their willingness to form part of the case study, and they were selected for this study in such a way that they represented the larger group of SMT members from which they were selected (Maxwell, 2008). To select the SMT members that have defining characteristic that make them the holders of the data needed for the study, I used the purposive sampling technique (Maree, 2007). This technique was preferred because in purposive sampling I was able to select particular participants [principals, deputy principals and heads of department] from the population who were representative of the larger group of Limpopo school managers or they were informative about the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, 2006). Purposive sampling is thus used in this research because its power and logic is that a few cases studied in depth yielded many insights about the topic of moral purpose.

Therefore, probability sampling procedures such as simple random or stratified sampling are inappropriate to my study because generalisability of the findings is not the purpose, only one or two subunits of a population (only SMTs not parents or educators) are relevant to the research problem, and I may not have had access to the whole population (e.g. all school managers) from which I wished to sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Parents and educators were excluded as participants in this study because of the timeframe of the study. Therefore, investigating only the experiences of SMT members was especially significant to ensure economical use of time and resources. Exploring only the SMT's understanding of their roles sufficiently responded to the research question and the subsequent research sub-questions.

Studying all six secondary schools (four from rural areas and two from towns) and school managers within them has produced a broad and varied picture of how moral purpose is cultivated in schools. In the next section I discuss three data collection techniques that were applied to all the selected participants. These data collection techniques are semi-structured interviews, document collection and analysis and scheduled observations.

#### **4.5. Data collection**

##### **4.5.1. Semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were chief data collection instrument that I used to determine the in-depth views of the SMTs regarding their experiences of moral purpose. Harries (2008:36) argues that “Events cannot be understood unless one understands how these events are perceived and interpreted by people who participate in them”. The semi-structured interviews were considered to be effective in collecting multilayered data through the lived experiences of the participants, because “one way to find out about a phenomenon is to ask questions from the people who are involved in it in some particular way” (Schalock, 2008:67). According to Kvale (1996:125), an interview is “An interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest. It is a specific form of human interaction in which knowledge evolves through a dialogue. Therefore, using interviews as one of my data collection tools enabled the participants to interact with me and share the experiences they have had in terms of their context. Interviews gave the SMT members a chance of demonstrating what they know about moral purpose, as well as giving me the opportunity to explore their attitudes and perceptions.

The choice of semi-structured interviews achieved an effective balance between flexibility and structure as it facilitated discovery while allowing analysis in terms of commonalities (Gillham, 2005). Semi-structured interviews have the following features

which are indicative of how they maintain this balance, namely: the same questions are explored with each participant, the questions are developed to ensure their focus remains on the key themes under investigation, and approximately equivalent interview time is allowed in each case (Gillham, 2005). The probing nature of semi-structured interviews also provided a powerful means for me to clarify answers provided by the participants, hence uncovering rich descriptions in the data. While the use of different types of probes is desirable, Maree (2007) warns that it is easy to get sidetracked by trivial aspects that are not related to the study.

Nevertheless, I was able to guard against this weakness by constantly guiding the participants back to the main focus of the interview. Piloting the interviews further helped me to re-organise and restructure my interviews based on what I learnt during the pilot interview in two secondary schools and this reduced excessive probing. Despite the pilot's limited methodology, the interview I undertook with the school management teams of the two secondary schools had proved to be a particularly useful instrument to determine which questions needed rephrasing. As a result of this pilot study I had to rephrase the first two research questions. Generally, piloting the interviews minimised mistakes during the interviewing process. Furthermore, to help me work systematically, maintain focus and not to wander and ask irrelevant questions or pose misleading probes, I used an interview schedule for all the interviews (see Appendix A).

Considering that perceptions on moral purpose might vary from person to person or across post-levels, I decided to interview fifteen SMT members in total: three school principals (one acting), four deputy principals (one acting), and eight HoDs (also see section 5.1). The final interview sample was to a certain extent dictated by circumstances such as the withdrawal of all participants from Strawberry High School during the interview phase. Nevertheless, I felt I had managed to interview a representative sample of managers. I preferred to conduct the interviews in the participants' work places in

order to respect their personal comfort. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' offices. In one particular instance I had to interview the head of department in his vehicle as there was no other convenient venue.

#### **4.5.2. Document collection and analysis**

Given the complexity and depth of the phenomenon studied, the identification and exploration of various principles underpinning moral purpose was fundamental. The important source for achieving this was document collection and analysis. According to Hatch (2002), documents are powerful indicators of the value system operating within institutions. Exploring the value system of schools is critical when studying moral purpose because they provide a behind-the-scenes view at the institutional processes and how they came into existence. The use of documents in this study was stimulated by their advantages, namely, they enabled me to obtain the language and words of participants, I was able to access them at a time convenient to me, they represented data which are thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them as written evidence, and it saved me the time and expense of transcribing (Creswell, 2009).

Furthermore, in the interest of triangulation of data, "documents could serve to corroborate the evidence from other sources" (Maree, 2007:83). In this research, documents were useful as a source of reference and comparison for what was gathered through the interview process. For the purpose of this study, the strategic plans of selected schools and systemic authorities, Mission Statements, the minutes of previous meetings, and the Website (Strawberry High School) were examined. The final selection of documents was made following initial analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the themes that arose within the data. The documents themselves were obtained from the websites of systemic authorities and selected schools, but mostly, they were obtained directly from the members of the SMTs. The full list of the documents analysed is included as Appendix C.

Each document was analysed separately, taking notes that reflect information about the document as well as key ideas in the document which served as some form of evidence for underlying values of moral purpose. Therefore, the documents collected and analysed in this study informed data collection and the analysis process in the following ways: (a) they served as a framework for the development of the interview questions for members of the SMTs, (b) they served as a background for initial analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the themes that would emerge from the data, and (c) principles within the documents articulated the ideals espoused by schools' mission. Therefore, they served to uncover and verify the underlying principles of a moral purpose articulated by the members of school management teams during the semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.5.3. Observations**

To strengthen the findings and to provide the possibility for triangulation, overt observation of SMT meetings, morning briefing sessions, and other intangible aspects of school climate were undertaken where feasible and possible. According to Maree (2007:84), observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Schwandt (1997:106) elucidates that, "Observation is a firsthand eye-witness account of everyday social action ...". Considering these two definitions together, my role as an observer was to witness and record the behaviour of the SMTs firsthand without necessarily communicating or questioning them. Observation was regarded in this research as a supportive or supplementary tool to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained from the interviews and intensive analysis of documents. I used observation simply because moral purpose is still an evolving concept in South Africa, and I predicted that most participants would be unfamiliar with it. I regarded it as one of the concepts participants would be "uncomfortable to discuss" (Creswell,

2009:180). Indeed, when asked direct questions on moral purpose during interviews, some participants' seemed uncertain about their responses.

The primary advantage of using observational methods are that the researcher does not need to worry about the limitations of self-report bias, social desirability, or response set, and the information is not limited to what can be recalled accurately by the participants. Behaviour can thus be recorded as it occurs naturally (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:257). This means that in observations what people think and do is seen in practice and in doing that the rationale and purpose behind certain decisions or actions may be determined. In this research, observations revealed things that my participants would not normally tell and information that may have been missed in an interview and other forms of data collection (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000:305). I was, therefore, there in schools, for example, in meetings, to observe the processes and procedures detailed in the observation schedule (Appendix B).

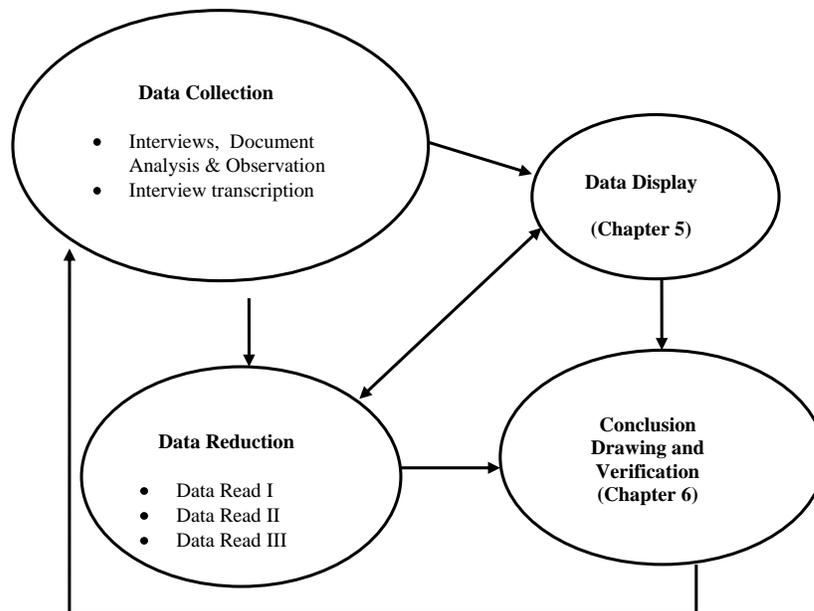
The use of an observation schedule means that I went into the schools knowing in advance what I was looking for. This approach is referred to by Cohen et al. (2000) as 'structured observation'. According to Robson (1993: 206), structured observation "... is a way of quantifying behaviour". In this study, only simple behaviours of the SMT members were observed. This is because observational research is expensive and difficult to conduct reliably for complex behaviour (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). According to Maree (2007:85), "in structured observation, the researchers identify predetermined categories of behaviour that they would like to observe". My observation schedule was designed to address four significant categories of the SMTs' behaviour. The first category captured the observation of the members' behaviour in meetings with major focus on the key procedures or elements that facilitate healthy relationships. This involved observing whether or not members shared their ideas freely without any fear of prejudice or if their opinions were respected.

The second category focused on observing behaviours related to leadership practices. In this category I observed some evidence of the presence of shared or collaborative leadership. The evidence involved looking at the values and aspects underpinning teamwork, for example, how team members communicate and manage interpersonal differences. This category further observed the involvement of teachers, learners and parents in school leadership. This was achieved by looking at various leadership functions or duties teachers were playing in the school. The third category of behaviours observed was in relation to classroom practices and learning outcomes. In this category I visited two HoDs to uncover their teaching approaches or methods and assessment strategies and tasks, to find out about learning outcomes such as learners' meaningful engagement with subject content taught. In the last category I broadly observed several aspects of school climate such as a respect for time (instructional or time for meetings, or register) and commitment to excellence by recognising those who had achieved best results in the subjects they teach (see Appendix D for observation data).

However, the drawback of this approach is that one may be too strongly focused on what one is looking for and thus miss the unexpected or slightest forms of interactions. Generally, "Observation by its very nature is highly selective and subjective [as] we seldom observe the whole situation but tend to focus on a specific event or object within the whole, thereby cutting us off from the whole" (Maree, 2007:84). This happened in my case to some extent. On reflection, a more open-ended schedule may have been more useful. Nevertheless, my use of structured observation was justifiable because "the interactive social scene is too complex and too subtle to observe or record everything, the researcher does not seek to capture everything that happens" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:422).

## 4.6. Data analysis

This research employed a multi-method approach where data gathered from interviews, observations and documents supplemented each other as part of the data analysis process. Although the amount of raw data generated by the semi-structured interviews and document analysis was significant, summarising each interview transcript, identifying themes and sub-themes with the data and data summaries, and classifying these themes and sub-themes into findings and possible conclusions was enjoyable and effective. The process by which this was done is articulated below, and it occurred in three interwoven stages, namely, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994:3). Figure 4.1 is a model that illustrates and describes the interwovenness of the three stages followed in my research.



**Figure 4.1: *The Data Analysis Model*** (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

### • Stage One: Data reduction

Data was selected, focused, simplified, abstracted and transformed from interview transcriptions or other data sources. This happened in three stages, namely, Data Read I,

Data Read II and Data Read III. These three stages or activities emphasise the importance of reading through all the data several times in order to be familiarised with it. Data Read I involved the first formal analysis of transcripts completed with significant quotes and descriptions. This was followed by Data Read II. Data Read II involved an in-depth analysis of transcripts and documents in which I identified new areas of interest and reinforced the worth of key elements already highlighted. For the first time during this second reading I noted that the “Educational Leadership Approach for Academic Achievement” may be the most appropriate overarching theme for data in this area. This would bring together the responses of participants to participative leadership, teamwork and instructional leadership. Data Read III is the final reading and analysis of the transcripts including my detailed thoughts and observations. Quotes were included that supported each of those ideas identified. These longer analyses became the basis for many of explorations of themes in Chapter five.

Creswell (2009:185) considers these reading stages or activities (Data Read I, II, III) as one stage and referred to it as “reading through all the data” and this includes coding. Maree (2007:105) defines coding as a process of reading carefully through transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units. The coding process was used to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis, to advance how the description and themes were represented in the qualitative narrative, and to make an interpretation or meaning of the data. Data-readings stages (reading the data several times) were very important because they gave me an opportunity to have an insight into what the participants were saying. Field observations were done at the same period in which the interviews were conducted and provided data that set into perspective data obtained from the interviews and documents analysis, especially with regard to values underlying moral purpose (see 4.5.3). Furthermore, document review and analyses which were simply done at home provided data that

helped to advance my insight into the responses given by participants during the interviews (see 4.5.2).

- **Stage Two: Data display**

This stage involved the organisation, compression and assembly of information undertaken to facilitate conclusion drawing. This occurred in two major stages or activities: classification and writing. Firstly, the material from earlier data-reads was classified under the four research questions. Within each research question my comments and participants' quotes were organised under themes and sub-themes. For example, under the theme of "Educational Leadership Approach for Academic Achievement", the following comments were typical: *"You know, achievement starts with teamwork, everything starts with teamwork. When it comes to SMT, I have never; since I have taken over as a principal panicked ... we work as a team"* (Apple High School: Principal).

Secondly, material from classification stages and data-reads was synthesised into paragraphs and sections to form Chapter five (The Research Findings). For example, "Educational Leadership Approach for Academic Achievement" was included as Section 5.3.1 with participants' quotes included. The participants nominating the importance of participative leadership, teamwork and instructional leadership were highlighted.

- **Stage Three: Conclusion drawing and verification**

The process of assigning meaning by noting patterns, explanations, causal flows and propositions was undertaken (Chapter 6). Conclusion drawing was only part of this third stage of analysis and formed part of Chapter 6. In order to strengthen the trustworthiness of my study I had to verify these conclusions through reflection. Reflecting on the entire research process helped me to check the accuracy of facts and observations. This process

confirmed that the participants' case constructions were correctly placed under key themes and research questions.

Although the documentation of data collection and data analysis stages of this study were rigorous, the qualitative research findings and conclusions that arise from them remain subjective. To ensure that subjectivity could not present any barrier to the verification of the conclusions, I determined quality criteria which I followed throughout the research. In the next section I examined the trustworthiness of the research within the broader field of qualitative research. This is a criterion applied to ensure the quality of the data.

#### **4.7. Trustworthiness**

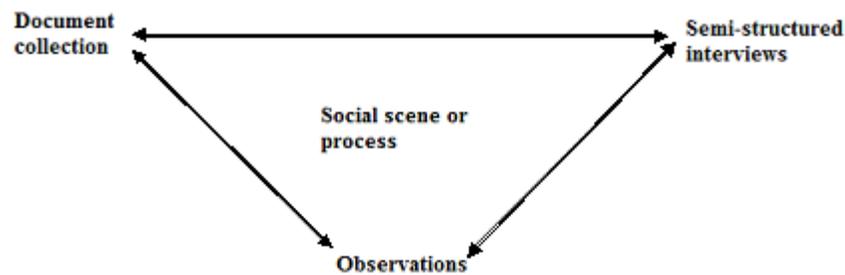
The next section examines the trustworthiness of the research within the broader field of qualitative research as a means to ensure the quality of the data. Trustworthiness is a framework for ensuring credible qualitative research (Krefting, 1991). Measures to ensure trustworthiness considered for my study include credibility, dependability and transferability.

##### **4.7.1. Credibility**

Credibility refers to the "extent to which the results approximate reality and are judged to be trustworthy and reasonable" (Hesse-Biber, 2010:76). This is the assurance that the researcher's conclusions stem from the data (Durrhein & Wassenaar, 2002). This means that accurate descriptions of human experiences are presented to extent that people who also share that experience would immediately recognise the descriptions. Since the goal of this research is to provide the results that are judged to be credible, I established credibility by applying triangulation to the methods of data collection and analysis. According to Stake (2003), triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. For McMillan and Schumacher (2006), triangulation is referred to as

cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes.

To find regularities in the data, I compared different sources, situations and methods to see if the same pattern keeps recurring. This was done in order to determine if there are any discrepancies in the findings. The theme of “moral purpose”, explored in this research was cross-checked by comparing data obtained from documents, semi-structured interviews and observations of SMT meetings. Figure 4.2 below illustrates cross-triangulation methods employed in this research.



**Figure 4.2: *Triangulation in this research*** (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:499)

Figure 4.2 demonstrates how I established data trustworthiness by seeking and assessing patterns or themes from interviews conducted with school principals, deputy principals and heads of department, and comparing these patterns with those emerging from the documents and scheduled observation. Therefore, triangulating the data sets gave me a broader picture of what the participants perceived to be true because I approached the research question from various angles. There are assumptions underlying the use of triangulation in data analysis to ensure trustworthiness. To Mouton (2006), the underlying assumption is that because various methods complement each other, their respective shortcomings can be balanced out. Although in reality the use of various sources of data does not necessarily mean that the data from one source neatly complements others, this research posited that triangulation would reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation.

Furthermore, the data analysis process described in section 4.6 detailed several stages of data-reading that ensured that themes identified within the data were tested and verified before they were articulated as findings and conclusions. The range of data collection methods, the rigorous data analysis process and the appropriateness of the six selected schools as research contexts have assisted me to ensure that the findings and conclusions described in Chapters five and six are dependable. They provided a reliable qualitative account of the actions and the principles underlying these actions in the SMTs of the six schools at the time of research.

#### **4.7.2. Dependability**

Dependability as an aspect of trustworthiness means that the process of study is consistent and reasonable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When dependability is established, readers are convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did. In this research, dependability was achieved by describing the exact methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Such dense description of methods provides information as to how repeatable the study might be or how unique the situation (Kielhofner, 1982). Another means that I used to increase dependability of the study was to conduct a code-recode procedure on my data during the analysis phase of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After coding a segment of data, I waited at least for two weeks and then returned and recoded the same data and compared the results, and found that they were similar.

Dependability in this research was also enhanced through triangulation to ensure that the weaknesses of one method of data collection (e.g. observations) are compensated by the use of alternative data collection methods (e.g. interviews). I further established dependability of my study by using member checking to ensure that what I observed was in fact what happened. Member checking in this research was done by playing the

summaries of the interview tapes to the participants to check the accuracy of responses or facts. In addition, in order to test the overall interpretation, near the conclusion of the study I did final member check with key participants to ensure that the final presentation of the data reflects the experiences accurately. This strategy was used to verify my understanding of what I observed with those observed. The identified themes were further discussed with the participants to ensure that they are accurate and dependable (Creswell, 2003).

I also strove to eliminate any bias that was brought to the research by constantly reflecting on the research problem. The effects of research bias was minimised by using standardised interview questions to ensure that all participants become subjected to the same questions and this enhanced the dependability of the study. The interviews were conducted in the English language to reduce misunderstandings that using differing languages would have caused. My participants and I shared the same language; therefore, the use of a commonly accepted medium of instruction was justifiable. In addition, during observations, I also avoided getting deeply involved with the situation being observed, as this would have increased a risk of becoming too subjectively involved and leading to research bias.

After the interviews were conducted using standardised questions, I employed verbatim account, by which conversations, direct quotations of the participants' responses during interviews and from documents were presented as data, mechanically recording data during interviews using a tape recorder. Amongst others, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews provided an unedited copy of the interviews for the purpose of analysis and also left evidence for others who can reconstruct the process to reach a conclusion. Furthermore, I checked the transcripts to make sure that they did not contain obvious mistakes during transcription and made sure that there was no drift in the definition of codes, a shift of the meaning of the codes during the process of coding (Creswell, 2009).

### **4.7.3. Transferability**

Transferability depends upon the degree of similarity between the contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, Lincoln & Guba, 1995). In this regard, to ensure that the findings of this research are transferred to other contexts, I used rich, thick, descriptions of the participants and contexts by supplying a large amount of clear and detailed information about the SMT members' views regarding moral purpose as well as the settings in which they live and function (Creswell, 2003). By providing a dense background information about the participants and the research context and setting may allow other SMT members to assess how transferable the findings are. This is as Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that it is not the researcher's job to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide an adequate database to allow transferability judgments to be made by others. Therefore, I have provided an adequate database of my participants and research contexts that may allow other SMTs in other schools or districts in Limpopo and South Africa as a whole to determine whether the findings 'fit' into their contexts or view them as meaningful and applicable in terms of their own experiences of moral purpose.

### **4.8. Ethical issues**

Before data was collected, approval to conduct research was given by the Limpopo Department of Education (Appendix G). Subsequently, I approached the two districts and the six selected schools with a letter explaining the purpose of the research, the details of the interviews and that tape a recorder or voice recorder would be used during interviews, and that critical documents such as strategic plans and minutes of departmental meetings would be requested, and that observations of the SMT meetings would be conducted. The letter also indicated that the data collection process would not disturb the normal running of the schools.

After these engagements with the districts and sampled schools, the researcher contacted potential participants to clarify various ethical considerations. The summary of the need for ethical consideration in this study is provided by Fontana and Frey (2003:88):

Because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, researchers must take extreme care to avoid any harm to them. Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional, or any kind).

The ethical guidelines summarised above involved making initial contact with potential participants at different schools where they were verbally invited to take part in the study and provided with information related to the study. After this contact, a formal invitation, which included a letter of information providing details of the study, was sent to potential participants. To indicate their willingness to participate in the research, the participants were required to fill-in, sign and email their consent forms. Even if the participants had consented to participate in the research, they were each verbally informed of their right to decline participation in the research, which can happen at any time and for any reason. This was the case with the participants from Strawberry High School. They withdrew during the interview phase citing management of grade twelve trial examinations as the reason for withdrawal. During this research all reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were taken.

These steps revolved around dual responsibility described by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:399): firstly, “the protection of the participant’s confidence from other actors in the setting whose private information might enable them to identify them and, secondly, the protection of informants from the general reading public”. In line with this, I did not reveal information about the attitudes, motivations or behaviour that a participant would rather not have revealed (Thompson, 2008). This means that all the information and responses shared by participants during this research was kept private and the results

were presented in an anonymous fashion or manner in order to protect the identities of the SMT members. The real names of schools and participants were changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality (e.g. Apple High School: Principal).

#### **4.9. Limitations of the study**

According to Punch (2000), limitations are those factors or conditions that are unavoidably present in the research. In my research, the first limitation was my capacity to source all necessary documents to inform the document analysis and subsequent in-depth interviews. Some critical documents were not made available by the schools under study, especially the underperforming schools. The limitation of having few available documents was compounded by the fact that my presence during observations was seen by some managers, teachers and learners as intrusive and this resulted in them behaving unnaturally. Another limitation of this research was the degree to which the participants contributed meaningfully and honestly to the research through semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the degree of respect and loyalty or friendship present within SMTs may have made SMT members less likely to reveal the truth about the operations and motivations of each other.

However, these limitations were sufficiently addressed by using multiple data collection techniques as other data sources, especially interviews, offset the anticipated challenge of having few documents. The reliability threat of interview data was overcome by using observations. By observing the members of the SMT interacting in a meeting or teaching lessons in classrooms provided me with an opportunity to identify behaviours exhibited by members of the SMTs that shed light on the kind of relationship that exist amongst the team members, and this allowed me to treat the emerging data with caution.

#### **4.10. Delimitations of the study**

Delimitations are the boundaries the researcher places around the study to ensure it remains manageable (Punch, 2000). In my research, these delimitations included: (a) limiting the examination of the phenomenon of moral purpose to only six secondary schools within two districts, namely, Capricorn and Mopani, with only fifteen SMT members interviewed, thus ensuring that a manageable amount of material was collected in terms of the time frame for the study (b) avoiding using my own school as a formal context for the research, as this would have run the risk of becoming subjectively involved, leading to my own bias getting the better of my observations (c) limiting the amount of data collection by restricting the examination of the capacity of the SMTs to the views of the principals, deputy principal(s) and heads of department and the principles outlined in the document analysis (Other possible sources of data in this research could have included teachers and learners) and (d) since unnecessarily longer interviews would have made them difficult to transcribe and analyse, the researcher limited the allocation of time for each interview to approximately one hour thus allowing for some depth of interview.

#### **4.11. Chapter summary**

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research methodology. Initially, the chapter explored the constructivist worldview as a means by which I attempted to describe my relationship with the participants in the study. The constructivism paradigm positioned the study as a qualitative research design. The purpose and justification of each of the three data collation methods were clarified within the broader qualitative research methodology. The data collection techniques included a series of semi-structured interviews, document collection and analysis and observations. The chapter included the data analysis process. It concluded with an exploration of the importance of credibility, transferability and dependability as important aspects of trustworthiness, an

acknowledgement of the relevant ethical issues and an outline of the delimiters and limitations of the study. The next chapter explores the data generated by the research methods outlined in chapter four. The responses from participants will be organised accordingly and examined according to the four research questions that underline this study.

## Chapter 5

### The research findings

#### 5.1. Introduction

This research was designed with a chief research question that seeks to answer how school management teams cultivate moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools. This chapter examines the responses elicited from the four research questions. The data has been organised in accordance with the four research questions and categories. Within these four research questions, data was classified according to sets of interview questions as well as the emerging themes identified through close reading of the interview transcripts. Data from interviews was complemented by data obtained through document analysis and observations. As Table 5.1 indicates, responses to research question 1 have been organised around four themes. Two themes are explored in the discussion of the responses to research question two, while responses to research question three have been organised around one theme. Responses to research question four have been organised around one theme. Therefore, data was organised around a total of eight themes.

The table 5.1 shows the organisation of the themes. As it was analysed, data was classified according to these provisional themes, however, a number of initial themes were rejected as insufficient data was generated during the research process to justify their retention, consequently new themes were developed to take account of themes that arose during the data analysis process. These new themes were classified under categories. The chapter presents the data gathered through interviews, analysis of foundational documents, and observation. The interviews present the chief data, and the observation data and documents analysis data were reported where these were felt to be helpful to present a comprehensive portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation.

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Section</b>
<b>What do the members of school management teams identify as moral purpose?</b>	School management teams and moral purpose	Perception of moral purpose	5.3.1
		Key values of moral purpose	5.3.2
		Teamwork and the central goal of moral purpose	5.3.3
		Motivation	5.3.4
<b>How can school management teams share moral purpose?</b>	Shared moral purpose and modalities of sharing	Shared moral purpose	5.4.1
		Shared leadership	5.4.2
<b>Which factors inhibit school management teams to enact the moral purpose of the school?</b>	The constraints of sharing moral purpose	Threats and challenges inhibiting moral purpose	5.5.1
<b>How can school management teams overcome factors inhibiting moral purpose?</b>	The capacity of the SMTs to overcome constraints of sharing moral purpose	Role and responsibilities of SMT to address challenges inhibiting moral purpose	5.6.1

**Table 5.1 *Research Questions and Emerging Categories and Themes***

The following key was used to distinguish the participants from each other and their schools. The names of the schools and participants were changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

- Apple High School Principal
- Apple High School Deputy Principal A
- Apple High School Deputy Principal B
- Apple High School Head of Department

- Apple High School's Academic Tutor
- Orange High School Deputy Principal
- Orange High School Head of Department A
- Orange High School Head of Department B
- Peach Secondary School Acting Principal
- Peach Secondary School Acting Deputy Principal
- Peach Secondary School Head of Department A
- Peach Secondary School Head of Department B
- Banana Secondary School Principal
- Grape High School Head of Department A
- Grape High School Head of Department B
- Strawberry High School

## **5.2. The sampled schools and participants**

Before the actual analysis of my findings, I briefly explain the sampled schools and their participants. The identity of the participants, specific information on student numbers, grade level configuration and streams and subjects offered have been changed or deliberately left out to protect anonymity and confidentiality (Section 4.8). However, all information pertinent to this research has been included.

### *5.2.1. Apple High School*

Apple High school is a large urban secondary school with about one thousand two hundred learners in grade eight to grade twelve and sixty six teachers. It is one of the effective public schools in the province with impressive performance in grade twelve National Senior Examination results. The school management team consists of the principal, two deputy principals, six heads of department, two academic tutors and two

coach tutors. Apple High School is adequately resourced with sufficient facilities such as classrooms, administration block, hostels, libraries, and laboratories.

This research involved six participants, namely, principal, two deputy principals, head of department, and academic tutor. The school principal had been occupying the position for over five years and has two deputies (Deputy Principals A and B). The Deputy Principal A supervises all the HoDs in the school. The second deputy principal is assigned a responsibility to supervise and assist the support staff including the receptionists. The head of department has been the head of department for the past ten year.

The academic tutor is responsible for the academic performance of the grades assigned to him. His responsibility is to maintain contact with the heads of departments on an on-going basis to provide feedback on the achievement of learners. He monitors the performance of learners every term and compiles term examination results for analysis by the heads of departments and develops strategic plans to ensure that failing learners improve. All participants appeared to be energetic, warm and friendly during the interviews. Generally, the school participants contributed immensely to the findings of this research.

### *5.2.2. Orange High School*

Orange High School is a medium rural high school with about seven hundred and fifty learners in grades eight to twelve. Unlike Apple High School, Orange High School serves a community of lower income families with the majority of learners surviving on social grants. The school management team of the school consists of the principal, the deputy principal and four heads of departments. This is one of the effective schools in the circuit when it comes to grade twelve results. It has always performed above an average of sixty percent in this examination in the past three years. Although there are no basic facilities

such as libraries and laboratories, all members of the SMT and twenty five staff members are accommodated in a newly built administration block.

This research involved the deputy principal and two HoDs. Head of Department A has been the head of department for the last fifteen years and Deputy Principal has been his supervisor for the same period of time. The deputy principal and Head of Department B had been in the teaching profession for more than thirty years and were the oldest and most experienced members of staff in the school.

### *5.2.3. Peach Secondary School*

Peach Secondary School is a small village school with five hundred and fifty learners in grades eight to twelve. As with Orange High School, Peach High School is one of the schools serving a large rural and impoverished population. Unlike Orange High School, however, the school had been labelled dysfunctional because of its persistent lower grade twelve results of less than forty percent in the past five years. The school management team of the school consists of the acting principal, the acting deputy principal, and two heads of departments. There are eighteen teachers in the school of which two are holding temporary posts.

This research involved four participants from Peach Secondary School: the acting principal, acting deputy principal, and two HoDs. The current school principal has been acting in the post since the school principal retired in 2012. The acting deputy principal was the first head of department in the school and was asked to act as deputy principal when the deputy principal was elevated to serve as an acting deputy principal. Both have been acting in these positions for more than two years. Head of Department A is the oldest of the SMT members and had been in the SMT for over fifteen years and served with the former principal for almost a decade before she was actually appointed as a head of department. Head of Department B has been the head of department for three years.

#### *5.2.4. Banana Secondary School*

Banana Secondary School is a secondary school with six hundred and fifty learners in grades eight to twelve. It is one of the four schools serving a large rural community consistently of poor families with most parents working in Gauteng leaving their children heading families. Despite the prevailing poverty in the community, the school is one of the effective schools in the circuit when it comes to grade twelve results. Consequently, the school has even attracted learners from the neighbouring township. For the past five years, Banana Secondary School has been obtaining a grade twelve pass rate of between sixty five and eighty percent.

The SMT consists of the principal, the deputy principal, two HoDs and two subject supervisors. There are twenty teachers in the school. The research involves only the school principal. This principal has been the principal for ten years and he had since been teaching English in grade twelve. He is the most experienced teacher in the school who started as a lecturer in the college of education before he was deployed to the school. During the interviews he appeared to be a calm, introspective and reflective person whose focus seemed to be on the process of teaching rather than on management and leadership.

#### *5.2.5. Grape High School*

Grape High School is a large secondary school with one thousand and three hundred learners in grades eight to twelve and forty three teachers. It serves a large rural community with a substantial number of learners coming from impoverished families. The SMT consists of the principal, two deputy principals, and seven heads of departments. The school is underperforming with a grade twelve pass rate of less than fifty percent when it comes to the grade twelve examination results. The research involved two heads of department (Grape High School Heads of Department A and B).

Grade High School Head of Department A has been a head of department for the past three years and he heads one of the biggest departments in the school with at least ten teachers. Grape High School Head of Department B joined the school three years ago and heads the department of social sciences which has four teachers.

#### *5.2.6. Strawberry High School*

Strawberry High School is a large urban high school with about nine hundred male and female learners in grades eight to twelve. It is one of the four public schools serving a large town population that is dominantly served by private schools. However, there are a substantial number of rural learners from surrounding areas transported to this school on a daily basis. As with Apple High School, it is one of the effective schools in the province when it comes to grade twelve examination results. It has been achieving between eighty and a hundred percent pass rate in the past ten years. The school management team consists of the newly appointed principal, a deputy principal, five heads of department, and two subject supervisors who are senior teachers nominated to serve on the SMT.

There are thirty teachers of whom five are employed by the school governing body. No interviews were conducted at the school because the school principal withdrew the school immediately after three weeks of observations at the school and subsequent document analysis. He cited a hectic schedule for the SMT as they were preparing for grade twelve trial examinations. Thus, the findings reported in this chapter concerning Strawberry High School are limited to data collected through scheduled observations and document collection and analysis instruments.

### **5.3. Research question one: School management teams and moral purpose**

This research question was designed to explore the degree to which individuals in the SMT perceive or identify moral purpose within their schools' context. A major focus of this research question was the exploration of what members of the SMT understood by the concept 'moral purpose' and the degree to which they had experienced or observed its expression within their SMT and school. Fundamentally, the question was broadly aimed at examining moral purpose as identified in relation to educational leadership approaches of SMTs that influence academic achievement. The central themes emerging from this research question were:

- Perception of moral purpose
- Key values of moral purpose
- Teamwork and the central goal of moral purpose
- Motivation

These four themes are explored below.

#### **5.3.1. Perceptions of moral purpose**

The call to improve the academic results in Limpopo Province challenges school management teams to be aware of and nourish moral purpose. The interview participants were challenged to identify and explore moral purpose underlying educational leadership approaches that they take to generate positive learning outcomes such as examination results. However, in responding to this question, eight out of fifteen participants tended to focus on describing leadership approaches that cause an increase in academic achievement rather than the moral purpose underlying such approaches. Overall, the responses generated through follow-ups and probing revealed that the concept of moral purpose was the least familiar to research participants, with only six of the participants

reflecting on its usefulness in transforming academic achievement in Limpopo secondary schools.

Nonetheless, the six participants were able to give explicit perception of moral purpose and identified key issues pertaining to it and showed similar evidence of commitment to identify and nourish it. Grape High School Head of Department B stated that “... *the moral purpose of the school is to put the results higher and higher and higher until we don't have any failure in our school*”. Apple High School's Academic Tutor called it the “*moral goal of achievement*”, which he said it was fulfilled in their school when “... *the whole SMT plays a role via monitoring classes, checking the work that has been done, all the work that need to be done, and providing guidance*”. Embodying this moral purpose is the school's Mission Statement, which perhaps most succinctly provides what should be a reason for the school management teams to exist in that school:

*(Apple High School) strives towards responsible pupils who attain their full potential and maintain high standards to make valuable contributions to society*  
(Apple High School: Mission Statement).

In line with the foregoing, Orange High School Deputy Principal described their school's moral purpose as “... *to achieve better matric results.*” There is a sense that she understands moral purpose in relation to grade twelve examination results and illustrated that profound commitment to this moral purpose has transformed the school's academic results when it comes to grade twelve results. She states that “*Because of this moral purpose, three years ago our matric results were very poor, but this year we have at least improved.*” The review of the Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination Results confirms that indeed the school has been improving since 2010. Ironically, another response that closely addressed the concept of moral purpose was provided by a participant who had been an SMT member in the underperforming school for a longer

time. Peach Secondary School Head of Department A perceived that “... *moral purpose is the vision of our school.*”

A review of the Vision Statement document disclosed that the vision of Peach Secondary School is a vision for academic achievement:

*Peach Secondary School strives for the development of knowledgeable and high achieving learners. This will be accomplished through teaching excellence that takes place within a caring, trusting and high expectation environment that is centred on learner achievement.*

Commenting on how the school intends to accomplish this vision, Peach Secondary School Head of Department B reported “... *we work collectively to achieve the vision and mission of the school.*” However, Peach Secondary School Head of Department A reported that it was not easy to implement their vision because “*Sometimes educators hold cabal meeting to sabotage the plans.*” Perhaps the attitude of teachers to subvert the realisation of the vision is the major reason the school is underperforming. Furthermore, looking at the school vision and the responses provided by the two SMT members one can conclude that identifying the importance of moral purpose is one thing but translating it into practice another thing.

All the six interview participants showed similar evidence that the central goal of moral purpose is deeply associated with raising standards of achievement for all learners. The importance of this compelling moral purpose is reflected in Apple High School Principal’s message commenting on the 2011 Matric results as published in the 2012 School Magazine:

*Despite the failure to produce the ideal 100% pass rate, the 95.47% achieved carries much weight in terms of the number of bachelors produced. The 139 bachelors with 283 distinctions and 139 Bs, 58 Diplomas and 14 Higher Certificates we produced, place us fourth best school in the entire province. That is a commendable performance and contribution towards the province’s matric standing when compared to other provinces (Apple High School: Magazine, 2012).*

While this moral purpose was explored in relation to the general learning outcomes of learners in schools, participants turned to identify it in relation to Grade twelve examination results. Thus, performance in this examination was perceived by many participants to be very important. The decline of results in this examination appears to be a most painful thing that exemplified the need for SMTs to constantly monitor classroom and leadership practices and foster those strategies that improve and sustain academic achievement. Highlighting the pain of the decline in grade twelve results, the Apple High School Principal commented on the 2012 results as follows:

*In terms of performance, I'm not actually happy because we really at the beginning of the year got targets, of which are targets will always be like we need hundred percent pass rate. And also we just don't want to see ourselves like coming to conclusion to say that our learners have actually achieved whatever the expectation or have passed. But we want them to pass with quality”.*

A review of “The summarised Report on the 2012 National Senior Certificate Examination” document reflects the decline the principal is talking about: *Of the 223 learners who wrote the 2010 examination, 214 passed (96.0%), 221 wrote in 2011 with 211 achieving (95.5%), and in 2012, 225 wrote with only 193 achieving (85.8%)* (DBE, Report on the 2012 National Senior Certificate Examination). More specifically, the Apple High School Principal explained that their reason to be concerned about the decline of grade twelve results was that his school targets a hundred percent learner achievement at the beginning of each year. He remarks that *“For us even if we fail one learner it is a bigger challenge, we feel we are not reaching there, we are not actually getting the right results.”*

Furthermore, the responses offered by Peach Secondary School Acting Principal indicate that the decline in terms of these results is equally a concern of both performing and underperforming schools. She reported that *“The decline is our concern and our purpose*

*is to transform classroom practices in order to achieve good results at the end of the year.”* Thus, Peach Secondary School’s Development Plan reflects the decline the principal is talking about and suggests core strategies and priorities that the SMT has formulated to address the decline and enhance their moral purpose:

*Educators utilise time as indicated on timetables. Administrative periods are used for administrative tasks. There must be limitation on the following: calls and time spent by learners without supervision. Learners are only absent in really reasonable cases.* (Peach Secondary School’s School Development Plan 2010 – 2015).

However, the performance of Peach Secondary School in the past three years when it comes to grade twelve results suggests that the SMT members were either disloyal to the strategies outlined in the School Development Plan or teachers had sabotaged these strategies leading to a serious decline in performance. This could be the reality facing many underperforming schools with their SMTs aware of the moral purpose to cultivate academic performance but not able to mobilise teachers to support the actual cultivation. In addition, Apple High School Head of Department A stated that when driven by the moral purpose of raising the results higher, schools become discontent with only quantity of achievement. He reported that *“The pass rate is hundred percent yes but it is the quality that count in that pass.”*

The school’s pursuit for quality achievement was emphasised by the principal who explained that *“... all of us we have got one moral purpose, to get results, quality results.”* He further underlined the importance of quality achievement by indicating how their school achieves and sustains quality. He said that their focus was on the level seven learners who are top level performers achieving a pass rate between 80 – 100% and level one learners who are bottom level performers (0 – 29%). He explained that *“Apple High School does not want to see a child at level one and at the same time we don’t neglect those learners at level seven.”* Apple High School Head of Department A concurred and

specified that their strategy employed to improve and sustain learner achievement “... is to fight level ones ... we don't want level ones, even though they can just appear somewhere we make fast move to avoid them in the examination or the next test.”

On the issue of level seven learners, the Apple High School Principal stated that “ ... a child who got 98% for me I will have a one-on-one meeting with that child and encourage him or her and say you cant get 100% and you must focus on making right these mistakes which you are making. This child is capable of getting 100%.” Generally, pursuing quality learner achievement to those being interviewed was an important aspect of moral purpose that demands rigorous planning, goal setting, effective organisation, and prioritisation needed to be central to all the operations within the school. In this regard, Banana Secondary School Principal explained that “*Everything we plan, everything we do the goal is achievement, academic achievement.*” Therefore, regardless of whether or not moral purpose has fully being realised in the selected schools, their SMTs must be unconditionally committed to ensuring that their school environment enables the enhancement of learner achievement.

In addition to viewing moral purpose as a compelling idea to improve academic achievement for all learners, Apple High School Head of Department A perceives respect as the underlying moral purpose that transforms the teaching and learning processes in schools:

*The first thing I think moral purpose should be the question of respect, whether that is a child or a teacher or colleagues and all those. For me is a point of departure because it comes even into play when we are talking about issues of punctuality, talking about issues of carrying out activities, talking about studying alone ... So all we try to do with their lives as learners is to emphasise the importance of respect ... and portray one's respect through one's conduct..*

Banana Secondary School Principal added:

*But at the end of the day I have realised one thing that when you lead people, first is the hidden aspect that you cannot leave behind - respect. Respect even a learner, and the reason why these kids respect me a lot is the fact that there a kind of respect I'm giving back to them. When I speak to them I don't shout to them, speak to them in such a way that they will understand you. And when they leave here they are going to implement everything, they are going to do exactly what you have requested, even when you speak to teacher, when they come here make sure that you start by showing an aspect of respect.*

The two extended quotes above highlight that respect manifests itself within the school through the manager's conduct. The respect that is portrayed through one's conduct emerged as a central component of moral purpose. According to Banana Secondary School Principal, the responsibility of the SMTs is to "... *try at all cost to instill the value of respect... and try at all cost to make sure that from both the learners and the teachers, there is an element of mutual respect ...*" This highlights that moral purpose perceived as respect plays a critical role in leadership and school improvement because it encourages mutual interest in establishing healthy relationship and collaboration between teachers and learners. On this account, Apple High School Principal highlighted the ripple effect of giving respect to teachers and learners in the school. He stated that "... *the reason this kids respect me a lot is the fact that there is a kind of respect I'm giving back to them.*"

This means that when a leader changes his or her conduct and start respecting teachers and learners, he or she encourages them to do the same. Orange High School Head of Department A argues that "... *the conduct could begin with listening to teachers and their peers.*" This means that respect becomes exemplified in the conduct of a leader when he or she accepts the right of others to hold different views to their own. By listening to the opinions of teachers and learners in the school, the SMT can win them to work together with it to improve learner achievement. Hence, Grape High School Head of Department A asserted that "*Without respect you can't win people.*" Therefore, respect is a critical component of moral purpose that can eliminate any potential factor that may have a detrimental effect on learner achievement.

The perception of the reality of moral purpose in schools was also explored by focusing on the effects of moral purpose on achievement in schools. This exploration highlights the extent to which moral purpose influenced learner achievement in the past three years. In terms of the grade twelve results, nine participants from performing schools highlighted that focusing on moral purpose has had an effect on learner achievement. Thus, Banana High School Principal remarked that *“Our graph indicates that we are moving up and it is because of what we have been practicing throughout.... So our graph is going up because of this moral purpose.”* The essence of this reflection that ‘focusing on moral purpose has effect on learner achievement reinforces the importance of school management teams to set higher targets for learners to excel in this examinations.

Thus, Banana High School Principal stressed the importance of having high expectations and asserted that *“We are aiming at hundred percent this year, if not ninety, if we miss hundred, ninety it will be, that is a sure case.”* Having high expectations for all learners is a good and noble goal. When teachers have high expectation for learners and provide tasks that are engaging, learners build self-esteem and increase confidence and improve academic performance. Another example of how schools set higher expectations is provided by Apple High School Deputy Principal B who reports *“... we have moved from Club 50 for Mathematics, we are now pushing to have Club 100.”* Clubs are determined and demarcated according to the number of learners passing the subject. If there are more than a hundred learners passing, the school fall into Club 100, if there are fifty or between fifty and hundred, then the school still belong to Club 50.

In this regard, he describes that their expectations are that *“... this year we said we want to be in the top hundred, so we are pushing by all means to go to the top hundred. And as I speak we do have many distinctions in Maths in grade twelve because we want that Club 100 to be there in the National Examinations.”* From the same school, Apple High School Head of Department who had always been achieving a hundred percent pass rate

in his subject in the past fifteen years stressed the importance of having higher expectations that not only challenges learners to pass but to obtain quality results: “*The pass rate is hundred percent yes ... and that only can be achieved through the issue of getting interest from learners to the subject. It has been working and we have seen a lot of cooperative attitude in a lot of classes that I’m teaching ...*” He clearly attributed his success of achieving a hundred percent pass rate to his capacity to transform classroom practice into a more cooperative and engaging one. He stated that as an English teacher:

*I should be there and do it with them and work with them and go through the text and go through a lot of other things. And besides, the learners always take the teachers who are a step or two ahead of them seriously, and so it influences the results.*

This engaging aspect of teaching was confirmed by my observations of two lessons in Apple High School and Strawberry High School. In both the lessons I observed the classes were taught by the Heads of Department who appeared to be adequately prepared for the lessons. The lesson plans were well formulated with teaching techniques, activities and teaching aids that made the lessons appealing to learners. The assessment tasks given to learners were also engaging, more meaningful and authentic. These tasks made the classrooms more interactive as learners engaged interestingly with the teachers, the subject matter and each other. For example, in the Mathematics class that I observed at Strawberry High School, the HoD was presenting a lesson on data handling and his approach was stimulating and created classroom opportunities for learners to engage with the content taught.

The HoD first requested each learner to stand and write his or her shoe size on the chalkboard and the class was full of laughter as each learner wrote his or her shoe size. When all forty learners had written their shoe sizes, the HoD grouped learners into small groups and asked each group to determine the median shoe size and then the mean size of the class. After fifteen minutes, the groups compared their solutions. I found this task

more authentic and meaningful as it related to the real life situation of the learners. The learners were learning at greater depth and taking responsibility for their learning. This means that learners were in control of their own learning, identifying their own strengths and weaknesses as learners, and were able to develop their own learning styles to reach their goals and monitor their progress. The HoD's approaches to teaching transformed the attitudes of learners to the extent that they were all able to relate to the subject matter.

However, within these results, the effects of moral purpose on learner achievement seemed nominal if not absent in underperforming schools in the past three years. Grape High School Head of Department B stated that *"Our results were very poor in the past three years."* Notwithstanding, there is evidence in the data that there is an expectation that through embracing moral purpose, schools can improve learner performance. But this expectation is predicated on the assumption that moral purpose is occurring within the team and should be expressed in the school through key values: the degree to which this is the case is examined in the next section.

### **5.3.2. Key values of moral purpose**

The participants in this research believe that moral purpose can be expressed in terms of three fundamental values which are imperative in enhancing academic achievement. First, Apple High School's Academic Tutor believes that the key expression of moral purpose in their school is *"Commitment, total commitment from our staff. When we do planning for the time table, etc, we make sure, I'm talking from grade twelve perspective, we make sure we get our best educators in those classes."* Peach Secondary School Acting Principal added that commitment and dedication should be embraced by all managers, teachers and learners as they engage in various tasks and activities. She said *"The key expressions of moral purpose that enhances academic leadership and learner achievement in Peach Secondary School are commitment and dedication of both learners and educators."*

She further stated that committed teachers “... give lot of task for learners to study on their own.” Accordingly, the Banana High School Principal stated that teachers should understand that teaching learners is their moral responsibility and “... the key responsibility of any teacher at school is to be in class on time and do what he or she is expected of or seen to be doing.” This implies that the evidence of teachers’ commitment and responsibility in the classroom includes nothing less than effective teaching, assessing, and giving constant feedback to learners. But it appears that SMTs in effective schools (Orange, Apple and Banana) hold strong to the belief that to ensure full teachers’ commitment to effective classroom practices they need to be committed to instructional leadership activities that include monitoring, modelling and support.

Firstly, Orange High School Head of Department A stated that to effectively cultivate moral purpose requires that SMTs engage in the process of “... monitoring of work given to learners by subject educators and feedback given to learners.” This activity should involve or should be coupled with the “... moderation to check if the work given to learners is standardised.” Apple High School’s Academic Tutor espoused that “Our preparation in class, our daily class, that is where the whole SMT plays a role via monitoring classes, checking all the work that has been done, all the work that need to be done, providing guidance.” Flowing from these remarks SMTs should, among other things, monitor the lesson planning and presentation to ensure that various methods of teaching are applied properly. They should also monitor content teaching to ensure that the content for teaching and learning is in line with expected standards.

Secondly, Apple High School Deputy Principal A highlighted the importance of support and states that the SMTs should take responsibility “... as a caring and supporting leader to the school, so providing care and support for effective teaching and learning.” What necessitates support of teachers in school is that the new South African curriculum demands the use of different teaching methods which are learner-centred. Teachers who

are not familiar with these methods may not function effectively in the classroom. Therefore, SMTs need to provide in-school support in the form of training in different teaching techniques. It appears that it is the SMTs' commitment to monitoring, moderation and support that ensures that teachers perform their responsibilities effectively. These effective classroom practices can ensure that the moral purpose of raising the standard of learner achievement is successfully cultivated.

Thirdly, modelling was identified as an important instructional leadership activity that can enhance the central goal of moral purpose. Banana Secondary School Principal claimed that he is able to improve learner achievement because he model good classroom practices. He said *"I lead by example. I also teach grade twelve."* The Apple High School Head of Department pointed at the power of modelling and stated, *"... whatever you can't do, you can't expect others to do."* He added that *"Expectation should be led by feasibility, we can do this, and I have tested that through my own experiences in the field. And so if we end up having to demand anything from other teachers, this is the way."* If SMTs expect to see teachers demonstrating the values of commitment and responsibility in their teaching practices they should be the first to manifest these practices in the way they teach and lead. Thus, the Apple High School Principal states:

*Teachers must see me leading by example. So they have realised that principal is a person who go extra mile, he will come to school at half past six, go to the media centre, get learners there, sit with them, conduct morning studies, start with us in the staff briefing.*

Generally, the participants' remarks illustrate the seriousness of the role the SMT plays to support teaching and learning. The essence of this reflection that *"SMT's commitment in the areas of monitoring, modeling and supporting is a key to improvement of learner achievement"* is reflected in the notion of instructional leadership reinforced by Southworth (2002, 2004).

Amidst the interview data, several other values were accepted by participants interviewed as expressing moral purpose. The first was the value of discipline with regard to which the Orange High School Deputy Principal related that *“Discipline is there as the first thing we dwell on”*. Her colleague, Head of Department B, concurred and stated that *“The first thing that we look at in order for learners to be transformed morally and academically is discipline. We try by all means as the managers of this school to discipline our learners.”* Echoing these responses was Banana Secondary School Principal who remarked that *“We cannot have good performance in an environment which is not discipline driven.”*

It is clear from the above comments that school managers view the creation and maintenance of discipline structures in their schools as the basis for the enhancement of learner achievement. Sound learner discipline increases learner performance because it reduces late coming and absenteeism. On the reduction of late coming the Orange High School Head of Department B explained that *“Here at our school we don’t know anything like late coming. We start early in the morning, at seven o’clock learners are all here, they are even used to that.”* A sound discipline is said to enhance learner achievement because in a disciplined and purposeful school environment learners are more likely to respond positively to programmes such as morning and afternoon studies and even Saturday classes.

Notably, the establishment of a disciplined school environment that is dedicated towards the schools’ academic improvement starts with the creation of a school code of conduct. This is a document compiled to regulate the conduct of learners in a public school. A thorough review of code of the conduct documents of the sampled schools showed that two (Apple High School and Strawberry High School) out of six of such documents are well formulated. The code of conduct of four schools only prescribed rules relating to learners’ conduct without outlining how learners who infringe the code of conduct would

be punished. For example, rules such as “No cell phones in the school premises are allowed” included in Grape High School’s code of conduct fail to spell out the action that will be taken if a learner brings a cell phone to school. But the code of conduct documents for Apple High School and Strawberry High School are developed in such a way that they spell out consistent and uniform actions in the event of infringement and learners are clear about what is expected from them.

The two schools use the merits and demerits system to promote positive learner conduct. Any learner who commits misconduct receives a demerit to show that he or she has done something wrong. For example, at Apple High School a learner will get 200 demerits if found in possession of alcohol on school grounds or under influence on school grounds. However, the establishment of a disciplined school environment should not be limited to maintenance of positive learner behaviour but should also include the imposition of strict discipline on teachers in schools. To achieve school improvement, the Orange High School Head of Department A stated that “*We need discipline from our staff, we start on top, discipline from a staff, being at school, attend classes, be on time, be prepared.*” In a disciplined school environment teachers attend school and classes on time and prepare for their lessons adequately, and all these practices are necessities for the enhancement of moral purpose.

### **5.3.3. Teamwork and the central goal of moral purpose**

It became apparent in section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 that improving learner achievement, particularly the grade twelve results, is a central goal of moral purpose which is achieved by SMTs that are laden with underlying values such as commitment and discipline. However, participants have strong view that the goal of raising achievement levels for all learners does not happen by accident but requires the establishment of teamwork in schools.

A useful starting point for the examination of these aspects was the acknowledgement that the notion of working together as a team is fundamental to the efficacy of the SMTs in cultivating moral purpose of academic achievement for all learners:

*Achievement of learners starts with teamwork. Everything starts with teamwork ... whenever there is something, the way we exchange, the way in which we assist each other, we work as a team. And then even the teachers out there when they see us they see this team spirit. It is difficult nowadays to get people to operate as a team. But if you come to Apple High School, there are different because these people work as a team, they understand each other. We are all focused; we know what we want, and where we are heading to. The reason why the school is so successful in terms of grade twelve results is because of teamwork, of sharing of ideas and consultation, not undermining each other (Apple High School Principal).*

Banana Secondary School Principal also espoused on team notion as a key approach for enhancing moral purpose of academic achievement in his school: *“Under normal circumstances the school is doing well because we work as a team. And I believe it got team leadership ... that is what put our learners on the map.”* The perceptions of the two principals above are that by espousing the notion of teamwork not only as democratically viable but also as morally acceptable has helped their schools to improve learner achievement. Therefore, the realisation of the goal of moral purpose depends largely on the capacity of SMTs to foster teamwork and this improves cooperation among team members. Commenting on this cooperation, Grape High School Head of Department A stated that *“... if teacher A is not present, then, I have to check who can help those learners ... We had a challenge of teacher X who was on sick leave, to indicate that teamwork is there, I happened to take over his subject.”*

Overall, the participants understand the concept of teamwork as not just a group of people working together but as people unified around a compelling moral purpose, sharing responsibilities and cooperating to improve learner achievement. However, my observations of the sampled schools proved that the majority of SMT members might

have talked about teamwork without necessarily actualising it in their schools. Plain evidence of this was the lack of SMT and staff meetings which are instrumental in ensuring team communication and cohesion, both of which are key elements of teamwork. Analysis of the minutes of SMTs' previous meetings also supported this evidence as there were no recent SMT meetings held in four schools. Two of these schools are underperforming in the grade twelve examinations. Except for Apple High School and Strawberry High School, all minutes collected and analysed were two to three months old. This is an indication that in most underperforming schools the line of communication is restricted hampering the cultivation of moral purpose.

Evidence of ineffective teams in other schools or the absence of teamwork was the lack of cooperation within the SMTs. Peach Secondary School Acting Principal highlighted this challenge as hampering the moral purpose of academic improvement in her school:

*As a school we agreed that we will give parents reports when schools reopen. But when we returned, this HOD failed to submit his marks. I went to him and I wanted to know what might be the problem but he said there was no problem, he just wanted to finalise his work. But one of the educators opened my eyes when she said; you SMT demand submission from us while you yourselves do not comply. Mr. X did not mark his scripts and that is why he did not submit. I had to enter my colleague's office and then indeed I found the scripts on the table, and when I checked the ones on top were marked but the ones below were not marked. I called my colleague who did not mark the scripts, as part of the SMT, I was alone, and he again did not want to come so that we may talk one to one.*

The scenario presented above points to one of the numerous challenges facing school principals when they undertake the duty to promote the teamwork goal within the SMTs. As with many other principals, Peach Secondary School Acting Principal's major frustration is with the defiant attitude of one team member who should be setting an example to teachers. The Banana High School Principal indicated that even though he generally has SMT members who are positive about teamwork and are cooperative, he said "... you always have a black sheep in the kraal." He reports that "We have some who are doing other things that are not in line with our team vision and moral purpose."

Unlike Banana High School, the pervading attitude of lack of cooperation has resulted in perpetual underperformance of Peach Secondary School in the grade twelve examinations.

The participants' responses illustrated that their notion of teamwork overlaps with participative decision-making. The Apple High School Principal points to the importance of participative decision-making:

*Each and every time whenever there is a decision to make, be it about achievement of learners or school programme, as long as I feel like I cannot do this alone, I call my colleagues and teachers and say guys here is the issue, let us sit around the table and discuss.*

The remarks above show that the inclusive decision-making process that is a central focus of all individuals in the school can produce improvement in learner achievement. My observations in Apple High School bear out the Principal's comments. While seated in the Deputy Principal A's office during my second visit to the school, an urgent announcement was made for SMTs to meet immediately after school. This means that in the context of my research, the participative notion not only bonds staff together around a decision about learner achievement, but also lessens leadership pressure on the school principal. The data show that principals also believe strongly in broad participation to include learners and parents. Commenting on the imperativeness of participative decision making that involves parents, the Orange High School Head of Department A stated that *"But now we are trying to involve parents and even the learners themselves in whatever decision we take they are involved."*

The overall picture that emerged indicates that the role played by parents is generally acknowledged and welcomed by SMTs. The Banana High School Principal highlighted the importance of parent involvement and said *"Normally what we do every year, we invite parents and we talk to them about how we are going to run the school the whole*

*year, so that the parents are able to support us.*” With regards to involvement of learners, the Apple High School Principal explained that “... *we also work with the learner representative council and matric board ... I want to show them that without them I am nothing. And that they must understand that the principal wants to work with us, and then let us support him.*” Although Apple High School elicits support from various learner structures such as the Matric Board to promote a disciplined environment, it is the Representative Council of Learners that is generally considered in other schools to assist the SMTs with issues of learner discipline.

#### **5.3.4. Motivation**

While it did not emerge as a primary value within the data, motivation was also highlighted by at least five interviewees in this research as ensuring effective cultivation of moral purpose. The Banana High School principal stressed the value of learner motivation and stated that “*And on the other hand we also invite the motivational speakers from outside, like church leaders around; they were here in March motivating learners. And that thing meant a lot because most of our learners are motivated.*” As seen in this comment, school principals and the other SMT members need to be cognisant of the major impact of motivation; and they must also develop a diverse range of skills to motivate learners. Alongside the motivation task of the principal or SMT, schools can still employ the expertise of other people such as former learners or business people.

The above thought was highlighted in the comments of the Orange High School Head of Department B who stated that “... *we even call those learners who passed here some years back, those who are working, and those who are holding higher positions and then they encourage them and they become very much motivated.*” This comment uncovers a norm in many schools for motivating current learners by employing the services of former learners who achieved excellent Grade twelve results. The Grape High School Head of Department reinforced that “*Those who have passed matric, they come back to*

*motivate others. We have got four to seven of them from last group; they are at University X doing teaching.”*

One of the major effects motivation has on learners was mentioned by the Banana High School Principal stating that *“I don’t see any learner coming late to school because they are motivated to learn.”* This means that motivation reduces late coming because motivated learners will always find a reason to wake up and go to school and learn more and more each day. Therefore, Apple High School’s Academic Tutor argued that *“... every lesson should actually contain a component of motivation, not just handing over knowledge but motivation for what lies ahead, what is coming.”* He added that *“In school environment we should do everything to get learners motivated, to get them to study...”* These remarks emphasise the significant role played by motivation in enhancing the learning process in the school.

However, motivation in schools should not only be about learners but should also be directed towards the teaching staff. One of the strongest affirmations of this was offered by the Orange High School Head of Department A who reflected *“... we try by all means to motivate educators that they must do one two three.”* The Banana High School Principal maintained that he personally *“... sit with the staff and motivate them”*. He added that *“... those are some of the things that enhance the academic performance of learners.”* Motivation of teachers enhances academic performance of learners because a motivated teacher will always find a reason to wake up every morning to go to school and teach learners.

#### **5.4. Research question two: Shared moral purpose and modalities of sharing**

This research question was designed to explore whether moral purpose is shared within different school contexts. The efficacy of the SMTs within the selected schools to share moral purpose was explored by identifying the modes by which SMTs share moral

purpose. The degree to which these modes are informed by foundational documents and my own observations was also examined. The examination in this section concludes with an exploration of how the shared moral purpose contributes to shared leadership to include even teachers who do not hold any formal management positions. Thus, the central themes emerging from this research question were: shared moral purpose and shared leadership.

#### **5.4.1. Shared moral purpose**

When asked whether or not moral purpose is shared across members of the SMTs and schools, research participants were overwhelmingly positive that it is shared. However, the depth of their responses was mixed because they appeared to be drawing from different discourses. Eight participants understood and used the word ‘shared’ in relation to educational leadership that is shared. This aspect is addressed under shared leadership in section 5.4.2 below. At least seven participants, of whom five were from Apple High School, derived their responses from a perspective that the word ‘shared’ means to magnify and disseminate moral purpose until it is broadly accepted by all in the school. This is a relevant discourse to this theme.

Apple High School’s Academic Tutor claimed that “*Moral purpose is shared from top management to staff.*” However, it was the follow-up to this initial response which specified the extent to which moral purpose was shared at Apple High School. He reported that it is shared to “... *not only academic colleagues, I’m talking about administrative colleagues, I’m talking about our ground staff colleagues, it is shared with everybody.*” This universal acceptance by different stakeholders within this school paints a general picture of how each member of the school community gets to contribute towards the cultivation of moral purpose. Thus, the useful starting point for the examination of this theme was the exploration of how school management teams share their moral purpose.

The research participants seemed to understand shared moral purpose as a compelling moral imperative that is embraced by all role players in the school. Thus, the Banana Secondary School Principal stated *“It is shared because we strive from time to time to ensure that we all work towards a common goal or [moral] purpose.”* Shared moral purpose is not a value that resides only in a leader but it is spread to all the people in the school through various modes. Of the utmost importance in the sharing of moral purpose are the notions of communication and delegation. Communication seems to be the most applied mode by school management teams with regard to sharing moral purpose. The Apple High School Deputy Principal A explained:

*And you cannot seem to be achieving one thing as it is a common one thing if the lines of communication are closed or restricted ... So our lines of communication are very open, our lines of communication here at school are very open.*

The value of communication was further reinforced by the Grape High School Head of Department A who stated that *“... if communication breaks down, I think the whole system will break down.”* The Apple High School Head of Department also believes that *“To bind the teachers together, to bind the learners together, we need to be seen to be sharing the information as and when it unfolds.”* The need to share this information calls for regular meetings. The Apple High School Deputy Principal A pointed out *“... we effectively make use of our morning briefing to cascade information to our educators.”* She also added that every Tuesday they have SMT meetings *“... just to make sure we are still on the common side or same page or same chapter of the book. So we do that more often.”*

It was clear that in this morning briefing meeting that I observed in Apple High School that indeed valuable information was shared. I also observed that in these meetings every member’s input was valued; members listened to what others had to say before

expressing a viewpoint of their own and members did not speak over or cut off other members. The nature of the meeting was such that one could easily comment on the extent to which moral purpose was driving the staff. It was in this meeting where teachers were made aware of teachers who were late or absent on the day and announcements were made about who would be standing in for them. This allocation was clearly to ensure that learners do not sit idle without anyone to attend to them.

The departmental or subject meetings emerged as other platforms where the sharing of information takes place. Referring to the departmental meeting, the Grape High School Head of Department B recounted *“So it is true we are sharing and we meet almost every time to talk about the subject.”* In addition to departmental meetings where discourses are centred on improving the performance of all subjects within the department, the Orange High School Head of Department A indicated that *“We have got our different subject meetings.”* He added that any member who has attended a subject meeting comes back and *“... shares what was spoken about, discussed, decided or whatever in that subject meeting, and then it is shared with the whole department ...”* Therefore, regardless of whether or not moral purpose is widely manifested within the entire school community, SMTs must be unconditionally committed to ensuring that their school environment enable utilisation of various types of meetings to share moral purpose.

It is evident that during these meetings learner performance is placed at the top of the agenda. The importance of academic performance was confirmed by the Apple High School minutes of the SMT meeting, under the item grade twelve analysis of results:

*10 learners failed which is disappointing but there is quality in our results. Learners obtained distinctions in most of the subjects. The principal conveyed his appreciation and congratulations to the HODs and educators involved (Apple High School: Minutes of SMT Meeting, 16.01.2013).*

The above description provides an excellent conclusion to the examination of integrating the skill of communication within team meetings to share information around the issue of learner performance. Evident in this response is the important notion that the effectiveness of the SMT is not defined by how often the team meets, rather by the efficacy that requires the vigorous exchange of ideas, having one's thinking challenged and having the capacity to have critical questions asked to stimulate discussion. This means that although effective communication amongst the team members must be respectful, it must also be robust to allow an exchange of ideas to drive the team towards consensus in critical issues such as learner achievement.

Delegation of duties is another notion that surfaced in the interview data that SMTs take up to share moral purpose within the schools. Peach Secondary School Head of Department A believes that moral purpose within her school's management team is shared "*through delegation of duties*". She reckons that "*Sometimes when SMT members are delegated some duties, those that we feel that the educators can execute we do delegate to them. And then we monitor the educators or when they have executed such we check.*" For this participant, delegation is not abdication; a manager delegating the duties should not be seen as shoving away responsibility. But effective delegation of duties is realised when the school principal is aware that the accountability for that delegated duty remains with him or her.

Although principals are officially appointed by the circuits as chief invigilators for school-based examinations, the Banana Secondary School Principal feels that for members of his SMT to embrace the moral purpose, he can even delegate this huge task with huge accountability to his deputy principal. He elaborated:

*Like Monday they are starting with trial examination, so I gave the deputy principal to run that. So in this way I'm making her to be aware that she is also responsible for this, not only the principal. So this indicates that she feels that*

*she is part of the school, she is part of the management team that manages the school.*

All in all, participants believe that moral purpose is shared in their schools and that sharing is worthwhile as the Apple High School Deputy Principal B claimed the sharing “... *makes it easy for us because we can see that as management what the school wants is being implemented. And we see the results among the learners.*” According to Peach Secondary School’s Head of Department A, the sharing of moral purpose is critical because everyone get to know that “... *the kids have to pass*” and she further claimed that as a result of this sharing “*Even if we can close the SMT’s office the teachers will still go to class knowing that at the end of the year learners have to pass, it is their moral responsibility to see them passing.*”

Clearly, the effect of shared moral purpose is that it boosts the morale of the team members and teachers become more committed to what they are doing. In the next section we will examine the effect of moral purpose on leadership approaches by exploring the extent to which the shared moral purpose enhances distributed leadership and/or teacher leadership.

#### **5.4.2. Shared Leadership**

A major focus of this section is the exploration of what individuals understood by the phrase ‘shared leadership’ and the degree to which they had experienced or observed its practice as an approach that help to facilitate the sharing of moral purpose. Amidst the interview data, several themes were invariably accepted by each of the participants, especially school principals. The first of these was the importance of shared or collaborative leadership both in theory, and as practiced within their SMT and schools. Therefore, the critical point of departure which was useful in the examination of this theme was the acknowledgement by these participants that the capacity for leadership is

shared across many members of the school community. There was a growing recognition in the responses that a leader can't be all things to all people, can't hold all knowledge, and can't possess every skill to run the school effectively.

In this regard, the Apple High School Principal stated:

*When I manage this school I make sure that I don't manage this school alone. I manage this school with the SMT ... It is difficult just for me to run the school alone without the SMT and the teachers. Without them I will never succeed.*

The Banana High School Principal accentuated that *"In my approach I don't regard myself as a sole manager, so all SMT members are managers. We share these responsibilities."* The recognition by these two school principals, both of them leading higher performing schools in terms of grade twelve results that the *"sole leader"* approach will result in their failure illustrates the richness that can come from shared leadership. But what did members of SMTs view as shared leadership? One perspective identified the benefits offered by having to recognise the existing expertise within the SMT and outside the traditional hierarchical leadership structures in the school to involve even the teachers to co-manage the school:

*You know we make sure that whatever we do here at school is not an SMT's responsibility, whatever we decide upon we engage the educators. If you look at our SMT structure we have educators who are not HoDs, they are just educators but they are put on the school management team. So in a way we are saying to them, whatever good thing you are doing we will recognise your expertise and call for help so that we can co-manage the school (Apple High School Deputy Principal A).*

The comments above stress the value of concentrating on engaging expertise wherever it exists within the organisation rather than seeking this only within the formal position or roles. Banana Secondary School Principal stated that *"If the teacher is skillful enough then even if the teacher is not part of the management team we make them to take a leading role when it comes to the organisation of some activities."* He added that *"They*

*will take decisions, as long as they have got good management or leadership skills.”*

From this, shared leadership is about collaborative decision making which is fostered by mutual respect for the strength, talents and skills of each member of the SMT and teaching staff. This means that shared leadership is identification and preparation of skillful teachers to “co-manage” the school in order to enhance school improvement.

However, the effect of shared leadership in schools as the preferred model of educational leadership is determined by the availability of expertise within the SMT and teaching staff and the efficacy of the SMT to create and formalise leadership structures to facilitate its practice. Apple High School Deputy Principal A elaborated on how their school formalised the structure that allows for the inclusion of teachers to “co-manage” the school:

*We have given teachers roles, different roles. Some are coach tutors, coach tutors are discipline educators. They enhance and instill discipline in their various grades. Some are academic tutors; their baby is to make sure that these children pass. Learners did not pass, what are the barriers, what are the intervention strategies, what can we do or they do to make sure that the learners pass?*

Apple High School’s new leadership structure, which includes academic and coach tutors, demonstrates how shared leadership has been expressed in the school. Giving these teachers managerial roles help to catalyse the cultivation of the moral purpose in this school in two significant ways. Firstly, because participants have identified enhancement of learners’ academic achievement as their moral purpose, academic tutors ensure that every learner passes. The Apple High School Principal clarifies this role saying that “... *academic tutors are not part of the SMT, but they are overseeing the whole academic performance of the grade.*” Secondly, discipline was identified as a major factor inhibiting moral purpose in schools, therefore, coach tutors assist in instilling discipline in their grades.

The managerial roles distributed to teachers vary from school to school depending on the shared vision of the school or the experiences of the teachers to whom roles are assigned. In Orange High School roles are assigned to more experienced members of the staff as reflected in the thoughts of Orange High School Head of Department A:

*We have senior teachers. We have identified those teachers who have experience and say that this is a senior teacher of this subject. They are also helping the management, they check teachers, and they usually take books from the learners and check. When it comes to moderation during terms they are also helping. And that is academically.*

Therefore, according to the above responses, the nature of shared leadership in schools, that is, how shared leadership has been expressed takes its starting point in the identification of expertise and strength of teachers and the formalisation of structures to fulfill shared leadership. But the extent to which the SMTs and teachers work together and have a shared and agreed commitment to a specific goal depends largely on the ownership of their own schools. Therefore, when structures are in place in order to involve teachers in leading the school, teachers start to own the school and its moral purpose. This thought is reflected in Apple High School Deputy Principal A's comment:

*... So we have given them opportunity to show us what they can do. So that they can have a sense of ownership to say, our school, Apple High School our school, not their school, so we have given them roles to play.*

Given the breadth of contexts within Limpopo schools and the variety of leadership models offered within them, the degree to which the shared leadership model is achieved is mixed. But more important than whether all schools are as effective as they need to be in this respect is the commitment described by all participants to this ideal of shared leadership whereby different managerial roles are allocated even to ordinary teachers. Despite the universal acknowledgement of the importance of sharing moral purpose and leadership, the practical process of sharing can be hampered by numerous factors. The

next section examines the theme “Threats and challenges inhibiting moral purpose” which is explored under research question three.

### **5.5. Research question three: The constraints of sharing moral purpose**

The major focus of this research question was the exploration of what SMT members accept as threats and challenges that inhibit the sharing of moral purpose within each school context. All participants, irrespective of whether or not moral purpose and leadership are widely shared within their schools, felt that there are crucial challenges that inhibit the sharing of moral purpose and leadership in their schools. Most of the challenges provided by participants are associated with all the schools’ role players. There was an overwhelming acknowledgement that learner discipline is a huge challenge experienced by SMTs in the everyday cultivation of moral purpose. Orange High School Head of Department B accentuated that “... *you find that even though we try our best as a school, you will find that a few learners sometimes do deviate from what is our moral purpose.*”

Although the school is experiencing minimal cases of learner misconduct, the Apple High School Deputy Principal A admitted that there is “... *a small group of learners who we seem not to be getting right with them.*” Her colleague, Apple High School Head of Department echoed this response reporting that “*Apart from that maybe you might find that we also have different children that are beyond repair when it comes to issues of discipline.*” The following response highlights succinctly the frustration of having to deal with a small group of ill-disciplined learners:

*And you try this and they just want to get the worst out of everybody ... Daring attitude where a child shows you can't take me anywhere, you can't do anything and everything, and you know we don't even use corporal punishment. You reach a point where you feel much more helpless and so you can't influence that child. And this affects us in the sense that when you set a goal and say we need hundred percent as a school, then you have that child who is sitting there and hijacking your dream (Grape High School Head of Department B).*

The most serious factor encouraging disciplinary problems in learners was abuse of intoxicating substances such as drugs and alcohol. The Peach Secondary School Acting Deputy Principal affirmed that learners' disciplinary problems manifest themselves "... either because those learners are on drugs or are abusing alcohol, we have such learners." Grape High School Head of Department A added that "*Most of the learners are using glue and dagga and on Monday they come here drunk from the weekend and some come to school late.*" My observation at Grape High School bore out this tendency of learners to come late to school, especially on Mondays. During my visit to the school on one particular Monday, I observed many learners locked outside the school gates because they were late. Discipline is important because in order to raise the level of learner achievement for all learners in the school, learners must be:

*... in class on time and do what they are expected to be doing. They should be in class, they should be taught, and they should also adhere to the teacher's instructions to make sure there is effective teaching and learning*" (Apple High School Deputy Principal A).

Therefore, moral purpose thrives in an environment characterised by learners who respect instructional time and willingly cooperate with teachers in the classroom. But to establish classrooms where teachers and learners collaborate in order to ensure that the central goal of moral purpose is achieved is not easy because "... learners who abuse these intoxicating substances become unruly in classrooms" (Peach High School Acting Principal). She complained about this and says that "*sometimes we don't know what to do about them as a school.*" According to the Apple High School Deputy Principal A, disciplinary problems such as unruly classroom behaviour may occur because "... *those learners come from family backgrounds with social issues that need to be addressed.*"

One social factor that was raised by three participants attached to schools in rural areas was that of learners heading families in the absence of their parents either because they

were deceased or working in Gauteng. The Peach High School Acting Principal explained that this factor has an impact on learner achievement because “... *as a result the school experiences a high degree of absenteeism.*” It emerged that this high rate of absenteeism jeopardises efforts taken by SMTs to cultivate the moral purpose of improving achievement of all learners in schools. In addition to learner absenteeism, the Banana Secondary School Principal states that “... *you find that these learners do not even write homeworks.*”

However, it can be misleading to conclude that only learners who come from poor rural areas have disciplinary problems, because the quote below provides the clearest example in the data of how even learners coming from affluent families in urban areas are a serious concern:

*And the other challenge is you know, we are quintile five, these learners, majority of them they come from very affluent background, they have money, as big money. And you can imagine a situation where a child is so well lined, his or her pockets are well lined, the child is likely not to receive discipline quite well. Because is like the child is bigger than life, that is the challenge in itself (Apple High School Deputy Principal A).*

The response above is important as it provides the understanding that learner discipline is a social concern that seems to affect nearly every school and its effect is commonly seen in the academic performance of learners. The Banana High School Principal’s response further surfaced teenage pregnancy as another common social concern that inhibit the moral purpose of raising the achievement levels for all learners. He reported “*We also have this teenage pregnancy because these learners think that by doing that they will get more money from social grants.*” As a social construct, teenage pregnancy has become one of several indicators of burgeoning adolescent delinquency and moral decay.

This has implication for the continued higher failure rate in public schools, and thus, the failure to address these challenges will negatively impact on moral purpose. The dilemma for an overwhelming majority of SMT members is the challenge of not being able to persuade parents to support them in addressing the disciplinary issues of learners in their schools. Thus, it was apparent that parent involvement and participation are critical in the cultivation of moral purpose in schools. The participants held a strong view that it would be difficult, almost impossible, to enhance learner achievement without the involvement of parents. However, the participants raised a concern that their schools are experiencing a lack of parents' participation in the education of their children. Although experiencing few instances of parents not participating in the affairs of the school, the Apple High School Deputy Principal A confirmed:

*And of that sample I have spoken to you about, we don't get cooperation because either the parents are very protective or they are busy, their schedules are so busy, they don't have time to come to school. And you feel like you are stuck with the soul and you don't know what to do with the child.*

The lack of parent involvement and participation is equally a detrimental factor which is exacerbating the issue of learner discipline in schools. Orange High School Head of Department B asserted that *"You find that if some of the learners when they are ill-disciplined, when we call parents, some parents do not come to school."* Even if the parents do come to school, they display a negative attitude and protect their children. Grape High School Head of Department B substantiated that *"... when the parent tries to intervene, [he/she] will intervene protecting the child."* My observation at Orange High School proved that parents are unwilling to participate in the education of their children. During my observation at this school, I came across a guardian who was fuming because the teachers according to her were shifting responsibility when they called the parents

every time a child bunked extra lessons. She added *“Teachers must deal with children, we placed them under their care, and after all they are teachers.”*

In a worst case scenario, Peach Secondary School Head of Department A stated that some parents instead of supporting the teachers, *“They are looking at alternative way, a legal way on how to show or prove to the teacher that you did not follow the procedures ... This kind of attitude gives learners the impression that they are untouchable.”* He stated that some of these kids will go to the extent of threatening the teacher that *“I will tell my father to sue you.”* The response offered by the Banana Secondary School Principal indicated that things with learner discipline in schools start to fail from lack of proper leadership at home where *“... a dad is not a dad any more.”* This compelling argument suggests that to fix the issue of learner discipline in schools learners need good parenting at home and this is necessary to achieve the central goal of moral purpose.

Furthermore, evidence in this report creates an unsolicited image that teachers’ behaviours such as their laziness to execute duties assigned to them hamper the sharing of moral purpose in schools. Commenting directly on factors inherent in teachers, Apple High School Head of Department highlighted personal clashes that might arise because of what he calls the *“human factor”*, which means that even if teachers *“... were born on the same day, sharing the same mom, there will always be different people. So that one will be the point of departure that you will see one eye to eye on many issues but not hundred percent.”* He conceded that these conflicts may arise as a result of where teachers come from because teachers bring different perspectives to school, and some may maintain a bit of *“... psychological stubbornness to change.”*

He added that this psychological stubbornness to change comes into play when teachers feel because of where they come from they know better than anybody else and that attitude *“... will create a bit of stagnation in terms of progress.”* Peach High School Head of Department A attributed underperformance of his school to stagnation in terms

of the performance of teachers who sometimes “... *hold cabal meetings to sabotage the plans that have been put in place or policies that have been put in place.*” In addition, absenteeism of staff emerged amidst the data as another challenge that inhibited moral purpose. The Banana Secondary School Principal explained that “*The challenge that I have experienced at this school from various departments is absenteeism.*” He added that “... *like it is hardly a month without having people being absent, maybe because of personal issues.*” According to him, a more deeply rooted cause of absenteeism may be that “*There are some who are ill; I have got about three who have chronics...*”

Lack of commitment in teachers also surfaced as an issue that is hampering the sharing of moral purpose. Peach High School Head of Department B asserted that “... *some educators are not committed to their work.*” In the same vein, Orange High School Head of Department B stated:

*Because sometimes when you delegate people keep on postponing. You know, sometimes a person will say I will do it and when you inquire the following day, he/she will say the next day. That is why I am saying such factors like laziness are the ones that are hampering the smooth running of the school.*

Notwithstanding the universal acceptance of the importance of sharing moral purpose, the reality is that a group of experienced and passionate professionals will occasionally struggle to agree on every issue. An overwhelming majority of SMTs concur that members of teams do have clashes but they quickly reach consensus through robust debates for the sake of the learners. Therefore, most members of the SMTs from various schools could not remember any instance where the sharing of moral purpose was hampered by the behaviour of one of the members of their SMTs. Evident in the data is that despite being confronted by numerous inhibiting challenges, SMTs believe in the notion that no challenge is stronger than teamwork.

However, it is important for this research to examine how SMTs act to address various challenges inhibiting moral purpose. As the data analysis moves towards examination of the fourth research question, one important issue was evident: the role and responsibilities of SMTs to address challenges inhibiting moral purpose in their schools.

**5.6. Research question four: The capacity of the SMTs to overcome factors inhibiting the sharing of moral purpose.**

The cultivation of moral purpose may not be possible in schools characterised by issues of learner discipline, lack of parent participation and interpersonal differences within the SMTs. Before moral purpose can flourish in schools, the SMTs need to take responsibility to address these challenges. Therefore, this research question was designed to explore the capacity of SMTs to overcome the challenges that prevent the improvement of learner achievement in selected schools. In this section, the efficacy of SMTs to address these challenges is explored by investigating the role and responsibilities played by members of SMTs when addressing these factors. The degree to which these roles are informed by foundational documents such as the Mission Statement of schools and Schools' Code of Conduct is also examined.

Generally, all participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that it is their responsibility to address various challenges hindering the cultivation of the moral purpose in schools. For example, the Peach Secondary School Acting Principal accepted this responsibility:

*Yes. It is my responsibility as a leader; in fact, it must be a team thing because we are working as management ... We are able to address that as a team because each and every member of the management team is also experiencing some other challenges in his department. We are doing it collectively in such a way that each and every member is responsible for the department and once he or she is unable to solve those challenges is then now that as a leader I'm able to come in to solve those problems.*

All the participants are of the view that overcoming factors that hamper the realisation of their moral purpose requires a collective endeavour. The Banana Secondary School Principal highlighted this joint responsibility:

*As managers we are at the helm of policy implementation, and I should believe that the policy of education as far as a child is concerned is that we should make our learning spaces conducive for learning and teaching and as a result whatever challenge we come across as managers we need to rise together above that challenge hampering our moral purpose.*

He further described this shared responsibility by stating that though he must take a lead in addressing these challenges, they need to do it “... *collectively ... because somewhere somehow I cannot claim to have all the expertise to address them, we invite those who have expertise to address them.*” This indicates that there is a need to ‘rise together’ and take collective responsibility to confront the challenges inhibiting moral purpose in schools. The SMTs that are serious about defeating challenges inhibiting moral purpose involve teachers and other important stakeholders. The Apple High School Principal elucidates that “... *even though it is my responsibility in terms of addressing this, I cannot take each and everything, I must share this responsibility with my colleagues.*” Grape High School Head of Department A also believes that the fight to address factors that hinder moral purpose in any school “... *demand nothing but that cooperative responsibility on the part of everybody.*”

However, while accepting the responsibility to address the challenges hindering the goal of raising the level of achievement for all learners, five participants from underperforming schools (Grape High School and Peach Secondary School) failed to provide ways of addressing these challenges in their schools. They tended to restate and reiterate the challenges mentioned in the previous section without providing and describing ways of addressing them. Their responses suggest that their schools are not succeeding in terms of learner achievement because of their failure to set up strategies to

deal with factors inhibiting moral purpose. The possible end product of this failure to develop comprehensive strategies to address these challenges is that achievement gaps between learners with disciplinary problems and those with good conduct may not be narrowed. This is because problematic learners in schools are normally not given more opportunities to achieve as compared with well-behaved learners. They are mostly neglected.

In contrast, all members of the three effective schools (Apple High School, Orange High School and Banana Secondary School) indicated interest in offering techniques to address these challenges. Therefore, in the next sections the explicit roles played by ten participants from effective schools and strategies undertaken to address factors challenging the cultivation of moral purpose are explored. The starting point for this theme is the exploration of what the SMTs from the three higher performing schools understood as their role in addressing the constraints of moral purpose. These participants from effective schools offered a range of observations on what SMTs are seen to do, as well as what SMTs ideally should do to address fundamental challenges such as learner discipline and interpersonal differences.

Rather than exploring these observations as a block, they have been classified under two headings, reflecting how fundamental challenges highlighted in section 5.5 can be addressed, namely (a) consultation with stakeholders, and (b) examination and implementation of policy guidelines. All principals and other members of the SMTs interviewed in this research highlighted the first of these aspects and suggested that consulting stakeholders was key amongst their responsibilities. This point was made initially by one of the principals who believed that to address learner discipline managers ought to involve the expertise of other people such as the police and social workers:

*Because whenever we see any misconduct, for example, when some learners are using drugs we involve police. Hence we say the police usually come here and*

*address them. Even this problem of [teenage] pregnancy, because these learners are pregnant and they do come here at school, we even call parents to address the problem ... Sometimes we even encourage parents to take the children to social workers. Where we find that a certain learner has got a problem of drugs like dagga, we try to talk to the learner and the learner continues, we call parents and even tell the parents just to take the learner to the social workers (Orange High School Head of Department B)*

The Peach Secondary School Acting Principal reinforced the idea of having to deploy professional people like psychologists to assist in addressing learners' behavioural problems. He stated that the reason for this consultation and involvement of professionals is that managers need to understand the cause of the learner behaviour. She suggested that *"The only way to understand what really causes this behaviour because we are not even trained to deal with this kind of things, then we need psychologist."* While supporting the idea of involving expert people to address disciplinary issues of learners, Grape High School Head of Department B is of a view that the first thing should be for the SMTs to investigate the root cause of the problem *"Because most of the learners, seventy percent of our kids have got domestic issues. And that is where the crisis comes from."* He asserted that before you discipline a learner *"... you must try to start by understanding exactly what causes this behaviour"* because *"you may find that the parents are separated, the parents are divorced."*

According to Orange High School Head of Department A, to successfully investigate the root cause of the disciplinary problems of the learner managers need to cultivate trust which is the basis for learners opening up to share their deepest secrets. Managers achieve the cultivation of this trust *"... through assumption of that role of parenting... because if you lose parenting you lose a lot of things."* In short, children trust their own parents more than anybody else, so the Orange High School Deputy Principal believes that *"If these kids see us as their secondary parents, it works because then they can trust you."* Trust will therefore make them confide in the managers and teachers regarding all the issues bothering them from home.

The following observations highlight the second aspect, arguing that the key responsibility of the SMT, particularly, school principals, is to implement policies in order to address effectively issues of learner and teacher discipline. Commenting on how the school deals with learner discipline, Orange High School Head of Department A says that *“In the case of disciplinary challenges, we have code of conduct which spells out exactly how we should go about it.”* In addition, the application of the code of conduct as a document that ensures learner discipline was detailed by the Apple High School Deputy Principal B who indicated that *“The most important tool that helps is the school’s code of conduct. In the beginning of the year our grade twelve or Matric Board put the grade eight who are the first entries on a two weeks training regarding the code of conduct.”*

Inherent in this description was the suggestion that part of the role of the school principal and his SMT is to find ways of communicating and reinforcing the code of conduct with the learners, encouraging adherence to it at all times. Therefore, moral purpose can only flourish in an environment in which the code of conduct is reinforced. Different schools employ different structures to reinforce the school’s code of conduct. Mostly, schools utilise parent structures such as the School Governing Bodies (SGB) and learner structures such as the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) to assist the SMTs in encouraging learners’ adherence to the school’s code of conduct. In addition to these structures, Apple High School developed a structure called Matric Board to work collaboratively with the RCL in encouraging learners to adhere to the school’s code of conduct. Thus, Apple High School Deputy Principal B reported:

*The Matric Board is helping us a lot like I told you that Matric Board is fully aware of how to run the school. They know very well about the school’s code of conduct, they help us in discipline, starting from the register classes, if you go to register class in the morning, Matric Board member is there to assist the teacher, to see that the uniform policy is complied with. If somebody is absent, they help the teacher to identify the absentees. And also throughout the day if they find something that is against the school’s code of conduct they address it*

*immediately, the Matric Board member immediately addresses that issue with the learner.*

These responses above illustrate the profound commitment expressed by SMT members in this school to maintain discipline and this approach seems to yield good results for the school. Thus, the Apple High School Deputy Principal B stated that *“We can see results among the learners. Compared to schools in town, our school has got the lowest disciplinary problems. I’m not saying we don’t have, we have few issues of drug abuse and alcohol.”* Therefore, this approach to learner discipline is important as it provides the clearest example of how SMTs can embrace and promote the school’s code of conduct to instill discipline by making use of available learner structures in their schools. The value the school places on this document is highlighted by the manner in which it is developed to apply the “merits and demerits” system. If for example, a learner is caught bunking lessons or part of the lesson, the learner gets fifteen demerits or if he/she fails to produce an assignment, he or she gets ten demerits (Strawberry High School: Code of Conduct).

Furthermore, two participants nominated the involvement of the SGB as a structure that assists in disciplinary issues in their schools. Orange High School Head of Department B reported that *“We have the SGB here at school. And in the case where there are certain things that the parents must know about their child’s misconduct, through the principal, we involve the SGB ... So we find that the SGB is helping us a lot in trying to maintain discipline in the school.”* The South African Schools Act of 1996 provides that school governing bodies should adopt and assist in the enforcement of a learner code of conduct to maintain discipline effectively. Therefore, effective schools with minimum cases of learner discipline are those that support the role of the SGB in learner discipline and utilise this structure in unison with other disciplinary structures in the school.

Furthermore, the participants highlighted policy implementation as of utmost importance even when dealing with teachers’ disciplinary issues or misconduct. The Orange High

School Deputy Principal stated that once she realised that a staff member was demonstrating unacceptable behaviour in the school, she called that person and sat down and “... *show him or her laws or the rules that are given by the department.*” Grape High School Head of Department A added “*And also we need to look at policy issues, the policies will always guide us ...*” Although there are several other policies that can inform disciplinary actions taken by the SMT in dealing with teacher misconduct such as the ELRC policy document, the South African Council for Educators’ (SACE) Code of Conduct remain the key policy when it comes to teacher discipline.

### **5.7. Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the data collected through each of the three data collection techniques (semi-structured interviews with SMTs members, analysis of foundational documents of the schools and systemic educational authorities and observations) was analysed. The data obtained was organised according to the four research questions framing this thesis. To achieve smooth discussions, categories were also established under these research questions. In the first research question, what SMTs identified as moral purpose underlying their educational leadership approaches was examined. The educational leadership for academic achievement, perceptions on moral purpose, key values of moral purpose, and motivation emerged from the data as themes. All research participants expressed strong support for teamwork, participative leadership and managing teaching and learning as models of educational leadership that can enhance learner achievement in schools.

In the second research question the degree to which individual SMT members from selected schools shared moral purpose was explored. Universal acceptance that moral purpose is shared through communication across the schools was reflected in the research. The participants highlighted the importance of open, robust and honest communication within teams. However, the findings proved that not all participants

understood what shared moral purpose entails. An emerging area of responsibility for the SMTs is to design more formalised and recognised structures with leadership roles explicitly allocated to individuals within those structures. This is to ensure the success of shared leadership in schools. The third research question sought to identify factors inhibiting moral purpose in schools. The key findings in this area were lack of parent involvement and participation, learner discipline and interpersonal differences between the members of the SMTs.

In the final research question, the effectiveness of the SMTs in selected schools in addressing the challenges of moral purpose was examined. In successful schools, the challenges identified within teams and schools were balanced by the identification of various roles played by SMTs to address these challenges. In the next chapter, the findings identified above are more fully discussed. The findings are organised according to four research questions, using the literature to critique these significance findings.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion of the Findings**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

Given the pressing need to improve the academic achievement of learners in secondary schools in Limpopo Province over the past five years, an exploration of how moral purpose has been cultivated in schools to improve learner achievement is timely. It is also of significant personal interest to me as a member of a SMT in a secondary school in Limpopo Province. In chapter five data was presented across various themes. In this chapter, the themes identified in chapter five are organised under four categories, namely, school management teams and moral purpose, shared moral purpose and modalities of sharing, the constraints of sharing moral purpose, and the capacity of the SMTs to overcome constraints of sharing moral purpose. The next four sections present the discussion of the themes in the light of the literature pertaining to the research focus.

#### **6.2. School management teams and moral purpose**

The first research question asked “What do members of school management teams identify as moral purpose?” Research participants indicated that educational leadership is a rewarding but increasingly challenging and complex task. The research validated the claims of Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning. These authors claim that leadership explains about 5 to 7 percent of the difference in learner achievement across schools. The research further shows that there is not one typical leadership and management approach in all of the sampled schools taken to enhance learner achievement, but there is a blend of various educational leadership approaches. The research has found that underlying this blend of several leadership approaches is teamwork exemplified through participative decision-making.

The research goes further to indicate that for teamwork within the SMT to flourish, leaders should be imbued with and driven by a compelling purpose that demands that they take responsibility and work harder for a greater number and range of areas within the school. This compelling purpose is the moral purpose which is effectively cultivated in schools when SMTs are committed and take responsibility to manage teaching and learning by effectively modelling good leadership and classroom practice, and monitoring and supporting teachers. In addition to the values of commitment and responsibility to various aspects of instructional leadership, participants have the strong view that moral purpose can be expressed through the fundamental value of discipline. Below I discuss four major themes organised under the category “School management teams and moral purpose”.

#### **6.2.1. Perceptions of moral purpose**

While acknowledging the need to have teamwork underlined by moral purpose, the research found that moral purpose is the least familiar concept to the majority of school managers. The research goes further to establish that there are significant differences in the way different members of SMTs perceive moral purpose. What emerged is not surprising but does confirm the findings of international studies that have established that the notion of moral purpose is understood differently and has been labeled in various ways by many people (Andrews & Lewis, 2004, Bezzina, 2007, Cuttance *et al.*, 2003, Fullan, 2001). Despite applying different labels to moral purpose, participants in this research seemed to perceive moral purpose in relation to learner achievement. They first perceive it as a “moral goal of achievement”. I find moral purpose as a “moral goal of achievement” an interesting description because it highlights the importance of infusing the moral aspect into the goals schools set for learner achievement.

According to the University of South Africa's study guide (2007), goals give direction to the efforts of staff, parents and learners, motivate staff, parents and learners, and serve as a yardstick for measuring progress. Goals indicate the direction in which decisions and actions should be aimed (Hellriegel, *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, when goals are based on the school managers' "moral sense", that is, the sense of what is right or fair; they become a compelling purpose or imperative that informs the managers' decisions and actions. It is therefore this moral dimension in school management that determines whether or not the goals are attained. In this sense, I argue that the goals for the Limpopo Department of Education's (LDoE, 2011) turn-around strategy is unlikely to improve learner achievement and school management unless they are infused with moral purpose. Goals without moral purpose are normally unpersuasive and intangible, and the SMTs are likely to fail translating them into practice.

Moral purpose as a "moral goal of achievement" requires that school managers explicitly position themselves at the nexus of improving learning and closing the gap between top achievers and lower achievers in schools. This resonates with Barber and Fullan's (2005:3) argument that "The central moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, whenever they exist are narrowed". The participants see this moral purpose as a compelling motive to achieve higher and higher results until there is no learner failing in the school. There is a general recognition in this research that moral purpose is one of the fundamental necessities for bringing about the kind of change and improvement that will deliver desirable learning outcomes such as good examination results in schools (Bezzina, 2007).

According to Fullan (1993), achievement of change and school improvement depends on how effectively school managers identify and narrows gaps between higher performing and lower performing learners, advantaged and disadvantaged learners. Interestingly, the research shows how school managers in performing schools are realising the 'moral

purpose' of raising the bar and closing the learning and achievement gap for all learners regardless of school context. They indicate that, on one hand, they focus on eliminating 'level one' achievers wherever they appear in any examination or test results. In the South African context, level ones are those learners who have performed below thirty percent and are deemed to have "not achieved" in any test or examination across all subjects. On the other hand, school managers robustly engage top achievers to ensure that they are encouraged and their performance is sustained throughout the year. This is a salient lesson for all school managers whose role is to bring about academic school improvement, and involves deciding on ways to narrow achievement gaps between learners in test and examination results.

However, viewing moral purpose as compelling imperative that narrowly focuses on closing achievement gaps between learners in tests or examinations results undermines other critical learning outcomes. The results of many empirical research studies claim that moral purpose influences other learning outcomes like the depth of learning in the classroom, student motivation and engagement, incredible reading skills and depth of language usage or simply literacy and numeracy (Bezzina, 2010, 2011, Fullan, 2012b, Fullan, 2011). Focusing on these learning outcomes together can present clear picture of how moral purpose achieves its ultimate goal of gradual transformation of the learner into fuller, richer and deeper human beings (Bezzina, 2010). It can be argued therefore that it is impossible to achieve progressive transformation of learners into deeper human beings and responsible community members by merely focusing on how they perform in external examination or testing.

Furthermore, the research participants perceive moral purpose as a "whole-school vision for the academic success for all learners". This is congruent with Cuttance *et al.*'s (2003) description of moral purpose as whole school vision and goals that becomes a "broad directional vision" (Fullan, 2009:109). The participants' perception highlights the central

role of the school vision focusing on academic success in producing improvements in learner achievement. Therefore, “whole-school vision for the academic success for all learners” is a moral purpose that underscores the need to have the school vision focused on the achievement of all learners regardless of background. And in this, the participants seemed to suggest that any vision aimed at generating improvements in learner achievement should become a school-wide learning improvement agenda focused on the future expectations for learner progress.

The moral purpose viewed in this way challenges all stakeholders to make a concerted effort to achieve it. The important role of school leaders is to facilitate the participatory process of conceptualising and negotiating the vision. The SMT has an important responsibility in the vision building process, its communication and implementation which essentially contributes to a shared process. Virtually, all the vision statements of all the selected schools contain an element of producing high achieving learners accomplished through good classroom practices that take place within a caring, trusting and high expectation environment. In this sense, the University of South Africa’s Study Guide (2007) states that the visions of different schools will probably be the same in the sense that they will focus on the core business of schools, namely teaching and learning, but each will formulate its vision differently depending on the context within which the school functions. This implies that moral purpose associated with the school vision needs to relate to the improvement of teaching and learning practices that are aimed at learner achievement.

What appears to be emerging from the research is that school managers in higher performing schools engage in leadership practices that involve regular analysis of examination results as a means by which their moral purpose is realised. The components of such a leadership approach involve the identification of existing achievement gaps in the school and the provision of operational elements to enable efficient and effective use

of analysis of learner examination results. This resonates with one of the recommendations offered by Ali and Botha (2006) that HoDs need to spend more time analysing learners' results. This should include operational elements such as appropriate school structures, adequate time to undertake such analysis, and formulation of whole-school plans to make effective use of the data generated. This analysis of results informs the development of improvement plans by all the departments in the school.

The research has further found that in most of the schools value is given to the analysis of grade twelve examination results rather than the whole-school analysis that involves all grades. This is perhaps because of the increasing demands by government and the community for results accountability in this examination, and school leaders are being faced with increasing pressure to make conscious adaptation to their practices in order to improve learner achievement (Fullan, 2009, Rowe, 2000). The analysis of these results, which mostly happen at the beginning of the year, are seen by school managers as being helpful tool to aid them to reflect on their performance as instructional leaders.

However, within the South African context these results are normally used for making "comparisons between teachers, schools and jurisdictions" (Pettit, 2012:18). Such comparisons contribute little to improving student achievement because they are largely unrelated to the teaching and learning processes. This is largely because the effects of such comparisons are felt at the beginning of the year and thereafter schools forget about them, and school managers and teachers return to *status quo*. Another negative outcome about the diagnosis of only grade twelve examination results is that it can gradually erode the culture of teaching and learning in the lower grades.

School managers and teachers invest time and energy on improving these results and in the process neglecting teaching and assessment in the lower grades because they are regarded as lower-risk grades with little accountability attached to them. Therefore, depending on the results of grade-focused analysing does not provide a comprehensive

picture of teaching and learning in schools. The analysis can neither inform the school principals of the developmental needs of the entire teaching staff nor assist them to reflect accurately upon their management in their school. In this sense, I argue for what I can call ‘whole-school analysis’ that involves all grades. This kind of analysis should be done at the end of every school term.

In addition to viewing moral purpose as the “moral goal of achievement” and the “whole-school vision for academic success for all learners”, the research has found that school managers perceived ‘respect’ as the underlying moral purpose. This research findings validates Barber and Fullan’s (2005) view that moral purpose involves treating people with respect, be it teachers or learners within the school. Similarly, Fullan (1993) asserts that leaders of schools with strong moral purpose treat people ethically, that is, with respect and concern – be it adults or children. He sees this moral purpose as an overarching value that is evident in all good and effective school leaders. The participants appear to understand respect as a basic hidden aspect that they cannot afford to leave behind when working with learners and teachers.

They suggest that respect is more significantly portrayed by participants through their conduct towards others. They further suggest that the manager’s conduct could begin with listening to others and becoming careful not to hurt their feelings in the process of interactions. For example, in an SMT meeting where the sharing of ideas is expected to take place, principals who portray respect would listen to other members’ views on the subject under discussion. Therefore, respect overcomes what Everard and Morris (1996:71) call “failure to listen” on the part of the principal. In their views “Failure to listen ... is a game of asking people for their views in order to ignore them.” The principals are of the view that leaders need to learn to listen to their constituencies.

The findings emphasise how school principals need to listen to all stakeholders when they are to make binding decisions. According to Tyala (2004), a leader is expected to

listen to members and understand the members' feelings and try to accommodate them. It seems participants acknowledge that through listening they could learn something new from other people. Therefore, school managers need, as far as possible, to listen to different views of different parties involved in the school in order to make informed decision. In a classroom context, respect is a reciprocal aspect underlying the relationship between teachers and learners. Learners who listen to teachers are likely to achieve better results. Likewise, teachers who respect learners are most likely to achieve a disciplined classroom and increased interactivity in the classroom.

### **6.2.2. Key values of moral purpose**

The participants in this research hold a strong view that for schools to succeed in translating moral purpose into practice they need to embrace certain key values which should direct the behaviours of people involved in the agenda of the school. Without values to guide and direct our lives, we are like ships without rudders that are flung to and fro on the capricious ocean of existence (University of Pretoria, 2010). Accordingly, the participants appeared to express a belief that the presence of moral purpose can only be noticed when it is expressed through certain values articulated by the school. They nominated commitment or dedication, discipline and responsibility as the key values of moral purpose. These three fundamental values are essential and I have illustrated them in a pyramid. The managers and teachers need to acquire each of these values as they move towards the attainment of the moral purpose.

In figure 6.1, the values are placed into levels according to the significant influence they have on the role of the SMTs, and they describe how SMTs in selected schools engage with various activities intended to enhance learner achievement.



**Figure 6.1** *Moral Purpose Pyramid of values*

The value of commitment was widely accepted by participants as a key expression of moral purpose. There was a great recognition that being a leader starts with a conscious decision to commit oneself to the task (University of Pretoria, 2010). Commitment occupies the first level on the pyramid and signifies that school leaders who are truly committed accept the challenges of the system as they arise and find ways to cope and flourish (DoE, 2008b). Therefore, to cultivate moral purpose that is focused on improving the academic performance of Limpopo Province schools need school managers who are able to adapt and move in changing and challenging the circumstance of their schools.

Thus, Day (2008) states that committed and passionate school leaders exhibit a clear enduring set of values and ideologies which inform practice regardless of social context and the active rejection of a minimalist approach to leadership (to just doing the job). This means that committed school leaders have a clear set of personal values that guide them and keeps them focused on their work, regardless of what they have to cope with on a daily basis. Interestingly, the research found that the school managers in effective schools achieve the central goal of moral purpose by showing commitment to aspects of instructional leadership. Generally, instructional leadership appears to be an important

characteristic of effective schools that succeed in cultivating their moral purpose. This resonates with several other international studies.

For example, Robinson, Llyod and Rowe (2008) identified five dimensions of leadership, the third of which involves the direct involvement of leaders in planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum. Their findings suggest that higher performing schools have leaders who exhibit explicit leadership, coordination and active oversight of teaching and learning. On this account, Robinson (2007:21) stresses that “The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to students”. In the South African context, “There is a consensus around the importance of leadership to improve student outcomes” (Hoadley, 2007:1).

In the context of this study, I argue that leaders who are closer to the core business of teaching and learning are closer to their moral purpose. They are thus well positioned to raise the level of achievement for all learners. They are aware of any factors in the teaching and learning processes that may hamper their agenda of improving the academic achievement beforehand. Their major commitment is to their role of managing teaching and learning. Of great interest is that the two principals and other managers of higher performing schools involved in this research appeared to conceptualise their role as such. Their commitment to instructional leadership role enhances moral purpose because it allows the provision of an orderly atmosphere and learning climate, coordination of the instructional programmes, and supervising and supporting teachers (Kruger *et al.*, 2007).

The performance of these functions leads to significant influence on teacher expectations on students, classroom pedagogy and student achievement (Pettit, 2012). To cultivate moral purpose, the school managers in these effective schools appeared to be committed to the performance of three tasks or activities that are positively connected to learner achievement, namely, monitoring, modelling and support (Southworth, 2004). Firstly, the effective school leaders succeed in cultivating moral purpose by their commitment to the

modelling of good classroom behaviours and practices. The National College for School Leadership (now known as National College for Teaching and Leadership - NCTL) states that modelling is the power of example (NCSL, 2005). The SMTs in this research highlighted that leading by example has direct bearing on effective teaching and learning. The concept of 'role model' underpins this approach (Southworth, 2004:79). Teachers expect leaders to be able to 'walk the talk'. The research participants highlighted that leaders are likely to gain the respect of teachers as managers if they walk their talk and demonstrate their abilities as good teachers as well as effective leaders. Members of the SMTs need to set an example in order to inspire confidence in the teachers. One of the school principals claimed that by teaching grade twelve he is able to demonstrate high-level skills in teaching, classroom management, good pedagogic practices and curriculum planning and management.

However, this research also validate Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen's (2008) study findings that some principals claimed to "lead by example" but they were referring to their own teaching role rather than modelling or demonstrating good classroom practice to their colleagues. It seems that modelling as highlighted by school managers in my research means setting an example to teachers by merely teaching and passing learners rather than inviting teachers to observe how the managers go about teaching. The actual modelling is when teachers are invited to learn through observing the managers' good classroom practices such as subject delivery, pedagogy and classroom management skills.

Secondly, the research participants further suggested that it is their commitment to monitoring the teaching and learning processes that ensures improved learner achievement. They were of the view that monitoring should be a widely distributed role to include the school principal, deputies and heads of department. In explaining the purpose of monitoring, Bush *et al.* (2008) states that monitoring is undertaken to establish

whether teaching and learning are taking place in a satisfactory way. The research has also found that the HoDs or senior teachers examine teachers' portfolios and workbooks and also check learners' work to see if teachers' claims are matched by learner outcomes. Accordingly, Mason (2004) indicates that the SMTs should monitor content teaching to ensure that the content for teaching and learning is in line with the assessment standards. Furthermore, SMTs need to monitor continuous or classroom assessment to ensure that assessment is not done once off, like in the form of a test or an examination, but takes place on a continuous bases.

Thirdly, they identified support as one aspect that overlaps with monitoring and claimed that commitment to this aspect has enhanced the cultivation of moral purpose in their schools. Support implies that once areas of weakness are identified through monitoring, SMTs should provide direct support to teachers to assist them improve classroom instruction. Louis and Kruse's (1995) study of five urban schools reports that in the more successful schools teachers were provided with classroom support that included providing them with coaches and mentors, and school leaders implemented whole group teacher discussions to help individual teachers solve problems. Although school principals and HoDs appear to be committed to giving attention to teachers' needs for improving classroom skills, they did not conceptualise their role as coaches or mentors of teachers. They claimed their role is simply to develop a culture of trust where teachers can ask and receive assistance.

Furthermore, Coleman (2003:145) considers the importance of developing a supportive culture and states that "Promoting effective learning and teaching and encouraging a culture of learning have wide implications to those involved in management of schools". That is, school managers should focus on specific aspects of staff development by considering ways of improving the teaching styles of teachers. The point of departure in supporting teachers should be to create a culture in which SMT members and teachers

can constantly engage in professional conversations through formal or informal meetings. According to NCSL (2005), classroom practice can improve where leaders regularly engage in dialogue with colleagues. This would mean professional conversations in formal and informal meetings with constructive feedback. The issue of meetings has featured strongly in the research participants' responses, and they serve as powerful avenues where SMTs and staff share experiences leading to the emergence of solutions to teaching and learning challenges and leading to enhanced learner outcomes.

On the basis of the foregoing and within the context of this study, I argue that it is impossible to cultivate moral purpose in the school environment that is not hospitable to effective teaching and learning, where instructional programmes are not well coordinated, and classroom practices are not supervised and the teaching staff is not supported. Therefore, it is important for the school principals to show unrelenting commitment to the instructional leadership activities if they are to improve learner achievement in their schools. Unfortunately, Bush and Heystek's (2006) research in Gauteng Province, South Africa found that principals are not conceptualising their role as 'leader of learning'. Their time is largely consumed by administrative activities (Chisholm, Hoadley & Kivilu, 2005).

While acknowledging the importance of the value of commitment to instructional leadership activities in the cultivation of moral purpose, Fullan (2011) argues that in order to turn commitment into results, school leaders must display persistence against a lot of odds, emotional intelligence, thick skin and resilience. Collins and Hansen (2011) calls this 'persistence against a lot of odds' 'fanatic discipline', that is, leaders must be 'fanatic' about consistency of action with regard to values, long term goals, performance standards and methods, and consistency over time. They further argue that in organisations that succeed for the long term, leaders are utterly relentless, monomaniacal even, unbending in their focus on their quests. Therefore, discipline is the value that

makes the difference between schools that are effective and those that are not. Once leaders and teachers have made personal and collective commitments to the central goal of moral purpose, they need to show discipline in order to achieve the improved learning outcomes for all learners.

It is therefore the task of school managers at all levels to promote self-discipline in the school environment utilising the view of responsibility associated with the task allocated to them. Discipline at the second level of the pyramid helps SMTs, teachers and learners to maintain focus on the set targets by controlling both internal and external factors that may potentially derail them from achieving standards set by the school. In order to attain the high standards for learner achievement through respect for targets, commitment to tasks and taking responsibility, SMT, teachers and learners should maintain a high standard of discipline in everything they do in the school. To me, therefore, Collins and Hansen's (2011) 'fanatic discipline' and Fullan's (2011) 'focus on implementation' highlight the important role played by the value of discipline in achieving the cultivation of moral purpose in schools.

But coupled with the value of commitment and discipline should be the value of responsibility. The value of responsibility is positioned at the third level and is all about being accountable for the results. Accountability occurs at various levels in the school, with the school principal holding ultimate accountability status for the entire school operations. For example, the principal is responsible for effective teaching and learning in the school and must also be accountable for the failure to perform such duties. The heads of department are also responsible for their various departments and must account for the results within their departments. This is as the University of South Africa's Study Guide (2007) puts it that every office is a calling to provide service within the community in a particular way and with this goes the accompanying responsibility to do this well.

People, no matter what office they hold, who do not want to carry out the responsibilities of their office should be called to account and given the opportunity to desist from their shirking of responsibilities. In the end, no school community can function well with those elements that place constraints on those who want to carry out their responsibilities as office bearers, be they learners, parents, teachers or those in leadership positions. In this lies the aspect of collective responsibility. According to Fullan (2011), when it comes to school improvement, leaders cannot do it alone; neither can they do it by hiring nor supporting individuals. He asserts that achieving moral purpose requires collective responsibility for student learning, helping to sustain staff commitment, putting peer pressure on those who don't do their fair share and holding them to account, and easing teachers' sense of isolation. Collective responsibility is a very powerful notion that encourages permeability of accountability to various levels at schools.

While the values discussed in this research are acknowledged by participants as crucial, it is however, important to argue that they are not exhaustive and prescriptive. The most powerful and lasting values, therefore, are those that people have chosen for themselves rather than those that have been imposed on them. Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that values that are considered important are chosen with full awareness of the consequences that they will have on our actions, they are associated with positive feelings and as such are affectively laden. It is possible to argue that although it is unwarranted for school managers to impose certain values on their subordinates, it is important to demonstrate worthwhile values for teachers and learners to emulate. This should not downplay the values teachers and learners have chosen as important.

### **6.2.3. Teamwork and the central goal of moral purpose**

The picture elicited by this research is that the central goal of moral purpose is to raise the achievement level for all learners in schools. But the participants were of the view that this goal can only be achieved when teamwork prevails within the SMTs and other

teams. Teamwork was widely acknowledged by the research participants not only as an alternative notion to 'sole' principalship but also as a key driver for effective cultivation of moral purpose in schools. They held the strong view that teamwork facilitates the cultivation of moral purpose because it provides an opportunity for the SMTs to share ideas, responsibilities and accountability for the outcomes of the leadership functions in the school. The notion of 'sharing' allows the SMTs to have a wider range of ideas to solve problems than a single manager. Accordingly, Darren (2010:71) identified "a willingness by members to share, even to sacrifice" as a key feature marking the effectiveness of the SMTs.

However, sharing is only possible in teams that are "having communication, having cooperation, and knowledge and ability to work together in making work plans to accomplish the goal" (Mendwell, 2009:320). That is, it would be impossible for members of the SMTs to be willing to share in an environment in which principals have restricted channels of communication and members have no skills in collaboration. It is therefore important to equip SMT members with good communication skills and develop their understanding of team dynamics such as respect and patience. Another key dimension of teamwork that emerged in my research is that teamwork consists of a collection of individuals who are not only interdependent in their tasks but "who [also] see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity ... who manage their relationship across organisational boundaries" (Cohen & Bailey, 2007:106).

The participants in one of the higher performing schools indicated that their SMT is seen by teachers and learners as a united entity that shares responsibility as they pursue the moral purpose of the school. They further claimed that teachers and learners in the school respect them because they see them as a team that sings the same tune every time they approach teachers and learners with the decisions taken in the SMT meetings. The "united entity" highlighted as an ideal by school managers means oneness. This is a unit

that does everything in the spirit of succeeding. To be seen by others as a unit requires the ability of the SMT members to effectively manage their interpersonal relationships. Staff is unlikely to respect a SMT that is characterised by tensions and struggles within the team.

Of interest in this study is that the two principals interviewed highlighted that teamwork encourages other members to offer them support and indicated that this support is in terms of “positive criticism, advice, correction, encouragement and different ideas” (Tyala, 2007:84). They regarded support as an important ingredient of teamwork and concede that it is impossible to achieve the goal of moral purpose without it. As Scott and Walker (1999:50) argue that “Without the right form of support, teamwork can be a little more than a token of democracy, and if schools are to optimise their use of teams, they must face up to some of the inconsistency evidence in their structures, systems and processes”. My research has proved that whenever there are structures and systems of support in place in a school, the notion of teamwork becomes more effective, and the ultimate end results are evidence of learner achievement. The research participants were also of the view that SMTs need to be constantly supported by all the stakeholders involved so that they can execute their functions confidently. This support should come from the provincial, district and circuit levels as well as from the community.

It is on the basis of the foregoing that I can argue that the actual enactment of teamwork in underperforming schools seems to be wishful thinking. Several observations confirm this conclusion. Firstly, it emerged that participants from the underperforming schools emphasise teamwork to mean a process of allocating duties to different members of the SMTs, and they perceive it as occurring within such a hierarchical arrangement. The ideal of sharing espoused by these SMTs can be undermined by the presence of hierarchies within leadership teams (Glenn, 2009). While it is true that management responsibilities in schools are usually arranged hierarchically with the principal, deputy

principal and heads of departments occupying managerial positions, Ndebele (2007:2) argues that teamwork is “not only what we do together when we have been put in some position of power to steer an organisation or some institution”. It is rather a notion that thrives when the traditional hierarchical arrangements are made imperceptible during day-to-day interactions of the members of the SMTs and teachers to allow collaboration or interdependence of members outside restricted boundaries.

Secondly, participants from underperforming schools pointed out that there are individual behaviours and attitudes that are counterproductive, challenging the efficacy of the SMTs in their schools. An example of such attitudes is lack of commitment evident with respect to the decisions made by the team (Cole, 2006). Despite consensus about the submission dates for the learners’ marks, a member of the SMT in one of the underperforming schools failed to meet the submission due date and, as a result, the school failed to meet due dates set by the circuit. The efficacy of SMTs is actually measured by the ability to meet due dates, among other things. Tonduer (2008) concurs that the major thing is to meet due dates set by the Department. It is possible to argue that most underperforming schools comprise managers and teachers who are lazy and, as a result of their laziness, their schools fail to meet the Department’s due dates. Accordingly, Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) identified laziness of some team members as a factor challenging the efficacy of teams.

Thirdly, the research has found evidence of irregular SMT meetings in underperforming schools. This was evident in the old minutes of the previous meetings held by the SMT and staff presented for the purposes of document analysis. The minutes presented were about two to four months old. The infrequency of meetings held by teams is one of the challenges identified in other studies as having a negative impact on teamwork (Cole, 2006). In contrast, the minutes presented by performing schools were recent (two to one month old). My observations at two performing schools also confirmed the frequency of

SMT and staff meetings which generally served the purpose of sharing information which provides opportunities for the SMT members and staff to have control over their environment by collectively deciding on what is important for the school and solving problems.

While school managers from higher performing schools appear to have the capacity to actualise teamwork in ensuring diversity of opinion and complementarities of skills within the SMTs, Fullan (1993:64) warns that “a shared sense of purpose and related concerted action is something to work toward, and is never fully achieved”. An in-depth analysis of data proved that not all team members in these SMTs are as willing to share as they are portrayed to be. One principal’s remarks that “there will always be a black sheep in the kraal” confirmed that. Therefore, considering several barriers that need to be addressed before teamwork thrive in most schools, it would be premature to conclude that all SMTs in performing schools are effective. It seems that the school principals in this research focused on what they would like to see happening in their schools rather than what is actually happening.

Therefore, teamwork is a process rather than a phenomenon, which needs patience to fully achieve. It should be a goal all members of the SMTs are striving for, bearing in mind that along the way there will be obstacles that need negotiating, failing which, sharing may remain a myth (Tyala, 2004). For teamwork to thrive, negotiating needs to be coupled with an emphasis on participative decision-making. The emphasis on participative decision-making is based on the assumptions that participation will increase school effectiveness and that in the context of site-based management, leadership is potentially available to any legitimate stakeholder (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). The development of team management means that school management is not located only in the position of the school principal and this leads to facilitation that

ensures that “decision-making processes, the crafting of a vision and mission of the school, the setting of school ethos rest with the schools’ stakeholders” (DoE, 2002:2).

Owens (2001:288) argues that “In participative decision-making, all members have the right to be heard, to have their views considered, to express feelings, to offer knowledge and information”. This was very prominent in the responses of the participants and my observations complemented this. All the meetings I observed were conducted in a very relaxed manner that allowed each member to be free to contribute his or her ideas. Undoubtedly, if meetings are conducted in that fashion all team members will own the decisions taken in those meetings because “... it is only if people are involved in the process of decision-making that they will own the decision taken” (Udjombala, 2002:49). The inclusion of various stakeholders in decision-making does not only endorse the democratic nature of the school, but can also enhance learner achievement. This is so because people who have helped make decisions about standards or achievement goals for learners are likely to modify their behaviours in order to attain the goals.

Specifically, since the goal of learner achievement concern the entire staff, parents and learners, it is important to involve them because “The basic aspects of democracy are participation and involvement of people in issues affecting their lives” (Tyala, 2004). This involvement of stakeholders including staff should be in all decisions that involve them, “... from big change programmes, to the day-to-day decisions on how services are delivered” (Munro, 2003:278). This is an ideal democratic situation but practical situations in most of our schools suggest otherwise. My observations can affirm that in most instances it is easy for the school principal to decide solely on what they personally regard as trivial or insignificant matters of day-to-day school operations.

For example, the school principal can decide where to set up a meeting between the HoD and the visiting curriculum advisor without consulting the HoD. In this case, the HoD has got no say on something that affects him or her, whether he or she is comfortable

with the venue does not matter. This is a sign that in most schools day-to-day decisions are subject to the impulsive and undemocratic reaction of the principal when considering consultation on what is considered an insignificant matter. However, it needs to be stated that sometimes unilateral decisions can be justified. One of the research principals indicated that he consults with the other members of the SMT and teachers when he sees fit.

According to Tyala (2004), it would be ineffective to wait for the SMT meeting to decide whether to call an ambulance for the learner who has sprained his ankle during break time. In this case, the school principal uses his or her own discretion to solve the problem and is at liberty to decide the solution unilaterally. There is a difference between unilateral decisions and authoritarianism. Authoritarianism compromises the freedom of others in the process of obeying rules set by school leader while unilateral decision making is considerate of the circumstances around the situation about which the decision is to be made. There will always be situations in the process of cultivating moral purpose where the school principal is required to provide unilateral solutions for the sake of the school.

Evidently, the school principals in this research claimed that in their schools participative decision-making has succeeded in “bonding staff together and easing the pressures” on them as they pursue the nourishment of their moral purpose (Sergiovanni, 1984:13). They acknowledged that they cannot claim to have all the answers for everything happening in their schools or all the skills to manage the school. They recognised that “The burdens of leadership will be less if leadership functions and roles are shared” (Sergiovanni, 1984:13). They further recognised the importance of cooperation with the school governing body (SGB) as a stakeholder that can assist in maintaining a disciplined environment in their school. Bush and Heystek (2003) point to the need for this co-operation between principals and SGBs if governance is to be effective. Therefore, to

turn schools into thriving centres of excellence in which moral purpose thrives, teamwork exemplified in participative decision-making needs to permeate the whole system to involve collaboration between the SMTs and different structures in the school such as the RCLs and SGBs.

#### **6.2.4. Motivation**

The need for motivation emerged in my findings as a factor in schools that boasts staff morale and energises learners to achieve at higher levels. Although SMT members appear to be committed to ensure that their schools demonstrate fidelity in action as well as in rhetoric to the underlying moral purpose, the research found that a full allegiance to moral purpose is challenged by teachers and learners who appear to lack motivation. This can potentially betray the moral purpose of the school. Thus, the research participants highlighted the value they place on the motivation of teachers and learners in their schools. School managers in this research believed that to succeed in enacting moral purpose, they needed to have a strong positive influence on staff motivation. This resonates with the claim of Leithwood *et al.* (2006) that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.

The approaches taken by SMTs to motivate their staff highlight the significance of creating a need which sets up a drive that is aimed at goal attainment. Garner (2008) stated that needs are best defined as deficiencies. They are created whenever there is physiological or psychological imbalance. The research findings suggest that amongst three needs in McClelland's achievement motivation theory mentioned by Buber (2007), a need for achievement was mostly acknowledged by most SMT members. The need for achievement was seen as a drive that most teachers were encouraged to have in order to overcome the challenges and obstacles which they encounter in the process of goal attainment.

The research findings further suggest that teams from higher performing schools are characterised by “a tendency to set moderately difficult goals” (Buber, 2007:27). According to Buber (2007), the high team achievers like to set their goals which they thoughtfully select and become committed to and the teams like to be as fully as possible responsible for the attainment of their goals, they would rather accomplish a task successfully than leave it to chance. He adds that team members with a need for achievement have a single minded pre-occupation with tasks and tasks accomplishment and that high performing teams put much of their energy into the task to ensure that it is not only accomplished but it is also done to the best of their knowledge and capability.

The research has found that the need for achievement in schools activates a drive that is aimed at the incentives that schools and the Department of Education give to teachers and learners during excellent achievements. According to Hoover (2005: 54), incentives are “those things that will be evoked to alleviate a need and thereby reduce the drive or motive”. The incentive that the SMTs seem to commonly accept and make part of the working environment in order to encourage both teachers and learners to perform their tasks are giving of awards to appreciate their good work. The certificates of achievements, trophies and medals dominate awards given to teachers and learners who perform very well in their respective subjects, in some cases, even in sports, arts and culture. Of interest in this research is the fact that principals interviewed emphasised that they constantly acknowledge in the staffrooms teachers who achieve at a high standard and perform their duties well.

Likewise, learners who perform well are also duly acknowledged by the principals and other teachers to motivate them. When it comes to learner motivation, participants emphasised the importance of using motivational speakers or religious leaders at the beginning of the year to encourage learners. In this regard, I argue that motivation done occasionally at the beginning of the year cannot suffice to raise and sustain learners’ need

to achieve. To me, motivation is like taking a bath, learners need it every day. Therefore, every lesson should have an element of motivation if we are to turn around the achievement crisis in the Limpopo secondary schools.

### **6.3. Shared moral purpose and modalities of sharing**

The second research question set out to explore and reinforce the importance of shared moral purpose and its connection with shared leadership in the pursuit of the academic achievement of learners. Although the first question asked “Do you believe that the moral purpose within your school management team is shared?” research participants tended to emphasise how it was made explicit within the context of their schools. In most respects, participants mentioned that educational leadership was shared across the SMT, with effective leadership of schools requiring the widely spread opinions, experience and capabilities found across a leadership team. It is clear from the research findings that SMT members in the selected schools value the opportunities offered by shared leadership.

Although some overlap was observed with respect to the findings of research question one and two, especially regarding the themes of teamwork and shared leadership, this question has been dealt with separately. The key aspect of the first question remained the individual’s experience of SMTs to enhance participative leadership or teamwork while the second question examined the operation and effectiveness of SMT in the process of involving teachers who do not hold any formal management roles. In the next section I elucidate on the two themes under this research question, namely, shared moral purpose and shared leadership.

### **6.3.1. Shared moral purpose**

Most research participants expressed confidence that moral purpose is broadly shared in their schools. The research also reinforces the view that there is a need to be quite explicit about this moral purpose, and it provides critical modalities of sharing this moral purpose in schools. Therefore, this research provides an answer to the challenge put forward by Bezzina (2007) who stated that the challenge is to find a way to surface this moral purpose to make it part of the discourse in schools so that it can be embedded in practice. Furthermore, most of the international literature devoted more attention on the sharing of moral purpose, and going so far as to encourage explicitness than to detail methods of sharing this moral purpose of which they speak (Andrews & Lewis, 2004). Therefore, this research corroborates these studies in that it suggests methods for sharing moral purpose in schools.

As articulated by several participants, the notions of effective communication and delegation are critical to the sharing of moral purpose in schools. First and foremost, the research has highlighted the value of communication with SMT members reinforcing the benefits offered through the utilisation of meetings to nurture and share moral purpose. In one school, the participants stressed that they conduct morning briefing meetings on a daily basis to share information. This confirms the claim by Van der Westhuizen (1997:214) that "... the education leader [should] spend 80% of his day communicating". From this, participants appear to have a strong view that if communication breaks down the entire system breaks down because through communication people get to know what to do, in which case they are likely to undertake their duties with confidence. Furthermore, people may not seem to be sharing a common goal if the lines of communication are closed or restricted.

According to Sergiovanni (2001), if the leader has good communication skills s/he is likely to articulate beliefs persuasively, effectively explain decisions, check for

understanding, and behave in ways that reflect these beliefs and decisions. Broadly speaking, Smit and Cronjé (1992) argue that communication aims at informing, convincing and reminding. This means that effective SMT members need to consider dissemination of information as of paramount importance. It is very important to have simultaneous flow of information from the top down and from the bottom up in order to sketch the expected learner outcomes, and ensure actions to achieve the set outcomes.

Communication is also seen as the power of persuasion, with the skillful manager able to convince and remind his/her subordinates about the overarching moral purpose of the school. There is however a warning that “Institutional leaders who focus on communicating their own “rightness” becomes isolated and ineffectual” (University of Pretoria, 2010:74). This means that school leaders need to use communication to effectively elucidate decisions taken and supported by the schools’ larger community and prompt this community towards carrying out such decisions rather than making and communicating reflections and judgments they made on their own without consultation.

The notion of delegation received little attention in my findings. However, three participants nominated delegation as having contemporary relevance as a notion of sharing moral purpose in schools. They expressed their support for this notion and reinforce that “Unless work responsibilities, authority and power are shared among the staff members, the staff will lack creativity and adaptability” (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:118). It becomes clear that among other duties, the SMT members are expected to increase the creativity of the staff through effective delegation. Smit and Cronjé’s (1999:249) guidelines of effective delegation confirms the importance of delegation in sharing moral purpose. They indicate that the first guideline is to “set standards and outcomes” and the second is to “ensure clarity of authority and responsibility”.

Setting standards and outcomes as part of the planning process invite staff members to participate in the process of formulating outcomes and agreeing on criteria for measuring

performance. If the teachers become part of the planning process for setting a higher standard with regard to academic achievement, they would comply with the criteria of regular tests, examination and revision of work. Ensuring clarity of authority and responsibility means that teachers must be clear about the tasks of teaching and learning and their authority to carry out the tasks assigned to them, as well as to recognise their responsibility for achieving better academic results, and their accountability for the results that they achieve. It can, therefore, be argued that SMT members accustomed to this notion are effectively enhancing the sharing of moral purpose.

While all the school managers claimed to have achieved shared moral purpose in their schools through the notions of communication and delegation, the important question arising here is why this widely shared moral purpose has not transformed learner achievement in the underperforming schools. Why SMTs have not been able to translate this shared moral purpose into action in order to address lower achievement? The research findings suggest that the managers in these schools could have lacked the moral potency or “realized moral purpose” (Bezzina & Tuana, 2012, Fullan, 2011:15). Bezzina and Tuana (2012:11) assert that moral potency involves “not just ownership, but courage and a sense of efficacy, a disposition to act morally and translate it [moral purpose] into moral action”. This is a very powerful notion that links moral purpose with action.

In the context of shared moral purpose, this involves the leader not only having a belief in the moral purpose, but also having a firm commitment to actualising this with the desire and belief in their power and ability to do so (Bezzina & Tauna, 2012). The research suggests that knowing the moral purpose of improving learners’ achievement outcomes and then seeing the need to do so are necessary but not sufficient. They are just prerequisites for moral action, or “doing something about it” (Pettit, 2012:12). It is possible to argue that although school managers appear to have unquestioned personal commitment to improve learning and placed a high value on the worth of learner

achievement, they failed to operationalise their moral purpose due to their lack of “capabilities to act to achieve a moral purpose ... and the courage to perform ... and persevere through challenges” (Hannah & Avolio, 2010:293).

To them, moral potency involves the ability to move from moral purpose to moral action, and this is a function of the interplay between ownership, efficacy and courage. These aspects seem to describe how two schools in my research continue to thrive and produce excellent grade twelve results under adverse circumstances such as large class size, lack of parental involvement, learner discipline, and funding, while the other two of similar size and with similar circumstances fade over time when it comes to learner achievement.

### **6.3.2. Shared leadership**

In this research, principals who were interviewed strongly supports leadership teams that were composed of a number of deputy principals, heads of department and other leaders within the school. Although the sample size was small (six schools), there was little support for any particular form or make-up of leadership team. This confirmed the suggestion of Wallace (2001) that a context-specific constitution facilitates leadership approaches best suited for specific schools and educational environment. The school managers in this research were not quite familiar with the terminology used to describe some forms of leadership approaches that involve teachers who are not holding formal positions in the SMT. Although the research participants recognised the importance of creating opportunities for wider consultation and enhanced participation of teachers in leadership in their schools, they did not make very explicit references to shared leadership. However, a thorough analysis of the findings on how school managers go about sharing leadership functions points to the view that participants understand distributed leadership as a form of shared leadership with which they were familiar.

The SMTs in higher performing schools generally recognised that individual teachers in their schools are able to exercise leadership independently of the formal management roles exercised by the principal, deputy principals and HoDs. The emphasis on involving teachers in leadership suggests that in most performing schools teachers are given opportunities to “lead within and beyond the classroom ... [to] influence others towards improved educational practice’ (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001:17). There was also evidence that involving teachers in leadership promotes a collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision sharing, a set of values which assist in developing this collaborative culture, and distributed leadership on the part of the formal management teams (Grant, 2006).

The final point ‘distributed leadership’ is crucial and relevant to this research as it underlines the need for principals to empower their teachers to lead and manage teaching and learning effectively. The principals interviewed in this research seemed to be aware of the responsibility to capacitate teachers and to build teams of expert teachers in their schools. In one school, skillful teachers are given roles as academic tutors and coach tutors who plays managerial roles. The academic tutors are mere teachers responsible for overseeing the whole academic performance of the grade. The coach tutors are teachers who play a crucial role of instilling discipline in their grades. These teachers are involved in “brokerage”, using their expertise to perform duties that the SMT members should be performing within the school. Harris and Muijs (2003) point to the need to broker and mediate relationships between colleagues.

However, Harris and Muijs (2003) indicate that successful brokering calls for some surrender of power by senior leaders, who should be imbued with a collaborative philosophy. There was also evidence of the existence of the aspect of principals who are committed to providing possibilities for effective brokering in their schools by assuming the role of leaders of leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000). The research participants indicated

that they don't involve teachers in leadership as a scapegoat to abdicate their own leadership responsibilities and accountability, but they do so to increase mutual learning that is a key factor that makes them better leaders.

In accordance with Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004), the research participants nominated circumstances where leadership practices are exercised by those placed to do so. These circumstances vary from school to school, with other schools utilising the expertise of senior teachers to perform roles such as moderation and classroom observations. In other schools, the teachers are engaged in social roles such as being members and leaders of bereavement committees or birthday clubs. More generally, shared and distributed leadership was described in terms of principles such as respect, right relationship, trust, and affirmation. These principles are thus supporting the findings of Bezzina (2008) who identified these as values underlying moral purpose.

#### **6.4. The constraints of sharing moral purpose**

The only question asked is "Which factors inhibit school management teams to enact the moral purpose of the school?" While acknowledging the need to take increased responsibility to articulate and share moral purpose, SMTs note that the increasing complexity of the South African education system is posing a number of inhibiting threats and challenges. Based on their research in two schools, Van Deventer and Kruger (2003) argue that lack of discipline; low educator morale and other educational problems contribute to poor matric (grade twelve) results and other weak educational outcomes. In line with this, the research has found that the key challenge in the Limpopo schools for those involved in the cultivation of moral purpose is learner discipline or learner behaviour problems. This challenge emerged strongly in my findings, with SMTs indicating that even though they try their best to raise the standard of performance for all learners, there are always learners who sit there and threaten the nourishment of that moral purpose.

The frustrations and helplessness of the members of the SMTs and teachers are that there are different children that are beyond “repair” when it comes to issues of discipline, they feel that these are the children they can’t influence. The Western Cape Education Department’s manual titled *A Practical Guide to Understanding and Managing Learner Behaviour* espouses:

Learner behaviour problems have, for years, been a major concern for educators, administrators and parents. More than ever before, educators are faced with critical problems in their classroom, and are confronted with unacceptable learner behaviour and threatening situation (WCDoe, 2007).

My findings further suggest that, in most respects, the source of problematic learner behaviour is the influence of drugs and alcohol. The use of drugs and alcohol by teenagers is increasing, and this is one of the external factors that impinge on classroom behaviour (DoE, 2008b). The increase in substance abuse leads to unruly conduct in the classrooms and an increase in learner absenteeism. Therefore, unacceptable learner behaviour and absenteeism are crucial factors that negatively impact on effective teaching and learning in schools, and ultimately impact on learner achievement. There was also the possibility that most learners in the rural schools came from either child-headed households or homes where there is abuse by adults (DoE, 2008b). Discipline is an important element of the school and classroom management as it ensures good classroom practice and creates a conducive atmosphere for the achievement of higher achievement standards for all learners within the school.

There is a need, therefore, to prioritise the needs of learners whose behaviours are as a result of them being traumatised by home life or from a psychological challenge of coming to school hungry. While acknowledging the need to work harder and take responsibility to ensure a culture of positive behaviour of learners by engaging robustly with factors that cause disciplinary problems, SMTs indicated that parents should also

play an active role to establish discipline and purposeful environment in which effective teaching and learning can take place. In this sense, the research reports that participants are frustrated by the lack of parent support and involvement and complain about the invisibility of parents in their schools. According to Squelch and Lemmer (1994), parent involvement is the participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities to improve their children's education. They further claim that the benefits of parent involvement include improved school performance, reduced drop out rates, a decrease in delinquency, and a more positive attitude towards the school. It implies support given to school which can take the form of cooperation, which leads to participation and partnership.

However, this research finds that the SMTs and teachers miss parents' cooperation, participation and partnership required to maintain daily discipline in schools. Within Limpopo schools, this lack of parent support and involvement is caused by the presence of illiterate parents and dysfunctional families. These two factors emerged strongly as factors that fail the SMTs to address issues of learner discipline. Therefore, this research validates the findings of Bush *et al.* (2008) who identified 'disinterested and/or illiterate parents and/or dysfunctional families as major factor(s) that inhibit South African principals to overcome the problems from the schools' contexts and to build on the supportive factors. Illiteracy, perhaps due to the legacy of apartheid education, appeared to be a critical factor hampering parents' involvement because the majority of undereducated or uneducated parents become totally disinterested in their children's education.

Another aspect arising from the findings which is linked to parent support is the arrogance of some parents because they are affluent and demanding. SMTs and teachers are increasingly faced with parents who, due to their affluent background, demonstrate arrogance towards them. They threaten to sue teachers who take on the responsibility to

discipline their misbehaving children. I consider the findings of this research to be a true reflection of what is transpiring in most of the schools. Another issue arising from the findings is linked to teacher related problems. Principals indicated that they are confronted with challenges of frequent absenteeism by teachers in their schools.

In line with this observation, the Advance Certificate in Education (ACE) manual for School Management and Leadership espouses that these teachers are often late and sometimes absent because of personal problems (DoE, 2008b). It seems that the absenteeism of teachers is due to an increased number of teachers suffering from chronic diseases. The manual for School Management and Leadership elucidates that some teachers are often late or sometimes absent because they are unwell because of sickness or have a disease such as HIV AIDS or are abusing substances such as alcohol or drugs (DoE, 2008b). All of these factors whether considered singly or collectively bring to the fore that the context in which moral purpose is expected to flourish is characterised by numerous factors that requires school managers to offer support to teachers who are struggling with personal problems.

The teachers' lack of commitment and/or laziness also emerged from this research as a challenge facing school management teams. The lack of commitment or laziness on the part of the teachers further serves as a crucial barrier to delegation. The SMTs indicated that when duties are delegated to teachers, teachers keep on postponing the execution of those duties. Therefore, giving duties or responsibilities to teachers who are not committed can be viewed by principals as risky because at the end of the day they have to account to the stakeholders and the Department of Education. This general tendency of indolence betrays the value of effective delegation. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003:119) state that the value of effective delegating is that "The delegating process may be viewed as a developmental process as it provides subordinate staff members with an increasing amount of work to be performed, and also gives in-service management training". It can

be argued that the majority of our school teachers don't view delegation as a developmental process, and their resistance may be due to the fact that they see delegation as a subtle way by principals to increase the amount of work they have to perform.

### **6.5. The capacity of SMTs to overcome constraints of sharing moral purpose**

The research was not able to explore this question in depth as participants tended to focus on individual issues rather than those affecting the SMTs. Nonetheless, some discussions are drawn regarding the roles and responsibilities of SMTs in addressing factors inhibiting moral purpose in schools. The members of the SMTs demonstrate a passionate and articulate acknowledgement of their role and responsibilities to address the challenges they are encountering in the process of cultivating moral purpose in their schools. Two important responsibilities were identified:

#### **6.5.1. To consult on a regular basis with legitimate stakeholders**

There is an accepted recognition of the importance of consulting with various stakeholders when dealing with disciplinary issues in the school. Considering the challenges mentioned by schools such as learner discipline brought about by the abuse of the intoxicants such as drugs and alcohol, the involvement of experts such as police, psychologists and social workers could be justified. Furthermore, the facilitation of the involvement of parents is necessary to create a home-school support team that stand side by side when engaging with the constantly erring children. When it comes to teachers' misconduct, the participants indicated that structures such as teacher unions may be involved where necessary.

### **6.5.2. To reinforce policies and procedures in the school**

The research has found that the participants recognise the important role played by the SMTs in reinforcing the policies, procedures and rules in their schools. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the national and provincial legislation, and departmental policy are considered by the participants when dealing with matters involving teachers and learners. The University of Pretoria (2010) states that policy; procedures and rules are the blueprints for effective school management. Schools' code of conduct for learners and the South African Council of Educators' code of conduct embody rules, procedures and sanctions which ensure that every teacher and learner knows what to do. They are guidelines that should be used to guide SMTs in the decision making process. Therefore, principals must reinforce the need for the SMTs to “constantly engage in strategic thinking and transformation of such thinking into policies and programs” (Spillane *et al.*, 2005).

### **6.6. Chapter summary**

In this chapter, data from the responses of the participants was fully discussed. The findings were organised according to four research questions and relevant findings were used to either corroborate or repudiate the findings in the existing studies. The findings were also discussed in light of the literature pertaining to research focus. This existing literature was examined to critique the findings in the research as well. In general, the picture emerged in this research findings is both complex and sometimes contradictory. However, the range of findings generated in the research provides the basis for the development of a model for the cultivation of moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools. Therefore, in the next chapter I apply the main issues emerging from my findings to develop and present a model for the enactment of moral purpose.

## Chapter 7

### Conceptual model for cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools

#### 7.1. Introduction

In South Africa there is no evidence of any studies that have explored moral purpose. Furthermore, even fewer international research initiatives have studied the effects of imbuing a team-oriented (SMT) approach with moral purpose and the role played by SMTs in surfacing and nourishing the moral purpose within their schools. This study wanted to address that void. Therefore, in reflecting on the findings of this research and discussions thereof, in this chapter I suggest the model that attempts to portray a holistic picture of how moral purpose can be promoted in schools. This was necessitated by the study's findings which demonstrate a need to inculcate moral purpose in schools. The conceptual model consists of seven stages which are arranged cyclically.

My suggested model rests on the premise that specific dimensions of school leadership and management and moral purpose may produce key intermediate outcomes that could positively impact various processes within the school and, as such, may improve learner achievement. This perspective is a culling of my lessons to describe what effective SMTs can do to introduce and enact moral purpose in their schools. In short, I believe they should perform seven key functions: embracing district-wide goals, creating and sharing a vision for academic success for all learners, equipping SMTs for policy building and implementation, creating a positive internal school environment, enhancing teams and teamwork, magnifying shared leadership, and actualising moral leadership.

However, before discussing and presenting the steps of the suggested model of how moral purpose can be introduced in Limpopo secondary schools, I briefly begin by presenting the conceptualisation of moral purpose that was employed in this research. In this study, moral purpose is understood as the compelling purpose or aspirational idea to

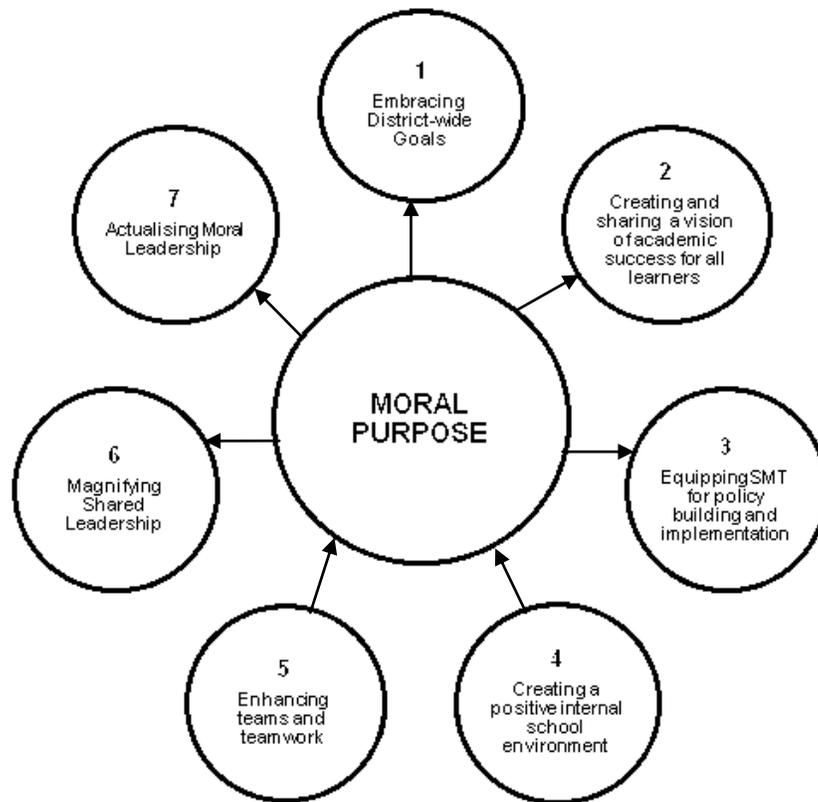
raise levels of learner achievement higher and higher until no learner is failing in the school. Moral purpose is reflected in the teachers' and leaders' aspirational desire to make a genuine difference in the lives of learners by ensuring that all learners under their care achieve higher academic outcomes irrespective of their schooling contexts.

At the core of this moral purpose is facilitation of learning that engages learners in a deeper understanding of their lives, thus, opening up possibilities for them to contribute positively to their communities and societies. This is the learning that does not address only the question of techniques or methodologies of teaching and leading but also pay attention to the underlying purpose of teaching and leading. This signifies that moral purpose is commitment to ends that express the “why” of teaching and leading. To teachers and leaders, their moral purpose therefore lies in the answers they provide to a question: “Teaching and leading to what ends and by what means?” (Greenfield, 2004:174). The answer teachers and leaders find to this question underlines their intentions to transform their leadership and teaching approaches to accommodate those notions that facilitate positive classroom practices where all learners engage fully with subject content, pushing away all barriers to learning. The foundation for such an aspirational purpose lies in a shared commitment to explicit values such as commitment, responsibility and discipline.

## **7.2. Uncovering the model**

The suggested conceptual model I have delineated in Figure 7.1 was developed after a thorough study of the literature as well as after the analysis of the research findings. Here I present a simple and practical guide to assist schools on how they can instill a sense of moral purpose. This model can give direction to the strategic planning process at circuit and school level as well as informing the formulation of the strategic planning process at district level. This model builds on the assumption that instilling a sense of moral purpose into schools forms the basis for systemic improvement in learner achievement, but that

improved achievements depends on a systematic approach which involves seven critical steps. Below is the portrayal of the model.



**Figure 7.1** *Conceptual model for cultivating moral purpose*

Below, I explain the meaning and implications of each of the model's steps.

### **7.2.1. Embracing district-wide goals**

Although districts do not feature directly in the data and literature, this dimension of the model is worth examining because all the cases studied were selected from the two districts in Limpopo Province. In the South African education context, a district is a level of a system where the daily operations of the system and schools are planned. It is at this level where principals or SMTs and educators are mobilised through various circuit offices to achieve the vision of the provincial and national Departments of Education. In my view, the strategies formulated by the provincial Department of Education fail or

succeed at this level. I view the local districts as key stakeholders that translate the strategies of the provincial Department into action by formulating specific, tangible and measurable goals. Therefore, the goals of the district need to have a primary focus on learner achievement and they must relate to the expectations or vision of the Limpopo Department of Education. The district-wide goals should focus on narrowing achievement gaps between high and low performing schools and learners in the district.

For schools to embrace and translate these goals into reality, the district must communicate them to schools in a clear and regular manner. Coupled with this communication should be district support to schools because effective school leadership depends on support from district officials. Except for the most extraordinary ones, principals are unlikely to proceed with a leadership style focused on learning if the district and the province are unsupportive, disinterested, or pushing other agendas. Therefore, the district officials need to re-culture themselves so they focus in a balanced fashion on administration as well as supporting principals and SMTs to improve instruction. Once the district leaders have formulated their own goals, they need to build a coalition of leaders who are willing to pursue the goals in practice.

Having district leadership teams with people who are committed to high engagement with others in the district and schools, advocating a two-way communication that deepens shared ownership of and commitment to the goals will ensure smooth implementation at school level. At school level, the SMT should formulate its own strategic plans to ensure the accomplishment of the goals communicated to it. To successfully implement these goals, it is recommended that schools build capacity among teachers to be responsible and responsive to the learning needs and concerns of learners. This means fostering strong relationships among the teaching staff and supporting their in-depth intellectual work, and this will create a teaching profession that ensures that all teachers have the knowledge and commitment they need to teach diverse learners in their schools.

If district-wide goals are communicated effectively, the goals will give direction to the efforts of staff, parents and learners resulting in improved learner achievement at all levels, including the provincial level. The widely owned district goals will also motivate staff, parents and learners, and they will serve as a yardstick for measuring progress. The successful school management teams are those that are able to effectively articulate the district-wide goals and are able to state the outcomes which are the building blocks of such goals. This can only be possible in an environment where the school, circuits and districts all work together to make improvement possible and sustainable.

However, the creation of the culture where collaboration exists between the districts, circuits and schools to enhance the attainment of goals demands the presence of effective district teams led by effective district managers who, although recognising the power and role of advocacy groups and political affiliations, are able to resist some pressure from these interest groups in order to maintain a focus on school improvement within the district. To resist such pressures and maintain focus on improving schools requires that the leadership work of the district managers be driven by deep moral purpose. In this way, the district manager can be committed to holding the circuits and schools accountable for their standards of performance without fear of political interference.

Therefore, the important aspect of the district manager's moral purpose should be to assume a role of leadership that is responsible for the success of all learners. This means that district leadership is about having the courage to primarily focus on learner achievement that is related to the goals and expectations of the provincial Department of education. The moral purpose articulated by the district managers needs to be one of equity and equal educational opportunity for all learners regardless of ability, race, ethnicity, class or gender. This means they need to be clearly aware of the differences of opportunities provided in the schools and are compelled to address the achievement gaps among learners.

Another aspect of the district manager's moral purpose should be to ensure that all learners are adequately prepared in the classrooms for post-school life. The key point here is that the district managers should recognise the importance of all learners assuming increasing amounts of responsibility for their own learning so they may eventually become independent learners at tertiary institutions. This needs a fair distribution of resources that builds schools and classroom capacity, including the employment of well-qualified teachers and leaders and the provision of adequate materials in decent conditions for the teaching and learning of all learners. The process of allocating teachers to vacant posts needs to be reviewed to allow placement of quality teachers to schools, teachers who will be fully responsible for the learning needs of all learners. In addition, the district managers should find a way to overcome prevailing bias in the process of filling management posts, especially those of school principals. School principals must be appointed on merit. The crisis of timely delivery of teaching and learning support materials needs to be addressed in Limpopo Province in order to achieve this aspect of the district managers' moral purpose.

Generally, I suggest that the current district managers in Limpopo Province transform their leadership approaches to involve two important functions. Firstly, the work of current district managers needs to involve initiating and sustaining requests for ongoing input from circuits and schools for policy decisions. This collaborative decision making is important to ensure the formulation of effective policy implementation strategies which should be embedded in a district-wide vision directed to meeting the expectations of the provincial department. The district manager should also be able to recognise the inadequacy of translation and interpretation of previous policies and involve the expertise of school managers; teachers and circuit officials to formulate strategies to translate and interpret policies into action.

Secondly, the work of district managers should involve being interested in dealing with value conflicts, difficult issues, and underlying tensions within the district. When personal values of school managers, teachers, and circuit staff downplay the value system described for the success of the district value conflicts occur causing tensions within schools. It is the responsibility of the district manager to take interest in engaging legitimate stakeholders in dialogue and deliberation about difficult issues in the district such as disciplinary cases of teachers in schools. This dialogue is only possible in an environment which fosters development of significant professional and working relationships between the district managers, circuit managers, school principals, and teachers' unions.

### **7.2.2. Creating and sharing a vision of academic achievement for all learners**

There is an increasingly awareness of the importance for leaders to have a tangible and compelling school-wide vision of commitment to high standards and success of all learners. This vision has strong impact on the SMT's role and its underlying aspects are having high expectations for all learners and placing academic achievement at the top of the SMT's agenda. I believe that by espousing the notion of having high expectations for all, SMTs can successfully close the achievement gap between the high performing learners and low performing learners. Therefore, a vision of raising the overall achievement for all learners should be a school-wide learning improvement agenda focused on the future expectation for learner progress. This vision becomes an engine that drives the SMT and other role players within the school to set their own goals.

The model posits that effective school management practices such as strategy formulation and policy making, all of which are irrevocably interconnected, can go a long way towards increasing productivity if driven by the vision of the school leader. Effective leaders should have their visions tied to the school's core business which is teaching and learning. Any vision connected to the core business of the school is like a brain, it

controls everything happening within the school. It makes the school face up the future expectations, yet without overlooking the lessons gained in the past. It is important for the school to build on the successes and learn from the failures.

The vision must be communicated to all the role players like teachers, learners and parents. SMTs need to take every opportunity to communicate the vision of the school to the community, verbally and in writing in a clear, regular, systematic and convincing way. The development, communication and accomplishment of the vision are the SMT's most important tasks. So, developing a shared future vision around higher standards, and success for all learners is an essential element of school leadership and improvement. As the common phrase states: 'If you don't know where you are going, any road will lead you there'. Leaders without a vision of academic achievement for all learners take a route that they later realise is a cul-de-sac route. Therefore, SMTs need vision to guide them towards the future and they should also be able to translate the vision into action and sustain it.

### **7.2.3. Equipping the SMT for policy building, communication and implementation**

To achieve the district-wide goals through their vision, school management teams need to be equipped for building, communicating and implementing policies. I suggest two main reasons why it is critical that leaders be empowered in this area. Firstly, it is unlikely that transformation will happen when not driven by relevant policy. Transformation in the South African education system, for example, was driven by key education policies such as White papers and the South African Schools Act of 1996. Likewise, schools need well-thought-out policies to be transformed into excellent learning centres. Secondly, to achieve a particular goal at the school, policies need to be designed to guide the general plan of action and the decision making process. While it is generally the responsibility of the national or provincial departments to draw up education policy, it is, however, the responsibility of the school management team and educators to draft the school policy

that regulates the professional obligations of the teachers and shapes the decisions that have to be made in the school.

The school management team also has responsibility for policy making regarding professional tasks such as the day-to-day administration and the organisation of teaching and learning in schools, assessment and determining the school timetable. An example of school policy documents which guide teaching and learning is the assessment policy which indicates how assessment will be conducted in the school. The greatest challenge I have observed is that only few SMTs are able to formulate their own policies. I have noticed that most of the policies in most schools are either downloaded from the internet or are verbatim copies of other schools' policies from other circuits or districts. This tendency will hamper the implementation of such policies because it is hard to implement and communicate something you did not contribute to constructing.

On this basis, I suggest that SMTs need to be trained on how to formulate important policies that will help them address the problems that may occur in their schools. The training should be ongoing so to allow extensive coverage of all important aspects relating to policy building and implementation. The model suggests that a framework be developed to guide the training programme of the SMTs. The framework should be premised on Van Deventer and Kruger's (2003) general guidelines with which the SMTs need to be familiarised when drawing up school policies. Basically, in drawing the school policy the key guideline is that the SMT and/or its delegated committee should take into cognisance the supremacy of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, and respect national or provincial legislation and community values. In addition, the SMT and/or its delegated committee should draft a short policy document using an explicit language that appeals to all legitimate stakeholders.

However, putting policy into effect demands that the SMT clarify who will monitor deviation from the policy and ensure responsibility, accountability and authority for

putting the policy into effect. The SMT needs also to review, evaluate and report on the results of carrying out the policy in order to determine if there is any reluctance or resistance in implementing the policy, where and why. This should lead to remedial action where it is required.

#### **7.2.4. Creating a climate hospitable to teaching and learning**

The model posits that effective SMTs ensure that their schools allow both teachers and learners to put learning at the centre of their daily activities. Such a productive internal school environment nurtures and reinforces interpersonal interactions which are important in team performance and predetermined achievement standards for all learners. The school's climate has a strongly directive influence on the motivation and achievement of teachers and learners in the school. According to Van Deventer and Kruger (2003) a healthy climate is characterised by the basics like discipline, quality and frequency of interactions and their modes, interpersonal relationships, and management and leadership styles. It can as well be observed in less tangible qualities of the school life such as a supportive and responsive attitude towards learners and a sense by teachers that they are part of a community of professionals focused on good instruction.

After envisioning the future of the school in terms of learner achievement and formulating relevant policies to guide the actions of individuals in the school, the SMT should engage in the process of building a positive school climate in order that discipline, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interactions prevail. Making the schools great places in which to work productively is a crucial responsibility of the SMTs if they are to turn the lower learner achievement around. So as to form the basis for a sound culture of teaching and learning, positive school climate will have the following effects: the reduction of absenteeism and drop-out rates because learners want to be at school, the promotion of learner motivation and their will to learn, increased willingness

on the part of teachers to take risks, to step outside the defined boundaries, and to make classroom more exciting and challenging to learners, and the encouragement of learners to continue with confidence in their efforts even if they fail to succeed the first time (Savo,1996).

However, my experience and this research have proved that it is not always easy to create a healthy and positive school climate characterised by a school community where all members share a set of essential values, participate in decision making, and support a common purpose. When I was appointed as a head of department in a school that had been producing low grade twelve results, I immediately sensed aspects of an unhealthy climate. This environment was characterised by negativism and defeatism and teacher pessimism and resistance, aspects which were commonly expressed during staff meetings. The discussions were centred on war stories about troubled learners who cannot pass and other management issues rather than matters that could fine-tune school leadership and classroom practices. These have since been significant barriers to learner achievement in our school. I believe there are many such schools in the province.

To change this climate, the SMT should dedicate itself to combating teacher isolation by allowing collaborative decision making made possible through effective communication and focusing on building a sense of school community by creating a welcoming, solution-oriented, no-blame, and professional environment. The point of departure in transforming this hostile environment should be the establishment of a clear school mission which promote learner achievement and clearly communicate expectations regarding learner behaviour, which are constantly and consistently applied. Then each school department needs to spell out its well-established expectation for success, encourage and monitor consistent delivery of quality classroom instruction and demonstrate instructional leadership. This will result in schools gradually moving towards achieving the district-wide goals.

### **7.2.5. Enhancing teams and teamwork**

My model posits that moral purpose flourishes in schools which uphold team management; these are schools where teamwork thrives within the SMTs. The SMTs need to model teamwork in their schools to provide an environment in which learning can be articulated, tested and refined. Essentially, the critical elements of teamwork which can facilitate improvement in team performance and learner achievement are communication, effective co-ordination and division of work load amongst members. Teamwork in school prevails when there is commitment of time and resources to building communication skills within the teams. Open and easy communication within the team is critical for goal accomplishment and completion of regular activities within the team.

The findings of this research indicate that communication within a team facilitates the sharing of moral purpose, and thus, can discriminate between effective and ineffective teams. SMTs practicing effective communication are likely to be able to influence teachers to support the fostering of moral purpose. This model reflects a proposal that not only communication will have a direct effect on teamwork, but at the same time, it will provide avenues for teachers to participate in leadership. Accordingly, effective communication should involve such factors as increased listening, openness to suggestions, and prompt, relevant feedback, which are also communication-based indicators of effective team functioning (Dyer, 1987). These factors are visible in a team where the SMT members practice dialogue rather monologue in their communication. A team member practicing dialogue would speak openly and authentically, giving prompt feedback to his or her subordinates.

Coupled with communication is effective conflict management. This means that teamwork can only lead to a feeling of personal worth among team members when interpersonal differences or disagreements within the team are positively managed.

Generally, conflict refers to perceived or experienced incompatible differences in the individual or between two or more individuals, which may lead to some or other form of opposition (University of Pretoria, 2010:107). A conflict becomes a harmful and a disruptive force if the tension within the team is such that it impedes members from achieving team goals. These disruptive conflicts within a team are commonly known as dysfunctional conflicts. Some of the outcomes of dysfunctional conflicts include: distance between people increases owing to the development of a climate of mistrust and suspicion, individuals concentrate on their own narrow interests, existing differences worsen, feelings of bitterness and hostility increase, and resistance rather than teamwork develops (Mullins, 1999).

However, not all conflicts are harmful. Conflict may be useful if it awakens members to alternative points of view and stimulates creativity in problem-solving and decision-making. The effects of conflict depend on how the members of the team manage, control and resolve the problem. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003) found that positive conflict management actions such as peaceful coexistence, compromise and problem solving can have an impact on teamwork. Peaceful coexistence means avoidance of conflict by retreating from the arena of confrontation while compromise is a “give-and-take” exchange, resulting in neither party winning or losing. Problem solving seeks the resolution of disagreements through face-to-face confrontation of the conflicting parties. This seemed to be an effective way of conflict management in my research.

#### **7.2.6. Magnifying shared leadership**

In the particular context of the school, the commitment to moral purpose depends on a gradual transformation of leadership in the school to accommodate school leadership that is collaborative or shared. Drawing inspiration from a body of work on shared leadership, I strongly believe that shared leadership is another critical pathway by which SMTs can transform teaching and learning processes in order to achieve higher levels of learner

achievement. This is so because acknowledging and developing the broader leadership capacity in schools hold the key to unlocking the store of leadership potential grounded in instructional expertise that principals are often unable to provide (Fullan, 2001, Gronn, 2002, Grubb & Flessa, 2009, Leithwood *et al.*, 2009). This suggests that there is a direct relationship between teamwork processes and shared leadership.

The proponents of shared leadership suggest that collaborative leadership has the potential to account for the broader range of naturally occurring leadership processes that exist in schools beyond the formal leadership exercised by principals (Harris, 2003, Lambert, 2002). With this in mind, the model suggests that leadership drawn from a variety of sources, including but not limited to the school principal, will have a positive impact on learner achievement. Hallinger and Heck's (2010) study that focused on examining the effect of collaborative leadership on reading achievement found that shared leadership can influence the school's academic capacity to enhance learner achievement. Within the context of shared leadership, moral purpose can smoothly permeate the entire school, thus becoming a compelling vision for all persons in the school.

Once moral purpose is widely shared, it becomes an underlying factor for school improvement that enhances teaching and learning processes, resulting in the achievement of higher academic standards. Since learner achievement represents a dynamic process, the SMTs need to develop broader instructional expertise among the teachers. The development of instructional expertise among teachers is possible when teachers are allowed to lead within and beyond the classrooms, and such leadership is underlined by a shared moral purpose. When shared leadership is infused with shared moral purpose, teachers' capabilities are optimised to achieve expected learning outcomes.

### **7.2.7. Actualising moral leadership**

To effectively nourish moral purpose and magnify shared leadership in schools, SMTs and teachers should invest time and resources to actualise moral leadership. The model posits that there should be a compelling moral dimension to school leadership that becomes a framework for the way things are done in the school. This moral aspect is important because for any leader to have an impact on school improvement his or her leadership need to be driven from what he or she conceives as right or good. According to Sergiovanni (2000), schools need some kind of special leadership because moral purposes and values play such an important role in establishing the character of schools. The leaders' values come to the fore here to influence the character of the school.

If the leader believes that sharing leadership to teachers and learners is the right thing, shared leadership will become magnified in that school. If commitment and respect are important values of the leader, then the school character will reflect that by having people who are committed to their functions and respecting one another and the goals set by the school. The notion of moral leadership emphasises “bringing diverse people into a common cause ... [having] at the center shared ideas, principles, and purposes that provide powerful sources of authority for leadership practices” (Sergiovanni, 2000:167). In this way, leadership becomes inspirational, morally uplifting and mobilising people to achieve high expectations when the leader's authority and influence are driven from the defensive notion of what the school leader nurtures and models as worthwhile values, beliefs and ethics. It is against this backdrop that the model suggests that leaders who embrace and advocate moral leadership have a long-term commitment to transforming their schools into moral organisations through their core values and beliefs that builds and influence healthy school climate.

The model acknowledges that school leaders can acquire profitable values from different authoritative sources, depending on their interests and experiences or political or religious

affiliations. Some leaders, mostly patriots or those with some political affiliations are committed to expressing the values contained in the Constitution and various education laws. Others draw from their own experience those values they cherish the most in the working environment, such as accountability, equality, fairness, dedication and respect. Others still draw on the core values derived from their religion. In discussing approaches to leadership which can be categorised as moral, West-Burnham (1997:239) espouses that "... many leaders possess what might be called 'higher order' perspective ... represented by a particular religious affiliation". Such leaders have a set of principles which provide the basis for their moral behaviour.

Another element of moral leadership that the model posits as essential in transforming schools into performing schools is a 'service-orientation for the common good' which I prefer to call 'leading by serving'. In this model I argue that effective leaders are servants and suggest that to succeed in cultivating moral purpose leaders should be at the complete disposal of others (e.g. teachers, learners and parents). This means that a servant leader will always have time to help others or to add value to others. Servant leaders believe that to get ahead, they need to put others first rather than to dominate over them. This approach develops a school-wide value of mutual benefit and good faith among the staff.

### **7.3. Limitation and future direction**

There are several limitations to this model. First and foremost, since this is an initial attempt at understanding how moral purpose is cultivated in schools, I considered only SMTs as teams that can make such cultivation possible. Although, it is the key team in the school, the SMT cannot alone achieve school improvement without involving other teams in the school. Therefore, regarding future directions, consideration should be given to the exploration of research-based issues (empirical issues) and generalisability issues. Some generalisability issues involve the types of teams and team member characteristics. Consideration of all teams at all levels within the school, from the SMT to other teacher

and learner teams could further refine a moral purpose model. Investigating this issue could improve generalisability and assist in guiding school managers in defining other leadership responsibilities that can facilitate the introduction of moral purpose.

Regarding team member characteristics, few, if any, studies have examined the implications of team diversity on team leadership requirements. According to Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater and Spangler (2004), diversity within the team could potentially affect team functioning, decision-making and cohesion. Future research could examine the role of diverse teams in the cultivation of moral purpose or the impact of diverse teams on leadership requirements. Both investigations could enhance our understanding of what various teams identify as moral purpose and how they nourish this moral purpose in order to enhance learning outcomes which may include academic outcomes. These investigations could guide school management teams as well as systemic authority in selection and training decisions.

The most obvious research-oriented issue is that this model needs to be fully tested. Due to the nature of the functions described in this model for the SMTs, sample size, duration of the research, data collection, and analytic techniques need to be considered. I believe that multiple-level perspectives could promote better moral purpose-team performance models. A multi-level approach could be applied involving a fair representative sample of schools in Limpopo (e.g. involve a hundred primary schools and a hundred secondary schools) and employing questionnaires as an additional data collection instrument. This is likely to produce richer and more reliable data that will increase our understanding of how moral purpose is nourished and enacted in schools.

Another limitation to this model is that I considered only academic achievement (specifically grade twelve examination results) as an important learning outcome achieved by the infusion of moral purpose on teamwork. Obviously, this is not exhaustive, as there are several other critical learning outcomes produced by having a

central moral purpose, such as learners' motivation and engagement and learners learning at greater depth (Bezzina, 2007). These additional outcomes have the potential to interact with those in my model in such a way as to alter overall team performance. Practically speaking, learner achievements or academic outcomes lie at the very end of the continuum and depends to a larger extent on effective classroom learning. Therefore, in future, consideration should also be given to learners' motivation and engagement with subject matter and learners learning at greater depth as key elements in a moral purpose model.

#### **7.4. Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, a suggested moral purpose model was presented. As with any conceptual model, conceptualisation of moral purpose was essentially addressed first. Following from the evidence obtained in the research, I considered seven functions effective SMTs should perform to promote moral purpose in their schools. Building upon the findings of prior research on school leadership effects and moral purpose, my model suggests that to introduce moral purpose in schools the SMT needs to embrace district-wide goals. The acceptance of district-wide goals leads SMTs to the creation and sharing of an academic vision for all learners. The sharing of the academic vision for learners is possible in schools that have a healthy school climate. A positive school climate can make effective teamwork and moral leadership possible in schools.

Although there is evidence of direct and mediated effects of school leadership on learner achievement, the model sought to improve our understanding of team leadership and performance by infusing it with moral purpose. Empirical testing of the proposed model will assist in determining the appropriateness of conceptualising moral purpose as a compelling idea for learner achievement. However, once the model is validated, a better understanding of moral purpose and teamwork underlying effective school management can have significant practical implications on learner achievement.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The conclusion of the research**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

This study's significance was magnified by the dearth of research in instilling moral purpose in South African schools. Through the discussions in this report one can see how pertinent the moral purpose in the running of effective schools is. Among the most crucial factors, the success of schools hinges on moral purpose in management. After reviewing the discussions of findings in relation to the four research questions, it is important to review the findings in relation to the research problem or the purpose of the research. In chapter one I identified the purpose of the research as to explore in-depth and describe the capacity of school management teams to identify, nourish and share the moral purpose of secondary schools in Limpopo Province.

Flowing from this, the research problem is that while team leadership in South Africa has been a subject of extensive discourse, it has not been examined in relation to moral purpose. There were also limited researches in South Africa that examined the extent to which the sharing of moral purpose enhanced improvement in school management and levels of learner achievement. It is now appropriate to consider to what extent the research purpose has been met and the research problem addressed by first looking at the empirical findings of my research and then, the theoretical implications and some practical and policy recommendations as well as areas for future research.

#### **8.2. Empirical findings**

Although the concept of moral purpose appeared to be essentially unfamiliar to the majority of the members of SMTs, the responses generated confirmed some of the views discussed in chapter three regarding the meaning and significance of moral purpose. The

school managers highlighted that moral purpose should consist of constantly improving learner achievement and respecting all teachers and learners in the school. Generally, moral purpose is perceived as a “compelling moral imperative” or “moral goal of achievement” directed towards raising the achievement levels of all learners in the school. This whole-school vision for academic achievement is achieved by ensuring that the achievement gap between higher and lower performing learners is narrowed. To close this achievement gap the SMTs appear to be acting swiftly against learners who fail in any test or examination. Analysis of term results underlies and informs this practice.

To realise this moral purpose, members of the school management teams highlighted that they have to be imbued with and express three underlying values, namely, commitment, responsibility and discipline (Figure 6.1). The SMTs that express these values are most likely to raise achievement levels for all learners in their schools than those who are not. The expression of moral purpose through these key values implicitly suggests that SMTs of higher performing schools share these values to create school cultures with transformed teaching and learning processes. They show commitment to activities associated with instructional programmes and activities designed to achieve higher standards. The main activities they perform are monitoring, modeling good classroom practices and providing support to the teachers. They are also accountable for the learning outcomes of their learners and are able to maintain a disciplined approach to work.

Generally, the research draws out the picture that teamwork is an overarching educational notion that provides an opportunity for schools to cultivate moral purpose. The school managers’ responses indicate several positive attributes of teamwork and the primary of these seem to be the notion of participative decision-making and sharing. On the notion of participative decision-making, the members of SMTs claimed that their schools have moved from ‘one-man’ authoritarian leadership and ‘unilateralist’s decision-making’ to collective decision-making. If all people concerned are involved in decision-making

processes, they will adopt ownership of that decision. The general view is that participation and involvement of people in the decision-making process do not only endorse the democratic nature of leadership but also provide the opportunity for people to adjust their behaviours in order to support the schools' agenda to improve learner achievement.

On the aspect of sharing, the SMT members reinforced the benefits offered through the utilisation of diversity of skills and knowledge or opinions within the team. The healthy, constructive and respectful debates in meetings were identified as the hallmarks of effective sharing of diverse opinions and complementary skills. The school managers have brought the phenomenon of teamwork to the fore because they have recognised that no sole person can possess all the expertise to manage the school alone or exclusively enlarge the school vision. Teamwork achieves the expansion of school vision through the synergies established within the schools which allow input of information into the vision by other members of the team.

Furthermore, the school managers indicated that teamwork provides an opportunity for SMT members to support one another. Support is an important component of teamwork and it can be given in the form of encouragement or the provision of different perspective on issues. The managers' unequivocal acceptance of team spirit as a unifying aspect within SMTs will be expressed in the manner in which they communicate recommendations to teachers and learners. They ought to communicate the same information irrespective of a member not being satisfied with a particular decision. The member must be given the opportunity to be convinced in the SMT meeting; therefore, he or she cannot go out to the teachers and communicate his or her feelings about the issue.

Coupled with the teamwork approach is the notion of motivation, which the participants felt it is very much an aspect of enhancing the cultivation of moral purpose. Staff motivation is viewed as critical as it creates a need which initiates a tremendous drive to

achieve higher achievement standards for learners. The need for achievement emerged as a key need to realising the goals of moral purpose. SMTs and teachers imbued with a need for achievement have the tendency to set moderately difficult goals to which they attach greater importance and pursue them with a lot of commitment and vigour. A need for achievement is seen to lead to vision realisation, which is, in turn, a source of motivation. People working according to their vision do not need any form of external motivation.

Interestingly, all SMT members highlighted the importance of a widely shared moral purpose. The sharing happens through effective communication and delegation. The sharing of moral purpose commonly occurs within SMT meetings and other staff meetings. The shared moral purpose appears to be explicit in environments that cultivate shared leadership. Significantly, distributed leadership emerged as a strong element of shared leadership, with teachers assuming leadership roles and functions ranging from being classroom managers to being leaders within their respective departments. The leadership roles were generally academic and aimed at promoting a culture of good teaching and learning in schools. However, undermining the sharing of moral purpose are sets of tensions and challenges which make the actual sharing of the moral purpose potentially problematic.

Learner discipline arose as a major threat, since attainment of higher achievement standards requires an atmosphere that is discipline-girded with no disruptive behaviours of learners. The challenge of learner discipline is exacerbated by lack of parent involvement and participation arising from dual factors: on the one hand, parents are illiterate and, on the other hand, they are not showing interest in the education of their children. Interpersonal problems or differences within the SMT emerged as another threat, with the diversity of personalities and attitude being detrimental to the process of sharing moral purpose. These may include personal agendas of individual members of the

SMT which may result in potentially harmful conflicts amongst them, thereby working against the sharing of moral purpose. Significantly, lack of commitment or laziness on the part of the teaching staff emerged as another challenge that was seen to lead to the postponement of executing duties delegated to them by the SMT. Consequently; SMTs view laziness of teachers as a factor that defies their ambitions to achieve higher achievement standards for learners.

Another key conclusion in the research is that there is an interesting comparison between higher performing and underperforming schools. The marked difference between these schools illustrates that it is impossible to make all schools the same in terms of learner achievement because of several varied dynamics apparent within their operations. The dynamics identified in these schools isolate what makes some schools perform compared with what makes others underperform. This comes down to perceptions held by school managers and teachers on moral purpose and the leadership approaches adopted to enhance learner achievement. Three dynamics were identified in higher performing schools which seem not to be apparent in underperforming schools. These dynamics are based on the triangulation of data obtained through interviews, document analysis and my own observations in these schools, and are:

- a. *All effective schools had organisational mindsets that supported a strong work ethic, expected achievement and acknowledged success:* What appears to be emerging from my research is that moral purpose driven schools perform because managers, teachers, and learners all show unwavering support for strong work ethics, which involved commitment to well planned study and enrichment programmes. The research goes on further to elucidate that there was clarity about what was expected in terms of learner achievement, and when such achievements were realised, schools acknowledged them and celebrated accordingly. In contrast, underperforming schools appeared to lack clarity on expected learner achievement or goals for general school

improvement. The findings confirm Stroller et al.'s (2004) research findings which showed that underperforming schools function without basic team requirements such as goals, which define team direction, and performance commitment which the SMT must have in order to achieve their goals.

- b. All higher performing schools had strong internal accountability systems in place:* According to Christie et al. (2007), the internal accountability system enabled working schools to meet the demands of external accountability, particularly in terms of the National Senior Certificate or grade twelve achievements. In this respect, teachers who were allocated to grade twelve classrooms appeared to be accounting for performance in their subjects to their immediate superiors on a term to term basis. Furthermore, the immediate supervisors, in this case, the HoDs, accounted to the school principal directly or indirectly through his or her deputy principals overseeing them.
- c. All of the higher performing schools were focused on key aspects of instructional leadership:* What emerged is not surprising but does confirm certain factors and approaches by the school leadership and management of effective schools with strong moral purpose. It points to the school managers having a clear vision about transforming teaching and learning. A report to the Minister of Education prepared in October by Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) highlighted the importance of this aspect and reported that all working schools focused on their central tasks of teaching, learning and management with a sense of responsibility, purpose and commitment. It appeared that effective schools are able to develop a culture within their schools where teaching and learning are talked about and valued. At a deeper level, the commitment of SMT members to talking about learner performance in one higher performing school was reflected in their identification of the importance of daily

meetings where classroom experiences of teachers are discussed, and these discussions informed day-to-day planning in the school.

In summary, although almost all the members of SMTs have demonstrated shared commitment to some notions of teamwork taken to enhance the moral purpose of raising learner achievement for all learners, they seemed to be less enlightened about the meaning of moral purpose, and its connection with shared leadership in schools. This suggests a fundamental lack of understanding of the meaning and significance of the concept of moral purpose as well as its effects on leadership approaches. It may thus seem premature to conclude that SMTs in this research are fully aware of their roles in terms of identifying and nourishing moral purpose within their schools. Perhaps the notion of moral purpose is too new to South Africa, or perhaps previous studies conducted in South African schools ignored its effects on leadership and learner achievement.

### **8.3. Theoretical contributions of the thesis**

The research makes several theoretical contributions in advancing the literature on moral purpose and school management and leadership. There are two sets of contributions in this thesis. The first contributions are topic-based, and related to increasing both empirical and theoretical understandings of several facets of moral purpose (e.g. meaning and significance) and the effects of team management or teamwork in the cultivation of moral purpose. The second contributions amount to an extension of research on the links between team management and moral purpose in South Africa and the effect of a social context on the enactment of moral purpose. In the next paragraphs I briefly discuss the two sets of theoretical contributions by picking one contribution after another in a sequence.

Firstly, this research provides us with an advanced understanding of what constitutes moral purpose of schools. The starting point, therefore, was the recognition that the central goal of moral purpose consists of constantly improving student achievement and ensuring that achievement gaps, wherever they exist are narrowed (Barber & Fullan, 2005). My research provides an expanded understanding of the meaning of moral purpose by conceiving moral purpose as a “whole-school vision for the academic success for all learners” and “moral goal of achievement.” Both these descriptions articulate the significance of moral purpose as a “broad directional vision” (Fullan, 2009:109), a compelling imperative that arouses the interest of all legitimate stakeholders to enact and nourish a common moral goal to improve learner achievement.

A key benefit of having this kind of a moral purpose-directed school vision is the explicitness of moral purpose in all school teams. This explicitness is achieved through effective communication and delegation. As a result of constant dialogue among stakeholders and effective delegation of duties, the “whole-school vision for the academic success for all learners” becomes a “shared moral purpose” of the school (Bezzina, 2007:4). Therefore, articulating and inspiring school management teams with a shared moral purpose can create more cohesiveness among the SMT members. The benefit of team cohesion lies in its ability to move team members towards healthy relationships (Fullan, 2009). Teams with values that encourage healthy relationships among its members have capacity to move their schools against all odds to achieve the ultimate goal of shared moral purpose - a transformed learner who is a fuller, richer and deeper human being (Bezzina, 2010).

Interestingly, the results of this thesis clearly suggest different underlying values for school management teams to achieve a “whole-school vision for the academic success for all learners.” The key values or expressions of moral purpose are commitment, discipline and responsibility. Evidently, these values add to those values identified for a research framework developed for Australian Catholic schools under the Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners project (Bezzina, 2008, 2010). This framework offers a basis for developing our own system for understanding how moral purpose can be enacted in South African schools. For future research, it would however be interesting to further examine the effect of embracing these values on school improvement. Therefore, my research provides the first known empirical test of LTLL framework in South African schooling context.

The other important implication of this research lies in delineating the unique contribution of teamwork in the cultivation of moral purpose in schools. The study found that in order to raise the achievement level for all learners, school management teams need to promote teamwork in their schools. In line with the previous research (Cohen & Bailey, 2007, Mendwell, 2009, Tyala, 2004), the findings of this thesis clearly indicate that the cultivation of moral purpose can be stimulated when leaders share responsibility, communicate, cooperate and work together in making work plans to achieve “whole-school vision for the success of all learners.” This research found that teamwork manifest itself in participative decision-making. The added value of the participative decision-making seems to lie with the way team members are mutually stimulated to take responsibility and focus on achieving a team-oriented work environment. By increasing the involvement in decision-making, SMT members become stimulated to voice their perspectives and increase dialogue around learner achievement.

Up till now research has acknowledged the importance of leadership on student outcomes (Leithwood *et al.* 2006), Robinson *et al.*, 2008), but has mainly focused on the indirect impact of leadership by shaping conditions that build school capacity to foster effective teaching and learning (Southworth, 2002). Although these previous researches have pointed at the role of leadership in improving school performance, the link between team management or teamwork and moral purpose has hardly been made. The results of this thesis further indicate that an orientation towards school improvement can be stimulated when team leadership or teamwork is infused with shared moral purpose. Therefore, a further theoretical contribution of my research is that it addresses the gap in the literature by providing greater detail and insight to how different school management teams with moral purpose improve learner achievement. Furthermore, it has added to the limited empirical research on the role of shared leadership in school improvement.

A further contribution relates to the research context in which my research was conducted. Most prior research on moral purpose has been undertaken in countries other than South Africa. Most of these studies were conducted in Australian Catholic schools. How well the findings transfer to South African schooling context was not well known or understood. My research suggests that leaders in Australian schools are motivated or affected by many of the same environmental characteristics as South African leaders. In addition, it reveals that to transform the learning and learners in South Africa, moral purpose needs to be conceptualised in the same way it has been conceptualised in other parts of the globe. On the basis of the foregoing, it is important to design a seminal future research that attempts to explain how social contexts in which schools and SMTs are based affect their capacity to enact their moral purpose. This may involve categorising

different factors (cultural, organisational, infrastructural and personal) that affect the capacity of these schools with reference to the practice theory literature.

#### **8.4. Policy and practical recommendations**

It may be more correct to describe moral purpose as an evolutionary concept in South African schools. Although some work has been done on moral purpose in other parts of the globe, I strongly feel that its enactment in South African schools needs further investigation. In my research there have been a number of research areas that emanated, but were not within the scope of this research. The next section of this chapter identifies a number of recommendations arising for schools and their leadership teams, systemic authorities responsible for Limpopo education and those responsible for education in South Africa.

##### **8.4.1. Recommendations for schools and their school management teams**

Schools and their SMTs are profoundly interrelated, therefore, the following recommendations require the concerted action of both the management teams and the schools for the recommendations to be realised. It is recommended that:

- a. SMTs investigate how moral purpose and its set of underlying values can form the basis for the creation and sharing of a vision for academic success for all learners*

The school is inevitably packed with many activities in which members of the SMTs and teachers are fully involved every spare minute of the day. All these activities are planned and carried out to enhance the goal of improving the lives of the children, especially academically. The SMTs need to align these activities to the vision for academic success for all learners, and then find ways in which moral purpose can influence the achievement of this vision. Since moral purpose is an internal powerful energy that makes people want to achieve higher expectations for all learners in schools, residing

school vision in moral purpose can produce sustainable learning outcomes such as excellent examination results.

But yielding excellent examination results requires the SMTs to ensure that all members of the school understand what the concept of moral purpose means and what its central goal is. To ensure that all members are familiar with the concept of moral purpose, schools should develop induction programmes for new teachers where they are lectured on what this concept is all about. In addition, the SMTs in consultation with the teachers, learners and parents, need to prescribe set of values that should underlie moral purpose and much of what is done in schools. The school management teams with clear and strong values can positively influence the direction of the school. When school managers do not sacrifice these values for their own personal ambitions, the staff can inevitably share the same values making it possible for the school to improve despite contextual factors.

*b. SMTs need to explore how moral leadership can be actualised to enhance the sharing of moral purpose and magnify shared leadership in schools*

For SMTs to identify and share moral purpose and magnify shared leadership in their schools, the actualisation of moral leadership needs to be a priority. The presence of children in schools makes schools unique and requires SMTs to view school leadership differently (Sergiovanni, 2000). He calls for a kind of moral leadership that must become that framework for the way things are done in schools. He describes leadership as moral because “It emphasises bringing diverse people into a common cause ... [having] at their centre shared ideas, principles, and purposes that provide a powerful source of authority for leadership practice” (Sergiovanni, 2000:167). This means that moral leadership can serve as a basis for all other leadership approaches with the authority of the leader derived from the defensive conception of what is right or good.

For example, if a leader believes that sharing the leadership functions with other people is the right or good thing, then shared leadership becomes more magnified in that school. Therefore, the appreciation of salient values and beliefs of leaders and the rituals that underpin them can be an important element in the management of schools in the Limpopo Province. Moral leadership should therefore be a framework for educational leadership in Limpopo secondary schools, a framework that can help to prescribe worthwhile values of SMT members that can enhance learner achievement.

*c. SMTs need to explore new and better ways to create a positive internal school environment in which moral purpose can flourish*

To successfully cultivate moral purpose in their schools, the SMTs need to ensure that their schools' internal climate is hospitable for teaching and learning. Creating a school climate that support and nurtures healthy interpersonal interactions and relationships should be a priority because moral purpose is like a seed that can only flourish in fertile environments. Such a fertile environment should be characterised by discipline of all managers, teachers, learners and parents, frequency of interactions occurring within school teams, and collaborative notions of leadership adopted by school management teams, and constant support provided by school managers to teachers, parents and learners to co-manage the school.

*d. School principals who are serious about meaningful change in their schools need to instill the sense of teamwork and explore means by which this enhanced teamwork can be connected to moral purpose*

The school principals need to explore means by which teamwork skills can be fostered in the SMTs and staff within their schools. This will assist staff in their professional responsibilities while nurturing the teamwork skills of individuals in preparation for possible future leadership responsibilities. In so doing, SMTs can be well enlightened to

develop framework for participative or shared leadership within their schools. Furthermore, the SMTs need to explore ways by which the teamwork notion can be connected to moral purpose in order to effectively espouse and achieve district-wide goals. This connection is significantly admirable because it can produce a lasting effect on school improvement, with working as teams ensuring effective expression and sharing of moral purpose.

The SMT members need to be aware of the importance of effective communication and delegation, not merely for fear of opposition, but because the two notions increase the possibilities for staff and learners to participate in leadership and own the moral purpose.

*e. The allocation of resources directed towards building leadership becomes a recurrent budget item for the school*

The implementation of suitable programmes will enable SMTs to initiate and support programmes designed to nourish the leadership development of aspirant leaders within their schools. This success in the implementation of capacity building programmes depends largely on the amount of resources allocated to them. Giving teachers roles in school decision-making is necessarily a good thing, but it can prove to be disastrous if those given decision-making roles are not sufficiently qualified to do so. The SMTs need to identify aspiring leaders and allocate sufficient resources of many forms, for example finances, to build their leadership capacity.

#### **8.4.2. Recommendations for systemic authorities responsible for Limpopo education**

The systemic authorities in charge of Limpopo education include the provincial, district, and circuit offices. To these authorities, three recommendations are given as follows:

- a. Existing professional learning programmes sponsored by systemic authorities should be critiqued to ensure sufficient emphasis on shared leadership and instructional leadership*

This will enable current and aspirant leaders to respond authentically to the challenge of improving learner achievement in schools in Limpopo Province. Relevant aspects of sharing moral purpose and the development of effective SMTs need to be included and affirmed in the learning programmes rolled out in the Province. This will enable principals and SMT members to utilise most effectively the benefits available from shared leadership as reflected in SMTs. Programmes that expose and develop SMT members' sense of reliance on each other and joint management would go a long way towards addressing the needs expressed in this research. The systemic authorities also need to provide on-going support in the form of experts such as curriculum advisors who visit schools to create awareness for principals and other SMT members on issues of managing teaching and learning in schools.

One way to slow down the turnover rate of school principals who do not conceptualise their roles as leaders of learning is to design professional learning programmes that provide opportunities for SMTs to be mentored by other school principals who have accepted responsibility for developing learning in their schools. The programme should include training of principals on how to create conditions where it is possible to develop a culture within the school where teaching and learning are talked about and valued, for example, talking about learners and classroom practices and experiences during breaks, and at various meetings. In addition, the training should focus on training school principals on how to create conditions which support teachers so that they are up to date with their subject and pedagogic knowledge.

*b. System sponsored professional learning programmes currently offered to principals and SMT members should be examined to include skills and capabilities in policy-making and problem-solving*

A well-thought-out and well-formulated school policies ensures that all people in the school know what to do and how to do it, especially where it concerns routine decisions in educational leadership. Building the policy-making skills of school leaders entails empowering them on how to develop and manage the process of policy development in the school and how to ensure that their drafting is broadly guided by the departmental policies. Care must be taken in deciding on and drafting policy as policy has long-term consequences. Incorrect policy may cause further problems rather than solving a specific problem. Therefore, it is important for SMTs to be trained to draft policy documents which are clear, precise and not too long so as to guide the decision making processes in their schools.

Furthermore, the training programmes offered to SMTs need to pay attention to the types of decision-making for solving problems and the styles and circumstances that play an important role in decision-making. Making things happen as we wish them to in a school, and to preventing unwanted events, depends on the skill of solving problems by taking and implementing effective decisions based on sound school policies. Problem-solving and decision-making are continuous management tasks that are a very important part of the management process. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that all SMT members in the Province be trained on how to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills. Principals and other managers are generally evaluated on the quality and results of the decisions they make.

Since managers are constantly involved in a series of decision-making and problem-solving situation as they plan to cultivate moral purpose, the effectiveness of their decisions plays a decisive role in determining the success of their planning and in

eliminating problems that may challenge moral purpose. It is also important to train school managers on how to effectively use participative decision making. If the principal involves staff and learners in decision-making, he will benefit by achieving a high level of motivation, greater effectiveness, open lines of communication, a free, honest and complete flow of information, and a greater awareness of grassroots problems (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994).

*c. Consideration should be given by systemic authorities to effectively intervene in underperforming schools and provide support.*

The task of intervening in underperforming schools is the responsibility of the provincial and district-level structures. However, my observations point to the conclusion that most of these offices in Limpopo are ineffective, largely flaccid organisations, unwilling for political reasons, or unable for technical reasons, to intervene decisively in schools. Therefore, it is important for the provincial department and its subsidiaries in the districts to improve their educational authority and appoint and utilise people with curriculum management expertise and skills, not politicians to support underperforming schools. It is a hopeless situation to expect schools to improve when the districts which are suppose to be the fountainheads of support are also in the same dysfunctional state as the underperforming schools they purport to administer.

#### **8.4.3. Recommendations for those responsible for education in South Africa**

To those who are responsible for policy-making or curriculum development in the South Africa education system, it is recommended that:

*a. Additional professional development learning programmes be developed by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa to facilitate the embedding of the values of moral purpose in the leadership practice of SMTs*

This will assist SMTs with their responsibilities to maintain higher standards for learner achievement and effective school management.

*b. The existing Life Orientation (LO) content prescribed in secondary schools should be expanded to include a section related to the significance of moral purpose and its underlying values such as respect and commitment*

The introduction of this additional section or aspect emphasises the role LO teachers have as members of staff, thus facilitating improvement in the manner in which learners view the subject matter of their subjects.

*c. The existing systemic support system offered to school managers should espouse lateral capacity building through networks*

Often school managers will learn best from fellow managers as they can relate to the realities and the challenges that are faced on a daily basis. It is recommended that school leaders pair with another in the same geographical vicinity, preferably, at the circuit level. Better performing schools should be twinned or networked with underperforming schools in the circuit so that the good experiences of the one can be shared.

*d. The concept of moral purpose should be further explored by the Department of Basic Education to identify additional enabling-factors that assist schools in developing a framework for cultivating moral purpose in schools*

This would facilitate the development of resources for this purpose and could further enhance realisation of the goals of the Department in terms of learner achievement and school management.

## **8.5. Recommendations for further research**

This research did not fully focus on the benefits that the framework for the ‘The Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners (LTLL) pilot programme offers the South African schools (Bezzina, 2008, 2010). Therefore, it is suggested that further investigation be undertaken to examine the utility of the LTLL framework as a means by which the effects of focusing on moral purpose can be fully examined within the context of South African schools over a period of time (three years). A focus on the framework can provide reinforcement of the role of moral purpose in supporting and enhancing leadership practices and classroom practices leading to enhanced learner achievement. Furthermore, engaging with the LTLL framework and some of the emerging understandings from the pilot programmes can provide an opportunity to examine further the core values of moral purpose and how these values are articulated by the SMTs of SA schools beyond those participating in this research.

This research did not focus on primary schools in the Province. It would be of value if research could be undertaken to examine how SMTs in primary schools identify moral purpose within their schools and how this moral purpose impacts on their leadership and learning process. Although some work has been done on teamwork, I strongly feel that less attention was paid to its connection with shared moral purpose in the pursuit of academic excellence in South African schools. My research also failed to deeply explore this gap. Furthermore, the actual effectiveness of the SMTs in sharing moral purpose needs to be scrutinised rather than focusing on their perceptions of moral purpose.

The most urgent and serious need for research is the examination of interventions to address the underlying factors inhibiting the sharing of moral purpose that emerged in this research. A research of this nature may be taken as action research to make it possible to uncover the deeply-rooted deficiency of parents’ lack of involvement and participation as well as interpersonal frictions within teams. Furthermore, identification

of additional enabling factors by which the moral purpose of schools could be enhanced from the perspective of SMTs need to be examined.

## **8.6. Chapter Summary**

In this research, I have explored the role of the SMTs of six secondary schools in Limpopo Province and identified both their perception of moral purpose and aspects of teamwork to which they ascribe and the principles by which they operate to enhance learner achievement. The commitment of SMTs to foundational values of moral purpose has been highlighted, as has the emphasis many SMT members place on raising the standard of achievement for all learners within the school. Yet in the light of what this research has found, it is evident that SMTs in Limpopo secondary schools lag behind in what the education system in South Africa envisaged to achieve in all the provinces in terms of learner achievement. Educational managers appear to have a narrow understanding of the significance of moral purpose for many reasons as discussed above. Until this understanding matures there will be no true enhancement of learner achievement and leadership in Limpopo Province.

In this research, a number of specific values underlying moral purpose were identified. The research further underlined several key strengths that will buttress SMTs, assisting them to address these challenges for example, SMT members are committed to teamwork and can articulate the advantages brought by teamwork and synergy, each research participant displayed a resounding commitment to key values underlying moral purpose, and each SMT member accepted responsibility to address interpersonal conflicts within the team. It is my wish that this research can remind those of us privileged to be leaders in South Africa of our responsibility to make the difference in our schools, to embrace the spirit of teamwork underlined by shared moral purpose, and to express this spirit through values such as commitment, discipline and responsibility.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Interview Schedule for the SMTs**

#### **Development of interview questions for the school management teams (SMTs)**

##### **Research Question 1: What do the members of school management teams identify as moral purpose?**

- Considering the academic performance of learners in (Name of the school), what would you identify as the moral purpose underlying your educational leadership approaches taken to transform the learning of your learners?
- To what extent have the moral purpose influenced leadership approaches and learner achievement in the past three years?
- What would you state as the key expressions or values of moral purpose in (Name of the school) that enhance academic leadership and learner achievement?

##### **Research Question 2: How can school management teams share moral purpose?**

- Do you believe that moral purpose within your school management team is shared? Why/why not/ how?
- To what extent do you think the shared moral purpose at (Name of school) enhanced teacher leadership and learner achievement?

##### **Research Question 3: Which factors inhibit school management teams to enact the moral purpose of the school?**

- In your case, do you think there are factors inhibiting you to translate moral purpose into practice?
- What are crucial factors that inhibit school management team in (Name of school) to translate moral purpose into practice?

- Can you describe any instance where the sharing of moral purpose was hampered by the behaviour of any of the members of the SMT?

**Research Question 4: How can school management teams overcome factors inhibiting moral purpose?**

- Do you think it is your responsibility to address these challenges? Why/Why not?
- In what ways can school management team in (Name of school) act to address these challenges?
- Can you describe technique(s) that you often apply in instances when you are hands-on addressing other member(s) of the SMT you view as hampering the sharing of moral purpose?

**Appendix B: Observation schedule**

<b>School</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
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**CATEGORY A**

**Observing the presence of procedures that influence relationships in meetings (e.g. SMT, Departmental, Staff, Morning briefings)**

<b>Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	
-------------	--	-------------	--

Where is the meeting taking place? .....

What type of a meeting is observed? .....

What is the composition of this meeting in terms of number, gender and post description?  
.....  
.....

Are there any apologies? .....

What is the agenda?  
.....  
.....  
.....

Who is the chairperson? .....

If the chairperson is the principal, does he or she dictate the meeting?  
.....  
.....

Are the previous minutes read? .....

What important matters are arising from the minute and how were these matters dealt with?

.....  
.....  
.....  
Is there any reflection on teacher and leadership practices and how was the issues addressed?

.....  
.....  
.....  
How do members communicate their ideas?

.....  
.....  
.....  
Are the members' contributions welcome and appreciated?

.....  
.....  
.....  
How are decisions reached?

.....  
.....  
.....  
If they do not agree on a particular issue, what do they do?

.....  
.....  
.....  
How was the meeting concluded?

**CATEGORY B**  
**LEADERSHIP PRACTICES**

<b>Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	
-------------	--	-------------	--

Is there any evidence of enhanced teacher leadership/distributive leadership/collaborated leadership and professional dialogue in the school?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Which values and/or ethics underpin the leadership practice in the school?

.....

.....

.....

.....

**CATEGORY C**  
**CLASSROOM PRACTICE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES**

<b>Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	
-------------	--	-------------	--

Where is the observation taking place? .....

Is there a more learner centred approaches applied by educator in the classroom?

.....

.....

Are the learners' tasks engaging, more authentic and meaningful?

.....

.....

Are learners taking more responsibility for their learning, and thus, learning at greater depth?

.....  
.....

**CATEGORY D**

**GENERAL OBSERVATIONS (CULTURE AND CLIMATE)**

<b>Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	
-------------	--	-------------	--

Are there good and welcoming reception area, offices, classrooms and staffrooms in the school?

.....  
.....

Are there good Learner and Teacher Support Materials (LTSM)?

.....  
.....

Are there any visible signs or symbols articulating the nature of good teaching and learning (e.g. time tables, etc)?

.....  
.....

Are there any visible signs or symbols articulating commitment to excellence or celebration of achievement?

.....  
.....

Is there acceptance and celebration of diversity in the school?

.....  
.....

Do teachers arrive punctually to school and in the classrooms?

.....  
.....  
Do learners punctual to school and in the classrooms?

.....  
.....  
Are there supportive parents?

.....  
.....  
Is there good team work amongst the educators and how is it expressed?

.....  
.....  
Is there an equitable workload for educators?

.....  
.....  
Is there any monitoring and collegial support system in the school?

**Appendix C: Foundational documents examined during data analysis**

<b>Name or title of the document</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Details of document examined</b>
1. Turn-Around Strategy to 2014	LDoE www.ldoe.org.za	Published in 2011
2. School Mission Statement	Apple High School Strawberry High School Peach High School Orange High School Grape High School	Developed as part of the school policy. The section explored values underlying the school climate.
3. Department of Basic Education	www.Education.gov.za	Report on 2012 National Examination Results
4. Academic Performance Plan (APIP) (2013)/ School Development Plan (SDP)	Peach Secondary School Grape High School Orange High School	Developed in 2013 and covers all the terms in the year 2013.
5. Previous Minutes of the SMT Meetings	Apple High School Strawberry High School Peach Secondary School Orange High School Grape High School	Taken during the first term of the year (2013). However, minutes for underperforming schools were taken between July and September 2012.
6. School Magazine	Apple High School	Published in 2012 as annual publication of the school
7. School Code of Conduct	Apple High School Strawberry High School Orange High School Grape High School Peach Secondary School	Developed as part of school policy.

## **Appendix D: Observation Data**

All six sampled secondary schools fulfilled the observation schedule, despite the withdrawal from the study of Strawberry High School afterward. After the observations, the school principal and the SMT of this school withdrew from taking part in the interviews citing time constraints as the reason for withdrawal. However, data obtained from this school through observations were considered for data analysis. Only two types of meetings were observed, namely, morning briefing meeting and SMT meeting. The aspects of the observation schedule were observed in the following way:

### **Analysis of sections observed**

<b>School</b>	<b>Section of the schedule Details</b>
Apple High School	All sections of the observation schedule were observed.
Orange High School	All sections of the observation schedule except for the classroom observations (Section C) were addressed.
Peach Secondary School	No meeting (Section A) or classrooms (Section C) were observed as no SMT member was available for classroom observations.
Banana Secondary School	No classroom observation (Section C) was fulfilled.
Grape High School	Only aspects of climate (Section D) were observed as members of the SMT were very busy.
Strawberry High School	No meeting (Section A) was observed as the SMT was not able to meet because of examinations.

### **Summary of the observations conducted in the five secondary schools**

Data is presented according to the observation schedule.

The morning briefing meeting in Apple High School took place at seven o'clock while the two SMT meetings in Strawberry High School and Grape High School happened during school hours. The briefing meeting at Apple High School took place in the boardroom while the SMT meetings in Strawberry and Grape High Schools took place in the principal's office. The attendance in one SMT meeting (Strawberry High School) was a hundred percent, but attendance was sixty percent at Grape High school with other members engaged in important activities within the school. The school principal and the other two teachers were absent for the morning briefing meeting at Apple High School because they were either to arrive late or were on sick leave. In one school, ninety percent of the SMT members were males, in another both sexes were represented (seven males and three females). In the SMT meeting at Strawberry High School the principal declared the meeting opened and in another case at Grape High School the principal requested a volunteer to open the meeting with a short prayer. In this case, the meeting was also closed with a short benediction. The SMT members were seated randomly in a circular fashion with the principal among them but sitting at the front where every member was able to see him.

In both cases (meetings at Strawberry and Grape High Schools) the principal chaired the SMT meetings. In both the schools the secretary was present and taking notes for the team. No attendance register or roll call was circulated for members to sign. In one school no previous minutes were read and in another school each member of the SMT had typed minutes from the previous meeting which the secretary distributed earlier on in the meeting. The secretary then read the minutes which were later adopted as a true reflection of that previous meeting. In one school (Grape High School) there were no matters arising because no minutes were read from the previous meeting. In the Strawberry High School were minutes of the previous meeting were read, there were matters arising which included the issue of winter enrichment programme for the grade twelve learners.

When the meetings were in progress, the principals chairing the meetings were not showing any dictatorial behaviour whatsoever in all cases. The duration of the meetings were varied according to the different agendas the two schools had. Meetings lasted between one and one and half hours. In Grape High School the principal asked me to be excused as there was a very sensitive issue to be discussed that concerned a teacher's late coming. I observed confidentiality and left the meeting.

The agendas of the two schools I observed did not differ significantly in the sense that most items discussed were relating to administrative issues. These were issues such as examinations (analysis of mid-year examination or subject statistics, trial examination papers and timetables), Academic Performance Improvement Plans (APIP) and term written work survey. Other matters addressed in a meeting at Grape High School were review of policies, a sport trip, and vandalism. In the school where I observed the meeting to the end, other items in the agenda were not addressed because the principal felt it was too late to exhaust them. There were no parents or learners at any of the meetings, but there were post level one teachers who are senior teachers acting as heads of departments. In one school the post level one teacher was the SMT secretary. In another school the post level one teachers were presenting reports with respect to a sport trip and vandalism.

There were no signs of the SMT members feeling intimidated and acting in a reserved manner. In one case the principal dominated the discussions but the members contributed positively too, all of them. The members' contributions were very welcome and appreciated. In both cases the members showed respect for each other's views during deliberations. To reach decisions the SMT members gave their views and agreed on a particular issue. Each member had a say on whatever issue that was discussed and decision was reached through consensus. When they did not agree on a particular issue

they weighed the facts and found the most suitable solution. There was a case when members could not agree and decision was reached through a vote.

The deputy principal chaired the morning briefing I observed. The meeting was a reflection on what transpired in the Apple High School the day before. The morning briefing meeting was attended by more than fifty teachers and both sexes were represented. Notably, all racial groups were also represented. The deputy principal declared the meeting opened and welcomed all members of the staff. He did not dominate the meeting. Teachers leading various portfolios such as sport and Maths Olympiad gave reports back and where achievement was mentioned, the entire staff celebrated by clapping. The academic tutor painted a picture of how the day looked like, making announcements of teachers who were absent and who would be in charge of their classes. The meeting lasted for about thirty minutes.

There was no clear and convincing evidence of the presence of teacher leadership in the three selected schools where no meetings were observed. The only evidence, though superficial yet important, emerged in the three schools' meetings with teachers not holding any formal leadership position demonstrating leadership of academic committees and programmes. Respect for other members' ideas during these meetings was identified as one of the key values underpinning the leadership practice in these three schools. The principals were respectful of all the members in attendance irrespective of whether the member was an ordinary teacher or SMT member. Post level one teachers leading other portfolios were given respect and given status of managers during the meetings. Consequently, there was a professional dialogue in all the meetings I observed.

Integrity demonstrated by the principals chairing the meetings was another key value. The principals were honest and consistent in their dealings with all members attending the meetings. The principals were straightforward with all the members in the meetings and behaved consistently even when there was tension in the meetings, they chose to

apply the same value system to resolve the tension. In one case (at Strawberry High School), the enthusiasms with which the post level one teacher was reporting back on the winter enrichment programme she was heading demonstrated three important values, namely, participation, teamwork and responsibility. Participation means a sense of belonging and being involved in the activities whole heartedly and teamwork being part of the team and willing to work together with the SMTs. Responsibility is simply being accountable for the results.

The observation of classroom took place in Apple High School and Strawberry High School, both them are former model C schools in two different towns. In one class at Apple High School I observed an English lesson while in Strawberry High School I observed Mathematics lesson. All the classes were taught by the heads of departments and they were both Grade twelve classes. In both classes the teachers appeared to be well prepared and their lessons incorporated learner centred approaches which teachers applied consistently throughout the lessons. In an English class the teacher used a data projector and a laptop to teach a novel 'Nothing but the Truth' and this increased learners' concentration. The learners were then requested to dramatise the scenes and I observed that this approach improved their understanding of the novel.

The tasks given to learners were also engaging, more meaningful and authentic. In the Mathematics class that I observed the teacher was presenting a lesson on data handling. He then requested each learner to stand and write his or her shoe size on the chalkboard and the class was full of laughter as each learner wrote his or her shoe size. When all forty learners had written their shoe sizes, the teacher asked them to determine the median shoe size and then the mean size of the class. I found this task more authentic and meaningful as it related to the real life situation of the learners. The learners were learning at greater depth and taking responsibility for their learning.

The observation of the school climate and culture was conducted in all the six secondary schools. In Apple High School and Strawberry High School, there were good and welcoming reception areas, offices and staffrooms or boardrooms. Both these schools have employed receptionists who deal with all visitors to school including learners' parents. On my arrival at Apple High School, the receptionist liaised with the office of the principal through his secretary if I had an appointment. The SMT's offices were expensively furnished with tables, chairs and cabinets. In another school that is rurally located, there was an administrative block but there was no receptionist. I had to move straight to the office of the school principal for reception. In two schools (Peach Secondary and Grape High School) the school governing bodies built the principals and their SMTs some offices but there were no reception areas for visitors in these schools. The principals' offices are however, well furnished and welcoming. In one school, the school principal together with a couple of his SMT members was using a classroom which was not very welcoming.

Generally, Apple High School and Strawberry High School have adequate learners and teachers support materials and various facilities including data projectors, libraries, computer laboratories, and science labs. In the other schools, the dominating support materials are textbooks. In another school (Grape High School) there is a computer lab with about ten computers full of dust which could be a sign of them having become white elephants. In this school there was also a science laboratory which also serves as an office for the science HoD. There are books scattered all over the place in this laboratory. In the SMTs offices, staffrooms and classrooms the signs or symbols articulating the nature of good teaching and learning are school timetables and personalised teacher timetables.

In almost all schools there were achievement certificates hanging on the walls which were visible symbols articulating commitment to excellence or celebration of schools' and learners' achievements. Another symbol of achievement seen in the two former

model C schools (Apple High School and Strawberry High School) were trophies for academic achievements, leadership, sports, arts and culture locked in cabinets at reception areas, the principals' offices and selected SMTs offices. There was also a list of the term's top achieving learners on the foyers and class cabinets demonstrating the value placed on learner achievement. Medals were also displayed in class cabinets as a symbol for celebrating achievement.

The other aspect of school culture observed was punctuality. In four schools, both teachers and learners respected reporting time as well as instructional time. No learner or teacher was seen arriving late to school or getting to class late. On the contrary, I observed on two occasions that thirty percent of learners in two schools (Peach Secondary School and Grape High School) were locked outside the school yard because they arrived late. Worse still, after the siren call about ten to fifteen minutes of instructional time was wasted as teachers were seen dragging their feet to their classrooms or they were still chatting. In all schools except these two, learners arrive at seven o'clock for morning classes so there was not a chance for them to be late.

In terms of parents' involvement or support, I observed two cases that perhaps highlight the plight of the two schools where these instances occurred. In one school (Orange High School), the guardian parent who was called to attend to the case of his nephew arrived at the school fuming because she did not understand why the school called her for just a simple case of absenteeism. As I was standing outside the admin block compiling my notes, I was approached by this very parent raising her concerns that teachers "call us for trivial matters" and they must start acting like parents to our children and must not call us every time the child misbehaves. She added "We have put them in charge of our children for the better part of the day, so they must prove to us that they are good parents". Another instance that happened at Grape High School was when the parents threatened to bewitch a HOD who referred her child's case of sexual harassment to a disciplinary

hearing. On a positive note, I observed a parent who came to the same school and cooperated with the deputy principal who was disciplining the child who came to school late. Another parent who arrived during my observation at Apple High School became overwhelmed by grief when the receptionist told her that her child failed the June examination allegedly because she was on drugs, but she pledged to support the school at all costs.

There was no clear evidence that good teamwork existed amongst the teachers in the schools observed except catching some glimpses of teamwork in the meetings observed. The aspect of lack of equitability when it comes to workload for teachers in schools especially with regard to teaching periods was observed in the underperforming schools. In Grape High School, the school principal is not teaching, his two deputy principals are only teaching two classes, one of which is grade twelve. The six heads of departments are also teaching two classes which amount to an average of sixteen periods per week for each HOD. The teachers, on the other hand, are teaching between 25 and 40 periods per week. In this school most of the principal's management functions, such as handling correspondence, professional development of teachers and instructional leadership, are executed by his first deputy principal.

In Apple High School and Strawberry High School, the school principals are not teaching but they were always seen walking around the school grounds, monitoring and giving support to teachers and learners. In these schools, I observed the presence of strict monitoring systems. I observed teachers' files including preparation files and Continuous Assessment (CASS) files in the HoDs' offices for term moderation. The deputy principals had the HoDs' files to check and moderate while the deputy principals' files were checked by the school principals. I was not able to observe anything regarding monitoring systems in the other four schools.

## **Appendix E: Transcription of Semi-Structured Interviews**

**Researcher:** *Considering the academic performance of learners in Apple High School, what would you identify as the moral purpose underlying your educational leadership approaches that you take to transform the learning of the learners?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** I basically believe that the moral purpose underlying the performance of learners here at the [Apple High School] is the directive of the Constitution. We see education as the constitutional right and that is the basis of our day to day duties. We know we carry the constitutional mandate to educate the nation.

**Researcher:** *Ok! What would you state as key expressions or values of moral purpose in the [Apple High School] that enhance the academic leadership and learner achievement?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** I still believe that the values enshrined in our Constitution, to a large extent, play a very critical role in influencing learner performance. We try at all cost to instill values of respect, for instance, because learning is a by-product of a sound discipline to be precise. We cannot have good performance in an environment which is not discipline driven. So we try at all cost to make sure that from both the learners and the teachers, there is an element of mutual respect as informed by our Constitution, of course, because I will refer from time to time because that is the basis for our business here at school.

**Researcher:** *To what extent has the moral purpose influenced your leadership approaches and learner achievement in the past three years?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** The past three years?

**Researcher:** *Yes.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** From the learners' side only or performance as a function of both the learners and the educators?

**Researcher:** *Both.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** We know that educators have the moral responsibility to teach and that as well informs our monitoring and evaluation, that the

key role and the key responsibility of any teacher here at school is to be in class on time and do what he or she is expected of or seem to be doing. Our learners as well we expect them to be in class on time and do what they are expected to be doing. They should be in class, they should be taught, and they should also adhere to the teacher's instructions to make sure there is effective learning and teaching.

**Researcher:** *So how has this moral purpose influenced your leadership as a manager in the past three years? If you look back three years from now, how has this moral purpose influenced your leadership?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** As a leader, isn't that I know that leadership is about people, is about human beings, so the teachers and the learners are the people I am leading. So in one way or another I should influence them, and if I'm to influence them positively, I should as well be seen doing right. And it is true what I do, how I manage my work life as well as my personal life because it affects the working milieu. I do at all cost to make sure that whatever I do is geared towards supporting the human beings I lead – the educators and children as well alike. I'm defined as care and supporting this school, so I provide care and support for effective teaching and learning.

**Researcher:** *Ok, thanks. My forth question is that: Do you believe that the moral purpose within your school management team here in your school is shared? If it is shared why, if it is not, why it is not, and how it is shared?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** I believe it is shared because we strive from time to time to ensure that we work towards a common goal. And you cannot seem to be achieving one thing as it is a common one thing if the lines of communication are closed or restricted. So whatever information we get either in the form of circulars from the department or whatever, in whatever form, we make sure it reaches educators and we effectively make use of our morning briefings to cascade such information to our educators. So our lines of communication are very open, our lines of communication here at Apple High Schoolre very open. And we are also accessible to our educators at all

times, we don't, for instance, we don't like them to feel like we are superiors, we are colleagues in education and the common purpose is to educate to the best of our ability.

**Researcher:** *So within your structure as a team, is it shared by all the members?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** It is shared by all members; we have meetings, like I have said you can't have a common goal in a situation where there is silence. So every Tuesday we have our SMT meetings just, to make sure that we are still on the common side or same page or same chapter of the book, so we do that more often.

**Researcher:** *To what extent do you think the shared moral purpose, now that you say it shared across at your school, to what extent has this enhanced teacher or shared leadership, where teachers also play a role as leaders and how do they play a role?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** You know we make sure that whatever we do here at school is not an SMT's responsibility, whatever we decide upon we engage the educators. If you look at our SMT's structure we have educators who are not HoDs, there are just educators but they are put of the school management team. So in a way we are saying to them, whatever good thing you are doing we will recognize your expertise and call for your help so that we can co-manage the school. Exactly ... I think so, of course, because you say I should think. But I think so.

**Researcher:** *Usually what roles do they play?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** The non-HoDs or members of the SMT who are not ...

**Researcher:** *Those teachers who are not holding the formal ...*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Ok. We have given them roles, different roles. I will give you some of the roles the educators are playing here. Some are coach tutors, coach tutors are discipline educators. They enhance and instill discipline in their various grades. Some are academic tutors; their baby is to make sure that these children pass. They did not pass, what are the barriers, what are the intervention strategies, what can we do or they do to make sure that the learners pass. Others are class register teachers; they

keep register on daily basis. So everybody has the role to play apart from just going to ...And we also have structures, of course, wherein they participate maximally. We also have admission committee, is not only for the SMTs, we have also roped in the services of junior educators. We also have our sport arenas, we have our educators there, so they have got roles, different roles to play, academic and social roles. Others are the members of bereavement committees and birthday clubs, so we have given them opportunity to show us what they can do. So that they can have a sense of ownership to say our school, Apple High School, our school, not their school, so we have given them roles to play.

**Researcher:** *What are crucial factors that inhibit school management team to translate this moral purpose into practice?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** In other schools?

**Researcher:** *In your school.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Factors that makes it difficult for us to translate or transfer whatever we have to other members?

**Researcher:** *To ... To practice the moral purpose, to make, to implement the moral purpose that you have as a team, what are the common factors, the challenges that you have, they confront on daily basis and you feel these one, two, three factors make it difficult to implement what you want to achieve. You said that the moral purpose is you need to educate these learners. But what are the challenges that make it impossible for you to, at least, implement the moral purpose?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** For me as the deputy principal?

**Researcher:** *Yes, for you and your team.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** I am trying to think of a scenario, but ... for now I'm failing because, I can't think of one, to be honest because you know what we do on day-to-day, we make sure we talk to our educators. You know to highlight all the hiccups that might be there ... I don't remember in any instance where whatever we

want to translate to the educator is vehemently not or not well received by the other parties. So ....

**Researcher:** *Generally looking at the system, the school itself, what are other challenges that you feel they challenge you, whether are from the learners, the parents ...*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** You know the challenges will come from the learners ... yes ... the challenge will come from the learners. We have one thousand two hundreds and something, two thousand and something learners. But a high number of our kids are those we are very proud of, but we have, you know, a group of learners who we seem not to be getting it right with them, either because those learners are on drugs, we have such learners, either because those learners come from families background with some social issues that need to be addressed. And such impact on their performance that is our great ... that is where we worry much. And of that sample I have spoken to you about, some we do get maximum cooperation from the parents and we refer the kids for rehabilitation. But some, as in some, some we don't get cooperation because either the parents are very protective or they are busy, their schedules is so busy they don't have time to come to school. And you feel like you are stuck with the soul and you don't know what to do with the child. And the systems is like what we have, as you are speaking about the systems, if you suspend the child, you should remember that the aim is to rectify behaviour, so but if you suspend, suspend or recommend expulsion, which is harsh, of course, it fails you, it fails the constitution because the aim is to educate all, is not to educate some and expel some or suspend some. And that is, that is I think, that is our grey area. And the other challenge is, you know, we quintile five, these learners, majority of them they come from very affluent background, they have money, as big money. And you can imagine a situation where a child is so well lined, his or her pockets are well lined, the child is likely not to receive discipline quite well. Because is like the child is bigger than life, that is the challenge in itself. And the suppliers out there, the suppliers of these intoxicating substances and drugs, they see Apple High School as

fertile market for their stock, can you see that. And that is the worrying factor that is what I can think of as an impediment, though it does not affect a high large or high group of learners, but it is worrisome. Because remember the teaching fraternity is the noble fraternity, is the holy fraternity, we care for these kids, we don't see them as ... We are not in industries where we produce goods, for the purpose of goods. We mentor lives, we want to see that all of them, if it was in our powers, all of them, of course, should just make it in life, but it is factors like those that will fail our aspirations as managers and leaders of the schools.

**Researcher:** *Ok. Can you quickly describe an instance where the sharing of the moral purpose is hampered by the behaviour of one of the members of your SMT?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Sadly, to be honest with you I do not remember very well of an instance where one member of the SMT would become a barrier. We ... We might have vigorous debates, that we can have. We might have differences but at the end we would agree that we differ to agree. So we don't just have members or a member who would definitely defy and fight for their story, no we don't have such, to be honest with you. Whatever little differences we have are very manageable, we will differ but eventually we will come to consensus, we would agree, we will definitely agree. It doesn't mean our debate are as plastid as you can think, there are very robust debates, if you can attend our SMT meeting you will see ourselves, we differ, very, but at the end we do agree.

**Researcher:** *But do you think it is your responsibility to address the challenges you alluded to in your school as the manager?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** As managers we are at the helm of policy implementation, and I should believe that the policy of education as far as child is concern is that we should make our learning spaces conducive for learning and teaching and as a result whatever challenge we come across as a manager you need to rise above

that challenge. And indeed it is my responsibility, to make sure that whatever challenges we come across they are addressed.

**Researcher:** *So, can you describe a technique(s) that you often apply in instances when you, as you, are hands-on addressing other members of the SMT you view as having different opinion or ideas or perhaps hampering the sharing, as you ...?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** As an individual?

**Researcher:** *Yes as an individual ... Here is the member you view as like this member is somehow hampering the sharing of this moral purpose?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Even if the member is on the opposite side of things we don't take it personal, myself I don't take it personal. I know we all have the right to think, but all of us even if we have our own different thinking, whatever we are thinking should be constructive. So if in my view I feel like somebody is to comprise, like the moral purpose why we are here, and the shared purpose, in my view, I think I need to talk to the person one-on-one, that I will do. And if I feel I should talk to somebody to talk to the person, that I will do. If I think the person need a formal communiqué that I will do. If it is writing a memo to the person and addressing the issue I don't hesitate to do that. But in all fairness whatever we do we strive for a situation where our SMT members do not withdraw what they have, like they should not feel like if I say something, mam would be on my case. It shouldn't be the case, they are free, in fact they are free to air their views as much as they can. It is from the pool that collectively we will decide which opinions could work for us, which contribution will build the school. Because it is not about ourselves as educators or as leaders, it is about the nation, it is about the welfare of the kids, it is about performance of the kids. Whatever we do, it doesn't matter, whatever we do, whatever strategies we apply, but at the end the government needs good performance, the parents are waiting for us to deliver, the kids as well, they cannot afford to be failed. So eventually at the end is about learner performance ...

**Researcher:** *So, in conclusion, what more can you tell me about your moral purpose generally?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Generally, I know that the teaching fraternity has cause for people with heart, as with heart, because we are working with kids, they are very fragile; we are working with kids they are under severe peer pressure. And such kind of things cannot be overlooked or underrated, because they impact on their performance. So in conclusion I'm saying I'm still in love with what I do on daily basis. I greatly care about the kids because I believe they are our future that is the common phrase, anyway. But you work hand in gloves with the kids, if you prove to them beyond reasonable doubt that you are there for them they will never fail you. So you develop a relationship with the kids in which it becomes very reciprocal in which becomes very mutual, they know mam should be in class, she should be there and teach, and we can't afford to fail her. So the two of you happen to be on the same side, to say I'm expected to teach and the learner would definitely say I can't afford to fail the teacher. At the same time the teacher is saying I cannot afford to fail the kids, so you just happen to have a very reciprocal relationship. And trust me it works. It works, if these kids see us as their secondary parents, it works because then they can trust you, both of you the kids and teachers find themselves in a relationship which is trust-bound, and makes teaching and learning very easy.

**Researcher:** *To sum up, maybe in two lines, what would you define your moral purpose?*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** As in coming up with a definition?

**Researcher:** *Yes, If you say ok, this is precisely my ... the moral purpose, really, I don't know when you first came in, but ...*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Ok. I just believe that the first teacher was Christ.

**Researcher:** *Ok.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** And if that is the philosophy I draw my day-to-day operation from, then I know that I have a responsibility to make the nation proud. It doesn't matter where I am, but for now that I'm still here at Apple High School, I owe it to the community where these kids come from to make their parents proud.

**Researcher:** *Ok. Thank you very much.*

**Apple High School: Deputy Principal A:** Thank you. Thank you.

## **Appendix F: Information sheet and consent form**

### **1. Name of researcher**

Dear participant

I am Mr. M.L Ramalepe. I am a DEd: Educational Management student at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

### **2. What I am doing**

I am conducting research on “**The role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools**”. The study is set out to examine what school management teams identify as moral purpose underlying their educational leadership practices and to what extent does this moral purpose enhance academic achievement of all learners in the school. It further seeks to understand in depth how the moral purpose of the school is shared and expressed in the offices, staff rooms and classroom. Data will be obtained by the use of the following techniques: semi-structured interviews with members of the SMTs, scheduled observations (e.g. observation of the prevailing school culture) and document collection and analysis (e.g. mission statement, minutes of SMT meetings).

### **3. Participation**

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you about your knowledge and opinions on moral purpose as cultivated by the SMT in your school. If you agree, I will ask you to take part in one interview for approximately one hour or be observed while in management or departmental meetings. I will also ask you to participate for the whole duration of the study, which is one month.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you

choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

#### **4. Confidentiality / anonymity**

All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others and will be kept confidential to the extent possible. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee in the college of education. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) On this note I am asking you to give me permission to tape-record the interview so that I can accurately record what is said. Your answers will be stored electronically in a secure environment and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal who you are.

I will not record your name anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name) and I will refer to you in this way in the data and report or other research output. Your school will also be referred to as Apple High School, B et cetera.

#### **5. Selection of participants and number involved**

The participants (school principals, deputy principals and heads of departments) will be selected on the basis of their availability. This means that the six secondary schools and eighteen members of the SMTs are selected based on their willingness to participate in the case study. In addition, the six schools will be selected on the basis of the varying historical contexts, with three selected from previously disadvantaged black schools, and

the other three from previously advantaged schools (schools that had privileges from the apartheid education system). In order to provide valid data that address the purpose of this study, the schools will also be at varying levels of learner performance.

#### **6. Summary of findings/debriefing**

The summary of results will be communicated to you as participants through emails.

#### **7. Risks or discomfort**

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm from your participation.

#### **8. Benefits**

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in that we hope will promote understanding of the concept of moral purpose and how it influence how school management team perform their responsibilities to transform the learning of learners. If you would like to receive feedback on our study, I will record your phone number on a separate sheet of paper and can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after September 2013.

#### **9. Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns**

This research has been approved by the UNISA College of Education Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please email the chairperson of the REC at [Lroucs@unisa.ac.za](mailto:Lroucs@unisa.ac.za). If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call me at 073 506 0507 or email me at [tetelo4life@ymail.com](mailto:tetelo4life@ymail.com).

**CONSENT**

I hereby agree to participate in research on “**The role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools**”. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.

.....

**Signature of participant**

**Date:**.....

**CONSENT FOR TAPE RECORDING**

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

.....

**Signature of participant**

**Date:**.....

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

.....

**Signature of participant**

**Date:**.....

**Appendix G: Limpopo Department of Education Approval Letter**



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

*Enquiries: Dr. Makola MC, Tel No: 015 290 9448. Email: MakolaMC@educ Limpopo.gov.za*

P O BOX 2314

TZANEEN

0850

Dear Ramalepe M.L

**RE: Request for permission to Conduct Research**

1. The above bears reference.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved – **THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN CULTIVATING MORAL PURPOSE IN LIMPOPO SECONDARY SCHOOLS.**
3. The following conditions should be considered:
  - 3.1. The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2. Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerned.
  - 3.3. The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools
  - 3.4. The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the forth term.
  - 3.5. During the study, the research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
  - 3.6. Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the department.

4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at School/Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
5. The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.

Best wishes



Thamaga MJ

Head of Department

2013 -01- 12

Date

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Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700  
Tel: (015) 290 7600. Fax: (015) 297 6920/4220/4494

*The heartland of Southern Africa – Development is about people!*

**Appendix H: Certificate from Editor**

8 Nahoon Valley Place  
Nahoon Valley  
East London  
5241

07 May 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the following doctoral thesis using the Windows “Tracking” system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action:

*The role of school management teams in cultivating moral purpose in Limpopo secondary schools* by Matome Liphy Ramalepe, submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the subject of Education Management at the University of South Africa.

Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)  
Professional Editor

Email: bcarlson521@gmail.com  
Cell: 0834596647

Appendix I: Consent letter from the school



Mohlatlego-Machaba High School

P.O BOX 3959

TZANEEN

0850

20 March 2013

Mohlatlego Machaba High School

EMIS NO: 0918510682

"If we can't find the way we'll make one"

To: Mr. Ramalepe M.L  
P O Box 2314  
Tzaneen  
0850

**Re: Approval to conduct research**

The school would like to inform you that your request to conduct research in our school has been granted. The approval is granted on a condition that you (the researcher) will follow certain ethical considerations such as allowing for voluntary participation and practicing anonymity in reporting findings.

The school wishes you the best in your study and hope to share with you the experiences of your expedition.

Yours faithfully

Mr. Mutshinya F.E  
(School Deputy Principal)

Date

20/03/2013

