

**SERVANT-LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FAITH-
BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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DECLARATION

Student number: **44389558**

I declare that "SERVANT-LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FAITH BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA" is my own work and that all sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted parameters for originality.

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Shula Melese

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STATEMENT REGARDING ORIGINALITY OF THESIS

I hereby declare that the originality software checking obtained by Mr M T Shula for his thesis titled, SERVANT-LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA, has been considered by me.

I confirm that the thesis meets an acceptable standard of originality

Supervisor: Professor Chris van Wyk

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the servant-leadership practices of principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa. For the purpose of this study the researcher employed a qualitative case study design, using the constructivist paradigm. The data gathering methods consisted of semi-structured interviews with six principals, focus group discussion with other six principals and three teachers and later on employed direct observation of two principals. In total, 15 participants were involved in the study.

The findings show that for the participants servant-leadership is understood and practised as a call to service, to lead as a team and build capacity to lead together as a community. This study also further showed the importance of the ten characteristics that identify the essence of a servant-leader in school principals' servant-leadership practice, especially in the South African context.

According to the findings from study data, inspiring qualities required of the servant-leader, patience, living by example, desire to serve others, putting the needs of others first, especially the underprivileged. Additional fruits of servant-leadership are empowerment, establishment of healthy relationships, support for one another, creating trust, collaborative leadership, community building, self-sacrifice of the leader for his/her school community, and the servant-leader truly representing the idea of service to members of the school community.

This study further noted that school leaders' leadership role in faith-based Christian schools is guided by biblical principles of love, compassion, and care for the needy. In order to practise these principles, principals are to be humble, relational, and servant-hearted. However, these biblical principles wouldn't have any value if there is no credibility, integrity, or leading by example.

The study also attempted to create some strategies to develop servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools, this study suggests that school leaders inculcate the spirit of collaboration and communication in their schools, practise attentively the ten characteristics of servant-leadership, build relationships, set a clear vision for the school with the school community and negotiation skills.

This study generated several implications for policy, practice, and further research. First, the policy that faith-based Christian schools of South Africa make an intentional choice to promote servant-leadership would serve a good purpose.

Secondly, using servant-leadership practicing principals to share their experiences with new principals during the hiring process is a practice worth imitating.

To understand a broader picture of the servant-leadership role and practice of faith-based Christian school principals, this study suggests future research be extended to get information from parents and learners as well.

Future research that compares servant-leadership practices in high schools and primary could open new understanding of servant-leadership, as elementary schools have more parental engagement in their schools.

A future study could investigate the correlation between the practices of teachers and of principals of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools.

Key terms:

Authentic leadership; building community; characteristics of servant-leadership; challenges of servant-leadership; Faith-based, leadership theories; moral leadership; School principals; servant-leadership; service; teamwork; transformational leadership.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED IN THIS STUDY

ACE: Association of the Christian schools

CIE: Catholic Institute of Education

DoE: Department of Education

ISASA: Independent Schools Association of South Africa

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The current demands in philosophy and leadership theories have challenged educational leadership (Sackney & Walker, 2007). Faith-based Christian education leadership is not immune to those challenges. Sergiovanni (1993) notes that the type of leadership that our society of today and schools in particular require is a type of leadership that speaks of the realities of the followers and connected to their values. Sergiovanni (1993: 20) wrote, "It is a morally based leaders that represents a form of stewardships, a commitment to serve others and to serve ideals". (Botha, 2011; Nsiah, 2013:200). Nsiah (2013:212) further note that this shift calls for the renewed acknowledgement of the concept of servant-leadership as advocated by Greenleaf (1977:35), who says that with the idea of shared leadership, the interest of followers is regarded as more important than self-interest. Nsiah (2013:27) noted that "Such kind of leadership practiced in the school community leads to stronger learning school communities with increased learning outcomes that set learners, staff, and parents on the path to initiatives and personal development. This kind of leadership is called "servant-leadership". Most faith-based institutions rely on a mission as the guiding force academically and administratively (Dickens, 2015:88). Within this mission lies the concept of putting the learner first, which is a model of servant-leadership. Gannell (2014:33) says that leaders within Christian schools are expected to have an understanding of the beliefs of their school communities, and should be able to articulate these beliefs, and develop practices consistent with that. These leaders are to practice leadership like servant-leaders as they are called to fulfil their Christian call for the good of all school community members. However, in a multicultural society like South Africa, this comes with challenges.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the servant-leadership practices of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa, and how these relate to the literature. To answer the question of how servant-leadership is practiced by school principals in faith-based Christian schools, literature related to the subject has been reviewed. Given the fact that this study was conducted within faith-based Christian schools, the researcher sought to identify the relationship between servant-leadership and other theories of leadership.

In the first section of this research, the researcher attempted to introduce the historical background of the faith-based Christian schools and the context of the study. In the rest of this first chapter, the problem has been stated, as well as the objectives, significance, limitation & delimitation and organisation of the study. The researcher provided the definitions of key terms.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Before the arrival of the first European invaders Swartz (2006) in South Africa in 1652, there was no European-based system of teaching and learning in the traditional African societies. At that time, the African groups had informal educational programmes that were selected and implemented by the populations (Kruger, (2005:121). Those programmes answered to the needs of the African environments at the time (Msimang, 2003:123). The process of education involved the training of young people regarding manners, roles, responsibilities, history, and the importance of the military and fighting skills (Hayward, 2007).

Before 1880, education was imparted unevenly between settlers and indigenous people (Sayed, 2002). In the more densely populated areas, there were private schools, as well as some boarding schools. These were often of poor quality and run by people without any formal education. The focus of those private schools was also on financial gain to build their structure and not pedagogical issues. Van der Walt (2016:86) notes that there was no coherent system of education.

1.2.1 Missionary education

The aim of British control in South Africa, like in other places, was to spread their empire. They introduced a British education system that was colonial by nature. Christie (1988:68) notes that the British wanted to use education as a channel to expand their traditions and to have social control in South Africa.

In South Africa, many schools arose in the British tradition and teachers were brought directly from Britain, especially at the establishment of mission schools in the country (Msilax 2007:148). Christie (1988:148) further notes that mission schools were also introduced to spread the Western way of life among the Africans and to teach them certain work values.

It is clear that while the missionaries provided a Western education system in South Africa for the good of the public, they also had hidden interests that they wanted to fulfil. Therefore, the aim of the British government and the missionaries was to use education to pursue their political aims. Sir George Grey who was the governor of the Cape in 1855 wrote, as quoted by Damos (2016:43):

If we leave the natives beyond our border ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with common faith and common interest, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to raise the natives in Christianity and civilization, by establishing among them missions connected with industrial schools. The native races beyond our boundary, influenced by our missionaries, instructed in our schools, benefiting by our trade would not make wars on our frontiers.

Thus, the above quotation summarises the political intentions of missionary education in South Africa. The goal was to make South Africans docile by using a British Christian philosophy in the education system Msila, (2007:149). The second period of formal education in South Africa is the Afrikaner National Education or the period of Christian National Education (CNE).

1.2.2 Christian National Education (CNE)

CNE could be traced from the 1600s when it was still minimal (Msila, 2007:148). The whole process began after the Anglo-Boer war between the British and the Afrikaners. The Afrikaners had different education system from the British education system. Therefore, they saw the British education system as isolating the Afrikaners from their own cultural practices. Consequently, Afrikaners established their own schools system, based on CNE (Msila, 2007:149). However, the aim of Christian National Education (CNE) established by Afrikaner nationalists was almost the same like that of the missionaries. In both systems education was politicised and religion was abused. Jansen (2004:66) explains that the policies of apartheid were purposefully intended to disenfranchise black South Africans and predestine them for lives of servitude and inferior social standing.

The main goal of the apartheid education was to maintain that status quo and of preserving the master-servant relationship between white people and Africans. During that time the white boys were taught how important it was to protect their land and

their education and it enhanced the superiority complex over black Africans (Kallaway, 2009:20)

(Chidester, 2006:65) notes that during the era of apartheid government Christian religion was used to reinforce racist legislation and segregation. Indeed, from 1948, the constitution and the way it was interpreted played a big role with regard to the policy.

The transformative process from apartheid oppression to democracy was a long and painstaking process (Chidester, 2006:123). According to Chidester (2006:64), preparing for the democratic transition as early as 1992, the national education policy investigation considered the following elements:

- to abandon the previous religious education systems which focused on Christian religion;
- to end all religious discrimination and religious coercion in education;
- to recognise the need for change;
- to eliminate religion entirely from the school curriculum;
- to develop new programmes for religious instruction; and
- to introduce a multi-religious education system that would increase tolerance and understanding for diversity.

1.2.3 Educational change in South Africa after 1994

In 1994, the end of apartheid was celebrated in South Africa. The end of the apartheid era and the beginning of democratic South Africa gave unique opportunities to rebuild a deeply divided and discriminatory education system in our country, and create a unified system without boundaries between diverse racial groups and economic conditions of the citizens. The policy on religious education, as approved by the Council of Education Ministers in 2003, gives guidelines overseeing religious freedom. The following is what is found written in it:

As a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages and religions we are duty bound to ensure that through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognizes our diversity. This should be particularly evident in our public schools where no

particular religious ethos should be dominant over and suppress others. The policy ensured to protect the rights of all learners, and recognize and respects. The policy recognizes the rich diverse religious heritage and adopts a co-operative model that accepts our rich heritage and the possibility for creative inter-operative model that accepts our rich heritage and the possibility for creative inter-action between schools and faith whilst, protecting our young people from religious discrimination or coercion.

Chidester (2006:66) notes that the above policy describes the clear connection of religion and education in such a way that it acknowledges the rich religious diversity of our country.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

School leaders of public and faith-based schools have multiple job responsibilities. They are expected to know the curriculum, assessment methods, administrative protocols, legal requirements, resource allocation, the need for professional development, and many other school matters (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013:88). Sergiovanni (2005a:44) notes that school leaders are also accountable for the improvement of school achievements. Steyn, (2012:89) contends that understanding the leadership responsibilities of school principals is crucial for the improvement of school achievement.

Servant-leadership aims to develop individuals within the school environment, and advocates for group-oriented decision-making to strengthen the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in the school. Taylor (2014:97) points out that as international attention in the last decade has focused on calls for schools to improve performance in general, and to increase the equity of learner achievement in particular, the debate over the role of school principals in improving school performance has been intensified. Steyn, (2012:33) explains that even though considerable progress has been made in researching, more research is still required to address the question of the paths by which a school principal can achieve school effectiveness in South Africa.

Bush (2011:65) and Clark (2014:78) also contend that there is great interest in educational leadership today, because of researchers' common belief that the quality of leadership can produce a significant difference in the outcomes for schools and

learners. The ever-changing social, political and economic environment agitates learners and whole school communities to raise a new set of demands, which is posing serious challenges to traditional forms of leadership.

Scholars like Edwards (2014:58) contend that servant-leadership has its foundations in basic Christian principles. Greenleaf (1977:55), who coined the term “servant-leadership”, believes that instructors and principals who work in faith-based education environments, should be fundamentally predisposed to exhibiting principles of servant-leadership in their day-to-day lives, as that can result in bringing positive outcomes. Prior (2017:145) advocates servant-leadership for today’s faith-based Christian schools, as it motivates the growth of the followers, common-vision, and ethical behaviours in the society and the schools as a whole. Although there is a vast amount of information about servant-leadership, little is related to how it is practiced by the school principals of faith-based Christian schools, particularly in the South African context.

Spaull (2013:88), writing on the education crisis in South Africa, points out that the most common weakness among school leaders leading to the failure of school achievement, is the inability to work with others. This is the opposite of what is expected from the school principals who practice the principles of servant-leadership. Msila (2014:33), in his journal article, explicitly recommends servant-leadership for school principals in South Africa. These ideas stimulated the interest of this researcher to explore the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa, and how that is related to the literature on this subject.

The initial interest of this researcher in servant-leadership stemmed from his past role as school principal of Holy Cross Primary Catholic School, and deepened from his master's dissertation on principals' understanding of servant-leadership in selected Christian primary schools in South Africa. That research revealed that the quality of the school leader or principal was one major factor that made a school successful or not. Thus, he wanted to deepen this by asking empirical questions such as, to what extent do school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in the South African context practice servant-leadership? What does it mean for these leaders to be principals in faith-based Christian school communities? What challenges do they encounter in practicing the servant-leadership ideal in their day-to-day work? Does this leadership

ideal assist in the establishment of stronger learning school communities in the current times in faith-based Christian schools? Such questions motivated this researcher to focus this doctoral study on servant-leadership practices of school principals of Faith-based Christian schools in the South African context.

1.4 The purpose of the study

Although much has been written and said about servant-leadership to date, there has not been any doctoral study done on principals' servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools in the South African context that the researcher has been able to find. However, researchers and scholars (Areas, 2013; Bush, 2016; Dannhauser, 2012; Glenda, 2013; Greenleaf, 1977) have written about the importance of this ideal of leadership. To fill this void, this researcher relied upon various leadership theories and servant-leadership studies conducted in other countries relating to faith-based Christian schools (Nsiah, 2013; Prior, 2017; Striepe, 2014). Besides describing the importance of servant-leadership practices, these studies indicate that where school leaders follow the principles of this kind of leadership, a critically important aspect, such as learner achievement, has improved. Obviously, these remarks do not mean that there are no public or independent schools that are not doing well academically in South Africa. This researcher intended, however, to show the importance of servant-leadership practices in the context of South African faith-based Christian schools.

This study will contribute to the limited research in the faith-based Christian educational leadership field in South Africa, providing empirical evidence regarding the following areas:

- the knowledge from this study could update the existing knowledge in the area of public and faith-based Christian educational leadership, providing empirical evidence to the OGOD case on religious practices in public schools;
- it would help to bring clarity to the Department of Education (educational policymakers) and the faith-based schools to understand the religious practices related to the servant-leadership; and
- the researcher anticipated that the information obtained from this study could be used to set up a systematic agenda for training principals, both for those in their posts and for those who will become principals in faith-based schools in South Africa.

Further, this researcher hoped that this study would serve as the foundation for further research in this area.

This doctoral research portrays how servant-leadership theory has found its way into the cognitive frameworks used by leaders in faith-based Christian schools to guide their work and be seen as being appropriate for faith-based Christian schools in the South African context.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At a time when schools are underperforming, the researcher believed it is important to explore the value of alternative leadership forms, such as servant-leadership. As mentioned, the research problem is to investigate servant-leadership practices of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. To guide this inquiry process, the main question is:

How do school principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa practice the principles of servant-leadership?

The specific research questions are as follows.

- How could the nature of servant-leadership be understood?
- Why are the characteristics of faith-based schools unique?
- How could the differences between servant-leadership practices and other kinds of leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools be explained?
- How do principals in faith-based Christian schools practice servant-leadership principles in their day-to-day school leadership?
- Which guidelines can be used to establish the implementation of servant-leadership practices in faith-based schools?

1.6 RATIONALE

Edwards (2017:49) points out that in the 21st century, apart from managing skills, school leaders should possess the qualities of caring for their followers and learn to lead by examples. Northouse (2004:57) writes, "Effective leadership is in high demand in today's schools". In particular, there is a call for strong ethical leadership". According to Sergiovanni (2005b:152), the ethical and moral leadership demanded in the 21st century schools is servant-leadership, which implies service to parents, teachers, and

learners as the crucial elements. Congruent thinking by Hulst (2012:38) led to her conclusion that a radically different perception on leadership, an ethic of caring, is needed in today's faith-based Christian schools if our purpose as leaders is to nurture children and bring them up to be caring, moral, productive members of society. Jacinta (2012:67) presents a sombre picture of uncaring leadership. Jacinta (2012:68) states that the world is in desperate need of a different leadership role model today, because there are abandoned values, betrayed trust, exploitation, and manipulation committed by people with power and influence. She continues to note that African leaders exploit privileges of position, causing ruin for employees and investors.

Obviously, the leader of any school community, particularly of the faith-based schools, whose leadership includes all leadership flaws expressed by Jacinta (2012) in the above quotation, would not be able to build an effective school community. This draws the attention to the need for school leaders in faith-based schools to be follower-centred, and practice a leadership style that pays greater attention to the priorities of the followers. Consequently, this particular study is significant for the following reasons.

Firstly, the rationale for this research reported in the thesis was informed by scholars (Craig, 2012; Grace, 2003) who argue that the field of educational leadership research has generally neglected to consider its role in relation to faith-based schools. Grace, (2009) also notes that it is important to expand research on faith-based Christian schools, given that in an international and South African context faith-based schools are growing in considerable numbers and play an important role in the society. Bush and Glover (2003:40), Hale (2016:74) and Leithwood (2008:127) note that the field of educational leadership research has established a number of significant and accepted conclusions about the importance of leadership to schools, especially in the area of school effectiveness. It would seem that a study that focuses on servant-leadership practices of school leaders within the context of faith-based Christian schools could advance knowledge within this field.

Secondly, the rationale of this study was also informed by the argument that the understanding of educational leadership is limited as it is founded on research that has traditionally focused on the role of the principal (Huber, 2004:44). According to Crasner (2014:57), this argument has created a perception that principals are "the

designated prime leaders” within the schools and has marginalised other types of leaders such as deputy principals and heads of schools, and parents. However, this researcher considered it crucial to explore the perspectives of those in other types of school leadership positions in terms of their contributions. Thus, the researcher has decided to involve some teachers in focus group discussions in order to gain some thoughts from them regarding different types of leadership and the servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools.

Thirdly, it is necessary to recognise that faith-based Christian schools are affected by contextual forces and are increasing in such numbers that they have become an important part of the education systems in various countries. Thus, faith-based schools provide a rich backdrop for examining educational leadership. Moreover, the limited research that has been conducted into such settings, tends to be located within certain types of faith-based schools and rarely address how servant-leadership has been practiced.

The foregoing considerations established the significance or rationale of the study, which set out to examine how servant-leadership is practised by the principals of faith-based Christian schools.

1.7 Limitation and delimitation of the study

This study did not set out to observe strategic management and systems in practice, and therefore relied heavily on views expressed by respondents during semi-structured interviews conducted with school principals, focus group discussions with the principals and educators and observations made by the researcher at two faith-based Christian schools. The study was therefore open to the same validity threat experienced by most mixed-methods studies. The researcher hopes that using more than one data source, as well as rigorously reporting and discussing the data, sufficiently addressed this threat.

Another limitation of this study was that it did not generalise statistically, but solely focused on selected faith-based Christian schools, though the same picture might probably be found in most areas of South African faith-based Christian schools.

The following delimitations apply.

- The study was focused on faith-based Christian school leaders in Gauteng to limit the distances for travelling purposes. Only twelve school principals and three teachers took part in the study.
- The researcher selected those schools that fall under three umbrella bodies for faith-based Christian schools located in Gauteng, namely CIE (Catholic Institute of Education), ISASA (Independent Schools of South Africa) and ACE (Association of Christian Education).
- This study employed the constructivist paradigm with case study research design which poses another limitation to it.
- This study focused solely on how school leaders of faith-based Christian practice servant-leadership and did not specifically seek to investigate the perspectives of the staff, parents or learners in relation to the ideal of this leadership practice.
- Only two principals who participated in semi-structured interviews were selected for observation.

1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The focus of this study was on servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian school organisations. Therefore, it was necessary to define how some terminology was used and interpreted. The following terms were used for operational definitions.

Servant-leadership: Servant-leadership is defined as a leadership ideal that attempts to simultaneously enhance the personal growth of workers and improve the quality and caring for the institutions through a combination of teamwork and community, personal involvement in decision making, and ethical behaviour (Blanchard, K., Hodges, (2016). For the purpose of this study it is referred to the leadership approach that underlines the call to serve, leading as a team and enhancing the ability to leading together as a community. *Faith-based Christian schools.* This refers to schools affiliated to any of the umbrella bodies for Christian schools in South Africa, in this study referred to as CIE, ISASA and ACE.

Faith-based Christian school principals. Faith-based Christian school principals were defined as any member of the administrative team to whom the faith-based Christian school teacher reported directly. Operationally defined, this includes subscribing to the

'Statement of Faith', ensuring consistent application of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Followers: In this study, *followers* refer to those who are led, staff, parents, learners, and the school community as a whole.

1.11 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the whole thesis. The researcher began the chapter by explaining the historical background of faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. The research problem and the research purpose were introduced. The research questions that underpin this research were articulated, the significance of the work, and an overview of the thesis were also included.

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature regarding the tenets of servant-leadership. The researcher discussed leadership theories in organisations and the similarities to and differences with servant-leadership. He further explained the historical background of servant-leadership and servant-leadership practices in educational institutions.

In Chapter 3, the researcher discusses the literature review around the leadership in faith-based Christian schools, and how servant-leadership is practiced in those schools.

Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology, including the research approach, research design, the participants, sampling techniques and sample size determination, data collection techniques and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the results and analysis of the data collected.

In Chapter 6 the data is discussed and illuminated by the literature under each research question and conveys a number of recommendations made as a result of the findings, as well as suggestions for further research. Finally, it presents a conclusion to the research.

1.12 CONCLUSION

After providing the background relevant to the study in this chapter, the research aims of this study were introduced. In addition, the historical background of faith-based

Christian schools in South Africa which looked at the Missionary education, CNE and education system post apartheid has been explained. Furthermore the significance of the study, the demarcation and delimitation of the study field and methodological issues were discussed.

The research problem and the research purpose were introduced to the reader. The research questions that underpin this research were articulated, the significance of the work, and an overview of the thesis were also included. The next chapter will deal with a theoretical contextualisation of leadership style

CHAPTER TWO: THE TENETS OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this chapter is to report on an investigation into literature that enabled the researcher to highlight the tenets of servant-leadership, which formed the basis of the empirical investigation of leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. The concept 'tenets' points towards basic principles or essential elements of the phenomenon of servant-leadership Focht (2015:45). These core components can also be seen as basic beliefs, or even as building blocks, that are critical in supporting the idea of servant-leadership. Thus, the literature review reported in this chapter reveals findings on leadership theories that are value-driven, where the idea is to emphasise relationship behaviour actions to transform follower attitudes and beliefs to a higher realm of motivation. For this purpose, the following theories have been selected: transformational leadership Burns (1978), authentic leadership Terry (1993), moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 2002; Richmon & Allison.2003: 46) and situational leadership (Blanchard (1997). Furthermore, the researcher looked at the theory of servant-leadership Greenleaf, (1970, 1977, 2002), based on a conceptualisation of the concept of 'servant-leadership', a historical overview of servant-leadership, the existence of servant-leadership in educational institutions and the characteristics of servant-leadership.

Sergiovanni (2002:48) notes that servant-leadership is a relatively new and viable leadership theory among many leadership theories. This literature review reflected in this chapter paves the way for Chapter 3, which concentrates on the literature related to servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools.

2.2 Leadership theories in organisations

In this section, the different contexts and applications of leadership theories are demonstrated by bringing to light the perspectives on leadership, and observing that leadership is often described in binary terms (cited by Van der Vliert, 2013:152), implying that a leader is either seen as task- or people-oriented or that a difference is made between transformational, situational, moral and authentic leadership. Throughout the years, (Rowe & Guerrero, 2011: 43) have tried to find a clear model of leadership that would stand up to the pressures of direction and changes that constantly bombard organisations. Whether a transactional, transformational,

charismatic or authentic model is employed, it seems as if the rationale for any study is always to find the ways leaders “approach the task of leading” (Marks & Printy, 2003:67). Leadership and leading are therefore central themes in this research, with specific attention being paid to the servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. This section responds to this aim of the study, by locating the study within the broader context of leadership theory.

The leadership discourse is populated by a plethora of perspectives and interpretations of what constitutes effective leadership. Hughes (2013:131) and West-Burnham (2013:48) note that leadership researchers mostly disagree on the definition of leadership. Hughes (2013:44) further suggests that the multiple leadership narratives stem from the “fact that leadership is a complex phenomenon involving the leader, the followers and the situation”.

The conceptualisation of leadership is further complicated by the perspective from which it is defined. Buchanan (2013:38) points out that when conceptualising leadership as a process, it may, on the one hand, be described as the “process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a certain manner”. On the other hand, however, Bennis (2014:32) describes leadership as the “process of influencing an organised group towards accomplishing its goals”. Alternatively, when leadership is perceived as the ability to create, Hughes (2013:5) contends that leaders “create conditions for a team to be effective”.

Proposing the above thoughts as opposing traits, the 1960s leadership grid of Blackaby (2011:79, cited in Van der Vliert, 2013) depicts two dimensions of leadership behaviour, namely concern for people and concern for production. Furthermore, Bass and Riggio (2006:148) describe a leadership model that sets up binary descriptions between transformational and transactional leadership. On the one hand, transformational leaders are believed to possess “good vision and impression management skills and use them to develop strong emotional bonds with learners” (Hughes, 2013:595). The next subsection reveals more about this aspect. However, models of leadership that endorse one approach over another are problematic in that they often ignore contextual factors in which leadership is practiced.

Literature on leadership theory also debated the binary stereotypes between masculine and feminine leadership traits. Low (2013:77) points out those masculine

leadership traits that are stereotypically described as transactional, focusing on performance with a preference for competition and hierarchical structures. Feminine leadership traits are typically associated with transformational leadership with a preference for flatter organisational structures that promote co-operation and collaboration. Powell (2010:140) notes that situational leadership theory, for example, recommends that leaders “vary the amount of masculine and feminine characteristics they display according to the situation”. This study, however, did not attempt to respond in detail to the different binary conceptualisations, but instead focuses on servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based schools in South Africa. Within this focus, it is noted that most theorists agree that influence and power are important leadership components. Bruce and Montanez (2012:191) contend that in order to influence followers, “leaders must model the behaviour they seek in others, offer ongoing coaching and feedback and develop followers so that they too can influence other members in the organisation”. The influence leaders exert is directly observable in the actions of followers and is often manifested in institutional success and achievement. Influence is usually associated with power, and reflects on the imbalance of power that exists in relationships Winter (2013:159).

Furthermore, it has been argued by Edwards (2017:16) that whilst immoral and unjust power imbalances must be challenged, the existences of certain power imbalances are a necessary component of the leadership relationship. Bostow, Galina & Mendoza (2015:19) contend that power can be used as a “generative force”, which is “crucial to the empowerment of historically marginalized populations”. Winter (2013:159) asserts, “power is a necessary dimension in all human enterprises”, and “power can inspire and illuminate us”. It is often through an unequal balance of power that tasks are accomplished and success is achieved. Yet, Winter (2013:67 & Bambale 2014) cautions against the negative face of power, and notes that these forces can be destructive and dehumanising.

The distinction between leadership and management is another aspect upon which most leadership theorists agree. Cohen (2010:15) explains that, on the one hand, “leaders define direction, take initiative and responsibility” while, on the other hand, “managers take orders and do the job to the best of their ability”. Corroborating this assertion, Clarke (2010:30) contends, “[l]eadership is about direction and purpose, while management is about efficiency and effectiveness”. It is within the understanding

of the complex concept of change, however, that the distinction between leadership and management is most clearly articulated. Gupton (2003:172) argues, “a primary distinction between management and leadership is that management suggests maintenance of the status quo. Leadership, on the other hand, is all about effecting change”. Similarly, Northouse (2015:15) insists, “management produces order and consistency”, whereas “leadership produces change and movement”. These statements suggest that change is a symptom of leadership and a useful measure to distinguish between leadership and management. However, inasmuch as leadership and management are discernible behaviours, both are required for organisations to function optimally and achieve objectives at the same time Northouse (2015:17). Indeed, the rise of worldwide interconnectivity and the growing trend towards partnerships have introduced a more recent dimension to the concept of leadership. Insisting that collaboration is an essential component in an inter-connected world, Archer and Cameron (2009:174) argue that a leader’s “inability to collaborate will render organisations redundant”.

In the rest of this section, the emphasis is on selected leadership theories, which Taylor (2014:210) alludes to as theories that promote “values-driven leaders who tend to relationships” and represent an “important source of hope and courage”. The researcher selected only four of these theories for the sake of this study, but there are also other types of value-driven leadership.

2.2.1 Transformational leadership

Burns (1978:20) defines transformational leadership as a process by which “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation”. According to Burns (1978:21), transformational leadership is a style of leadership that transforms follower attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours to a higher realm of motivation where the leader inspires followers to be motivated, to rise above and beyond current levels of achievement and performance to even higher levels of achievement and performance.

According to Bass and Riggio (2006:65), transformational leaders exhibit the following leadership behaviours in their day-to-day interactions with the staff or subordinates: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. **Inspirational motivation** entails leaders communicating high performance expectations in an encouraging and enthusiastic fashion. **Individualised**

consideration involves leaders coaching, mentoring, and providing feedback in a manner consistent with each individual's needs. **Intellectual stimulation** calls upon leadership to challenge followers to embrace new ways of thinking and doing, and to reassess values and beliefs. Northouse (2015:87) notes that the leader solicits new ideas from followers and shows tolerance for mistakes. Leithwood (2006:33) remarks that **idealised influence** is leadership providing vision and a sense of mission while displaying total commitment to the vision and mission. Leithwood (2006:40) further notes that the aforementioned transformational leadership behaviours have significant and progressive influence on subordinates or followers within organisations.

Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organisation. Wheeler (2012:131) agrees when stating that transformational leadership models advocate leadership as an organisational aspect, rather than the task of a particular individual. Many researchers, such as Leithwood (2006:95), affirm that transformational leadership behaviours directly and indirectly affect followers' behaviours, their psychological states and organisational performance. It has an effect on a leader's commitment to change in vision building, high performance anticipations, developing agreement about group goals and intellectual stimulation, communication, supportive leadership, and personal recognition.

Transformational and servant-leadership tend to be similar in some aspects. For instance, both value followers, both encourage the listening attitude, mentoring, empowerment of the followers takes also priority in both leadership styles. However, difference is noted in their objectives. The main focus of the transformational leaders is the organizational transformation where as servant-leaders focus their attention more on the followers within the organization.

Bass (2013:14) points out that transformational leadership and servant-leadership further appear to be comparable and complementary in terms of the growth of followers through personalised considerations, intellectual incentives and reassuring behaviours. However, according to Grant (2014:89), the main objective of transformational leaders is the organisation and the personal growth of their followers as viewed in the context of what is good for the organisation. Given the idea of service

in a servant-leadership, this constitutes the major difference between these two leadership theories, with servant-leadership strong on humility, authenticity and interpersonal acceptance, which are not pertinently emphasised in transformational leadership. Smith and Montagno (2004:38 & Ruschnan 2017), point out that in transformational leadership leaders devote whole of their efforts to leading and valuing the abilities of their constituents whereas in servant-leadership the leaders first priority is simply to serve their followers with selfless interest.

As a synthesis, transformational leadership and servant-leadership, appear to be comparable and complementary in terms of the growth of followers through personalised consideration, intellectual incentive and reassuring behaviour. However, according to Graham (2017:49), the main objective of transformational leaders is the organisation and the personal growth of their followers as viewed in the context of what is good for the organisation. However, according to Van Dierendonck (2013:148), the servant-leader's commitment lies more with the individual than with the organisation unlike the transformational leaders where the emphasis is on organisational development.

2.2.2 Situational leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2006:35) define situational leadership theory "as theory that is based on the ways people respond to working and being led in groups". In his study, Edwards (2014:235) also explains, "central to understanding situational leadership are the key concepts of task behaviour, the amount of guidance and direction you provide. Edwards (2014:235) further confirms, "these variables don't operate independently of each other or in isolation; they are interactive".

Situational leadership originated with Blanchard (1997), and is characterised by the idea that the leader can change his or her leadership strategy based on two main behaviours. These behaviours are described as task behaviours and relationship behaviours. Two prominent researchers, Parris and Peachey (2013:77), identify task behaviours as those in which the leader exhibits top-down directive communication by explaining the specifics of how tasks are to be performed. Relationship behaviours are those for which the leader engages in two-way communication and provides support for employees. This form of leadership shows a link between leadership theories of

the past and the new ideals of a leader that is people oriented, by contrasting the leaders whose strategies are determined by these two classifications.

Blanchard (1997:70) proposes the situational leadership model. This leadership model is in many ways similar to servant-leadership, in that the servant-leader is one whose main concern is to meet “other people’s highest priority needs” (Greenleaf, 1991:70). This means that the servant-leader does whatever is necessary to ensure the success of the subordinate, which means, in light of the situational leadership theory proposed by Blanchard (2006:71), he or she needs to provide the appropriate levels of task-oriented support, as well as relations-oriented support for each subordinate.

Servant-leadership and situational leadership strive to serve people’s highest priority needs. However, in both leadership practices different approaches are employed. Situational leadership uses task-oriented approach to lead the subordinates, whereas servant-leadership uses the approaches that respond to the person’s holistic needs.

2.2.3 Moral leadership

According to Burns (1978:4), moral leadership is seen when “leaders and the led have a relationship not only of power but of mutual needs, aspirations, and values”. He adds, “[m]oral leadership is not mere preaching, or uttering of pieties, or the insistence on social conformity. Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers”. Sergiovanni (2005b:88) points out that as a leadership approach, moral leadership possesses values and behaviours that are consistent and aligned with the needs and beliefs of followers. Moral leadership is concerned with distinguishing right from wrong and doing right, seeking the just, honest, good and right conduct in its practice.

Sergiovanni (2002:77) rightly contends that the highest level of leadership authority is to be found in the professional and moral domains. According to him, in moral leadership, the focus of leadership ought to be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. For Leithwood (2014:96), authority and influence are to be derived from defensible concepts of what is right or good. Moral leadership is therefore based on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. Leaders are expected to operate on the basis of what is ‘right’ or ‘good’. It emphasises promoting the commitment of the constituents, however, the difference lies in focus placed on values

and a moral purpose. In moral leadership leaders are accepted by the society to behave with integrity and inculcate objectives underpinned by those moral values.

Moral leadership has many similarities with spiritual leadership and servant-leadership. Spears and Lawrence (2010:29) point out that servant-leadership is a form of leadership based on teamwork and community, one that seeks to involve others in decision-making, one strongly based on ethical and caring behaviour, and one that is attempting to enhance the personal growth of workers, while improving the caring and quality of our many institutions.

2.2.4 Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership is a relatively new theory that focuses on leaders dealing in straightforward and honest ways with followers. The development of the term authentic leadership was first penned by Terry in (2003) with his *Authentic leadership: Courage in action*. Terry (2003:76) shaped further advances, when he wrote *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the secrets to creating lasting value*. According to Gardner (2011:10), “authentic leadership rests on the belief that a resolute stance and confidence in one’s speech and action is indicative of strong leadership”.

The concept of authenticity has its roots in Greek philosophy, as in ‘be true to your own self’. Therefore, being an authentic leader is tantamount to little more than being true to oneself or being who you profess to be. Brumley (2012:109) writes, “the idea of being true to oneself has manifested itself in the form of authentic leadership, which focuses on those behaviours that indicate that leaders are self-aware and regulate the self accordingly”. Gardner (2011:38) describes it as:

Behaving authentically means acting in accordance with one’s values, preferences, and needs as opposed to acting merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments through acting falsely ... authenticity is not reflected in a compulsion to be one’s true self, but rather in the free expression of core feelings, motives and inclinations.

From the previous quotes, this researcher understands that authentic leaders are those whose actions are based on their values and convictions. What they say is expected to be consistent with what they believe, and their actions to be consistent with both their words and their beliefs. While acknowledging this relatively new theory of leadership, there is still a debate about the legitimacy of authentic leadership, more

especially with regard to the abilities of the leaders. Gardner (2011:89) describes authentic leadership as “deeply problematic because it fails to take into account how social and historical circumstances affect a person’s ability to be a leader”. Another challenge to highlight here is that the importance of leaders’ self-awareness is central to authentic leadership, but it is not clear how to define and measure self-awareness. This researcher’s personal conviction is that some cultural values and beliefs influence behaviour, despite little or no conscious awareness.

Authentic leadership and servant-leadership have many characteristics in common. The basis of both authentic leadership and servant-leadership lies in either explicit or implicit recognition of the leader’s self-awareness and the focus on integrity, trust, courage, and hope. Both theories genuinely express the importance of emphasising the desire to serve others and to show an interest in empowering the people they serve. Moreover, when we compare authentic leadership with servant-leadership, similarities are found in major characteristics such as awareness, empathy, conceptualisation and foresight. Avolio and Gardner (2005:88 & Lemone (2016) argue that self-awareness and self-regulation in authentic leaders are based on the clinical, positive and social psychology literature, which has research-based evidence, while according to Shula (2014:57), Greenleaf's servant-leadership theory is based entirely on personal reflection on experiences.

Van Dierendonck (2013:123) notes that when comparing authentic leadership to the six characteristics of servant-leadership, only two characteristics, namely, humility and authenticity are the same, with none of the other four characteristics of servant-leadership belonging to the core of authentic leadership. For the researcher, it is clear that servant-leadership is a normative leadership style that lays down characteristics that all leaders are supposed to emulate to attain success. This ideal of leadership also tries to shape the character and personality of the leader according to such values, whereas authentic leadership is character driven and does not recognise leadership styles or a fixed set of leadership ideals.

2.2.5 Synthesis of different leadership styles

In reviewing the contents of 2.2.1 to 2.2.4 critically, the researcher is convinced that the most studied leadership theories that focus on followers and ethical considerations and that have commonalities with servant-leadership include transformational

leadership, authentic leadership and moral leadership. This thinking concurs with Van Dierendonck (2013:66), who states that these theories all have a moral dimension. A further analysis of these theories reveals similarities and differences with the characteristics of servant-leadership. The researcher further concurs with scholars who approach the task of leadership by emphasising leadership outcomes together with efficiency and effectiveness, as crucial focus points. However, 21st-century organisations have to find a way to gain a competitive edge. The days of considering achieved outcomes and earning outcomes as the only indicators of successful organisations, are over. The current challenges are more in line with understanding leadership as an activity that supports all people in their search for meaning and connectedness, by fostering a new self-awareness. It is clear that the need to research servant-leadership is intensely positioned within the current needs of the organisational realm. It is the goal of this literature review to explore servant-leadership as a viable leadership theory that warrants principals' practices as servant-leaders. The next section discusses the theoretical base of servant-leadership.

2.3 Theoretical base of servant-leadership

Servant-leadership was acknowledged as a significant leadership theory in the field of education (Anderson, 2005; Cerit, 2012; Thompson, 2002). Based on the research conducted by the Greenleaf Centre for Servant-Leadership, faith-based educational institutions have enlisted servant-leadership theory as an integral part of their educational leadership programmes. The key theoretical aspects of servant-leadership are espoused in the following sections:

- conceptualisation of the idea of 'servant-leadership';
- a historical overview of servant-leadership;
- servant-leadership in educational institutions; and
- the ten characteristics of servant-leadership.

2.3.1 Conceptualisation of the idea of servant-leadership

In this section, the strong ethical foundation grounded in values as proposed by Greenleaf (1970; 1977), was reviewed. Servant-leadership, inspired by the leadership characteristics of Jesus, was introduced by Greenleaf (1977:9) as a new model of leadership. Servant-leadership proposes service as a catalyst for successful leader–follower exchanges. Lee and Timiyo (2016:48) note that the emphasis of servant-

leadership is similar to transformational leadership regarding aspects such as collaboration, teamwork and empowerment. According to Greenleaf (1977:35), servant-leadership is, however, distinguishable from transformational leadership, because it is consistently identified as the main catalyst in emphasising spirituality in leadership. Greenleaf (1977:66) describes internal and external needs of individuals as being at the heart of servant-leadership, identifying those served as the greatest priority. Greenleaf (1977:14) conceptualises the foremost ideas regarding servant-leadership by asking the following questions:

- “Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”
- And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?”

According to Ruschman (2012:49 & Scott 2018), servant-leadership helps to protect leaders from the destructive influence of power. Coaching and mentoring processes are enhanced by servant-leaders as they recognise the talents and abilities of their followers. Avolio and Gardner (2005:87) note that servant-leaders’ primary interest becomes enhancing subordinates’ abilities, not only for the benefit of the organisation, but also for the improvement of the employees. Servant-leaders seek to improve individual processes and abilities, but share power with followers and empower those within the servant-leader’s circle of influence. Cerit (2012:12) further asserts that servant-leaders are those leaders who are supportive and nurturing and provide employees with resources necessary to improve performance. Cerit (2012:27) notes that servant-leaders create opportunities for positive individual and organisational outcomes in an increasingly complex work environment.

Note that the full influence of servant-leadership not only influences employees, but also is extended toward stakeholders. According to Kouzes and Posner (2006:98), challenges confronted within the realms of the workforce, are addressed through internal processes versus external perspectives. Personal accountability displayed by servant-leaders demonstrates leader transformation. Individual responsibility is paramount with servant-leaders. Positive changes with individuals, organisations, and communities are developed as the servant-leader creates positive outcomes through service. Sendjaya (2015) notes that the spiritual foundation of servant-leadership

invites increased stability, greater productivity, stress reduction and balance. Northouse (2015:87) considers servant-leadership to be a leadership model based on altruism, where leaders are aware of the needs of their followers and genuinely empathise with them. According to Panacio (2015:76), the focus of servant-leadership is the pursuit of ethical outcomes. Servant-leadership is described by Bass and Riggio (2006:8), as setting aside self-interests in order to advocate for the best interests of employees, the organisation, and society. Thus, Greenleaf's (1995) theory of leadership is considered unique as the objective of the leader involves service as a prime internal motivating factor. The self-interests of the servant-leader diminish in contrast to the needs of the follower, increasing the opportunity to serve.

In the form of synthesis, one can note that servant-leaders influence their followers through persuasion, respect the ideas of their constituents, and allow them to exercise their gifts. Thus, service to define servant-leaders existence.

2.3.2 Historical overview of servant-leadership

A Journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness was first produced in 1977 by Greenleaf and it was based on his foundational essay called *The servant as leader*. The premise of his work "is the desire to serve one another and to serve something beyond ourselves" (Greenleaf, 1977:20). Greenleaf (1977:32) posts that the greatest effect that can take place with individuals and society comes from leaders who serve. Greenleaf tells the story, *The journey to the East* by Herman Hesse (1956), as the reason for him to develop his work regarding servant-leadership. The most significant character in this story is named Leo, who is a servant to a group of individuals who went on a spiritual pilgrimage to the East. The humble servant strengthens others on their journey and assists in making the trek possible through his compassion and strength. When the humble servant Leo, suddenly departs from the group, the pilgrims fail to achieve their goals and objectives and eventually their trip becomes disorganised. Greenleaf (1970:1) states, "Leo ... known first as servant, was in fact the titular head of the Order, its guiding spirit, a great and noble leader". According to Spears and Lawrence (2010:73), service and caring are the foundations of a healthy society. Exemplary leadership is evident when the main objective of the leader is to serve others while improving the community.

Greenleaf (1995:77) acknowledges that his creation of the servant-leadership model was influenced by other individuals. Greenleaf's father, and one of Greenleaf's professors, exemplified the founding principles of servant-leadership and encouraged others to make changes from within the organisation. Greenleaf (1995:48) proposes that servant-leaders are healers, and as such, they heal not only themselves, but also those with whom they associate. Describing the different attributes of servant-leaders, Greenleaf (1970:8) states that a servant-leader proposes initiatives and "takes the risk of failure along with the chance of success". Greenleaf (1995:40) points out those nurturing aspects of servant-leadership that are also necessary traits in preparing individuals for leadership opportunities.

A leader's vulnerability to being corrupted by power is assuaged by Greenleaf's (1995:41) belief regarding ethical principles derived from his Judeo-Christian perspective. Servant-leaders are courageous in the pursuit of environments that support and encourage a culture where values of love and compassion are evident, whether religious affiliation is associated or not. Greenleaf (1970:9) contends that the servant-leader fosters the attribute of trust, stating, "a leader does not elicit trust unless one has confidence in his values and his competence and unless he has a sustaining spirit that will support the tenacious pursuit of a goal".

Some may misunderstand the term 'servant-leadership', primarily because many scholars and researchers may associate negative meanings derived from the combination of the two terms, 'servant' and 'leader' (Greenleaf, 1977:40). Criticism of the term servant-leadership is evident. However, Greenleaf (1995:56) contends that leaders who are servants become efficient and successful leaders. The servant-leader is one who aspires to become a servant before becoming a leader and who is naturally inclined to listen and understand others before reaching unsolicited conclusions. Values and ethical considerations are significant to servant-leaders as the servant-leader is concerned with the priorities of the followers whom he or she serves. By contrast, Greenleaf (1977:58) describes a leader who is controlling, proud, authoritarian, and manipulative, as a leader who would diminish others, eventually leading to their destruction.

The principles of servant-leadership are not new concepts derived primarily from Greenleaf (1997). The general concepts of servant-leadership have existed for centuries. Wheeler (2012:88) bases his ideas on past wisdom, regarding how people

best relate to one another as human beings. Biblical references support the concept of servant-leadership as illustrated by the example in New Testaments Jesus Christ being the central figure. Blanchard (2012:76 & Ruschnan 2017:67) articulates that Jesus is professed by many as one who exemplified the principles of a servant-leader (the researcher will elaborate on this concept in Chapter 3.) Greenleaf (1977:55) accredits Judeo-Christian theological principles as influencing the development of servant-leadership theory. Thompson (2002:12) identifies that the principles of servant-leadership can be found in many cultures throughout the world.

Buddhism, which is based on the teachings of Siddhattha Gotama, sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE, also incorporates many aspects of servant-leadership. According to Bhikkhu (2000:18), Siddhattha Gotama became an effective servant-leader only when he overcame his own desires and attachments and was able to serve others. Buddhism incorporates humility, loving kindness, and mindfulness as part of the leadership process. Nhat (2016:34) connects to those ideas as he says, “[y]ou can evaluate the quality of your authority by looking deeply to see if compassion is the foundation of your leadership”. Nhat (2016:45) further notes that Greenleaf (1977:23) identifies servant-leaders as individuals who change from within and who identify compassion as the process to personal transformation. Additionally, Bryant (2014:109) recognises that an environment “that nurtures effective communication, healthy relationships, and trust” is the responsibility of effective leadership.

Within the realm of servant-leadership, the relationship between leaders and follower is the most significant principle. A leader who understands the critical concepts of service, as well as the human condition, becomes a servant who can create positive outcomes through an increased understanding of those served. It is the role of the servant-leader principal to create healthy relationships and trust in the school environment. However, that is not enough on its own. The leader must be people minded, service oriented, filled with love and care for the followers.

In our country, there has recently been an increased public outcry against service delivery, poor national resource management, poor governance, and racial segregation. Servant-leadership practices of leaders, not only of the school leaders, but also of the political leaders, can contribute towards the positive change of service.

The following section discusses the literature that connects servant-leadership to the educational institutions.

2.3.3 Servant-leadership in educational institutions

The early writings of Greenleaf (1980) were developed mainly within the realm of business environments. Hunter (2014:44) writes that Greenleaf explored the implementation of servant-leadership in relation to educational institutions in later years.

Greenleaf (1977:99) describes poor leadership as being a significant factor regarding the dysfunctional and mediocre performance of schools, and also other organisations, whereas Starratt (2014:65) indicates educational leadership often utilises inappropriate styles of leadership, which at times negatively affect the school, educators, and learners. Brumley (2012) purports the benefits of utilising servant-leadership in educational settings with learners. Walker and Sackney (2013:165) demonstrate how the leadership qualities of school principals can create a positive organisational culture within the schools. Starrat (2014:66) agrees with the idea that school principals who uphold servant-leadership principles are more likely to foster a school climate where compassion and service is evident.

Harris (2004:48) highlights that the primary role of leaders within educational settings is creating a clear vision, increase positive learner outcomes, encourage collaboration, manage resources, and build leaderships. Starrat (2014:66) reiterates that servant-leaders understand the significance of leadership in developing functional schools. Servant-leader principals involve educators, school governing bodies and learner in the practice of decision-making and team collaboration.

Scholars (such as Anderson, 2005:44; Cerit, 2012:89; Jennings, 2013:54; Lambert: 2014:69; Taylor, 2017:56) contend that school leaders who exemplify servant-leadership characteristics at every level of leadership fulfil their responsibilities by making learner and staff development a priority. Culver (2013:38) also strongly emphasises the application and implementation of servant-leadership as a process providing great positive outcomes for educational organisations.

Creating a positive, service-oriented atmosphere requires the effective leadership of principals through a process of mindfulness about their surroundings. Thus, Moran (2013:230) contends that principals' leadership behaviours influence learners'

academic performance. As positive interpersonal relationships with learners are modelled, principals are able to influence the school climate affecting learner achievement.

Cerit (2012:48) examines the servant-leadership behaviours of principals and their effect on teacher job satisfaction. Information collected from the findings was used to identify understanding of servant-leadership characteristics in relation to teacher job satisfaction. His research reveals a significant positive relationship between principal servant-leadership behaviours and teachers' job satisfaction, building on the results of previous research regarding servant-leadership in educational settings.

Anderson (2005:231) identifies the significance of the relationship between leader and follower perceptions of servant-leadership principles experienced in a religious educational organisation and their effects on job satisfaction. Teachers working with high school learners, principals, higher education religion instructors, and upper management participated in the study of Anderson. In addition, his study revealed a correlation between servant-leadership characteristics and job satisfaction, extending the research among educational settings.

Lambert (2014:178) performs a similar study regarding servant-leadership behaviours and attitudes of secondary school principals, as reported and observed by leaders themselves and faculty members. A systematic of data, collected from the Organisational Leadership Assessment, reveals a significant correlation between perceived servant-leadership behaviours and organisational climate. Educational servant-leaders promote emotional and intellectual congruence within their organisations, inviting sustained positive institutional outcomes. Lambert (2014:72) reports, "the servant-leader principal creates a more positive organisational climate, resulting in teachers feeling more positive about their work and work environment". Miers (2004:302) reveals a similar analysis regarding the correlation between servant-leadership characteristics and job satisfaction in a public school institution, noting a positive relationship between the two. A spiritual foundation, coupled with moral principles, is how servant-leadership correlates with the educational environment.

Interdependence is a critical characteristic incorporated within the servant-leadership model, whereas traditional models of leadership encourage independence.

Interdependence is a characteristic of the teaching practice that requires collaboration. Blum (2008:217) notes that collaborative practices require positive interpersonal relationships and communication in order to succeed. The next sub-section of this chapter will describe the ten characteristics of servant-leadership, which are believed to identify components of a servant-leader.

2.4 Characteristics of servant-leadership

Through extensive work with Greenleaf (1995:44), Spears (2004), the director of the Robert K. Greenleaf Centre for Servant-Leadership, identified ten characteristics that describe the essence of a servant-leader. These characteristics are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building community. Several educational theorists, such as Blanchard (2012:80), Covey (2002:121), Fullan (2014:201), and Sergiovanni (2005a:44) also refer to these characteristics as essential components for effective servant-leadership practices.

Spears (2004:49) notes that the characteristics of servant-leadership manifest naturally within servant-leaders and the leaders can further develop and improve this through learning and practice. He considers the characteristics to be essential in day-to-day practice of school leadership. The ten characteristics regarding the school principals' practices are discussed under the following sub-sections.

2. 4.1 Listening

Spears (2004:13) writes, "leaders have been traditionally valued for their communication and decision-making skills". These skills, however, are indispensable for the servant-leader, and are strengthened by a strong commitment to listening to those under the principal's responsibility.

Servant-leaders seek to identify and clarify the will of their followers by listening receptively to what is being communicated. Sergiovanni (2000:31) points out that to lead in a Christian community, means to be of service to all community members in a way that promotes personal growth and fulfilment for the followers. Therefore, the most effective school leader is the one who has mastered the art of listening. For Greenleaf (2002:44), listening is understood as paying attention to the needs of others, (teachers, learners and parents) and trying to capture what they need as they express themselves verbally and non-verbally. Jennings (2013:188) underlines that listening

attentively helps the listener to understand the matter from the perspective of the other. It is through attentive listening that a servant-leader principal can gather information, identify the needs of his or her staff, learners and parents, and find ways to ensure that those needs are met. Servant-leaders listen to the situation before they take any action and they need to learn to listen to themselves authentically before beginning to listen to their followers. According to Nsiah (2013:38), authentic listening refers to listening not only to what the followers express with words, but also to the world of their emotions, internal and external concerns. Attentive listening creates trust between the principal and the teachers, parents and learners.

It is when the principal listens to his or her staff, learners and parents that an atmosphere of trust and a problem-solving attitude can be created. Jennings (2013:89) declares that the whole concern is the emphasis placed on the absolute need for mutual trust between the one who is listening and the one being listened to. There is then a shared support, understanding and a strong desire to help. Kasun (2013:14) states, “[a]ctive listening not only provides a medium for sharing information but also provides the opportunity for building healthy relationships in a school community.”

Roberts (2016) maintains that school principals practise listening through different ways of communicating, such as dialogue, coaching, reflective thinking, and using counselling programmes that may be available in their school structures. These comments confirm that it is difficult to embody other characteristics of servant-leadership without first being a good listener. While speaking of the importance of the attitude of listening in leaders, Greenleaf (1977:96) believes that an authentic servant-leader responds to any concerns/ situation by listening first. Hall (2014:48) notes that it is common belief that a school principal must be a good listener. A principal never knows when an angry learner or an upset teacher is going to walk into his or her office. A principal has to be prepared to deal with these situations and that begins with being a good listener. The document from the Department of Education (DoE) (2008:28) echoes the importance of listening and emphasises, “in many ways listening is the most crucial of all communication skills, yet it is the most neglected”.

2. 4.2 Empathy

Another attitude Greenleaf (1977:20) claims as important for servant-leaders is to show empathy in order to understand the intentions, behaviour and actions of other

people. He writes, “[t]he servant, as leader, always empathises, always accepts the person and never rejects, but sometimes refuses to accept some of the person’s effort or performance as good enough”. This implies the ability to understand the other person or the capacity to participate in their feelings, concerns and visions.

Principals who empathise with their staff, learners and parents, irrespective of what they can offer, are likely to be trusted. People become more aware of who they are when they meet with empathy, as empathy enables them to grow to be whole.

What is described by Greenleaf (1977:99) implies an understanding of the other and acceptance as human beings, irrespective of whether their views, culture or behaviour resonate with one’s own. This requires knowing others through conversation and listening to them. Spears and Lawrence (2010:121) points out that servant-leaders understand and accept people as they are and tolerate their mistakes. This creates trust between the leader and the one being led. A document from the South African Department of Education (2002), referring to leaders in schools, expresses the need to be empathetic towards children in need. Staff, parents and learners become more open and understanding when they are approached with an empathetic attitude.

Spears & Lawrence (2010:123) points out three considerations that allow the principal to have an empathetic approach towards others. The servant-leader (principal) should first take into consideration the background of the other person to know the circumstances of that individual’s life. Secondly, it is important to understand the particular needs of the person. Thirdly, Spears and Lawrence (2010:133) recommend listening with a non-judgmental attitude. The study of Kasun (2013:56) confirms, “it is important to listen and ask what the other person expects in order to be able to empathise with him/her”.

A servant-leader demonstrates a strong caring attitude through an empathetic approach. The other person feels accepted and recognised when his or her circumstances are seen from the perspectives of that individual. This researcher believes that this resonates with a popular saying, “to put oneself in the shoes of the other person”. The ability to understand how another feels is an important human ability, especially in the school environment. Empathetic understanding requires that the school principal develops self-awareness so that the principal’s own needs are separated from those of the people being led. (Greenleaf, 1991:44), in referring to

school leadership, points out that an empathetic attitude creates mutual trust between the leader and the other members of the school community, and enables them to work together.

Starratt (2014:86) speaks of “being present”. That implies a level of concentration and sensitivity towards the person who needs empathy. This presence refers to being present physically, emotionally, and spiritually, to being aware of the personal background of each follower. One of the salient examples of empathy in Jesus’ servant-leadership was his attitude towards the adulterous woman recorded in the Gospel of St. John (8:1–11). Jesus did not condemn her. Instead, he gave her an opportunity to do better. Servant-leaders accept the other because of her or his uniqueness. Spears and Lawrence (2010:39), as well as Nsiah (2013:83), note that characteristic of empathy allows servant-leaders to share in other peoples’ world (their emotions and particular situations).

Sharpe (2017:39) points out that in schools, staff, learners and teachers (all the stakeholders) are people with different emotions and should be related to and given empathy. This could happen when a leader creates a culture where every individual feels valued and of worth. This attitude of empathy creates care, love and trust between leaders and followers. The hindrance to implementing the skill of empathy is that some leaders do not take the time to listen properly to their subordinates and this inhibits the ability of the leader to empathise. The Department of Education (2005) highlights that an empathetic approach in South African school principals towards the learners is encouraged, particularly because of the effect and influence that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had on the society.

2. 4.3 Healing

Spears (2004:27) believes that healing is one of the strengths needed by servant-leaders. This is because, as Greenleaf (1991:13) emphasises, “trials are a natural aspect of everyday living, and can cause people to suffer from having a broken spirit”. Although this is part of being human, servant-leaders recognise that they have ways of finding opportunities to heal both the person and the community, to make them whole. Leaders do this by addressing with spiritual care the personal problems and inner wounds of their followers and the issues that may divide the community. Christie (2010:47) points out that in the South African context, one of the wounds needing to

be healed by servant-leaders in the schools is the wound created by the HIV/ AIDS pandemic. Nsiah (2013:223) points out that leaders with healing qualities can help their followers to grow towards perfection. Through their healing attitudes, servant-leaders open a way for trust and care, and, in Fullan's (2014:134) words, school leaders who show how much they care attract their staff and learners to follow them.

Our schools are marked by brokenness and hurt because of the apartheid legacy, disintegration of family life, socio-political changes, violence, and crime. School principals can help the people in the school community deal with these situations by building positive relationships, by showing care, love, listening and empathy, and by prayer. Noddings (2006:44) and Nsiah (2013:48) point out that a principal's healing qualities become more important when learners are still young in order to help them deal with and learn from imperfections and mistakes.

2. 4.4 Awareness

The servant-leader has general awareness, especially self-awareness. Servant-leaders become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses in order to accept the strengths and weaknesses of others. Kouzes and Posner (2006:88) explain that if the leader is not aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses, there is no inducement for improvement. Spears & Lawrence (2010:121) points out that awareness helps servant-leaders to recognise the ethical issues and to have a holistic approach to situations. (Kasun (2013:48) maintains that awareness entails making time for reflection to understand the vision and how each person fits in that vision. Reflection and interaction with others are two important ways of gaining both self-awareness and general awareness.

(Greenleaf, 1977:88) underlines that this characteristic of awareness assists the leader to recognise the challenging situations of others, and to search for solutions. School principals who are servant-leaders have self-awareness and know exactly where they are going, because they understand their own values, goals and dreams. Through a deeper awareness of the needs of the learners, teachers and the whole school community school principals work towards shaping a school community which is understood to be their crucial role. Kouzes and Posner (2006: 128) claim, "learning to be a better leader requires great self-awareness, and it requires making ourselves vulnerable".

Spears and Lawrence (2010:33) point out “awareness is not a giver of solace, it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed.” This researcher found one example of this in an informal discussion, prior to the interviews and observation, with a principal of a primary school. She said, “[a]s a principal, I want to call each and every child in this school by his/her name, because I believe that that will help me to know their background and the challenges they go through”. Servant-leaders appreciate the importance of teams, since a team encourages each member to contribute his or her strength to the task at hand, to be aware of the needs of the school and to foster their own growth. In order to develop self-awareness and general awareness, interacting with learners, colleagues, parents and community members every day seems to be very important for the school principals of the Christian primary schools. Additionally, reflecting on these daily events, interactions, successes or perceived failures can enhance self and general awareness. Anderson (2005:64) makes the point that servant-leaders assess, reflect, and are honest with others and seek to develop balance in their professional lives.

2. 4.5 Persuasion

Spears and Lawrence (2010:14) are of the opinion that servant-leaders seek to convince others by persuasion, rather than demanding compliance through control and coercion. Greenleaf (1998: 159) also writes as follows: “servant-leaders lead by setting example and don’t apply coercion. They attempt to explain the situation so that followers can understand”.

Servant-leaders do not desire to control their followers, but they are rather focused on mentoring and coaching, which creates credibility. Hunter (2014:58) says that their attitude of persuasion sets apart servant-leaders from the traditional authoritative model of leading. Kasun (2013:16) believes, “school principals who are servant - leaders effectively use persuasion to build consensus in the school environment.” They endeavour to make all the people involved understand the goal, to agree upon and to be willing to participate in any task required towards the fulfilment of that goal. Servant-leader principals comprehend that giving orders is not an effective way of leading the school. This is what Greenleaf (1980:44) writes:

The servant-leader is one who ventures and takes the risks of going out ahead to show the way and whom others follow, voluntarily, because they are persuaded that the leader's path is the right one probably better than they could devise for themselves.

From his writing, we understand that through persuasion servant-leader principals influence others, promote, credibility and build positive trust in the school context. It is believed that servant-leader principals attempt to persuade through their own personal example. Chatury (2017:143) says that servant-leaders seek to build consensus in the group and show the group how to achieve it, thus do not seek to impose a view upon their followers that the followers themselves do not accept as valid and worthwhile. This shows that persuasion occurs where there is dialogue, genuine interaction, reflection and discussion about the particular issue that concerns the whole school community.

Applying persuasion in the servant-leadership process involves some challenges. Greenleaf (1998:44) underlines the fact that the persuasive influence employed by the servant-leaders takes time. The process implies a slow process and at times it becomes painstaking. Therefore, he underlines three possible ways to make this process understandable, namely the ability of the leaders to lead by example, the leader should acquire persuasive skills and the followers' informed response. The study of Kasun (2013) reveals that persuasion works where there is honesty and trust between the principal and the rest of the school community. Therefore, principals ought to build strong relationships among their staff, teachers and parents in order to create an atmosphere of trust to allow persuasion to take place. However, this researcher argues that persuasion works if principals are empowered with negotiation skills.

2. 4.6 Conceptualisation

Spears (1998:48) explains conceptualisation as the ability to dream great dreams, and to look at a problem by conceptualising it, means thinking further than day-to-day realities. The servant-leader must understand the global picture and set a course of action to obtain future goals. It is important for the leader truly to identify the current reality and the gap between the reality and vision. Covey (2002:34) refers to this process as beginning with the end in mind.

Servant-leaders need to find a balance between this conceptual thinking and the daily operations approach. The vision shared by a servant-leader expands into the areas of meaning, purpose, and self-transcendence. The process of conceptualisation is rooted in relationships and shared meanings.

The servant-leader principal is able to join the school community around the vision and form a commitment to a common purpose. This implies that the school principal, must act as a historian, be able to learn from past mistakes, provide clear visions and hope for the future of the school. However, this vision and hope can only be achieved through teamwork.

Taylor (2017:117) points out that servant-leaders attract followers when they demonstrate the ability to see clearly the best destination for their schools. Thus, principals who are servant-leaders need to have an overall view of the reality of their schools, and then be able to lead their school effectively to attain that goal. To achieve this vision/goal, the servant-leader principal must understand the global picture and set a course of action to obtain future goals. It is important for the leader truly to identify the current reality and the gap between the reality and vision.

2.4.7 Foresight

Foresight is the ability to foresee or anticipate the likely outcome of any situation before it happens. Greenleaf (1991:18) says, "it is a better than average guess about what is going to happen in the future." For Spears and Lawrence (2010:28), "[i]t is a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future." In other words, it is about the ability to envisage the significance and nature of events before they happen. Foresight develops when servant-leaders gather information from others and the situations around them, staff members, parents and learners.

In the case when the leaders do not apply foresight in their servant-leadership, Greenleaf (2002:54) says,

Foresight is a "lead that the leaders have. Once servant-leaders lose this lead and events start to force their hands, they are leaders in name only.

They are not leading; they are reacting to immediate events and they probably will not be leaders for long.

In other words, this is to say that leaders (school leaders) must be visionaries. Botha (2011:242) points out that good principals value vision. He further states, “a vision is a blend of our experience from the past and our hopes and aspirations for the future” (Botha, 2011:243). This is one of the important characteristics of the servant-leader and it should result from discussion and be understood by everyone in the school community.

To this point, the researcher believes that building good relationships becomes one of the crucial issues for the principal to gather information as well. For the principals to establish and maintain positive relationships with all school community members, there must be a shared vision and goals of the school with teachers, learners and parents. This is believed to enhance the learning and leading process in the school. Sergiovanni (1994:231) and Starratt (2014:143) point out that the communicated and shared vision of the school community help to focus its energies on the accomplishment of the goals of the schools.

2. 4.8 Stewardship

Service is central to the idea of stewardship. Jennings (2013:23) defined a steward as “One who is in charge of a household”. School principals, as stewards, are responsible for the work as well as the welfare of those who share in the work of the school. Block (1993) expanded this definition: “In order for a leader to hold something of value in trust, it calls for placing service ahead of control. There is humility in stewardship”. Patterson (2005:32) believes that humility allows servant-leaders to recognize that they are stewards and to recognize the value of the followers and the whole organization. Jennings (2013:25) affirmed that servant-leaders “employ stewardship to focus on a strong commitment to serve the needs of others and emphasize the use of openness and persuasion”. Covey (2002:3) declared that the core principles involved with stewardship include “personal trustworthiness, interpersonal trust, and managerial empowerment.” Stewardship represents primarily an act of trust, whereby people and organizations entrust a leader to perform duties on their behalf. Stewardship involves partnership rather than patriarchy, and empowerment instead of dependency Focht and Ponton (2015:88) Stewardship means the growth and

development of followers and also of the leader (Blanchard and Hodges, 2003:48) as an asset to community building. School principals as stewards encourage teacher leadership, team work, innovation, collaboration and the professional growth of their teachers.

Jesus exemplified stewardship both in word and deed. In the Gospel of St. Matthew (25: 14-29) he told the parable about the three servants who were given talents with the objective of making a profit, to teach his followers the importance of handling with care the responsibilities with which they had been entrusted. Speaking of stewardship Sergioivanni (2000:139) puts it as follows: "Stewardship involves the leader's personal responsibility to manage his/her life and affairs with proper regard for the rights of other people and for the common welfare."

The researcher's conviction is that stewardship can be achieved only through the true commitment to serving the needs of the schools with an emphasis on openness. Stewardship encourages a sharing of power to create partnerships that truly recognise the value these partnerships bring to the organisation. There is humility in stewardship, it evokes images of service. School leaders are to bear in mind that service is central to the idea of stewardship.

2. 4.9 Commitment to the growth of others

Spears (2004:76) believed that "servant-leaders understand that followers have an inherent values besides the contributions they within the organization. As such servant-leaders deeply committed to the growth of every individual within the organization".

The secret to building people, Greenleaf (1995:21) maintains, "to be able to weld a team of such people by lifting them up to grow taller than they would otherwise be".

By removing obstacles that prevent people from effectively doing their jobs, a servant-leader helps each individual realise his or her full potential (Spears, 2004:78). The servant-leader recognises the responsibility to do everything possible to nurture the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of employees. Creating and offering opportunities for personal and professional development support the growth of others. Kouzes and Posner (2006:94) conclude that the most admired school leaders are leaders who make the teachers and learners feel valued, who raise their sense of self-

worth and self-esteem. The greatest goals of servant-leadership are the value of the individual being led, and that individual's well-being. A premise of servant-leadership is that the success of the school will follow if all those involved are in a state of well-being. Thus, the mission of servant-leader principals is to identify and meet the needs of their teachers, learners, and the school as a whole. The principal ensures that those who teach, and those who are taught get the resources that they need to be successful.

Autry (2004:89) writes that to be a leader who serves, one must think of oneself as, and indeed one must be, their primary resource. Helping others grow gives a servant-leader meaning and satisfaction. School principals as servant-leaders teach, coach, and mentor, so that others will use their energy for the good of the school. Members of the school feel empowered that their efforts have a positive influence on the organisation. Kouzes and Posner (2006:66) further note that followers need encouragement, positive affirmation, appreciation, acknowledgment, and praise and to be recognised for who they are and what they do. Consequently, the task of a school principals is to bring difference and future to the learners entrusted to their care. Greenleaf (1977:29) contends school leaders should strive to raise the spirit of the school communities they lead.

2. 4.10 Building community

Building community requires a culmination of all the nine qualities that the researcher has previously discussed. Hunter (2014:136) notes that community building is about coming together in order to create a healthy environment in which people can work free of unnecessary barriers and distractions. Hunter (2014:139) notes that servant-leader principals create environments where the individuals feel that the vision and tasks belong to the group. They understand that the mission of the school is bigger than any one person. This indicates that servant-leadership creates other servant-leaders, who then work together to build a community. Through community building, school leaders mobilise the collective capacity of individuals within the school setting and create a team that is committed to working together to achieve the vision and goals of the same school. In effective teams, leaders empower others and foster collaborative effort. Neuschel (2014:37) notes that building a community is working to

create a place that allows people to feel safe and allows them to put in all their energy and resources that will make themselves and their organisations great.

Hale (2016:47) writes,

“[e]ffective leadership is a leadership relationship that is rooted in community building. Successful servant-leaders incorporate their group’s values and beliefs. The ability to lead emerges also from the strength and sustenance of those who surround them”.

In community building, a servant-leader recognises the uniqueness of the spirit of every follower, but he/she does not condone inappropriate behaviours and/or performance with mediocrity. Hence, the servant-leader creates opportunities and alternatives from which constituents may choose and thus build up their autonomy for their success and the success of those around them.

Success in leadership is similar to success in life and may be measured by how well people work and play together (Kouzes & Posner, 2006:89). According to Spears (2006:16), “[t]his awareness causes the servant-leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those whom he/she works within a given institution”. In this way, a sense of community and team spirit is created which builds and maintains the social support they need to flourish as communities (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). To this end, a servant-leader believes that a community is greater than the sum of its individual parts (Covey, 2002:55). Greenleaf (1977:38) advises, “[t]o build a community, genuine care must be exercised because human service that requires love cannot be satisfactorily dispensed by specialised institutions that exist apart from community”.

As far as Christian schools are concerned, Sergiovanni (1994:142) states, “[c]ommunity building must become the heart of any school improvement effort”. For example the building of community in Catholic schools as an essential role of their participation in the community life of the church, was emphasised by the Vatican II document *Gravissimum educationis* (1965) in which Catholic schools are viewed not merely as institutions, but as essentially communities of people. Up to this point, the researcher has reviewed literature on the tenets, which direct towards basic principles or essential elements of the phenomenon of servant-leadership. These core

components can also be seen as basic beliefs or even as building blocks that are critical in supporting the idea of servant-leadership.

2.5 Concluding remarks

Servant-leadership is not an obvious choice for good leadership practice, nor is considered to be the solution for all leadership problems of a country. This researcher believes that the idea of servant-leadership may be problematic when applied in markedly unequal social contexts. It requires time to implement and opportunities to involve all the members of the school. The researcher aligns himself with Irving (2014:121), who says that the main problematic issue in servant-leadership lies with the close association of language used by servant-leaders and its relation to histories of slavery and colonisation. The South African history of racism, and its accentuated notion of servant-master, may test the validity of servant-leadership. Edwards (2017:221), in his study, "Critical feminist educational leadership in rural, disadvantaged schools of South Africa" notes that the legacy of apartheid and its association of subordination with race can present significant challenges for the application of servant-leadership in the South African school context. Nsiah's (2013:222) study underlines some barriers that could affect the implementation of servant-leadership. Egotism, according to Walker and Sackney (2013:42), is one of the barriers that create a hindrance to implementing servant-leadership. Traditionally the top-down type of leadership that existed in South Africa in the past might also have created scepticism about embracing the theory and practice of servant-leadership fully.

In the South African context, Nelson (2003) conducted a study on the relevance of servant-leadership among black leaders. His study describes the similarity between some of the principles of servant-leadership and *ubuntu* values. Nelson (2003:221) uses Patterson's factors (2005) of servant-leadership, namely love, humility, altruism, incorporation of the followers' vision, trust, empowerment and service. However, scepticism is found in terms of the applicability of servant-leadership in a South African context. Three factors create challenges to implement servant-leadership in South Africa and they are related to power, lack of trust, lack of effective empowerment procedure and negative connotations of the word 'servant' are the hindrances that create difficulties to employ servant-leadership practices. However, Naidoo (2014:88)

argues that dealing with this challenges may allow researchers to discover a way forward in the implementation of servant-leadership in South Africa.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter described the literature surrounding leadership in organisations, school leadership and servant-leadership practices. Under leadership organisations, the researcher has gathered a literature review on four theories of leadership namely, transformational, situational, moral and authentic leadership. Their similarities and differences, when compared with servant-leadership practices, have been elaborated.

The tenets of servant-leadership as a normative theory fall within the same leadership framework as transformational, moral, authentic and situational theories. The emphasis is on leadership practices that can be seen as subjectively oriented leadership that promote a kinder, gentler approach than bureaucratic approaches. In servant-leadership, the changing cultural demands are emphasised and the focus is on the humanistic side of leadership, whilst managerial approaches are de-emphasised. The following aspects can be seen as essential elements of the servant-leadership theory.

- Whilst the servant-leader's position is held in high esteem, there is a strong focus on the role of people who are followers in the leadership process. Though followers are not necessarily seen as co-decision-makers, their values and beliefs co-determine the quality of decisions. In addition to being valued for their indispensable communication and decision-making skills, servant-leaders have to be strongly committed to being good listeners and to influence decisions by being aware of themselves and their surroundings, possessing skills of persuasion, conceptualising, having foresight, being community builders and committed to the growth of the followers within the organisation.
- Servant-leaders are people- or follower-centred leaders, are highly regarded, emphasise the recognition and acknowledge of people, listen attentively to their needs, commit themselves to their growth etc.
- The principles and values of Christianity are held in high esteem in servant-leadership. Christian beliefs and values such as care for the followers, building people and working towards their growth, correlate closely with servant-leadership.

- More specifically, the following key components of servant-leadership can be applied directly to education: creating a clear vision, encouraging collaboration, managing resources, and building leaderships among teachers, parents and learners.

The next chapter deals with the servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools in the South African context.

CHAPTER THREE

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

3.1 Introduction

The essential elements of servant-leadership that formed the main part of Chapter 2 are also critical for the discussion of servant-leadership practices in faith-based schools. This section concentrates on a framework of literature, which relates to the scholarly and empirical literature on faith-based schools, within the international and South African contexts. In line with the aim of this study, this section specifically focuses on studies, which examined the phenomenon of educational leadership within the context of faith-based Christian schools, knowing that the field of educational leadership research appears to have overlooked this topic with regard to the context of faith-based schools. More specifically, servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools and the challenges to implement servant-leadership are discussed. At the outset, however, leadership in educational institutions is reviewed by focusing on the relationship between leadership and a number of key school-related issues.

3.2 Leadership in educational institutions

Even though the main aim of the whole research is to study the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools under this chapter, the researcher describes the conceptualisation of educational leadership, principal-centred leadership, and trust in principal-teacher relations, leadership and student achievement, the principal and instructional management. The whole aim is to pave the way for a discussion of faith-based Christian school leadership and servant-leadership practices.

3.2.1 Conceptualisation of educational leadership

Nestled within the broader narrative of leadership, is the literature regarding educational leadership. As a leadership discourse, educational leadership has not been exempted from differences in approaches, theories and opinions. Since the late 1980s, a significant number of authors have written on the topic, among others Bush (2011), Chapman (2013), Fullan (2011), Hargreaves (2009) and Sergiovanni (1992). Challenging the uniqueness of educational leadership theories, West-Burnham (2013:68) argues, “the existence of a leadership model for education is problematic”. He further notes that educational leadership “has no distinctive provenance, but

cheerfully borrows from an eclectic range of sources to produce a melded theory that implies an emergent conceptual framework rather than any distinctive model”, and emphasises, “educational leadership theory tended to be a borrower, rather than an initiator”. However, Williams-Boyd (2012:44) says that, when compared to corporate institutions, there are indeed differences in the types of leadership that schools require. Williams-Boyd (2012:45) further contends, “in schools, true leadership is even more complex and shaped by personal contexts”. Williams-Boyd (2012:49) suggests that it is these complexities and personal contexts that make a universal definition of educational definition extremely difficult to provide. Bush (2013:41) delivers a rationale for divergent definitions of educational leadership. Bush (2011:67) maintains, “most writers on educational management emphasise the significance of purposes and goals in education”.

Different theorists contribute alternative perspectives to the educational leadership discourse. Hargreaves (2009:76), for example, says that the notion of sustainable educational leadership presents a lasting dimension to the impact that leaders have on schools and communities. Considering the often limited and short-lived influence of leaders, Hargreaves (2009:78) contends:

When leadership is assigned to individuals or assumed to belong to them as an exclusive or exceptional gift, the potential and power of leadership is all too evanescent – it only exists in the pockets where leaders exert their immediate influence, and is quick to disappear once they have left.

However, education leadership seeks an effect that extends beyond the abilities and presence of the leader per se. According to Hargreaves (2009:184), this kind of leadership is that which “activates as a process that influences and develops things that matter in ways that spread and last to the benefit of all”.

As an alternative approach, Sergiovanni (1992:97) describes leadership in education as an enterprise of virtue. Referring to the concepts of authenticity, stewardship and servant-leadership, Starratt (2014:30) resolves that Sergiovanni’s view reflects “a commitment to transform schools”. The theory of moral leadership, as discussed in the previous chapter, therefore argues for an approach to leadership that considers the ethical behaviour and presence of the leader. Starratt (2014:184) says the notion of sustainable leadership thus seeks an effect that extends beyond the abilities and presence of the leader per se. In education, sustainable leadership is that which “activates as a process that influences and develops things that matter in ways that

spread and last to the benefit of all". Starratt (2014:187) further thinks about the "presence" of a leader as that virtue that fills the space between, and links, authenticity and responsibility. Usually, however, educational leadership theorists have drawn attention to addressing change in education. Hargreaves (2009:75) explains that educational change is not a linear step-by-step process, but rather a process that occurs in a "politically contested and multi-dimensional environment". Blasé (2005:264) says the organisational micro-politics are an important consideration of change management. Alternatively, Mulford (2009:48) proposes that teaching and learning are the key drivers for educational change. Whilst numerous educational leadership theories abound, Thrupp and Willmott (2013:161) challenge the literature and suggest that it is "harmful because of the way that it fails to challenge existing social inequalities and the way it chimes with managerial policies that will only further intensify existing inequality". Offering an alternative perspective, Thrupp and Willmott (2013:161) further conclude that educational management texts should be "more genuinely educational, more politically astute and more committed to social justice"

3.2.2 Principal-centred leadership

The document from the USA Congress (2009:69) underlines the role of the school leaders as to give direction and share vision. It is the school leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and the morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what learners may or may not become. Wilson (2015:164) states that the school leadership is pivotal to the success of a school and predominantly important in schools that have performed persistently poorly over time.

The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and learners about the school. Price (2012:92) notes that the principals' leadership role is the key to the success of the schools. As such where the school leadership works well schools become vibrant and innovative, schools become child-centred places, learners perform to the best of their ability, there is teamwork etc.

School principals are tasked with a lengthy list of responsibilities related to the leadership of a school. This list may include supervising learners, teachers, and other staff members, managing the budget, and attending numerous meetings. However,

simply managing a school is no longer enough. The principals of today are accountable for the oversight of teaching, curriculum, and assessment cycles, evaluation of teachers, fostering relationships with teachers and other stakeholders, evaluating and implementing discipline plans, developing a multi-year plan for needed resources, all while still managing the school building (Döş & Savaş, 2015:50; Michigan, 2013:64).

The extensive responsibilities of the school leaders of today require a depth of understanding of finance, curriculum, child development, human resource management, time management, community and public relations, and effective communication skills. Some leadership traits and practices may be more effective than others when guiding a school through these challenging times. As an extension of Reeves' (2009:221) work on principal effectiveness, Devos and Tuytens (2014:134) conducted a secondary analysis of two Canadian studies on school improvement. They find key characteristics of transformational leadership as commonalities among effective principals. Those school leaders demonstrated flexibility, vision, and emphasised personal and professional growth for themselves, as well as members of their organisations. The same leaders served to promote high levels of collaboration, motivation, and commitment to the school mission. A handful of recent studies (Mamo, 2016:112; Prior, 2017:241) confirm the importance of leadership in connection with teacher motivation, and further find that the lack of quality of leadership, insufficient feedback, and little recognition of work efforts are other demotivating practices in school environments. Gallagher and Smith (2008:47) say that the school leader is the professional that has the most direct responsibility for the development and maintenance of positive teacher morale. Ritter and Barnett (2016:18) also find that the school leader is the individual who has a direct influence on the culture of the school. Another element highlighted by the literature is that the school leader plays a significant role in establishing and promoting the culture and climate of the school. Both Duignan (2012:80) and Sergiovanni (2013:48) agree that a school leader who is skilled in promoting a school climate that encourages learning is crucial in improving student achievement. Day and Sammons (2016:49) in their study on transformational leadership yield a couple of key findings regarding the school climate. Their first finding is the idea that school leaders who produce quality work for the school was found to be the most important aspect in the study for influencing the behaviours and actions

of teachers. The researchers' second finding is the idea of the importance of school leaders' actions being in clear accordance with the mission, vision, values, and strategic goals of the school.

This section drew the elements related to the task of the school leaders in relation to the school effectiveness. It also correlates with studies in other countries, where the role of the school principals have been studied and connected to the efficiency of teaching-learning process. The next section highlights with more clarity the effect of leadership on school effectiveness.

3.2.3 Trust as key factor in principal-teacher relationships

Bush (2011:29) indicates that the increased interest in educational leadership in 21st century is based on the fact that there has been an established relationship between educational leadership qualities and academic performance. Firestone (2014:89) also stresses the importance of one-to-one relationships between principals and teachers. Additionally, many authors (DiPaola & Hoy 2010:79) say that trust and trust building are essential foundations to effective relationships within a school. According to Devos and Tuytens (2014:79), successful principals affect academic achievement through the support and development of teachers and the execution of effective administrative practices.

Treating teachers with respect and consideration, setting clear and reasonable expectations, and being open with teachers could result in high levels of trust between principals and teachers.

Kouzes and Posner (2006:60) and Tschannen-Moran (2013:70) express similar views, in which they explain that in order to achieve the objective of educating learners, principals depend on teachers and teachers depend on principals (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2015:154). This interdependent nature of staff relationships is grounded in trust. Trust serves as the foundation for communication, collaborative decision-making, and building a common vision (Tschannen-Moran, 2013:33). Teachers, principals, parents, and learners need some level of trust between the groups in order for the school to be productive and affect student outcomes positively. Ultimately, Tschannen-Moran (2013:52) says, "trust matters to successful leaders and their schools". Leaders have to take the initial steps to model trust to others. Such actions include building relationships by taking risks, being vulnerable, listening, and being

clear with performance expectations and the treatment of others (Kouzes & Posner, 2006:98).

Michigan (2013:132) points out that teachers demonstrate professionalism where leaders demonstrate a professional orientation and where trust is evident throughout the organisation. Implications for school leaders, based on this conclusion, may include a need to cultivate relationships of trust to set and communicate teacher expectations, and to share leadership with teachers.

Shula's (2014:67) study also says that trust is an important factor to enhance collaboration by learners, parents and teachers. This has been established through previous research at Christian primary schools in South Africa Shula (2014:68). Teacher and principal relationships built on trust have a positive impact on the climate at the school. In order to establish and build trust in a school, the school leaders must consider their leadership practices and how these practices cultivate a climate of trust.

3.2.4 Leadership and student achievement

Under this section, the researcher reviews the literature on the relationship between school leadership and learner achievement. An extensive meta-analysis of 30 years of leadership research by Marzano et al. (2015:59) reveals the impact that effective school principals potentially have on student learning.

Leaders can have a positive impact on student achievement; they can also have a marginal, or worse, negative impact on student achievement. When leaders concentrate on the wrong school or classroom practices, they can negatively impact student achievement. Marzano et al. (2015:59)

For example, by not taking any action against the low performing teachers, or by not showing any concern for learners who encounter academic challenges, can affect learners and the school as a whole. Leithwood (2015:49) writes that school leaders are being "held accountable not only for the structures and processes they establish, but also for the performance of those under their charge". This scholar (Leithwood 2015:69) further explains that in the past it has been difficult to measure learner outcomes and link that to teacher/principal performance, but nowadays technology has made it possible to tie learning outcomes more directly to school principals than before.

There have been studies that have shown various characteristics that have correlations with learner achievement. Philips (2015) studied the correlations between

principal managerial leadership, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and learner achievement. Philips and Raham (2015:201) find significant correlations among the studied leadership forms and learner achievement. Philips and Raham (2015:203) further state that the results of their research support the belief that principal leadership influences learner achievement, although it is primarily an indirect relationship.

Cerit (2012:208) conducted a narrative review of the literature on leadership and learner achievement, and identified that there are categories of principal behaviour that positively affect learner achievement. She also states that the effect of leadership on learner achievement has been mostly indirect. While a small portion of the effect may be direct – that is, principals' direct interactions with learners in or out of the classroom may be motivating, inspiring, instructive, or otherwise influential – most of it is indirect, that is, mediated through teachers and others.

On the other hand, Steyn (2012:47) investigated the relationship between principal leadership orientation and learner achievement. She finds that principal leadership and learner achievement have a direct relationship.

This section has reviewed literature related to the school leaders' contribution to the learners' achievement. The next section will look at the principals and their instructional management role.

3.2.5 The principal and instructional management

As managers of instructional programmes, school leaders must be able to recognise quality teaching, provide professional development and learning opportunities for teachers, build curriculum coherence, and clarify instructional objectives.

It is Michigan's (2013:79) view that school leaders have a responsibility to cultivate an environment for learning. However, to fulfil this responsibility, school leaders must be aware of what is being taught in classrooms and how instruction is taking place. DiPaola and Hoy (2010:69) articulates that classroom walkthroughs and observations are two methods for principals to gain insight into the instructional programme within their schools. When principals have a grasp of the instructional programme, they may choose to make adjustments in their leadership practices to enhance the educational opportunities for teachers and learners in their schools.

One way for principals to manage the instructional programmes within their schools is through professional development offerings and the coherence of programmes. Principal leadership and instruction have a relationship, which is affected by the quality of professional development, professional community, and partnerships with parents. Another conclusion from these researchers is that school climate can also affect the quality of instruction and learner achievement.

Some researchers (Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013:440) support the development of teachers and its importance in principal leadership practices. These researchers investigated the associations between leadership practices and learner achievement. Based on these results, Grissom et al. (2013) conclude, “[t]ime spent directly on coaching teachers is positively associated with achievement gains and school improvement”. These researchers are of the opinion that principals may note two key points: direct coaching of teachers can affect student achievement, and information from walk-throughs should be used to develop learning opportunities for teachers. Researchers (Day & Sammons, 2016:54) sought to determine and enumerate the strategies employed by principals, which resulted in school improvement. Of the identified strategies, two are related to the development of teachers. Day and Sammons (2016:251) find successful principals “built the leadership capacities of the educators through the progressive distribution of responsibility with accountability” and “placed emphasis on creating a range of learning and development opportunities for all staff and learners”. These findings suggest that sharing leadership responsibilities with teachers and supporting them with tailored learning opportunities result in improved outcomes within the school environment.

Principals are able to provide support for the development of teachers through other methods, as well. Bass (2013:96) recommends several principal practices that could benefit teachers, including refining teachers’ coaching and reflective conversation skills, modelling effective teaching, and providing resources for teacher development that are designed to meet the needs of the learners. In addition to these principal practices, McCarley (2016:326) outlines the importance of a principal understanding teacher, “abilities, needs, and goals” and building upon an individual teacher’s strengths. Teachers, regardless of experience or training, are in need of their principals’ support and efforts related to teacher development. As Danielson (2012:35)

states, “because teaching is so demanding and complex, all teaching can be improved”.

Through these efforts, a positive change may occur in the quality of instruction and the overall learning environment within a school. These studies examined the effect specific leadership practices can have within a school. According to this collective body of research, principals’ methods of leadership can positively influence the school climate, the effective implementation of teacher evaluation systems, and learner achievement. When considering this compilation of studies, principals may ascertain the communication of expectations, teacher development, building trust, and the management of instructional programmes as valuable and effective leadership practices.

In this section, literature that pertains to leadership in educational institutions was discussed. The core components that serve as building blocks in supporting the idea of the tenets of servant-leadership were highlighted.

3.3 Leadership in faith-based schools

The previous section discussed the educational leadership in general. No mention was made of the faith-based school leadership. This section will discuss the context of faith-based school leadership and how faith-based Christian schools are different.

3.3.1 The context of faith-based schools

This section is dedicated to examine how servant-leadership is understood and practised by faith-based school leaders, and this researcher hopes that this will offer an opportunity to enrich current understanding of educational leadership in faith-based Christian schools in the context of South Africa. The researcher starts by reviewing the literature around faith-based Christian schools. Grace (2009:146) suggests that the context of faith-based schools are made more complex on account of their “dual identity” and “dual missions”. This dual character ascribed to faith-based Christian schools is a result of, on the one hand, competitive, market, and accountability forces created by government policies, and on the other hand, reforms and influences from the schools’ religious community and local governing agencies, which oversee them. As Grace (2009:119) aptly states, faith-based schools serve both “God and Caesar”.

Furthermore, Halstead and McLaughlin (2015:63) note that the complex nature of faith-based schools is derived from their “distinctive non-common educational aims”

and “restricted non-common educational environments”. McGettrick (2015), and McLaughlin (2015:89) also argue that the aims of faith-based schools are made distinct because of the ways in which they are related to and influenced by the purposes, characteristics, and ethos of the particular faith of a school, and its religious traditions. The environment of faith-based schools is distinct, because of their processes to select learners who would gain from the faith and curriculum of a school (Halstead & McLaughlin, 2015; McGettrick, 2015:93) and to hire staff who would support the faith of a school. As a result, it has been argued that these non-common aims and environments (Halstead & McLaughlin, 2015:40), along with the values and beliefs of faith influence a school, and how the school approaches various aspects of its operations, including the ways in which leadership is understood and practised.

Grace (2009:123), Gunter (2013:80) and Lawton (2015:40) describe that the expansion of faith-based schools, both in number and in diversity, has enabled this school sector to become an important part of education systems worldwide. The expansion of faith-based schools has also generated a complex public debate as to whether or not such schools should be receiving national government support and has raised questions concerning the type of education being provided.

According to Lawton (2015:43), despite the fact that faith-based schools comprise a significant proportion of schools internationally and in South Africa in particular and being a topic of wide debate, these schools tend to be on the periphery of attempts to understand the critical issues within the field of education and are rarely seen as a focus of educational leadership research (Grace, 2003:88; 2009:98). As a result, Lawton (2015:45) argues that research into faith-based schools is “remarkably underdeveloped”, and has been classified as “uncharted” territory.

One of the main causes for this neglect is a traditional perception that research into faith-based schools is an “exotic” undertaking, which holds little interest for those involved in the discussion and research of education. Gallagher (2013:23) describes this neglect as a “secular marginalisation” by the media and academics, which have allowed secular culture to dominate discussion and have regarded the subject of religion “as unimportant”. Another cause of this neglect is that the various faith communities have not promoted research into faith-based schools. Thus, it is not surprising that this lack of scholarly interest has created a significant gap in understanding faith-based schools, and the ways in which leadership is understood

and practised in such contexts. This is a great challenge, especially in the context of South African faith-based schools.

Arthur (2016:39) and Grace (2003:81) note that the limited amount of empirical research that does focus on faith-based schools has tended to concentrate on Catholic schools and is located within the context of the United States and Australia. Hence, this researcher hugely depended on the literature from these two countries to develop ideas on the leadership of faith-based schools leadership. Grace (2003:155) notes that the research emphasised areas such as “religious, moral and social formation and attitudes” and “school effectiveness and academic outcomes”. In addition, the research into some of faith-based schools, such as Islamic, Jewish, is particularly sparse and has tended to consist of policy studies or descriptive analyses, rather than empirically based work. For example, Hewer (2016:165) describes the social context of Muslim schools in England, and Goddard (2003) compares policies relating to education funding, parental choice, and school accreditation of Muslim schools located in the United States, the Netherlands, and Belgium.

However, this researcher argues that there is a scarcity of research pertaining to faith-based Christian schools within the field of educational leadership. That said, some studies relating to the context of faith-based schools do exist. One example is the recent report by the National College of School Leadership of the Department of Education (2006:88), now renamed as the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Service, which was based on a series of seminars conducted with faith-based school leaders. This report identifies three key themes for future research, including “leadership of faith schools, leadership and spirituality, and the development of leadership in faith schools”. In addition, Shah (2016:175) conceptualises the idea of educational leadership through an Islamic perspective. Her work is significant as it highlights the ways in which Islamic religious texts and teachings can influence how educational leadership is understood and practised in Islamic schools. Similarly, Lawton’s (2015:158) empirically based work focuses on understanding Islamic leaders’ perspectives on educational leadership. Through a series of interviews, focus groups, and school visits, the findings of this research have revealed that social, cultural, and political challenges have an influence on leaders’ work which is compounded by the fact that such schools are often more likely to be under-resourced and lack necessary support. Another example of empirically based research includes

Grace's (2012:78) examination of how English Catholic head teachers' understand school leadership and how their understandings relate to "traditional models" of educational leadership. Grace's (2009:89) analysis of interviews with 60 head teachers found that they had a variety of leadership understandings which relate to the "discourse of strong leadership" and to a "discourse of collegiality". The analysis also found that the head teachers' understandings of leadership can be influenced by contextual factors, which relate to the culture or socio-economic status of the school.

This section shed light on empirical studies of the historical facts of faith-based school leadership and some empirical studies done on faith-based schools in general. The following section will discuss the similarities and differences between faith-based Christian schooling in the South African and international context.

Many of the themes identified in the general literature on faith-based schools and leadership are also applicable to the South Africa setting. One of the similarities is the existence of multi-levelled contextual influences on South African faith-based schools. Another similarity is how South African faith-based schools have been overlooked by educational research. The relatively small amount of empirically based research that has been conducted within South Africa has focused on Catholic schools. These observations can also be applied to the context of South Africa where research has tended to focus on government schools and the role of the principal, and to date, it appears that no research has been conducted on how educational leadership is understood and practised within faith-based schools. Such observations are particularly relevant, as it will be recalled that South Africa has a significant number of learners attending non-government schools, the majority of which are faith-based. This is to highlight the similarities of South African faith-based Christian schooling with the international context. The following section describes the uniqueness of the faith-based Christian school leadership.

3.3.2 Distinctiveness of faith-based school-leadership practices

In the previous section, it was suggested that the contexts of faith-based schools are made more complex as a result of their dual identity. Furthermore, the aims of faith-based Christian schools are made distinct because of the ways in which they are related to and influenced by the purposes, characteristics, and ethos of the particular

faith and the religious traditions of a school. Thus, this section describes the expectations of school leaders' practices in faith-based Christian schools.

According to Sullivan (2006b:938), "faith-based schools have a dual identity: they are simultaneously part of a religious community and also belong to a wider system of education. Their mission is, to a large degree, given in advance by the faith community that sponsors them ... At the same time, however this mission is not unconstrained: for faith schools are obliged to take into account a range of expectations and requirement imposed on them by the wider society."

It is to be understood that faith-based Christian school leadership is not merely leadership practised by Christians. Edwards (2014:56) points out that school leaders are expected to combine both the professional and spiritual aspects of their lives as they serve the school community. Another important element to be highlighted (Hall, 2014:39; Hulst, 2012:97) is that in Christian communities, leadership is associated with an understanding of God's leading or calling. Gannell (2014:79) notes that a strong sense of calling motivates Christian school leaders, helping to sustain them in the busyness and day-to-day pressures of their roles. Additionally, in looking to appoint leaders to a faith-based Christian school there is also an expectation that a school board will have a process that includes prayer and discernment, culminating in a belief that God has led them to appoint a particular person. Striepe (2014:94) notes that in research into faith-based schools, it was found that the understandings and practices of leaders are value-driven and that leaders' perspectives on leadership are shaped by their own philosophy or spirituality, and enhanced by that of the affiliated faith of the school. Consistent with this, faith-based Christian school leaders' beliefs shape their vision, their relationships and the manner in which they lead.

Faith-based Christian school leaders are to be purposeful in their leadership, making choices rooted in biblical principles consistent with their beliefs and the beliefs of their school communities (Brown, 2007:209). In research within CSA schools, O'Harae (2007:88) finds no leader expressing self-promotion as motivation for becoming a principal. According to Brown (2007), faith-based Christian school leaders, recognise that their authority is not power to wield, with their roles being one among many in supporting God's plan for the functioning of a particular community. To be consistent with Christian teachings, Kouzes and Posner (2006:90) note faith-based Christian school leaders are expected to be humble, relational, and selfless, demonstrating a

commitment to others, looking to serve their interests. Hulst (2012:67), speaking of the faith-based Christian school leaders, points out that they should endeavour to be *servant-hearted* people, who lead as people who serve God and the community and who give of themselves, demonstrating passion for their cause. Servant-leaders establish clear performance goals for community members and empower and coach people to achieve those purposes.

Credibility is an important facet of faith-based Christian school leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2006:88), if people do not believe in a leader they will not believe the leader's message. Brown (2007:212) and Hall (2014:70) argue that to be believed, leaders need to embody the life they advocate. They need to stand for something and act in a way that is consistent with their beliefs. At the heart of credibility is the person of the leader. Faith-based Christian school leaders are first believed to be followers of Christ, before they are leaders. Credibility for the faith-based Christian school leader is not simply a matter of sharing biblical messages. Kouzes and Posner (2006:89) note that the words of a leader are enhanced by a mature Christian faith where actions are consistent with the message. Hall (2014:68) also notes a similar thought as he highlights that the life of a Christian school leader need not be a perfect life, but it does need to be a life of integrity.

The above leads us to state that an element of a faith-based Christian school leader's role is to develop school practice consistent with a Christian worldview. DuFour and Fullan (2014:25) note that to be credible, it is important that a faith-based Christian school leader not only possesses a worldview consistent with that of their school community, but also is able to articulate that worldview and live it out, setting an example in both words and through actions consistent with words. Hulst (2012:206) points out that through their messages and personal contact, faith-based Christian school leaders have the task of leading parents, staff and learners to a deep understanding of the meaning and importance of their Christian perspective and how this affects schooling as a whole.

To fulfil their leadership and management tasks, school leaders participate in professional development. Gannell (2014:60) notes that with beliefs shaping practice, it is important that the professional development of leaders be informed by a Christian worldview. To be better equipped for their task of leading faith-based Christian school

communities, it is recommended that leaders and prospective leaders undertake training in biblical leadership.

In research into Christian schools, leadership has been aligned to transformational leadership. This researcher has provided a general reflection on transformational leadership in the previous chapter, under the section that discussed the similarities and differences of servant-leadership with other holistic leadership styles. Transformational leadership is built on a moral foundation and emphasises moral and personal improvements, rather than self-interest. The idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration of the transformational leader align with trust, commitment, justice and love that are consistent with the Bible and, thus, acceptable to Christian schools. However, educators Lavery (2013:80) and Sharpe (2017:291) point out that transformational leadership and servant-leadership are also consistent with the values of Christian leaders. On the other hand, O'Harae (2007:79) describes that transformational and servant-leadership are understood to be closely related to the biblical concept of leadership.

This section can be summarised by stating that leadership of faith-based Christian schools is associated with an understanding of God's calling to serve Christian school communities. Faith-based Christian school leaders are motivated by a strong sense of calling. The understandings and practices of leaders are value-driven and leaders' perspectives on leadership are shaped by their own philosophy or spirituality, and enhanced by that of the affiliated faith of the school. Faith-based Christian school leaders are to be humble, relational, and selfless, and consequently servant-leaders.

3.4 Servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools

The following subsection reviews the literature around the spiritual facet. As such, the teaching of Jesus on servanthood will be briefly visited and compared with the servant-leadership of the school principals in faith-based Christian schools.

3.4.1 The teaching of Jesus and servanthood

In the previous chapter, this researcher gave an overview of servant-leadership in educational institutions. This section concentrates on the servant-leadership practices from the perspective of faith-based Christian schools.

The concept of *servant* is deeply embedded in the Judeo-Christian heritage (Greenleaf, 2002:211) with the word *servant* (or *servants*) occurring more than 750

times in the Bible. This is understandable, given that Jesus advocates the concept of servanthood as an aspect of leadership in the Gospel of (St. Mark 10:42-45), as he says:

Know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Authors such as O'Harae (2007:87), Quarmby (2010:87), Sharpe (2017) and Twelves (2014:79) suggest that leaders of faith-based Christian schools should exercise servant-leadership as the preferred leadership style. In order to be successful, they need to have a mind-set and practices of a servant. Ruwoldt (2016:187) underlines that there is evidence that school leaders can tend to regard servant-leadership in terms of leaders doing the hard work for others, as well as empowering others, rather than promoting the values of their schools developing cultures consistent with the concept of community, Christian school leadership should be careful in its use of the Bible. Using Scripture to oppress or devalue the contributions of 'subordinates' stands in contradistinction to the ethical teachings of Scripture. School principals of faith-based Christian schools need to recognise that hierarchical or authoritarian models of leadership are not normative in Scripture but, rather, reflect secular, modernist, organisational theory.

Shortt (2014:203) notes regardless of one is a Christian or not, Jesus' life, His actions, and words direct to Him as a leader whose deeds and vision changed the human history for centuries, and who provided a leadership ideal which is worth emulating .

According to Collier (2013:97), the term *servant* used in the Gospel of St. Mark 10:43 is the Greek word *diakonos*, which means *to wait at table, to provide or care for, to minister, or to serve*. In the Gospel of St Mark 10:44 is used the term "slave" and that is Greek word "doulos". Wilkes (2009:174) further points out that Jesus' concept of leadership lies in the use of slave because slavery was repulsive to the Jews of the first century who considered such a comparison to be a terrible attack on their dignity, because it connoted a person bound to do the will of a master or superior or the master. Jesus used *servant* and *slave* to describe the form of leadership he was

advocating for his followers to employ at that time and the rest of those who would follow his footsteps afterwards..

In St. Luke 4:18-30, Jesus declared in his inaugural homily that he had come to serve and to proclaim the good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind. The central message of that was that he had come to serve and not to be served. Jennings (2013:120) points out that Jesus exemplified a true servant by what he said and did when he washed the feet of his disciples. According to Jennings (2013:129), in St. Luke 22:26, Jesus, seeing his disciples not understanding his message about service, said to them:

But not so among you, on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the one who serves.

In St. Mark 9:35, he tells them, “[i]f anyone desires to be first, he shall be the last of all and servant of all” (St. Mark 9:35). The words and actions of Jesus offer a challenge and a good example to those who lead in faith-based Christian schools. Jesus’ words in the Gospel of St. John (15:16), “It was not you who chose me, but I chose you to go forth and bear fruit” stand as reminder to faith-based Christian school leaders to emulate his way of leadership in their servant-leadership practice in faith-based Christian schools.

From what has been explained up to now under this section, it is clear that the faith-based school leader, for whom the message of the gospel values forms his/her important part of leadership, has to exercise leadership in imitation of Jesus the servant-leader who has come to serve first. This section has included Jesus’ servanthood as an important model for school leaders in faith-based Christian schools.

3.4.2 The relevance of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian

In the previous sub-section, the literature reviewed, revolved around Jesus’ servanthood and its relation to the faith-based School leaders. This section briefly reviews the relevance of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools.

Burggraaf (2014:12) points out that leadership of the faith-based Christian schools must be spiritual, servant-like, and empowering”. He further notes, “the heart of Faith-based Christian school leadership lies in being effective spiritual leadership that is

servant-leadership. In this case the leader becomes a servant who at the same time needs others as they need him/her.”

Arthur (2016:58) contends that faith-based school is to be perceived as one interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent community in which “ school leaders are meant to be servants to the needs of people in the faith-community and of the idea that binds them together as one entity”. Duignan (2007:89) echoes the perception that the faith-based Christian school is a community of the ‘people of God’ that unites everyone as a team.

Miller (2017:16) agrees, “Leadership is understood as a call to service, a ministry for the Church and the wider school community society. It is about being in the midst of others as one who is called to offer serves”.

Fullan (2005:180) and Starratt (2014:96) note that a faith-based Christian learning community needs a leadership type that espouses an ethic of care and moral ardour. Blanchard (2012:201), Covey (2002:79) and Sergiovanni (2013:17), state that this kind of leadership is servant-leadership. Neidhart (2014:69) indicates that in faith-based Christian schools, servant-leadership is “a fundamental, foundational and essential expression of their vocation within the faith-based school community”. Speaking specifically of the Catholic schools, Mulligan (2012:38) writes:

Catholic education, by its very nature, is a call to live differently and offer something more: a perspective about our world rooted in the scriptures and social teachings of the church” (implying an imitation of the leadership style of Jesus).

In short, a faith-based Christian school discovers its meaning, vision in the Church, and does not separate faith from education. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Southern African Catholic Bishops through the Catholic Institute of Education have recommended servant-leadership practices in their respective schools.

3.4.3 Challenges of servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools

Servant-leadership is not a leadership ideal that can be taken light. It cannot be considered as a solution to all leadership challenges in South Africa or elsewhere. This researcher believes that it requires time and changing of mind-set of the given society.

Servant-leadership is an ideal that requires time to implement and opportunities to involve all the members of the school. Nsiah's (2013:239) study underlines some barriers that could affect the implementation of servant-leadership, and this researcher also believes that these affect leadership practices in our country. Leaders and followers may not see servant-leadership as an important ideal for the success. Fear of humbling oneself in the materialistic and aggressive world of today can be one of the hindrances to practice servant-leadership.

According to Sackney (2007:96), egoism is one of the barriers that create a hindrance to implementing servant-leadership in the school environment. As this researcher mentioned in Chapter 2, traditionally the top-down type of leadership that existed in our country in the past may create scepticism about embracing the theory and practice of servant-leadership in the South African context. However, this researcher hopes that this study may shed light on how that can be dealt with in school contexts.

Besides the barriers and paradoxes highlighted above, servant-leadership can have some negative aspects of which school leaders may need to be aware. Here are some of these barriers.

- Reluctance of some colleagues and followers to collaborate and be empowered.
- The difficulty of sharing, of being humble, and capable of uplifting others, and of knowing very well that colleagues may surpass the servant-leader within the organisation.
- The challenges of dealing with anger, frustration, vulnerability, and despondence as the servant-leader strives to be a role model. These may prevent school principals in the process of becoming a servant-leader. However, the leader must recognise that these barriers, paradoxes, and downsides are not only perceived, but also justifiable. The leader can enhance the possibility of a safe and successful practice into servant-leadership, by preparing for such anticipated difficulties early during the leadership mandate.

Faith-based Christian school leaders take the words of Holy Scripture as a source of inspiration and hope in their servant-leadership practice. Added to that, servant-leaders use tenacity, perseverance, strength, as their way to success.

3.5 Overview of Chapter three

In Chapter 3, the literature concerning the conceptualisation of school leadership, the context of the South African faith-based Christian schools, and servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based schools were reviewed. The importance of servant-leadership practice in faith-based Christian schools was discussed. This researcher has made biblical references to the Scriptural basis of servant-leadership, since faith-based Christian school principals need to practice leadership based on the biblical principles. In addition, the researcher has discussed the models of servant-leadership presented by various authors. The researcher concluded the chapter by mentioning some barriers and downsides of servant-leadership practices and how school principals can overcome that. This is because the literature review expressed the view that servant-leadership is not only a safe way for effective leadership, but it provides as well the necessary tools needed to establish a better learning community.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research methodology, presents methods and procedures for data collection, and the selection of participants. This study employed a qualitative research method, with a constructivist paradigm to research about the servant-leadership practices of school leaders of faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. The chapter has the following sections: research design and methodology, participant selection, population and sampling, data gathering methods, trustworthiness, data analysis and interpretation, methodological challenges, limitations of the study and summary of the methodology. In conforming to the ethical considerations, the researcher gave pseudonyms (fictitious names) such as Mancho Faith-based Christian Secondary School, Beto Faith-based Christian Secondary School, Birke Faith-based Christian Secondary School, Shole Faith-based Christian Secondary School, Wollima Faith-based Christian Secondary School and Fulasa Faith-based Christian School, and principals were called Mr Kakawo, Mr Galaso, Mr Banta, Mr Bunaro, Ms Shiminta and Ms Muni.

Authors, such as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:101), Creswell (2013:214) and Neuman (2011:48), are in agreement that there is no fixed structure to design qualitative research. These writers noted that research design denotes some idea of what one wants to know, a guide or a plan. Henning (2004:18) notes that research design is sometimes used as a synonym of research types. Nieuwenhuis (2007:70) conceptualises research design “as a plan or strategy from the philosophical assumptions for specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done”. Yin (2009:78) agrees with others and defines research design as “a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions”.

From the above statement, one can draw the conclusion that a research design in a qualitative approach requires a researcher to develop his or her own designs as he or she goes along, using one or more of the available strategies or tools as an aid or guideline. Thus, one can conclude that a research design is the planned architecture of inquiry.

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative case study design, utilising the constructivist paradigm, because, as advised by Stake (2008:79), he believed that a qualitative case study provides an opportunity to reach at great learning from the perspectives of the participants. Rule and John (2011:89) also note that the advantage of a qualitative case study is that it allows investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events in any given areas.

In this case study, the researcher chose the constructivist/interpretive paradigm as the philosophical stance, as that provided the lens through which participants of this research practice of servant-leadership were unpacked. The researcher explains the philosophical orientation in the next section.

These are the questions that focused the research design.

- How could the nature of servant-leadership be understood?
- Why are the characteristics of faith-based schools unique?
- How could the differences between servant-leadership practices and other kinds of leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools be explained?
- How do principals in faith-based Christian schools practice servant-leadership principles in their day-to-day school leadership?
- Which guidelines can be used to establish the implementation of servant-leadership practices in faith-based schools?

4.2 Philosophical orientation of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa, and to explore how their practices are related to the literature on the subject. From the ontological and epistemological point of view, this study lent itself to a constructivist/interpretative lens. This is due to the fact that, first of all, the reality sought by the researcher is based on the meanings and understanding that the school principals have of the situations and actions of their daily leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools in relation to the servant-leadership practices. Secondly, according to Bloor and Wood (2006), meaning was created through the interaction with the principals and teachers who took part in this research study.

Bogdan (2007 & Biklen: 76) are of the opinion that researchers use the constructivist qualitative approach, because of their interest to learn how participants make sense of their daily leadership practices. In other words, they are focused on the *participants' perspectives* as is the case with this particular study. However, (Creswell, 2014:97) points out that people create meaning as they interact with each other and their environments. This researcher chose to employ a case study research, because it allowed an in-depth approach to provide insight into the given phenomenon of how school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in the South African context practiced the essential features of servant-leadership, integrated these into their respective school cultures, and the effect this had in the schools. This case study approach utilised semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation as methods of data gathering, as these afforded the opportunity for the participants to provide rich explanations of their servant-leadership practices in the selected faith-based Christian schools in the South African context, and how that related to the literature on the subject.

Ponterotto (2005:109) described that the focal point that distinguishes constructivist approach from other qualitative paradigms as centrality of the interaction between the researcher and the object of investigation. Using an interactive researcher-participant dialogue through interview sessions, focus group discussions and observations, the researcher presents the findings of this research as a co-creation of the researcher and the participants themselves.

Because of its hermeneutical approach to meaning making, the constructivist paradigm argues that meaning is veiled and must be brought to the surface through deep reflection with the participants. According to Ponterotto (2005:112), reflection is stimulated by the researcher-participant dialogue via the research methods adopted by the researcher. The implication of Ponterotto's (2005:115) observation for this particular study was that it was through the researcher's reflections and interpretation of the data that meaning was uncovered. In addition to that, throughout the analysis process of data collection, the researcher strived to understand the data from the point of view of the daily experiences of the participants, of these school principals, as the meanings that the respondents brought to the research, was of primary importance for the researcher.

In summary, reality is constructed through the researcher–respondent interaction, based on the knowledge they both bring to the study. Guided by the philosophical tenets of constructivist thinking, as the researcher has described above, he explored the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based schools in South Africa by seeking an understanding of participants' perspectives.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005:201) explain that the constructivist paradigm assumes a set of methodological procedures that guide the research. In the following section, this researcher will present the research design applied to this study.

4.3 Research design

The research design determines the practical actions and procedures that the researcher will follow in order to address the research question. Creswell (2012:20) defines the research design as the “specific procedures involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis and report writing”. Employing semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation as methods of data collection, this study is informed by the qualitative research approach. Consequently, the researcher explains what is meant by a case study.

4.3.1 Case study

Creswell (2012:58) and Hatch (2002:79) denote case studies as one of the qualitative research designs used by constructivist researchers. These scholars indicate that case studies are different from other types of qualitative studies (phenomenological studies, biographical studies, grounded theory, and ethnographical studies), as they are extensive verifications and intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time. Creswell (2014:87) contends that case study designs involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group, to permit the researcher effectively to understand how it operates and functions. On the other hand, Stake (2008:88) notes that a researcher chooses a particular research design and method, because of the intent of the study. The researcher's choice of this case study design was dictated by his desire to construct meaning through an in-depth study of the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa.

Mabry (2008:98) identifies three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In intrinsic case studies, the researcher does not attempt to generalise

beyond the single case, or evolve theories pertaining to his or her research. With instrumental case studies, the researcher seeks to gain insight into an issue, clarify a theory, or revise aspects of a generalisation. In collective case studies, a number of cases are researched in order to clarify components of a theory. The collective case study design usually involves several instrumental cases to improve researchers' capacity to contribute to a theory about a larger collection of cases (Yin, 2003:67). Algozzine and Hancock (2006) note that findings from collective case studies may substantiate a theory, while at the same time providing insights into people's thinking and behaviour in a particular situation.

This researcher adopted the collective case study design for this research, because a case study approach can provide the medium for in-depth data collection of the servant-leadership practices of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools. According to Algozzine and Hancock (2006), after the researcher has identified the disciplinary orientation and design for the study, he or she then identifies the participants, and the methods of data collection. The following sections discuss participant selection and the research methods of the study.

4.4 Participant selection

Merriam (2009:77) advises researchers that, in identifying participants for a case study investigation, to use purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to obtain some insight, and selects a sample from which most can be achieved. According to Algozzine and Hancock (2006), Silverman (2013:99) and Stake (2012), the researcher selects specific cases to expand the potential for learning from those cases. Based on telephone conversations with the head offices of the three umbrella bodies for faith-based Christian schools in South Africa, namely ACE (Association for Christian schools), CIE (Catholic Institute of Education) and ISASA (Independent Schools of South Africa), from which participants were selected, the researcher learned that CIE, ACE, and ISASA encouraged the servant-leadership ideal for their schools and therefore it appeared that all faith-based Christian schools in Gauteng could have potentially be participants in this research study. The researcher's initial desire was to use the nominational technique in order to identify and select participants for this study, but the head offices of these faith-based Christian schools declined to nominate the possible participants in order to avoid the possibility that their direct involvement might

compromise the study. Advised by Bloor and Wood (2006:101), and Merriam (2009:88), the researcher employed purposive sampling in order to engage the participants in the study. Thus, participants for this study consisted of twelve principals and three teachers from twelve schools that belong to the three umbrella bodies, ISASA, CIE and ACE.

For the sake of gaining access to participants, the researcher requested their head offices to allow him to undertake research in their schools. (See Appendix A for the letter to the associations.) He then contacted principals by e-mail and phone through their personal assistants. The selection of the participants for the study was based on their availability to be part of the study and also geographical distance. On the other hand the researcher selected these schools primarily because they were classified as one of the top-performing schools in Gauteng (Department of Education, 2016) and he assumed that the servant-leadership practices of the school principals might have contributed to that. On the grounds of the performance of the schools in the matric results of 2016, the researcher identified twelve secondary schools in Gauteng for this study, of which all are situated in urban areas. The selection of the sites is in congruence with what Merriam (2009:77) argues that using a purposeful sampling allows a researcher to discover, understand and gain insight and selects a sample from which the most can be learned.

However, for reasons of confidentiality, the researcher gave pseudonyms to the participants and did not use their real names.

Given the fact that it was a qualitative study, it was important to gain in-depth understanding of servant-leadership practices of the participants in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. Purposive sampling of participants in this research was most appropriate as it enabled the researcher to identify the principals and teachers that would provide him with information-rich data. In establishing the number of the teachers to participate in the focus group discussion, the researcher had a meeting with the school principals where he explained the purpose of the study, as well as the research questions and the criteria of selecting those schools. For the semi-structured interviews the researcher involved only principals, whereas for focus group discussions, the researcher requested the principals to identify six teachers as per selection criteria.

4.5 Data gathering methods

The data gathering methods that were used in this qualitative study were used for consistency with the research paradigm. In a case study, a wide array of data is collected as a researcher looks to develop an in-depth picture of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014:78). Data in case study research is gathered from a range of sources, such as documents, archival records, physical artefacts, interviews, direct observation and participant-observation (Yin, 2009:98). As part of this research the following three data collection strategies were used: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and direct observation with two purposively selected faith-based Christian schools with the principals who participated in the interview process.

4.5.1 Individual interviews

DeMarrais (2004:55) defines an interview as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study”.

Interviewing involves a face-to-face interpersonal encounter in which the interviewer asks a respondent or respondents to answer questions relating to the research topic. Hammond and Wellington (2012:86) note that interviews provide a means of getting an interviewee to talk freely about a topic, being “ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, to articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably”.

There are several variations of the interview. These, according to Williamson (2013:201), include three common types: fully structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Fully structured interviews are pre-determined with a fixed order and wording of questions. Semi-structured interviews have pre-determined questions, but with flexibility in wording and order. Patton (2002:2003) notes that unstructured interviews are less predictable, more like broad areas of conversation rather than ordered questions. The researcher chose semi-structured interviews as the method for this research as that afforded him more flexibility than structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to probe deeply into an issue and for the principals to construct meaning. Thus, semi-structured interviews were considered to be consistent with the constructionist paradigm and the interpretivist theoretical perspective within which this research took place. In choosing this approach, it was also understood that although faith-based Christian schools

share values, the contexts and the people within each school community were different and they interpreted and constructed meaning around these values in different ways, though the focus point was servant-leadership practices. Further, according to Edwards and Holland (2013:78), semi-structured interviews are consistent with constructivist paradigm in that it is “the interaction of the participants in the interview situation ... that creates knowledge”.

The researcher met with all the participants approximately two months before the data collection process to explain the purpose of the study, the research method and the ethical considerations. On the actual date of the interview, focus group discussions and direct observation in each school, he had a few minutes to establish a pleasant rapport with the participants. The researcher informed the participants of the purpose of the interview, the kind of questions that he would ask and in the end, he asked whether there was anything else the participants wanted to add.

All interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. This enabled the researcher to focus on the interaction with the interviewee during the interview. The interviews were between thirty and fifty minutes in length with all the participants. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, and then made available for validation and verification by those who were interviewed.

4.5. 2 Focus group discussion

Focus group interviews were the second type of data collection strategy the researcher used in this study. Smithson (2008:358) defines a focus group as “generally understood to be a group of 6–12 participants, with an interviewer, or moderator, asking questions about a particular topic”. Lichtman (2015) concurs that a focus group should be between six and twelve people. Although Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) (2013: 176) concur with this number of participants, they add that the size of the focus group will vary according to the “setting, topics and research objectives of the project”. Describing a focus group as “collectively interviewing a group of respondents”, Kumar (2014:371) adds that a focus group is a qualitative research strategy in which “attitudes, opinions or perceptions towards an issue, product, and service programme are explored through a free and open discussion”. Besides promoting open discussion, Smithson (2008:58) discerns that focus groups “permit researchers to observe a large number of interactions on a specific topic in a short time”. Smithson (2008:78)

contends that focus groups are seen as less intimidating and “are a way of lessening the impact of the researcher and permitting smaller groups to develop and elaborate their own perspective in the research topic in a ‘safe environment’”. Madriz (2000:36) argues, however, that the “focus group is a collectivist rather than an individual research method that focuses on the multimodality of participants’ attitudes, experiences and beliefs”. Smithson (2008:350) contests this assertion, arguing, “using focus groups does not in itself make research ‘collectivist’ or empowering to participants”. In addition, focus group sampling and composition are important considerations when planning data collection processes. Barbour (2007:58) asserts that the “purpose of qualitative sampling is to reflect on the diversity within the group or population under study rather than aspiring to recruit a representative sample”. Whilst a sound knowledge of the topic is essential, the focus group seeks to stimulate discussion and elicit diverse views. Furthermore, Lichtman (2015:296) points out that there is no consensus on the composition of groups, stating, “some researchers believe it is best to have homogeneous groups while others want a greater mix”. Based on Lichtman’s (2015:290) advice, this researcher conducted one focus group discussion with six principals and three teachers. The focus group discussions took place in the office of principal P8 in Johannesburg. The focus group discussion took approximately an hour. For confidentiality purposes the researcher has not named the names of the schools from where the participants were selected, and rather used pseudonyms, as discussed under 4.2. Advised by Orit (2018) and cognoscenti of the fact that tension could arise with participants with asymmetrical power relations during the data collection period in order to mitigate that the researcher discussed the goal of the research prior to the initiation of the discussion.

4.5.3. Observation

Observations, like interviews, are a primary source of data collection in qualitative research. However, Merriam (2009:39) identifies two distinctive ways in which observation differs from interviews. Firstly, observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon naturally occurs, instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing. Secondly, observational data represent a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest, rather than a second-hand account of the world obtained in an interview. Despite these differences, the researcher used observation as both a first- and second-hand data-gathering technique to collect information about

principals' servant-leadership practices before and during the interviews and staff meetings.

Yin (2011:143) remarks, "observing can be an invaluable way of collecting data because what you see with your own eyes and perceive with your own senses is not filtered by what others might have reported to you or what the author of the same documents might have seen".

The researcher drew from Bryman's 'structured observation' to design the observation programme for this study. Bryman (2004:165) presents a structured observation as a method of "systematically observing the behaviour of individuals in terms of a schedule of categories". Bryman (2004:166), says that unlike survey research, where respondents report on their behaviour and thinking, "one of the main advantages is that it allows behaviour to be observed directly" by the researcher.

The gathering of data through participant observation is facilitated by a structured observation schedule. Table 4.1 is an example of the details recorded during participant observations. Bryman (2004:169) explains, "designing a schedule for the recording of observations is a crucial step in the structured observation project". 169). Table 4.1 outlines the structured observation process used to guide participant observations in this study. Adopting Bryman's guidelines, structured observation took place in two of the schools where the principals participated in semi-structured interviews. The researcher observed two school principals.

Table 4.1 denotes how the observation was going to be held with two selected schools. The two schools were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. At Birke's school, the researcher planned to attend the meeting of the principal and to observe leadership behaviours (actions and words that would provide insights into the servant-leadership practices).

At Shiminta's school, the researcher planned to attend the quarterly meeting of the principal with the parents. There the researcher also planned to look into words and actions that would echo the servant-leadership practices.

Table 4.1: Schools for observation

The table below describes the observation procedure. In the columns the researcher describes what was reflected/ observed in the two schools.

Schools	Birke and Shiminta (pseudonyms)
Observation explanation	Principal's servant-leadership practices
Participants present	Staff meeting and meeting with the parents
Duration	Approximately three hours each
Category of information	Leadership behaviour: actions and words that provide insights to the servant-leadership style

Assessing observations in social research, however, Bryman (2004) points to reliability and validity concerns. These are associated with inter-observer consistency and the reliability of data from multiple observers. In addition, 'generalisability' presents reliability concerns. Generalising data implies that the researcher records observable data and is rarely able to determine the intentions or motivation behind the behaviour. Whilst the researcher concedes these limitations, at the same time he concurs with Bryman's (2004:178) assertion that "structured observation is almost certainly more accurate and more effective than getting people to report on their behaviour through questionnaires".

The researcher was as unobtrusive as possible during the observation period. Based on the recommendation of Bogdan and Biklen (2007:76), he decided to take short notes (write short notes) and comments as participants shared. In addition, as participants were open to discuss and explain events to him as the interviews progressed, the researcher had the opportunity to ask the participants to clarify certain elements/ points that were not clear to him during the discussion. After each observation and meeting with the participants, the researcher immediately left the setting in order to summarise, and outline his observations.

4.6 Data interpretation and analysis

Merriam (2009:48) reminds researchers that good analysis in case studies demands from the researcher to search for emerging and re-emerging patterns and themes throughout the data, and observes, "[d]ata cannot speak for themselves. For data to speak, researchers must translate them into a language". Hatch (2002:90)

conceptualises the general data analysis process as asking questions of data, because asking the right questions leads to the right interpretation of data. According to Hatch (2002:96), data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, and generate theories. It involves evaluation, interpretation, categorisation, comparison, and pattern finding. From Hatch's (2002:98) understanding, it becomes clear that data are replete with information, and it is by treating data systematically and carefully, and asking the right questions, that information is discovered.

The researcher began data analysis from the first day of data gathering, while constantly remaining aware of the interconnectedness of data from the initial day of data collection until the analysis process was completed. Hatch (2002:149) recommends starting data analysis soon after collection has begun, because "[a]t an informal, but essential, level, analysis is happening from the first moments of data collection". Analysis involves giving meaning to first impressions.

With regard to formal analysis, Stake (2008:140) recommends two ways of arriving at meaning in the analysis of case study data. One way is the researcher's direct interpretation of an instance that has been seen, heard, read, or described. The second way is that the researcher intuitively clusters similar instances together before developing an interpretation. Creswell (2012:125) and Stake (2008:129) describe this kind of analysis as categorical aggregation, which represents units of information composed of events, happenings, and instances. Categorical analysis leads to the discovery of patterns and themes, while direct interpretations demand more patience and intuition to arrive at an interpretation (Stake, 2008:116). Both types of analysis are useful in case studies and the researcher combined them in the analysis process.

After the transcription of the interviews and recording of observations, the researcher started the analysis process by coding the data for patterns and themes. The researcher was guided by Rule and John's (2011:87) observation that analysis involves "working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others". Merriam, (2009:118) recommends that the first step is to read the material collected many times to

familiarise oneself with the data and be able to hear and feel what the data has to offer. This approach leads to organising the data topically, by arranging the material into a narrative account, then systematically classifying the data into some sort of schema consisting of categories, themes, or types. The researcher compared data from the different participants and developed codes for each theme. In addition, as Bailey (2007:70) points out, “the purpose of these disciplined approaches to analysis is, of course, to describe and explain the essence of the experience and meaning of servant-leadership practices in participants’ lives”. Advised by Neuman (2011:86), the researcher used interpretations and aggregations throughout the entire process of data collection and analysis.

The gathered information through individual interviews, focus group discussion and observations is unlocked by means of a coding process. Neuman (2011:213) speaks of a three-step coding process, referring to open coding, axial coding and selective coding. As a result of evaluating and listing codes, thematic patterns were identified and the outcomes were described in terms of thematic themes and patterns. Transcripts of recorded interviews, focus group discussions and the researcher’s observation were carefully scrutinised and analysed to enhance familiarity with the content. As the researcher implicitly noted above, qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:118), the generic process in qualitative data analysis includes data preparation, coding of data, establishing of categories or themes and developing patterns.

The researcher used a constant comparative method in analysing the data collected through the three methods as it aligned well with a qualitative research method. He decided to do so, as according to Boeije (2002:40), a constant comparative method allowed data collection analysis and interpretation to happen concurrently.

In synthesis, in this case study data was compared with existing data to develop a theory grounded in the data. The issue in the process of coding is whether the codes should be predetermined by the researcher (pre-coding), or allowed to emerge from the text (subsequent coding). Given the fact that very little information is available to know how principals in faith-based schools practice servant-leadership, this researcher did not use predetermined codes. Rather, he allowed that to emerge from

the data itself. From these codes, he developed categories or themes, and then developed theories in comparison with the literature. Concluding the transcription of the interviews, focus-group discussions and points from direct observations, the researcher carefully read all the data collected. During this process of reading and re-reading, the researcher took notes and memos and wrote reflective notes. By memos this researcher is referring to the discussions on a particular theme, and any kind of reflection about the data or coding. The next sub-section will describe the ethical considerations undertaken in this study.

4.7 Establishing trustworthiness

Creswell (2013:48) points out that in qualitative research, trustworthiness relates to how participants' perceptions have been represented in the final account of the research. To demonstrate trustworthiness, it is important that the researcher provide a detailed account of the methodological approach adopted in the process of collecting and analysing the data (Bailey, 2007:116). At the same time, Bailey (2007:116) points out that one important approach to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is by using four criteria: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility addresses the concern of rigour applied to the research (Mateo, 2009:197), as to whether or not it is reasonable to trust the research findings. To establish credibility within this qualitative research, consideration was given to whether the findings were credible given the data presented (Merriam, 2009:38). To promote credibility, several strategies were employed. These are triangulation, and member checks.

According to Robson (2002:129) and Stake (2012:132), triangulation is a process used in research to support the trustworthiness of the data. Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour (Burns 2000:33). Advised by Robson (2002:47), Simons (2009:42) and Stake (2012), and given that an over reliance on one method may distort the researcher's picture of an aspect of reality, triangulation acts as a means of cross-checking the relevance and significance of issues or testing arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence in support of key claims, thus enhancing the rigour of the research. Consequently, in this case study

research into faith-based Christian schools, multiple sources and methods of data collection were used to enhance the credibility of the data. These were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. According to Cope (2014:78), another common strategy for enhancing credibility is employing member checks, or respondent validation. That, in other words, refers to the process of checking with the respondents the data that has been collected from them. This may happen at a number of stages in the research, such as during an interview. As indicated above, in order to establish credibility, this researcher used member checks. The researcher took the transcripts of the interviews and observation reports back to the principals to ask them whether the findings were plausible.

4.7.2 Transferability

The aim of transferability is to understand the extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings. While the researcher can give suggestions as to how the findings are transferrable to another setting, it at the end is the reader's decision.

Merriam (2009:123) and Shenton (2004:57) note that a common method of enhancing the possibility of the results being transferable is by using rich, thick descriptions. When the researcher provides detailed descriptions of a phenomenon or many perspectives on a theme being studied, the results become realistic (Creswell, 2013:17) or credible (Shenton, 2004:59). Thus, in this research the researcher detailed descriptions of the phenomenon, including quotations from the participants' interviews, with the aim to enhance the credibility and transferability of the findings of the study.

The aim of this research was to provide insight within a particular bounded system of how principals in faith-based Christian schools practiced the principles of servant-leadership as recommended by their umbrella bodies. It also aimed to provide perceptions of their understandings of how this has been communicated and developed in the school communities within that bounded system, and their leadership by which this was done.

Thus, the researcher ensured transferability by providing a rich, thick, and profound descriptions of the time, place, , and participants' responses, so that readers can judge the applicability of the findings, formulate their own interpretations, and make their own personal judgments the transferability to their own or other contexts, as the study was

carried out in a faith-based Christian school context, as indicated in the limitations in Chapter 1.

4.7.3 Dependability

According to Shenton (2004:304), a criterion for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research is that of dependability. Dependability refers to the manner in which the research has been conducted. Essentially, if the research were repeated, would similar results be achieved should the same methods and same participants be involved? In order to enhance the dependability of this research, clear research design, including the epistemology, theoretical perspective, the methodology, the methods that he used, and how the data was analysed.

To clarify better the dependability of this research, the interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed and the text of the interviews provided to the interviewees for verification. The researcher has described clearly the way he has collected the data which also shows dependability.

4.7.4 Conformability

Conformability deals with the objectivity of a study and the procedures followed.. Cope (2014:201) explains, “[c]onformability shifts emphasis from verifiability of the enquirer to the conformability of the data”. According to Cope (2014:203) and Shenton (2004:74), “[c]onformability is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator’s imagination”. During data collection, the researcher of this study elicited participants’ stories in their own settings. The researcher gave the Participants the opportunity to read and confirm the accuracy of the interview/focus group discussions transcriptions.

4.8 Methodological challenges

No research comes without challenges. During the process of gathering data for this research, the researcher had a few cases where he encountered challenges that were related to information generation.

1. One principal who had initially agreed to be part of the participants for semi-structured interviews could not be easily be contacted again. This was due to the fact that his personal assistant had resigned from her position shortly after our initial meeting with the principal. After some time, the researcher drove

straight to the school of that principal and discussed the procedures face to face. The principal gave another date, which again was challenged as the interview had to be postponed.

2. Member checking as one of the methods to establish the credibility of the data was used. In this case, the researcher emailed and made telephone calls to solicit some feedback on the emerging findings from school principals. A few of them responded positively to the email, while some promised to come back, and never did it.
3. All the interviews, including the focus group discussions, took place in the offices of the principals. However, in two of the schools learners, other teachers as well as cleaners were not informed about the interviews and constantly knocked at the door or entered the office in search of their colleagues for information. This prolonged the interviews unnecessarily.

4.9 Ethical considerations

A primary concern in undertaking this research study was to demonstrate due respect and appreciation to the school leaders and teachers who contributed to this research and to uphold their dignity through practices that were ethical. As the research involved faith-based Christian school leaders at the beginning of every interview/group, discussion a brief moment of prayer was observed. After the prayer the researcher thanked participants for voluntarily accepting to partake in his research study.

The University of South Africa (Unisa) Research Ethics Committee provided ethics approval for this study. For the ethics approval letter, see Appendix G. The researcher followed the ethical guidelines established by the University.

Collecting data through any of the research methods involves some ethical issues in relation to the participants and the researcher of the study. As such, in this study, equally the researcher ensured that ethical considerations would be considered.

First of all, permission was first sought from the three umbrella bodies for faith-based Christian schools by way of telephonic conversations and later by delivering a letter in person to their offices. Then the researcher presented the permission letter to principals who were to take part in this study. The researcher made it clear to the participants that their participation in the research was voluntary. Participants were

reminded that they were free to withdraw from participating in this research at any time, should they wish to do so.

Participants of this research study were at all times fully informed about the research process, the purpose of the study and gave consent for their participation in this research. Additionally, the researcher highlighted that issues of safety would be treated with care, in that the participants would be protected at all times, and never be put at risk or harm of any nature They were not subjected to any deception or betrayal in the research process.

On the part of the researcher, it was ensured that elements of bias would be avoided with regard to reporting, research methodology, and use of information obtained from the participants. The researcher assured the participants that the information provided by them would be treated with the utmost confidence and would only be used for the purposes of this research study. According to Neuman (2011:76), when carrying out any kind of research, certain ethical rules are to be followed. In particular, objectivity must be maintained and data must be kept confidential. The researcher made all effort to follow these ethical rules strictly while this study was being conducted. In accordance with guidance offered by Creswell (2005:97), the identities of selected faith-based Christian schools and school principals who participated in this research study, were kept confidential by de-identification. Pseudonyms were used to represent participants and their respective schools as described under 4.2. Participants were informed that interviews and conversations during the observation phase would also be tape-recorded. After the completion of the transcription of the interviews and focus group discussions, participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts, add, and subtract any material they felt uncomfortable with, as part of the research.

The results of the study are reported ethically and without bias or prejudice to any leadership style. The research is reported in full and with complete honesty. Advised by Creswell (2005:89), the researcher never, at any time, put the lives of the participants at risk or harm during the study. Confidentiality and anonymity of human respondents was protected at all times.

To protect individuals involved in this research study further, as advised by Neuman (2011:77), confidentiality was provided. Confidentiality practices included ensuring the data was, at all times, kept in a lockable cabinet, and while the findings of this research

may be published, the data gained from it will not be made available to other researchers as the intent in gaining the data was for the specific purpose of this research. As Creswell (2014:99) advises, the written data shall be stored securely for a period of five years and then shredded.

4.10 Emerging trends data and patterns from the data

The researcher used specific techniques which included the cross-case search for patterns. This kept the researcher from reaching premature conclusions by requiring that they look at the data in many different ways. Cross-case analysis divides the data by type across all cases investigated. When a pattern from one data type is corroborated by the evidence from another, the finding is stronger. When evidence conflicts, deeper probing of the differences is necessary to identify the cause or source of conflict. In all cases, the researcher treated the evidence fairly to produce analytic conclusions answering the original "how" and "why" research questions. The tactics used in analysis forced the researcher to move beyond initial impressions to improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings. Therefore the researcher categorised, tabulated, and recombined data to address the initial propositions or purpose of the study, and conducted cross-checks of facts and discrepancies in accounts. Focused, short, repeat interviews were necessary to gather additional data to verify key observations or check a fact (Miles & Huberman 2014). The researcher allowed time in his design for the process of locating and evaluating the wayshe could sample the studied area.

4.11 Summary

The goal of this chapter was to explain the research design employed by the researcher. The researcher explored the servant-leadership practices of principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa and investigated how this leadership ideal was consistent with the literature on the subject. Under this chapter the researcher provided a detailed description of the key topic areas covered in this chapter, namely philosophical orientation to the study, research design, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness, and finally ethical considerations.

The researcher employed qualitative case study as the research design for investigating the servant-leadership practices of school principals. Constructivism is

the philosophical orientation that guided this study from the design stage to the analysis and interpretation stages. Three research methods were identified: semi-structured interviewees, focus group discussion and direct observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:97). Each of the methods has been described and explained. Transcripts of the interviews and observations, were analysed, coded and categorised into themes. Utilising these methods provided the researcher a good descriptive amount of information required to make the study worthwhile.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, the researcher described the research design, and the methodology used to achieve the main objective of this study. The main aim of this study is to explore the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa.

In Chapter 5, the focus is on presenting the data gathered from six principals through six individual semi-structured interviews, and from another six principals and three teachers through one group discussion and two observations at two schools. There was a total of fifteen participants. The researcher conducted observation at two schools where principals participated in semi-structured interviews. This chapter aims to present the findings of the study and offer an analysis and interpretation of servant-leadership experiences of faith-based Christian school principals in South Africa, as shared by the participants.

Questions that guided conversations during the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were: (a) What does it mean to be a leader in faith-based Christian schools? (b) How do you understand and practice your role as a servant-leader in faith-based Christian schools? (c) Do you think servant-leadership practice is important in faith-based Christian schools and why? (d) How are the ten characteristics of servant-leadership manifested in your day-to-day school leadership as servant-leaders? (e) What strategies do you recommend for the implementation of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools? (f) What are the challenges you experience as you practice the ideal of servant-leadership?

In this chapter, the themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and direct observations during the coding process are presented in the form of narrative descriptions of the servant-leadership as experienced and articulated by the participants in the context of faith-based Christian schools. The researcher described in Table 5.3, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. The themes and sub-themes emerging from the individual interviews and focus group discussions will be treated as one, whereas observation data that relate to the themes are presented to support the findings from the interviews towards the end of

the chapter. The researcher starts the discussion of research findings with a description of the data sources.

5.2. Description of data sources

Twelve principals and three teachers from twelve faith-based Christian schools took part in this study during July-August 2018 in an attempt to explore on the topic of servant-leadership practices of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa.

Table 5.1 offers biographical information on the six school principals who participated in semi-structured interviews, with specific reference to denomination to which they belong, the number of years in their role as principals, their highest academic qualifications, and their respective participation, or lack of participation, in servant-leadership training sessions or workshops before or after they assumed their roles as principals.

Table 5.1: Description of data sources: individual interviews

Participants' symbols	Gender	Denomination	Number of years as principal at current school	Highest qualification/degree	Participated in servant-leadership/workshops Yes or No
Shiminta	Male	Roman Catholic	9 years	Master's in educational leadership	Yes
Birke	Male	Anglican	11 years	Master's in education	Yes
Shole	Male	Methodist	7 years	Doctorate in education leadership and management	yes
Wollima	Male	Roman Catholic	11 years	Honours in education	yes
Fulasa	Female	Anglican	15 years	Honours in education	Yes
Mededo	Female	Roman Catholic	6 years	Master's in educational leadership	yes

As indicated in Table 5.1, four of the interviewees were male and two female. With years of experience ranging between six years to 15 years, these school leaders offered rich information regarding their servant-leadership experiences in selected schools. All the principals hold postgraduate certificates in Education. Shole holds a

PhD in Educational Leadership and Management, Shiminta, Birke and Fulasa hold a master's and Wollima has an honours degree in Education. All participants previously participated in one or other form of servant-leadership training. Fulasa did her master's at an Australian Catholic University, where she took servant-leadership as part of the modules prescribed for the qualification. The next table presents the data sources for the focus group discussion.

Table 5.2: Description of data sources of the focus group

Participants symbol	Gender	Denomination	Number of years as principal/teacher in the school	Highest academic qualification	Some sort of exposure to servant-leadership
Kakawo	Male	Roman Catholic	7	Honours	Yes
Galaso	Male	Anglican	6	Master's	Yes
Banta	Male	Anglican	9	Master's	Yes
Worke	Female	Methodist	12	Honours	Yes
Bunaro	Male	Methodist	10	Honours	no
Muni	Female	Roman Catholic	13	Honours	Yes
Terefe	Male	Roman Catholic	6	Post graduate teachers' diploma	Yes
Basho	Female	Methodist	5	Teachers' diploma	Yes
Mesu	Female	Dutch Reformed	8	Post graduate teachers' diploma	No

Table 5.2 presents another six high school principals of faith-based Christian schools and three teachers who participated in the focus group discussion in an attempt to gather additional data for exploring the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa.

Four male principals, two female principals, one male and two female teachers, in total nine people, participated in the focus group discussion. There were three who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, two were Anglicans, three were Methodist and one was Dutch Reformed. The three teachers involved in the focus group discussion, teach religious education in three of the schools.

The number of years these participants have been at the current schools, range from five to thirteen years. Two principals (Galaso and Banta) hold master's degrees in educational leadership and management, (Kakawo, Worke, Bunaro and Muni) hold

honours degrees, two teachers (Terefe & Worke) hold postgraduate teaching diplomas, and Basho holds a first teaching diploma. The table indicates that the participants (Kakawo, Galaso, Banta, Bunaro, Muni, T

erefe, Worke and Banta) have had exposure to or practiced servant-leadership in the context of faith-based Christian schools.

The third method employed by the researcher to gather data for this study was through direct observation of two participants by the researcher through a structured observation schedule. As indicated in the ethical clearance, the researcher observed the leadership styles practiced by these two principals.

In order to investigate the lived experiences of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools in their social settings, the researcher drew up a structured observation schedule. Appendix C outlines the structured observation process used to guide the observations of the participants in this study. Observations were done at two schools where the participants had participated in semi-structured interviews. It took place during the two-day visits at each of the two schools. At each school, the structured observations concentrated on the school routine, the inter-personal relationships and the principal’s interaction with staff members.

Table 5.3 Description of the detailed observation notes

Schools' symbolic names	Observation explanation	Participants	Duration	Category of observation
Birke	Weekly staff meeting	Principal and fifteen staff members	One hour, 25 minutes	Leadership behaviour: Actions and words that provide insight into the servant-leadership style.
Shiminta	Quarterly meeting with parents	Principal, deputy principal and about 60 parents	Approximately three hours	Leadership behaviour: Actions and words that provide insight into the servant-leadership style

Table 5.3 shows that observations were done at two faith-based Christian high schools. The principals from the two schools were part of the six who were involved in the semi-structured interviews. The two schools were given the pseudonyms “Birke” and “Shiminta” respectively. At Birke, the researcher attended the staff meeting which the principal chaired. The meeting took one hour and twenty-five minutes. The researcher observed leadership behaviours (actions and words) that described the

essence of servant-leadership. At Shiminta, the researcher attended the parents' quarterly gathering. The principal, his deputy and around 60 parents gathered. The principal chaired, assisted by his deputy. The meeting took about three hours. The researcher observed leadership behaviours (actions and words) that described the essence of a servant-leadership as displayed by the principal.

5.3 Themes and sub-themes

Section 5.3 presents the themes and sub-themes that emerged from individual and focus group interviews during the data analysis process. The researcher transcribed the data collected and presented what happened during the individual and focus group interviews. The researcher read the data that was transcribed carefully after the two interviews. He then attempted to code the data into meaningful categories that included the same concepts. After these categories, definite themes and sub-themes emerged. Those themes and sub-themes that emerged, were analysed and discussed in relation to the literature review.

Table 5.3 Themes and sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. Call to serve	*Attention to the learners' holistic needs *Valuing teachers *Community involvement in school leadership
2. Leading as a community	* Establishing Positive relationships *Team work *Creating a common vision
3. Building the capacity to serve as a community	* Active presence *Leading by example *Inspiring and empowering
4. Inhibitors of servant-leadership practices	*Selfish attitude of the followers *Lack of cooperation
5. Strategies for success in servant-leadership	*Communication and collaboration

5.3.1 Theme 1: Call to service

The first major theme, 'called to serve', emerged during the focus group discussions, and during the observation period. It was evident from the participants sharing and connecting their perception of their leadership role in faith-based Christian schools.

Participants Birke, Wollima, Kakawo, Banta, Bunaro illustrated this by comments such as “as leaders in faith-based schools of today, we are called to serve first and foremost”, and Shiminta, Shole, Fulasa, Mededo and Muni said, “we are leaders of Christian based schools. As such, we are called to serve others before ourselves.” In other words, this orientation aligned with an altruistic understanding of educational and servant-leadership in general, one that involved placing the needs of others, such as learners, staff, the school community, and the system of which the school is a part, ahead of individual needs. This was demonstrated by Worke belief that “what we do impacts on others ... you are a part of a system ... it’s not just about us going out on our way, but for others, kids and staff, to serve them”.

The ways in which the participants’ understanding and practices of educational leadership were related to service, helped this researcher to break the theme ‘called to serve’ down into three properties: ‘attending to the learners’ holistic needs’, ‘valuing teachers’, and ‘involvement of the community in school leadership’. Each of these properties will now be described in turn.

5.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Attending to the learners’ holistic needs

The first sub-theme, service to the learners by attending to their holistic needs, was established by a widely held belief that educational leadership meant providing for the learners’ various needs, particularly their academic achievement and personal characters. During the individual interview, Birke pointed out, “leadership is to recognise that is it not all about the grades kids get ... the emotional education of kids, the social education is important to me”. The holistic nature of the participants’ beliefs was similarly apparent in Wollima’s comment: “[s] learners’ achievement is more than just academic. I would see it as building up their leadership, instilling confidence, their resilience, their team skills, their interpersonal relationships.” The development of the learners’ intellectual and academic achievements, was evident in the comment by Shiminta during the individual interview, that serving learners involved “supporting and helping learners’ learning” by ensuring that “everything revolves around enabling the learners to achieve their personal best. In addition, Shiminta’s perspective drew attention to how serving learners by attending to their holistic needs, meant developing other areas such as the learners’ communication and interpersonal skills, self-esteem, and personal faith. This participant illustrated this with the following words:

My leadership ... is to produce a child ... who is able to communicate, is in tune with his/her own feelings, has good relationships with others, has a sense of fulfilment, and has a sense that there is a God out there looking out for them, taking care of them, and is there with them on a journey.

In a similar tone, Shole referred to the use of 'pastoral care' to support learners' academic, personal, and spiritual needs. The participant's definition of pastoral care demonstrates how this concept aligns with this theme. "Pastoral care is care of learners, looking out for learners, being aware of their needs, and not only just academic, but spiritual, intellectual, psychological, emotional, etc." Similarly, the concept of pastoral care and its connection to 'serving learners' was apparent in Brike's input that "[y]ou can't simply maximise student achievement and enable learners to achieve their potential without a strong pastoral care coming through the school. We are able to do that by incorporating the traditions of the founding religious congregations of the schools.

Hence, the theme of 'serving learners by attending to their holistic needs' is illustrative of how faith affiliation influenced these participants' perspectives on considering the holistic needs of the learners in their leadership of faith-based Christian schools.

Furthermore, the school leaders' understanding related to 'serving learners through attending to their holistic needs' translated into their leadership practices, such as implementing new programmes (servant-leadership programmes) or incorporating extra-mural activities for the learners which would enhance their skills. Worke shared, during the focus group discussions, how she identifies the needs of the learners.

I from time to time randomly select some learners and ask them how they feel at school, what they need, if they feel satisfied ... the whole aim is to ensure that learners are provided with the support needed to help them find who they are ... and access the things that will lead them to a healthy, fulfilled, and satisfied life.

In summary, the first sub-theme, 'attending to the holistic needs of the learners', captured the participants' caring disposition and their holistic outlook towards serving the learners' needs. However, this shared perspective was influenced by the ethos of each category of the faith-based schools, the mission of the school, as well as the personal philosophy of the participants' regarding leadership. These participants strongly believed that the care they offer, the compassion they display, the skills they

endeavour to enhance in their learners, is to maximise the service to the holistic needs of the learners in faith-based Christian schools.

5.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Valuing teachers

The second sub-theme of 'called to serve' is valuing teachers. This property demonstrates how the participants' leadership perspectives involved a consideration of how they could enhance the intellectual and professional capacity of the staff and improve their working conditions. Wollima's comment helped to define this property.

I also did teach in classrooms and I always felt that my role as a teacher was to serve the learners I taught ... now the target of the group of people I am serving is more the staff than the learners, but it is the same orientation. Therefore, if I can do timetables that will assist the teachers to do their particular teaching jobs better, then I think I have made a contribution.

The point of 'valuing the staff/teachers' was further clarified by Shiminta's comments during the individual and focus group discussion as follows, "leadership of faith-based Christian schools has to have a holistic approach, to look at it from a whole school perspective".

Additionally, 'valuing teachers/staff', Birke noted during the individual interview, was related to the importance of valuing and appreciating staff: "we have to affirm staff ... tell them they are doing a good job ... say we value you as a staff member". The belief of valuing and appreciating staff was enacted through the participants' practice, exemplified by the attempt of Wollima, Worke and Muni to make meetings more collaborative and enabling the staff to set agendas. From the participants' perspective, this practice enabled staff to "feel valued" and incorporated "an element of service that is part of the faith-based Christian schools' traditions".

Finally, a further aspect of 'valuing staff' was related to supporting staff with regard to their personal and professional issues. As Wollima, Mededo, Bunaro and Muni shared during the focus group discussions, supporting staff entailed "giving those people an opportunity to talk". These participants went on to state that it was the leaders' responsibility to "set up structures so that there are people the staff would be able to go and talk to". These principals understood the personal challenges, be it in their families and professional duties that the teachers could come across. The principals therefore created structures where the teachers could talk about that.

The next section examines how the participants' perspectives on servant-leadership as a 'call to serve', extended to those outside the school.

5.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Community involvement in school leadership

Community involvement was the third sub-theme identified in which the major category, 'called to serve' was manifested. This illustrates how serving others extended to the wider school community, which embraced caring for the parents of the school, its neighbourhood, and society at large. 'Serving the community' was apparent from comments by Wollima, Kakawo, Galaso, Bunaro, Muni, Terefe and Basho, when they said "we are preparing learners to become citizens of the world" and by "serving others, hopefully, we are making society a better place for all. As such, faith-based Christian schools have an obligation to involve in the learning–teaching process."

The participants' perspectives related to 'involving community in school leadership', entailed providing parents with a broad range of opportunities to engage with the staff and learners of the school, such as "quarterly parents' meeting where parents discuss mechanism[s] of improving their contribution in the holistic development of the learners". Bunaro explained how she created a group that enabled teachers, learners, and members of the wider school community, including parents, to be involved in leading the school.

We have a group of parents (we call them simply school committee). The majority are retired teachers and other academics. They act as our mentors. They are volunteers who are motivated to give back to school community their expertise and experiences. They come together three times in a year simply to discuss academic matters.

The point of 'community involvement in school leadership' also evolved through the participants' focus on serving disadvantaged groups, specifically children orphaned on account of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and special needs children who live in the same communities. As Muni's comments illustrated:

As a leader of faith-based Christian school, I'm adamant that our schools should be reflective of society, and in society we have people with disabilities, children without parents, children from single parent [households] or even child-headed backgrounds, the well off, the poor, everything. As such, through community involvement in school leadership, those disadvantaged are also served.

The belief that leadership in faith-based Christian schools entailed serving the disadvantaged, was similarly noted by Medo during the semi-structured interviews, and Worke in group discussions as follows, “faith-based Christian schools are called to social justice. So, that means getting up there and making it better for the disadvantaged in our South Africa.”

Related to the common belief that leadership of faith-based Christian schools entailed serving disadvantaged groups, were the participants’ endeavours to support community charities and services. This practice was also related to the belief that leadership involved giving back to the community what had been received from the same community. For example, Muni had begun a social project at the school where once every quarter learners and staff are asked to make monetary contributions to support the needy. Other participants (Shiminta, Basho, Wollima, Mededo and Kakawo) commented that all leaders and staff regularly contributed their own time to causes such as visiting the orphanage and old age homes where the vulnerable ones live.

The perspectives involving the community were influenced by the spirit of the founding religious congregation and the ethos of the Catholic faith. These influences were used to justify the schools’ programmes that centred on service, as described by the participants’ reflections. Hence, Shiminta, who heads one of the schools selected for this study noted:

We have married our motto to working for the good of others ... we have our Christian service learning which is like community service, and with the core Christian beliefs, come the belief about you look after the poor ... that is a part of what we do.... no one comes and says this is waste of time, because it’s part of the Catholic ethos.

Consequently, servant-leadership within the faith-based Christian school context was understood and practised by the leaders as a service to the community of the school, a perspective that was influenced directly by the funding ethos and mission of the school. However, this researcher noted that almost all the schools that belong to the group of faith-based Christian schools (the schools that participated in this study), have in one way or another, a community outreach service, which indicates that leadership (servant-leadership) is understood and practiced as part of service to the community and with the community involvement.

'Called to service' portrayed a common view that servant-leadership entailed developing well-rounded learners who would actively contribute to society, ensured that staff felt valued and appreciated, and worked to meet the needs of the community, especially those who are disadvantaged. The first major category also demonstrated how the ethos and mission of the schools actively influenced this aspect of the participants' servant-leadership perspectives.

The participants' understanding and practice of servant-leadership in this study resonated with what Spears (2004) points out, as the notion that servant-leadership is service to others. Bradley (2016:144) also says, "[s]ervice is the reason for servant-leadership." For Greenleaf (1995:88), when there is a mutual care among people very firm foundation for a good society is established. However, in this era less value is given to person-person contact. In this context care for the individual is overshadowed by institutional concerns. When people care and serve one another, they establish a firm foundation for a good society. Therefore, Greenleaf (2002:98) notes:

If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by regenerative forces operating within them.

The next section introduces the second major theme, which builds on this facet of the participants' perspectives, by focusing on how leadership practices involve all staff.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Leading as a community

A second theme that emanated from the interviews, deals with school leaders in how they practiced servant-leadership principles in their day-to-day school leadership practices. From the school leaders' answers, three sub-themes developed that captured the reasons for how these faith-based Christian school leaders succeeded: leading as a community, team work, and relationships. The central meaning of the concept, 'leading as a community', was encapsulated in Shole's, comment:

I have to keep coming back to the question: what is educational leadership about? I think it is about teamwork, and it is about shared decision-making, and above all building relationships through trust. I base this on my experience here at this particular school. Moreover, for me this is what servant-leadership is all about.

The researcher noted that the comment of this principal was representative of a common perspective among the participants, that servant-leadership involves the interactions of groups of people, rather than being confined to an individual position of authority to tell or inform the rest what has to be done. Similar to the perspectives conveyed by the theme of 'serving others', the perspectives related to the theme of 'leading as a community' were determined by the faith affiliation of the school, its religious values, as well as important figures within the particular religion, such as Jesus Christ and any funding religious congregations. In the case of the Catholic and Anglican schools, they have patrons and patronesses. Consequently, such factors created a distinctive understanding and practice of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools contexts, as reflected in Wollima's comment.

The values of the Gospel of Christ and the religious aspect of the school to me enhance the servant-leadership style, because there is nothing in the Gospel to me that is autocratic. Jesus established community, based on positive relationship, team work, trust, love, respect.

Birke, Shole, Fulasa, Mededo, Galaso, and Worke strongly emphasised the example of Jesus who said, "anyone who wants to be great among you, let him be your servant". For the leaders of faith-based Christian schools, Jesus remains the first example of practicing servant-leadership.

Resulting from these comments regarding 'leading as a community', this researcher decided to break it into three sub-themes: 'establishing positive relationships', 'teamwork', and 'creating a common vision'.

5.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Establishing positive relationships

The first sub-theme that emerged, 'building relationships', is manifested in the values that the participants attributed to the concept of relationships in the faith-based Christian school context in South Africa. Relationships was presented as an important part of the participants' servant-leadership understandings and practices, as shared by the following two comments of Wollima and Worke during the focus group interview.

"Our schools are based on relationships, and relationships are at the foundation of everything else that happens within our schools." Accordingly, relationships underpinned many aspects of the daily life in the schools, as Muni succinctly described.

Relationships are crucial, they are crucial in the classroom, they are crucial in the staff room, and without relationships we fail in everything. I am the leader and not the boss, because with the boss the relationship will not work. Without relationships, I wouldn't have followers and without followers I wouldn't be a leader, let alone being a servant-leader.

The importance of establishing and maintaining relationships between the learners and staff was exemplified by Mededo, describing his practice as follows:

Every day, a few times a day, I walk around the school, just making sure that things are going accordingly in the class ... I also make time to talk to the learners. We have a very friendly school community and the students in general do love to talk ... they want to talk to you and share their concerns. It is all about building up rapport.

Other comments highlighted the importance of relationships between other stakeholders. For Fulasa, 'establishing and maintaining relationships' was related to the relationships between the leaders and staff. For this principal, this meant going to the staff room just "talking to people" and getting to "know them and their families". This participant's behaviour was connected to his understanding that servant-leadership involved a "pastoral view", which was defined in her own words as:

Your interpersonal relationships, your ability to understand the way others think through attentive listening, empathy, healing and have some comprehension and some empathy for their position ... I think that is a key component of servant-leadership, we should all possess.

Terefe highlighted the relationship between the teachers and the principal as "our relationship with the principal is crucial ... I think it has to be an open and an honest relationship." Such perspectives would indicate that the participants recognised that establishing and maintaining relationships, involved spending time and effort on making personal contact with the members of the school community, and showing empathy where the staff member needed support.

The input of Terefe led the researcher to understand how 'establishing and maintaining relationships' was associated with a number of benefits in the schools from where these participants were coming. Shole described how relationships improved the learners' academic success.

If you have not created [a] connection with the learners, you do not have them in the palm of your hands, you have no chance of getting them over the line. It is extremely difficult to get them to excel in their subject area. Whereas, if you have that connection, it makes all the difference. If you incorporate servant-leadership practice in your leadership, you can create [a] relationship and if you maintain [a] positive relationship, it can definitely have [a] positive impact on school performance. I am adamant that this has helped our school to stand fairly among those with [a] good reputation.

The above input from the participant indicates that where there is a positive relationship among the school team, in other words where a positive working relationship has been maintained, the effect is seen in the learners' outcomes. The comment of the same participant indicates that where servant-leadership is practiced through positive relationships, the effect is perceived in the school achievements. A related view was shared by Mededo, who said that the advantage of establishing and maintaining relationships was shown through the effect it had on staff performance. She noted: "[i]f I ask someone to do something and there isn't a good sense of trust, they will do the job, because they are professional, but I may not get it done at the exact level that I have asked them to do it." However, as the participant continued her comments, she implied that if you have established a relationship that is built on trust, then staff members would be more likely to excel at their given task. This was how she explained it.

If you have relationships with the teachers and learners, you have given them [the] ability to say 'I can fail but still be ok; I can take risks without feeling that if I don't accomplish it ... I have wasted time'. If you can do that, then, when you ask them do something, they will come back with something even better than you could possibly plan.

According to the comment of this participant, building relationship is paramount for the success in servant-leadership and for the success of the school, but the relationship is to be built on trust.

Additionally, Fulasa shared a very interesting input on this matter during the semi-structured interviews, as relationships were perceived to solve problems. The following is what he had to share: "If you have good relationships with the learners and educators, then when mistakes happen ... you can remediate it ... if you have good relationships, they will talk to you before it becomes a big issue".

In conclusion, the researcher discovered that 'establishing and maintaining relationships' illustrated how relationships were built on personal connections, which

seemed to result in the creation of trust between the principal and staff of the school, making the school more effective and increasing the individuals' ability to succeed in their work.

Establishing and maintaining relationships, is closely connected to the next sub-theme, which is 'teamwork,' which will examine how servant-leadership was understood and practiced by the principals of faith-based Christian schools where these participants lead.

5.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Establishing teamwork

The second sub-theme of this theme, 'teamwork', presents a common perspective among the participants that was best exemplified by the following example from Bunaro: "The first thing I think about is teamwork, being part of a team." Furthermore, the meaning of 'establishing teamwork' was established through Shole's view that "shared decision-making was a part of the principal's approach to leadership". The importance of 'establishing teamwork' was evident in these two participants' perspectives, as demonstrated by their comments that teamwork was "obviously essential to move forward". Shiminta, Birke, Shole, Wollima and Terefe agreed in their sharing that tasks are delegated in their schools, and establishing teamwork allowed schools to succeed academically.

Such perspectives appeared to be influenced by specific school contextual factors. As Wollima reflected:

I don't believe in being a sheriff on my own. You cannot do it, especially in a school of this size where you have approximately 700 learners. You need a real team approach from everybody. Moreover, this is a Christian school where the spirit of teamwork is inculcated.

Such beliefs informed the participant's approach to servant-leadership. The same principal described how he strives to encourage teamwork in his school.

I try to look after staff, get them on board ... respect their decisions, listen to what they have to say. Try not to jump the gun with what I am feeling all the time. I try to come to an understanding of what is happening there before I act.

During the individual and focus group discussions, it became evident that one of the secrets of the success of school leaders in their servant-leadership practice was through teamwork. However, this comes with challenges, as Birke, Wollima and

Fulasa commented. Teamwork is a gateway for success in servant-leadership. However, this can be difficult at times, because many people have different agendas, coming from different backgrounds. It takes many team players. Collaboration is the biggest challenge. You may have staff members who are simply self-centred. In such an environment, servant-leadership practice does not work. The participant's comment above indicates that by creating a cooperative spirit and bringing individuals together to participate in any school functions, enhanced a positive spirit and lead to success. In addition, the researcher noted that the teamwork was linked to the concept of support, in particular the staffs' support of the principal, as this teacher's Basha comment clearly indicated.

I work with a team of two other staff members. Our job is to support the principal in his role. That is what teamwork is about: supporting him ... at the end of the day, even though the principal is leading the school, we are all doing it, we are all part of this leadership ... by supporting him, listening to him, being honest.

The comment of the teacher above indicates that through collaborative effort, teamwork is created, and leading with the principal, she feels that she is taking part in the leadership of the school. This position was supported by Shiminta during the semi-structured interview, who stated:

Being in a leadership team, gives you a chance to work *with* the team. I am an educational leader and I am one of the group. So, if there is a meeting with the heads of learning areas or a meeting with the school's leadership team, I would be with them and I think I would throw my two bobs' worth in.

This perspective denotes that it is linked with the understanding that servant-leadership is about leading as a team, regardless of positional roles. As they practice servant-leadership through teamwork, these participants understand that leadership is in everyone. Hence, the perspectives depicted how the principal's team approach to servant-leadership involved spreading the responsibility amongst different members of the team and the staff, according to the need.

These faith-based Christian school leaders feel inspired by what Banke, Maldonado, and Lacey (2012:143) define as a learning community, as one that utilises the "synergies of individuals ... with common interests as they work towards sharing understandings, skills and knowledge for shared purposes". Thus, the principal,

teachers, learners, staff and parents work to improve the quality of learning in the school.

Roberts (2007:6) believes that building a learning community, requires staff members to have reflective dialogue, focus on learners' learning, interact among teachers, collaboration, and shared values and norms. The researcher will present the final sub-theme under creating a common vision'. This is linked to the sub-theme 'establishing teamwork' that the researcher highlighted above. This third sub-theme emerges from a common perspective among the participants, that establishing relationships and using teamwork, enables them to create, enact, and promote a common school vision.

5.3.2.3 *Sub-theme 3: Creating a common vision*

The third sub-theme, 'creating a common vision', aligns closely with the previous two sub-themes that the researcher analysed. This connection was verbalised by Mededo in a comment as follows: "[t]here needs to be vision, planning, and all that sorts of things. However, it needs to be a whole school approach. The vision of our school is created with the contribution of every staff member."

The idea that leadership needed to involve a whole-school approach, was congruent with other participants' comments (Shiminta, Mededo, Muni, Terefe, Basho and Worke), which helped to reveal the meaning of 'establishing a common vision'. As Mededo noted, "I believe that a vision is important, that people know that there is a shared vision." Furthermore, establishing the vision of the school, was characterised by Shole as the most important aspect of servant-leadership. The participants' perspectives therefore, gave a clear indication of how their relationships with other school stakeholders, and the role of teamwork were inextricably linked with 'establishing a common vision'.

However, as the previous comments indicated, the understandings relating to establishing a common vision and who is responsible for that task, varied between the participants. For example, Shiminta, Fulasa and Terefe believed that establishing a common vision should be grounded in the views of the staff at the school. For example, according to these participants, developing a common or shared vision was considered to involve "knowing the people" and understanding "their vision" and "being prepared to learn from what they are telling you ... what they think the needs are for the learners of the school". Other participants (Birke, Wollima, Mededo and Worke)

felt that the responsibility of establishing the vision of the school, lay with the management team, as demonstrated by this comment that the “focus is more on staff to follow a vision or a goal. As a part of this leadership team, we set a strategy, mission, or strategic plan.” Shole believed that establishing a shared vision should involve all stakeholders, but ultimately, should be driven by the principal. In addition, this participant believed that the mission needed to recognise the constraints imposed by the school context. He illustrated this with this comment:

Those of us in leadership positions must have a clear vision for the school. My working preference is that vision is something being shared and developed at a whole range of levels within the school ... but obviously the vision is what the principal aspires to achieve at his/her school and what the leadership team are able to commit to and implement. I believe that the vision has to be combined with realities of running the school.

Hence, as these comments indicate, although the participants believed that it was important to include the voices of the school community in helping to lead the schools, the participants' perspectives indicated that the responsibility for leadership ultimately lies with specific leaders. In conclusion, the sub-theme, 'establishing a common vision' portrayed how the established relationships and teamwork assisted in the participants' ability to create a common vision for the school and demonstrated another way that the participants understood and practiced leadership as a community.

In summary, the major category of 'leading as a community' demonstrated that the participants felt that it was important to spread leadership amongst the staff. The next section examines the final category, which identifies how the participants perceived they supported this approach to leadership.

According to Wallace (2000:88), faith-based Christian school leaders who are servant-leaders are expected to be visionaries. This is due to the fact that vision that opens doors to holistic education. Greenleaf (1977:22), described vision through foresight and conceptualisation. He points out that the servant-leader “needs to have a sense for the unknowable and be able to foresee the unforeseeable which is to come”. Participants in this study seemed to have been inspired by Beech (2015:40), who notes that servant-leader principals must share that vision with their followers if they want to be efficient in their servant-leadership practices.

Servant-leaders share their vision with the entire school team. Indeed if the leaders are to rally the constituents toward that vision that can yield positive out in the life the school. Hence, the leader's central role of establishing a strategic vision for the organisation remains pretty important.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Building the capacity to serve as a community

The third major category identified by the researcher through individual interviews and focus group discussions with the leaders of faith-based Christian schools, is titled 'building the capacity to serve as a community'. This theme represents a commonly-held belief that leadership capacity is built through empowering, affirming, inspiring, supporting, and entrusting others. These servant-leadership practices were driven by the participants' prior experiences in education and their professional development, rather than other contextual factors related to the faith of the school. In addition, this facet of the participants' understanding of servant-leadership was closely tied to the other major issues, and consequently the title of the category reflects that connection. The researcher has divided this category into three sub-sections, and these are 'being present', 'modelling', and 'inspiring and empowering', which are now examined.

5.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Being present

The meaning of the first sub-theme, 'being present', was portrayed by comments such as : "taking time to be with educators as often as possible" (Birke), "I want educators to know that I am here and I am listening and I am aware of issues that are happening" (Wollima), and being "available to staff for discussion" (Fulasa). In addition, 'being present' is further defined by one participant's reflection: "there's no point sitting in your office because no one knows you are there, so you need to move around" (Mesu). This definition of 'being present' is similarly expressed by Shiminta comment:

If I am in my office and I close the door, that's not leadership, forget about servant-leadership ... I do not sit in my office. I have to be around, in the corridors, in the staff room. That is how I practice servant-leadership: through my presence and leading by example.

In addition, the participants' understandings of 'being present' were practised by such activities as taking on teaching responsibilities, and visiting classrooms or having formal and informal meetings. For these participants (Shiminta, Birke, Shole, Fulasa and Mededo), having an active presence within the school, resulted in "gaining a

greater understanding of the needs of the person, the needs of those educators and learners”, and an “understanding of their situations.

5.3.3.2 *Sub-theme 2: Leading by example*

The meaning attributed to ‘modelling’ was best articulated by the following comment of Wollima, that servant-leadership:

Requires modelling by example. If I have to expect my staff to do something, I need to be out there doing what I would like them to do ... we expect teachers to be out there on time, we expect them to be alert, we expect them to be on the move, we expect them to challenge kids ... the people exercising the leadership, need to be doing that.

The understanding that ‘modelling’ was partly about undertaking the mundane daily tasks expected of the staff, was elaborated by another’s perspective, who defined ‘modelling’ as “being involved at the grass roots or ground level” (Shole).

Another central aspect of the participants’ perspectives related to ‘modelling’, was the practice of teaching. As Wollima noted, “I am a leader, but I am also a teacher. I need to model best practice.” This was a common sentiment, evident in other participants’ reflections (Birke, Wollima, Fulasa,), which revealed that their beliefs about teaching, as an aspect of modelling, was influenced by strong personal beliefs and the established culture at the school, that appeared to be driven by the principal’s vision. This was best indicated by the following quote from Terefe during the focus group discussion:

The model we have here is that I take one class ... approximately five lessons per week. I think that is important ... our principal has done that ever since he was appointed at the school. I think that is fantastic leadership ... he knows what staff are talking about, if something comes up at a staff meeting, for example.

The participants believed, therefore, that they gained a better understanding of the needs of the school, the staff, and the learners through classroom contact, as demonstrated by this comment from Terefe: “I think you’ve got to keep abreast of kids and classrooms. Otherwise, what you think makes sense, maybe two, five, ten years ago, stops making sense. I think you still need to be involved.” Worke noted how teaching “keeps you grounded, you are rooted in knowing what is going on”. Consequently, this aspect of the participants’ servant-leadership practice made an

impact on their ability to serve others' needs. In this context, Fulasa described how teaching and working with a special needs learner, gave her "an insight into some of the difficulties the student is going to face and we are going to face or his teacher when he is in class". In addition, there was a belief that teaching helped the school leaders to be seen as a member of staff, not as the man or woman "in the office". For example, the comment was made by Mededo, "I want to be seen as a teacher and not as somebody behind a computer or at a desk".

The next sub-section, 'inspiring and empowering', examines another way the leadership perspectives were connected to building leadership capacity.

5.3.3.3 *Sub-theme 3: Inspiring and empowering*

The third sub-section, 'inspiring and empowering', demonstrated a third way in which the participants built leadership capacity within the school. The meaning of this property was best captured by this reflection (Mesu)

I think that school leaders need to be able to enthuse their staff and have people be excited about being on the staff at the school, wanting to be on the staff. I would like to think that the leadership model at our Christian school is one where people are open to receive thoughts, ideas, and suggestions from staff at all levels in the schools.

Another perspective, which helped to define this category, was Fulasa's definition of her understanding of leadership as "guiding others along the way" by "touching them on the shoulder, seeing their key attributes, their key strengths, building confidence, and affirming people". In addition, the importance of inspiring staff was clear in comments from Shiminta, Birke and Fulasa such as "my focus is about inspiring and leading staff" and "inspiration is very important with educational leadership".

'Inspiring and empowering' also meant, according to Mededo and Worke:

Giving people the freedom and ability and desire to want to do it, but also the safety to know that if something goes wrong, you are happy to be there and say that's ok let's try and find the next step. In this way, encouraging risk taking was another means to inspire and empower staff.

Inspiring and empowering the staff helped to establish a "real team effort" as participant Wollima described, "it sounds a bit of a cliché but it is really a group of people working to get the best outcome for the children in the schools". Hence, the

researcher understood that this input connects to how servant-leadership capacity can be used to serve learners.

Through this third theme 'building the capacity to serve', the researcher concludes that it indicated how the participants made a concerted effort to enable staff to contribute to the school and ensure that their professional and personal needs were met. The beliefs and practices associated with this category were primarily influenced by the participants' personal understandings of servant-leadership, as well as by the vision of the principal.

The analysis from this case, the servant-leaders at faith-based Christian schools in South Africa, demonstrated how their perspectives on educational leadership were grounded in their personal connection to the faith to which they belong, and the ethos of the particular churches. These factors led the participants commonly to understand and practice servant-leadership as a service to others. As a result, the participants' servant-leadership perspectives focused on meeting the needs of the learners, staff, and community, and establishing a sense of collegiality and shared leadership. Thus, during the process of analysis, the researcher identified three major categories: 'called to serve' 'leading as a community', and 'building the capacity to serve'.

Two assertions have been generated from this case, which characterises the participants' perspectives on servant-leadership within the faith-based Christian school context. The first one states that the participants' understandings of leadership are distinctive from how leadership is understood in various school contexts, secular or public schools, because their understandings and practices of leadership are built on Gospel values. The second assertion this researcher gathers, is that the participants' distinctive understandings of leadership, shape their servant-leadership practice in ways that relate to and differentiate it from how leadership is practised in various school contexts, secular or public schools. These assertions are connected to concepts of leadership as a spiritual and moral endeavour, as described by Greenleaf (1991:59). The researcher explains these assertions further.

Assertion one: The participants' understandings and practices of servant-leadership are distinctive from how leadership is understood in other types of schools, secular or public, because their understandings are built on Gospel values.

This first key assertion reveals how the school leaders of faith-based Christian schools in South Africa clearly articulated their understandings of servant-leadership as built on Gospel values, particularly the values of service, love, and care. This observation suggests that the participants' understandings and practice of servant-leadership are distinct from how leadership is understood in public schools.

For these participants, servant-leadership was more than fulfilling managerial tasks; it was rather about answering a 'call to serve', echoing Sullivan (2006b:77) who points out that Christians often adhere to the ideal that work should have a "purpose". Adding to this belief in service, is how the participants felt that it is indeed important to serve but not only the members of the school community, but also the wider community around, especially those who are disadvantaged (children with special needs, such as orphans, or learners from child-headed households). This disposition is captured in Greenleaf's (1991:35) concept of servant-leadership and Sharpe's (2017:95) concept of leadership in faith-based Christian schools, which focuses on the idea that leadership should work to decrease inequalities within society, and it is the role and responsibility of leaders in the schools to use their institutions as the vehicle to serve and care for members of society.

The participants' belief in service relates to their understanding that servant-leadership entails providing love and care to the staff and learners at the school. This orientation again accommodates the element of caring within Greenleaf's (1991:40) servant-leadership model, which involves demonstrating genuine compassion, and a personal level of concern and self-sacrifice. In the same way, this aspect of their understanding aligns with Duignan's (2012:119) description of leadership within faith-based Christian school contexts, which includes the idea that leadership should be driven by love and compassion.

Insofar as participants connect their understanding and practice of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools to Gospel values, it makes them distinctive from how leadership is understood within public school contexts.

The second assertion made by this researcher by means of the analysis and interpretation process, was that the participants' distinctive understandings and practices of servant-leadership shaped their leadership practice in ways, which are common to how leadership is practiced in various types of schools.

The participants' perspectives on their servant-leadership practice often included ways in which they sought and incorporated the inputs of other staff members when making decisions and creating a vision for the schools. In this way, the faith-based Christian school leaders feel that they are sharing leadership. Thus, one may argue that their practices align with how leadership can be practised in other types of schools. For example, the participants' comments on their practice related to the familiar argument that leadership can no longer be centred on one person (Duignan, 2012:99; Greenleaf, 1991:66, Spillane 2004:74), but needs to involve fluid arrangements where leaders and followers are able to change places as the situation dictates. As Sergiovanni (2005b:123) notes, this kind of leadership practices which the participants in this study identified with, also reflect how leadership capacity can be built through "team building, leadership development, shared decision-making, and striving to establish the value of collaboration and cooperation".

Further, this case study revealed that participants place an emphasis on creating positive relationships with the school community in order better to understand their needs and build cooperation. As such, it relates to Greenleaf's (1991:76) description of servant-leaders who give a high priority to the processes of listening, developing the capabilities of others, as well as ensuring that people's needs are being met and understanding that those who work within the school are both leaders and followers.

This case study suggested that the servant-leadership practice of these participants is distinctive from other school contexts, because it is based on the Gospel values (Duignan, 2007; Roux, 2013:88) As a result of that, the participants' orientations are in keeping with the focus of the South African faith-based Christian schools sector, where it is assumed that leadership within these contexts is based on Gospel values. This relates to the notion that Christian concepts found in the scriptures, create a framework that makes servant-leadership in Christian schools differ from how leadership is approached in other types of schools. This is particularly evident in the ways the participants described their interactions with others and their approach to decision-making in relation to Gospel values. In addition, the influence of Gospel values on their practice dictated the ways in which these participants practice leadership, such as how they met the academic and social needs of learners, as well as the professional and personal needs of staff. In other words, the ways these participants led with spirituality, demonstrated their focus on developing the emotional,

intellectual, and spiritual aspects of their community members as a way to make an active commitment to improve the lives of others.

This case study has illustrated how faith can have a significant effect on how servant-leadership is understood and practiced. The portrayal of these participants' leadership perspectives suggests that they are representative of a "covenantal community" which strives to fulfil their goals or mission, which have a moral foundation. As described by Sergiovanni (2013:87), the covenants, which in this case are Gospel values, are employed to bring people together, give meaning to the life of the school, and define how leaders live and how they operate as a part of the faith-based Christian schools community. Therefore, the participants' perspectives on leadership demonstrate how leadership within a faith-based school context is distinctive from leadership in secular and to some extent other types of faith-based schools.

5.3.4 Inhibitors of servant-leadership practices

Spears (2004:78) points out that many leaders are sceptical about servant-leadership, because they believe it to be a passive style of leadership. The study of Page and Wong (2007:89) reveals also that servant-leadership is challenging, because the leader is seen to relinquish power and become one of the masses.

In this connection the participants shared the challenges they face as they practice servant-leadership in their respective faith-based Christian schools.

5.3.4.1 The selfish attitude of the followers

Some participants (Muni) noted that, in servant-leadership, leaders strive to put others first, in order to serve their needs better. In servant-leadership, we try to implement the ten characteristics. However, this is not always the case as we too are products of this world. Mesu also noted during the focus group discussion, "you know, even though we claim to be servant-leaders it is so easy to put yourself first in the society we live today, to be selfish, ego-centric." Banta noted that it is pretty difficult to inculcating the idea of servant-leadership in learners, as they are influenced by peer pressure.

These participants note that sometimes it is not easy to practice servant-leadership as the society of today and peer pressure present the other side of the coin. In the South African context where we come from, the servant-master type of leadership may take time to change.

5.3.4.2 Lack of cooperation

The second sub-theme of this theme is a lack of cooperation. Walker and Sackney (2013:47) note that a lack of cooperation is a barrier to healthy school leadership.

Participants (Birke, Shole, Wollima, Fulasa, Mededo, Mesu, Bunaro and Muni) noted a lack of cooperation as the main challenge for practicing servant-leadership. Participants presented the reluctance of some colleagues and followers to collaborate and be empowered, as the inhibitors of servant-leadership during the individual and focus group discussions. One principal asserted that it is a challenge because, “I don’t think that servant-leadership works if we do not believe from within.”

Participants (Shiminta, Shole and Mededo) further shared this thought when they described those among the staff, parents and learners who do not believe in the programme, who do not take it to heart, and who see it just as another programme.

5.3.4.3 Strategies for enhancing Servant-Leadership

One of the interview questions addressed to the school leaders focused on the struggles to implement servant-leadership principles. As to strategies required to succeed in servant-leadership practices, school leaders acknowledging their leadership position as a call to serve, inculcating team spirit in the school environment, paving the path for collaboration, manifesting care for followers, creating positive working relationships and developing trust in followers. Fulasa & Mededo implicitly had noted that where there is a genuine trust between the school leader and the rest of school community you succeed in leading school smoothly. They indicated examples such as encouragement, appreciation, notes of support, notes of thanks to the staff motivate leaders and followers to work in a productive manner. . The comments indicated that there will always be dissenters in school communities. However, in the face of dissenters, Kahl (2014:61), borrowing Margaret Mead’s words suggested, “Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has. The servant-leader needs to keep in mind that not yielding to uncooperative members of the school community is the way to success. According these leaders, in order to give people opportunities to present themselves in a better light, in the case of a student, the best solution is to walk away and offer them another chance when they have calmed down. The understanding here is that

as an adult, and servant-leader, the principal must know better how to give opportunities for followers to learn and grow.

5.4 Interpretation of observation data

Based on the methodology employed in the study, the researcher held direct observation at two selected faith-based schools (Birke and Shiminta), during the staff meeting and the meeting with the parents of the learners respectively. The researcher observed the leadership behaviour (actions and words that provided insights to the servant-leadership style).

The principal themes identified from the observation as supporting and complementing data of the interviews are: service to the school community, building relationships, collaboration and empowerment of staff, commitments to the growth of the followers and community building.

5.4.1 Service to the community of school

According to Greenleaf (1977:20), the first choice of the servant-leader is to serve others. Through the observations at Birke and Shiminta faith-based Christian high schools for approximately for three hours each, the researcher discovered that the principals revealed a commitment to serving their school communities.

At the beginning of the meeting with the parents, the principal of Shiminta served the parents and his deputy with some refreshments. When asked why he did not request one of her teachers or a younger member of the attendees to do this, his immediate reply was, “that is the reason for leadership: *service*”. Furthermore, during the two meetings the principals’ constant expressions were about the service of the less advantaged in the school. The researcher asked the principal of Birke after her meeting with the parents, what was the objective of the gathering of the parents? Her response was, “parents are part of the school community for us and as we serve the learners, they are also being served. Anyway, that is the aim of our school, serving! These points relate to the first theme that emerged from the interviews: call to service.

5.4.2 Building relationships

The second supporting theme that emerged from the observation data, was building relationships: addressing the parents, the principal of Shiminta said, “relationships are

very important and our quarterly meetings with you make a lot of difference.” The principal of Birke challenged the staff at the meeting “to listen to the learners, show empathy [with] the little ones, and understand their situations”. He further noted, “[w]e do that if and when positive relationships are built with our children.” During the meetings, it became clear to the researcher that these leaders strive to build relationships with the staff, parents and learners. Building relationships helps a leader that he/she is not alone in leading the schools but there are others around who assist as well. The principals and teachers who participated in semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions, repeatedly mentioned building relationships for the success of the school.

5.4.3 Collaboration

The two principals – of Birke and Shiminta – enjoyed credibility in their schools. The researcher learnt that that emerged from their promotion of collaboration as an essential ingredient in servant-leadership leadership practice. The principal at Birke said in her introductory note to the staff said,

Dear staff, the vision of this school is our vision. The success of this school is our success and its failure too. We have everything in our power to make our school excel. You and I came up with a vision for this school and it definitely belongs to us. Let us work together. Let us take our school forward.

Then the principal invited all to take a minute and reflect on what could be improved. Participants in individual and focus group discussions strongly noted the importance of collaboration and empowerment.

5.4.4 Commitment to the growth of the followers

Both participants believed that collaboration is indispensable if followers are to grow and develop as leaders and at the same help others to grow as leaders. Through collaboration practiced by the school leaders constituents were given the opportunity to share and discuss ideas, and in the process, boost their confidence for leadership role.

During the observation period, the researcher noted that the two principals motivated every staff member to share his/her input as a way to help followers grow. The principals valued the comments and suggestions of every parent and staff member.

During observations, the researcher noted that staff members share with the principal the activities of the committee member with the principal. Secondly, by asking her deputy to chair the meeting, the principal of Birke indicated that her intention was to allow her colleague to grow. Participants in both individual and focus group discussions, mentioned that they encourage learners and teachers through training in leadership and extra academic activities.

5.4.5 Community building at school

The last theme that the researcher gathered during the observations he did at the two schools, was community building. The efforts of these principals for community building were based on trust. For instance, the principal of Birke , motivated her staff with the following words, “I know and trust you well that you can do it. I trust our learners. They can also do it. ”

The commitment of the principal at Shiminta to the building of community was manifest in his repetition to the parents that Shiminta belonged to them all, and that their input was essential and very important for the positive change and outcome of the school. . The principal repeated the vision of the school for the parents. He also reminded the parents “as [a] faith-based Christian school, our aim is to create and sustain a Shiminta school community enshrined by the Gospel values”. The theme of community building was another important topic raised by the principals and teachers who participated in both individual and group discussions. However, participants believed that trust is a *sine qua* for the success in building a community at school.

5.6 SUMMARY

Chapter 5 presented findings from six individual semi-structured interviews with the principals of faith-based Christian schools, one focus group discussion with six principals who work in six different schools and three teachers who are coordinators of religious teachers in three different faith-based Christian schools, as well as two observation sessions. The researcher analysed the individual semi-structured interviews and the responses from group discussion. The observation notes were correlated with the data that emerged from the interview. The interview findings were presented in a table in 5.3 of this chapter, in Table 5.5. The main themes and sub-themes of the study were discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

The following four main themes were identified: leadership as a call to serve, leading as a community, building the capacity to serve, and inhibitors of servant-leadership practices. Findings from the first theme revealed that school leaders of faith-based Christian schools understand their leadership role as a call to serve. According to their understanding, the call to serve is fulfilled through offering attention holistically to the needs of the learners (sub-theme 1), valuing the teachers and the service they offer (sub-theme 2), and through community involvement in the leadership of the school.

The findings from theme 2 indicated that these school leaders succeeded in servant-leadership through leading as a community and teamwork. Their comments included three important elements that they incorporated in their servant-leadership practices, such as inculcating teamwork (sub-theme 1), building positive relationships (sub-theme 2), through the input of each school community member (staff), and they created a common vision for their schools (sub-theme 3).

The findings from theme 3 also indicated that in their servant-leadership practices, their endeavour was to enhance the capacity of their teachers to serve as a community. For this, they enhanced their visibility (active presence) to support the teachers, they tried to lead by example, and they inspired and empowered their staff through further studies, workshops, and facilitating opportunities for the staff members to lead meetings.

It was found that there are inhibitors of servant-leadership practices. Sometimes, as school leaders, as they practice the principles of servant-leadership, they come across challenges such as a lack of cooperation from their constituents, as well as selfish attitudes.

Final findings revealed suggestions by interviewees on how to improve the effectiveness of servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools. Faith-based Christian school leaders suggested communication and collaboration between principals and teachers, school leadership committee, parents and finally developing trust.

The researcher learnt that the participants who took part in this research understand and practice the ten characteristics that form the essence of the servant-leader.

Chapter 6 presents conclusions, research findings in relation to research questions formulated in Chapter 1 and final recommendations.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The general aim of this research was to explore the servant-leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. In Chapter 1, the researcher identified the specific research objectives as follows:

- to investigate the nature of servant-leadership;
- to understand the characteristics of faith-based Christian schools;
- to explore the difference between servant-leadership practices and other kinds of leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools;
- to learn to what extent principals in faith-based Christian schools practice the principles of servant-leadership; and
- to suggest guidelines that could be employed to establish the implementation of servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools.

6.2 Summary of the findings

The main objective of this research project was to explore how school principals of faith-based Christian schools in South Africa understood and practiced the concept of servant-leadership in their day-to-day school leadership. Interviews and observation analysis yielded rich data to draw conclusions and generate findings. A call to service, leading as a community, and building the capacity to lead, were the main findings of this study. This study further discussed the strategies adopted by the principals in those schools. The next section discusses the research questions, which generated the findings.

6.3 The main conclusions of the study in terms of the research questions were as follows

6.3.1 Research question one: to investigate the nature of servant-leadership

The study revealed that servant-leadership is a type of leadership that motivates leaders to have a selfless heart towards others, put others needs first, lead by example, build positive relationships among the team members and create a leader–follower trust.

Congruent with Sergiovanni's (2005a:86) suggestion, this study also demonstrated that leadership that counts in the schools of today, particularly in faith-based Christian schools, is one that speaks to the heart of the learners, addresses their values and emotions, and builds relationships with the teachers and parents in the school community. The researcher understands that this type of leadership stands opposite to leadership of an authoritarian nature moves the leaders and constituents towards on the path to serve to serve others. The findings of this research also indicated that in servant-leadership, interest in helping learners and teachers to develop as leaders, is important. Servant-leadership has been seen as a model that encourages or inculcates learning communities with strong learning school communities with improved outcomes from learners, staff and parents, and it also encourages staff to take initiatives to develop themselves. This research also identified that the ten characteristics of servant-leadership are very important for the school leaders to be efficient in their leadership role in today's schools.

In order to measure the servant-leadership practices of schools, leaders in faith-based Christian schools have understood these ten characteristics identified by Spears (2004:67), as important.

Listening: Servant-leaders understand the situations of their staff, learners and parents through active listening. Active listening creates caring and understanding of others' situations. Through attentive listening to others, positive relationships can be created. However, listening involves attention to verbal and non-verbal expressions of the followers. This researcher noted the importance of a non-judgmental attitude towards others.

Empathy: The experiences of school leaders have shown that people grow when they are treated with empathy. Staff, learners and parents collaborate where there is empathy in a relationship. However, this researcher is of the opinion that even if leaders need to empathise with their followers, they are not to condone weak performances of their teachers and learners, but find ways to assist these followers to improve the situation.

Healing: This study has shown that building an atmosphere of trust and relationships among staff, learners and parents have created healing in their schools. The two important tools used by the principals in the study as a way to heal others, were prayer

and counselling facilities in the schools. This type of practice can heal the wounds of teachers and learners, and encourage improved teaching-learning mechanisms in the schools. However, teachers and learners need to be provided with the platform to unload their stress so as to avoid breakdowns.

Self-awareness: As they lead and educate others, school principals need to have self-awareness mechanisms. This study indicated that self-awareness is created through reflection, communication with their staff, working as a team and **Persuasion:** The study indicated that for persuasion to work with the staff, learners and parents, a climate of trust is paramount. Persuading by example was shown as the best way to win others over under this section. In persuasion, a leader has to show that he or she believes in what he or she is persuading others to do. In other words, leading by example yields positive outcomes for the one who leads, and those led.

Conceptualisation: This research indicated that the art of conceptualisation is strengthened through a constant evaluation of the activities in the schools collaboratively with the staff and parents. The researcher believes that through planning together, school leaders can work proactively. However, for this to work, setting clear goals at the beginning of each academic year helps to improve the quality of education and work for the staff and for themselves. This means to come up with a common vision as a team.

Foresight: This study indicated that comparing the events of the past with the events of the present, helps leaders to develop foresight. Foresight helps leaders to plan to succeed. This happens when leaders evaluate diligently the events at the school and create a clear vision for the future.

Stewardship: This study indicated that leadership of faith-based Christian schools calls for stewardship. Following the example of Jesus, school leaders in faith-based Christian schools choose service to their staff, learners, and their school communities to make it a better place for all involved. As called to serve, they should constantly ask themselves the following questions. Do staff and learners grow as persons? Do they become wiser and develop to become servants as they are served? In this study, stewardship is understood as geared towards the growth and development of the constituents, and the leader to be an initiator of community building.

Commitment to the growth of the people: this study found that servant-leader principals commit to the growth of the staff and learners within the schools. This shows that empowerment is the essential element of servant-leadership. In the context of faith-based Christian schools, this implies practices for personal growth of every individual follower. Principals have a unique opportunity to assist learners, teachers and all involved to obtain personal, professional and spiritual growth. The servant-leader identifies and meets the needs of others, and makes available the resources that they need to be successful in their tasks. However, empowerment is the collective effect of leadership, where people feel valued and part of the action, where they know their ability is important, where sharing is a real underlying value and where choice is a possibility for everyone.

Community building: In this study, community building is understood and practised as an important element, since principals of faith-based Christian schools derive their values of leadership from religious beliefs. Secondly, leadership of faith-based Christian schools is rooted in community. The leader tries to identify means for building the community, such as listening to the concerns of others and gathering information from the followers. The ability of leaders emerges from the strength of those around them and, in the school contexts, from the teachers and learners. This does not mean that leaders condone inappropriate behaviours and mediocre performances of the followers.

Even though this study highlighted the importance of the ten characteristics for the success in servant-leadership practice, there has been a lack of cooperation and selfish attitudes of others, which create hindrances. However, the researcher noted that there is a need for negotiation skills in the leaders in a faith-based school environment in order to succeed in their servant-leadership practices besides the ten characteristics identified.

6.3.2 Research question two: To understand the characteristics of faith-based Christian schools

The main aim of this study was to explore how servant-leadership is practised in faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. As such, exploring the characteristics of faith-based schools was part of the objectives. The following elements have been discovered in line with this objective.

- The Christian faith and the spiritual dimension influence elements of the school programme, and how leadership is practised within these schools. This is seen in a daily devotional programme and integration of a Christian ethos in the schools.
- These schools have an ethos and spirituality that emerge from their particular faith tradition.
- Faith-based Christian schools promote Christianity worldwide, where Jesus' instruction to serve one another becomes manifested through the leadership practices of the principals with the collaboration of the school community.
- Upholding a community of Christian parents having a collaborative role and ongoing involvement in setting the direction of the school, is another important element of faith-based Christian schools.
- These schools have a programme of multi-religious education that would be inclusive of all religions. Congruent with the South African policy on religious education of 2008, its focus is teaching learners about religion, but not to promote one religion over other religions.

The picture depicted by this study indicates that in faith-based Christian school settings, leadership is understood and practised as a vocation to serve the whole school community with great focus on the less advantaged. The role of the leaders includes instilling this understanding in the rest of the school community, through leaders' personal example and positive relationships. This research also indicated that the role of the school leaders remain as a challenge, as they have to develop the spirituality of those whom they are called to serve. This finding correlated with the conclusions drawn by Hall (2014:88) and Hulst (2012:48), that leadership of faith-based Christian schools is associated with an understanding of God's leadership. This indicates that school principals are expected to combine both professional and spiritual aspects of their own lives, as they are called to serve the school community in a faith-based context.

This research has also demonstrated that in faith-based Christian schools the understandings and practices of leaders are value-driven and that their perspectives on leadership are shaped by their own spirituality and strengthened by that of the faith to which the schools are affiliated. Consequently, the leaders' faith can shape their

vision, relationships and the way they practise their leadership role in the schools. As noted above, there is also a strong belief that leaders of faith-based Christian schools, in their leadership practices, have to be guided by biblical principles. This, in other words, means gospel values of love, compassion, and care for the less fortunate. As such, faith-based school leaders are to be humble, while at the same time relational and selfless in their service to others' interests. According to the findings of this research, they are to be servant-hearted people, as they serve God through the school community. Congruent with the Dickens' (2015:66) argument on the subject, they are expected to show credibility, integrity and must lead by example.

6.3.3 Research question three: To explore the difference between servant-leadership practices and other kinds of leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools

The third objective of this study entailed discussing the similarities and differences between practicing servant-leadership and other styles of leadership. The literature shows how transformational, situational, moral and authentic leadership practices are related to, and differ from, servant-leadership practices. During the data gathering process, the participants did not articulate the differences and similarities between servant-leadership and other styles of leadership. However, this researcher analysed their expressions and practices in order to understand how it correlates with, and differs from, these types of leadership practices.

Transformational leadership: The researcher noted similarities between transformational leadership and servant-leadership. The first one is that both focus on the appreciation and valuing followers and their ability to contribute, and listening to, mentoring, and empowering followers to develop themselves. This study demonstrated that in their servant-leadership practices, leaders in faith-based Christian schools value teachers, learners and parents. However, according to Stone, Russell and Patterson (2004:349), transformational leaders tend to focus more on what is good for the organisation, while servant-leaders focus more on the service of the followers in the organisation.

Situational leadership: This study demonstrated that servant-leadership and situational leadership strive to serve people's highest priority needs. However, in both leadership practices, different approaches are employed. Situational leadership uses

a task-oriented approach to lead the subordinates, whereas servant-leadership uses the approaches that respond to the person's holistic needs. However, even though the researcher did not concentrate on situational leadership, he saw a close link in terms of the service offered to the subordinates through both approaches. Leaders in this study strived to respond to the holistic needs of the learners and teachers through attentive listening, being present, and offering opportunities to develop themselves.

Moral leadership: This is concerned with distinguishing right from wrong and doing right, seeking the just, honest, good and right conduct in its practice.

In moral leadership practices, leaders and the led have a relationship, not only of power, but also of mutual needs, aspirations, and values. Sergiovanni (2002:48) rightly contends that the highest level of leadership authority is to be found in the professional and moral domains. According to him, in moral leadership, the focus of leadership ought to be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. Through this study, the researcher also found that moral leadership is based on the values, beliefs and ethics of the leaders themselves. In other words, leaders are expected to operate on the basis of what is right or good. In this practice, they are expected to behave with integrity and visions underpinned by clear values. This researcher is of the idea that moral leadership remains as the source of servant-leadership practices. This is because, in their servant-leadership practices, school leaders in faith-based Christian schools are expected to act with integrity, humility, and credibility. However, the difference between the two is that moral leadership is concerned with what is right and wrong, whereas servant-leadership looks at the service to the constituents in any sector first.

Authentic leadership: Authentic leadership and servant-leadership also have some characteristics in common. The basis of both authentic leadership and servant-leadership lie in either explicit or implicit recognition of the leader's self-awareness and the focus on integrity, trust, courage, and hope. However, Crippen (2006:14) notes that the difference between authentic leadership and servant-leadership lies in the approach taken by the leaders to lead. This researcher noted that authentic leadership is determined only by understanding the motivation of the leadership whereby, according to Greenleaf (1970:21), "servant-leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve and to serve first".

6.3.4 Research question four: To learn to what extent do principals in faith-based Christian schools practise the principles of servant-leadership

Besides the ten characteristics of servant-leadership described under 6.3.1, this study also demonstrated that servant-leaders should be role models for their constituents through the words and actions of the leaders. Servant-leader principals model their servant-leadership practices on the example of Jesus, who came to serve others first and look for the lost sheep among others, and invited all his followers to do the same. The expression of looking for the lost ones in this research was discovered through the school leaders' effort to focus on those who are less fortunate within the school community and outside, by creating outreach programmes and counselling facilities. In this research study, servant-leadership has been practised by encouraging learners and educators to be mindful of others, especially those who have challenges in their lives. The researcher found this element quite interesting, as South Africa is a country with a large number of HIV/AIDS victims, which results in many children being orphaned, and who need personalised attention and concern.

Collaboration and working as a team is another way through which servant-leadership has been understood and practised in this study. Serving the needs of the followers to develop themselves, is part of their responsibility as faith-based Christian school leaders.

Servant-leadership practice through role modelling in the image of Jesus, the servant-leader has moulded the servant-leadership role of the principals to be a moral voice in their faith-based Christian schools. The researcher believes that in the context of faith-Christian school environment the focus is not only on academic formation of the learners, but also on their growth in faith. Consequently the idea of the morality cannot be neglected in these schools. This is in a high demand in our current society, where value-driven practices are lacking.

One other element that the study revealed is that community building is paramount for success in servant-leadership. Consequently, this researcher has observed teamwork, cooperation and an effort to create a vision that belongs to the whole community. The understanding and practice of servant-leadership can be summarised as serving with a personal example of altruism, selfless sacrifice, creating sustained trust and serving the needs of the followers. However, the researcher has also indicated that servant-leadership is not always smooth and easy, as in this study the

lack of collaboration and selfish attitudes of some team members have created challenges for practicing the ideal of this kind of leadership.

The study suggested that in order to succeed in servant-leadership practices, there must be a clear goal and vision. This is due to the fact that principals who succeed, are those who have communicated their goal and vision. This researcher has also learnt that servant-leadership practices have enhanced the academic performance of the school, which may require further investigation. Indeed, even if teachers are the ones to whom the credit has to go for the positive achievement of the learners, the three teachers who participated in the focus group discussion, noted that the success of their schools in terms of academic performance, was on account of the positive working relationships created by their principals.

6.3.5 Research question five: What guidelines or suggestions can be recommended for the implementation of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools?

Under this question the study focused on a few of the strategies that could be incorporated for success in practices as servant-leaders, besides the ten characteristics discussed above. The need to enhance the atmosphere of collaboration (by delegating tasks to staff, empowering staff to take up initiatives, creating trusting relationships among the staff) and communication. This study noted that in the selected schools, student achievements have been constantly positive, due to the positive relationships among the staff and the trust that created and resulted in a positive working climate. However, correlating servant-leadership with school achievement would require another focus. The researcher did not focus on that aspect.

6.4 Implication of the findings

This study explored how servant-leadership is practised by the school principals of faith-based Christian schools in South Africa. They practised servant-leadership through the lens of the ten characteristics, and beside that, as a call to serve, lead as a community and building capacity to lead. Thus, the researcher highlights the following implications for policy and practice.

6.4.1 Implications for policy

It would be a worthwhile practice if induction programs in faith-based Christian schools for new principals and teachers would initiate discussion on servant-leadership, as the

type of leadership to enhance their skills in serving as a team, and to enhance a collaborative atmosphere. Principals and teacher who participated in this study underlined that they did not speak often about servant-leadership but they showed with their actions and by example. Thus, initiatives should begin in the schools that participated in this study that principals need to speak about servant-leadership to expose aspiring principals experiences of servant-leadership in practice.

The three umbrella bodies for Christian schools in South Africa selected for this study (ACE, CIE, ISASA) informed the researcher that they do encourage their schools to adopt servant-leadership principles in their day-to-day school leadership. This could be prescribed as a form of instruction to motivate faith-based school principals to practice servant-leadership as it has shown that it has positive implication on the schools outcome.

All the principals and teachers of faith-based Christian schools who have attended servant-leadership trainings could be motivated to organize servant-leadership seminars, conferences, and training sessions so as to develop a policy, would be assist, as it is the staff in the schools that form the body of future school leaders. The head offices of these Christian schools should initiate discussions over policy to. This would serve a good purpose, as participants in this study acknowledged having acquired some servant-leadership notions from some religious congregations, which actively promoted the leadership ideal in the schools.

6.4.2 Implications for practice

Towards the end of the chapter, the researcher offers a section that stipulates a few of the strategies that can be incorporated for success in servant-leadership roles.

Communication and collaboration: This study demonstrated that leaders have to care and cherish communication and collaboration. There is a common belief that where there is no honest communication, there will not be collaboration. The researcher believes that collaboration is enhanced through respect for constituents and building trust, as that energises them to work harder. However, in this context the leaders are required to seek for help from their followers, since they cannot perform successfully the job required of them left on their own. In addition, the school leader should express appreciation to his/ her constituents, as that helps build trust. The study also indicated that simple expression such as “thank you” or “well done”, give recognition to and motivate teachers and learners to do their work with care and compassion.

The researcher gathered that the success of the leaders in servant-leadership practices was through communication and collaboration. Where the principal is unable to explain his or her vision, there would not be clear support by the constituents, in this case the staff, learners and parents.

Developing trust in followers: This study also demonstrated that servant-leaders demonstrate trust through integrity and concern for their followers. This became evident where principals highlighted that in their respective Christian schools, they tried to instil values in the teachers and learners. However, this also appeared as a challenge to some principals, as in this materialistic and aggressive world it is difficult to be honest, and the school offers only a window opportunity. This researcher believes that trust is a *sine qua non* for persuasion. The researcher also agrees with the idea that where there is no trust between the principal and teachers school leaders cannot succeed in their efforts to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process.

6.5 The contributions of the research

During this research process, it became evident that very little has been written on faith-based school leadership in the South African context. As such, the researcher depended on the literature from other countries. Therefore, this study contributes to the development of servant-leadership among faith-based Christian school principals from the South African context.

This study contributed to the development of servant-leadership among faith-based Christian school principals to enhance the practice of its principles for a quality learning-teaching process. In this sense, this study intended not only to contribute to the development of individual servant-leadership practice, but also as a way of applying this style in a communal (different kind of) society, as a contributing factor towards the improvement of quality education.

This is the first study to explore the servant-leadership practices of faith-based schools in South Africa. As such, it displayed the importance of this ideal of leadership, as it motivates leaders to serve, to lead as a team and develop others.

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This research focused on the servant-leadership practices of leaders of faith-based Christian schools in the South African context, and it had very limited reference to the

practices of other members (teachers) of these school communities. To understand a broader picture of the servant-leadership role and practice of faith-based Christian school principals, future research perhaps could be extended to get information from parents and learners as well.

For this study, the researcher selected only high school principals. Future research that compares servant-leadership practices in high schools and primary could open new understanding of servant-leadership, as elementary schools have more parental engagement in their schools.

This study was held in faith-based Christian school contexts, and participants were inclined to shared similar ideas. The researcher suggests another study that focuses on the views of servant-leadership practices of school leaders who may not be Christians, eg Islam, Buddhist school leaders. Future research could be expanded to include school principals of non-Christian school backgrounds for a diversified study. School leaders who took part in this study were all from urban-setup, middle-class schools and multicultural settings. Research that investigates the practices of servant-leadership by school principals in rural areas and from low socio-economic situations may add more insight into this topic.

The participants of this study were from the schools known as one of the top achievers in the country. A future study on servant-leadership could focus on low achievers to enhance their morale.

In this study, even if three participants at the focus group discussion were teachers, their contribution was minimal, as they had to act in line with the principals' practice of servant-leadership. A future study could investigate the correlation between the practices of teachers and of principals of servant-leadership in faith-based Christian schools.

This researcher would suggest a future study to compare the impact of *ubuntu* values and servant-leadership principles.

6.7 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is that it focused only on the interviews of the teachers and principals pertaining to the experiences of the servant-leadership of school principals in Gauteng. The researcher could have possibly learned more if he had

studied at least one faith-based school from each of the nine provinces in South Africa. This does not mean that the choice of the sample was an oversight, because his intent was to investigate the servant-leadership practices of faith-based Christian school leaders in South Africa. The study did not include interviews with other key stakeholders such as learners, school board of trustees, or parents that could have enriched data. Leaving out the experiences of these stakeholders during the interview was a drawback, as it would have benefited the findings. Given the limited financial resources and time constraints for the study, it was not feasible to explore the experiences of all key stakeholders in the country.

Being a case study, it was confined to twelve faith-based high schools in Gauteng to avoid making the study area too large and difficult to cover the distances within a reasonable time. Given the fact that it was a case study, the findings of this study may not be generalised to, or replicated in other contexts, as this was not the purpose of the study. However, it is hoped that the lessons learned from the twelve schools might be seen in other similar schools in the country.

6.8 Concluding comment

The main aim of this study was to study the servant-leadership practices of faith-based Christian school principals in the South African context. The findings show that servant-leadership is understood and practised as a call to service, lead as a team and build capacity to lead together as a community. This study also further showed the importance of the ten characteristics that identify the essence of a servant leader in school principals' servant-leadership practice, especially in the South African context. This study therefore arrived at the following conclusions.

Leadership in faith-based Christian schools is understood and practised as a call to serve the school community. School leaders in these schools are expected to lead by example, putting the needs of others first, especially the underprivileged. The leadership role of school leaders in faith-based Christian schools has to include a spiritual aspect and be practised as an extension of their faith-responsibility. Therefore, principals in their leadership role have to combine professional and spiritual aspects.

School leaders' leadership role in faith-based Christian schools is also guided by biblical principles of love, compassion, and care for the needy. In order to practise these principles, principals are to be humble, relational, and servant-hearted. However, these biblical principles are of no value if there is no credibility, integrity, or leading by example.

This study has also indicated that in order to succeed in servant-leadership practices, school leaders should build positive relationships, and create an atmosphere of trust. The researcher learnt that for servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools, leaders should take the model of Jesus who invited those who aspire to be in leadership positions, to be servants of others.. The study demonstrates that the practices of the ten characteristics of servant-leadership enhance the school achievement.

In servant-leadership practices, there must be a strong emphasis on the need of the under-privileged. By under-privileged, this researcher refers to learners with a poor family background, or teachers with special needs. However, in their endeavour to confront these issues, school leaders are to work as a team with the rest of the school community.

This study also included a section on servant-leadership versus other styles of leadership practices, where it discussed the similarities and differences between the leadership styles.

As a strategy to develop servant-leadership practices in faith-based Christian schools, this study suggests that school leaders inculcate the spirit of collaboration and communication in their schools, practise attentively the ten characteristics of servant-leadership, build relationships, set a clear vision for the school with the school community and negotiation skills.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A:

Application for permission: Association of Christian schools (ACE)

Research Title: SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

04 March 2018

Contact details of the researcher: Melese Tumato Shula

House number 3878 Mdlondzo Street

Tschiawelo

Cell: 078 484 8865

Re, Request for permission to conduct research at schools under the umbrella body of "Association for Christian schools" (ACE).

I, Melese Tumato Shula am doing research with the University of South Africa, as a doctoral student entitled, "*Servant leadership practices of principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa*" under the supervision of Professor Chris Van Wyk, a professor in the Department of Educational Management towards a DED in

Educational Management at the University of South Africa. I'm requesting you to allow me to conduct this research involving four of your school principals who are implementing Servant Leadership principles.

The aim of the study is to understand how Servant leadership is practiced in Faith-Based Christian schools. I would like to inform you that I am familiar with the UNISA research policy and the UNISA ethics policy. Attached to this application please find my research plan, CV and a copy of the UNISA ethical clearance. I would like to thank you in advance for granting me permission to conduct my research in your schools.

Your association has been selected as I learnt from the conversation I had with you at the beginning of the year that some of the principals in your schools were implementing the principles of the Servant leadership. The study will entail collecting data through conducting individual face-on-face interviews, engaging in focus group discussion and observation at one of the schools.

The benefits of this study are that it will help to address the impact the servant leadership practices has on Faith-based Christian schools and will also set direction towards the implementation of its principles. Potential risks are that of taking time (from 30 to 45 minutes) off the principals' busy schedules and maybe taking their free times to participate in the interviews and observation. However, I will try to stick to the scheduled times. All information collected will be kept in strict confidence and for the purpose of this study only.

Yours sincerely

Melese Tumato Shula

Researcher

Appendix B

Application for permission: Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)
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Research Title: SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

04 March 2018

Contact details of the researcher: Melese Tumato Shula

House number 3878 Mdlondzo Street

Tschiawelo

Cell: 078 484 8865

Re, Request for permission to conduct research at schools under the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)

I, Melese Tumato Shula am doing research with the University of South Africa, as a doctoral student entitled, "*Servant leadership practices of principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa*" under the supervision of Professor Chris Van Wyk, a professor in the Department of Educational Management towards a DED in Educational Management at the University of South Africa. I'm requesting you to allow me to conduct this research involving four of your school principals and who are implementing Servant Leadership principles.

The aim of the study is to understand how Servant leadership is practiced in Faith-Based Christian schools. I would like to inform you that I am familiar with the UNISA research policy and the UNISA ethics policy. Attached to this application please find my research plan, CV and a copy of the UNISA ethical clearance. I would like to thank you in advance for granting me permission to conduct my research in your schools.

Your association has been selected as I learnt from the conversation I had with you at the beginning of the year that some of the principals in your schools were implementing the principles of the Servant leadership. The study will entail collecting data through conducting individual face-on-face interviews, engaging in focus group discussion and observation at one of the schools..

The benefits of this study are that it will help to address the impact the servant leadership practices has on Faith-based Christian schools and will also set direction towards the implementation of its principles. Potential risks are that of taking time (from 30 to 45 minutes) off the principals' busy schedules and maybe taking their free times to participate in the interviews and observation. However, I will try to stick to the scheduled times. All information collected will be kept in strict confidence and for the purpose of this study only.

Yours sincerely

Melese Tumato Shula

Researcher

Appendix C

Application for permission: Association of Independent Schools of South Africa (ISASA).
--

Research Title: SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH AFRICA

04 March 2018

Contact details of the researcher: Melese Tumato Shula

House number 3878 Mdlondzo Street

Tschiawelo

Cell: 078 484 8865

Re, Request for permission to conduct research at schools under the umbrella of Association for Christian schools.

I, Melese Tumato Shula am doing research with the University of South Africa, as a doctoral student entitled, "*Servant leadership practices of principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa*" under the supervision of Professor Chris Van Wyk, a professor in the Department of Educational Management towards a DED in Educational Management at the University of South Africa. I'm requesting you to allow me to conduct this research involving four of your school principals who are implementing Servant Leadership principles.

The aim of the study is to understand how Servant leadership is practiced in Faith-Based Christian schools. I would like to inform you that I am familiar with the UNISA research policy and the UNISA ethics policy. Attached to this application please find my research plan, CV and a copy of the UNISA ethical clearance. I would like to thank you in advance for granting me permission to conduct my research in your schools.

Your association has been selected as I learnt from the conversation I had with you at the beginning of the year that some of the principals in your schools were implementing the principles of the Servant leadership. The study will entail collecting data through conducting individual face-on-face interviews, engaging in focus group discussion and observation at one of the schools..

The benefits of this study are that it will help to address the impact the servant leadership practices has on Faith-based Christian schools and will also set direction towards the implementation of its principles. Potential risks are that of taking time (from 30 to 45 minutes) off the principals' busy schedules and maybe taking their free times to participate in the interviews and observation. However, I will try to stick to the scheduled times. All information collected will be kept in strict confidence and for the purpose of this study only.

Yours sincerely

Melese Tumato Shula

Researcher

Appendix D:

CONSENT TO ALLOW SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY)

I, _____ director/coordinator/ head of (ACE, CIE, ISASA), confirm that the researcher asking my consent to inform our principals to participate in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to inform principals in our schools to participate in the study. I understand that our principals' participation is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that our principals' participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Director/ coordinator/ Head of the organisation

_____ Date _____

Researcher's Name & Surname:

Melese Tumato Shula _____ date _____

Appendix E

Letter to principals to participate in semi-structured interviews
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Research Title: SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS SOUTH AFRICA

04 June 2018

Contact details of the researcher: Melese Tumato Shula

House number 3878 Mdlondzo Street

Tschiawelo

Cell: 078 484 8865

Dear principal

My name is Melese Tumato Shula and I'm doing research under the supervision of Professor Chris Van Wyk, a professor in the Department of Educational Management towards a DED in Educational Management at the University of South Africa. I'm inviting you to participate in a study entitled, "*Servant leadership Practices of Schools Principals in Faith-Based Christian Schools of South Africa*".

I'm conducting this research to find out the importance of servant leadership practices of school principals in Faith-based Christian schools with a view to come up with strategies for effective implementation. I have contacted the head offices for

Independent Schools of South Africa, Catholic Institute of Education and Association for Christian schools of South Africa and permission has been granted by these bodies to conduct this research in schools falling under their umbrellas.

You have been requested to participate in this research because you have been identified as implementing the principles servant leadership in your leadership. I feel you can make very important contributions to this study. I got your contact from the association your school belongs to.

The study collects data through individual interviews, focus group discussions as well as carrying out two observations.

You will be requested to respond to a 30 to 45 minutes interview questions as reflected in this interview guide.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given the information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me, the researcher will know about your responses to the interviews. Recordings of your interview will only be made with your permission and your name will not be mentioned in the recording, instead a pseudonym will be allocated to your interview to ensure strict confidentiality is adhered to. However, your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, but you will not be identifiable in such reports.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at my home and for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If need arises to destroy hard copies, these will be shredded or burned.

It is my hope that you will not incur any costs as a result of your participation in this study. But in the vent that you incur cost, I will refund you the costs. No payment is given to you as a reward for your participation.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Melese Shula on 0784848865 or email address aneafriano@hotmail.com . The findings are accessible for the next five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research will be conducted, you may contact my supervisor Professor Christo Van Wyk, Vanwyk.christo1@gmail.com

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

Melese Tumato Shula

Researcher

Appendix F

Letter to principals to participate in focus group interviews

Research Title: SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN FAITH-BASED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS SOUTH AFRICA

04 June 2018

Contact details of the researcher: Melese Tumato Shula

House number 3878 Mdlondzo Street

Tschiawelo

Cell: 078 484 8865

Dear principal

My name is Melese Tumato Shula and I'm doing research under the supervision of Professor Chris Van Wyk, a professor in the Department of Educational Management towards a DED in Educational Management at the University of South Africa. I'm inviting you to participate in a study entitled, "*Servant leadership Practices of Schools Principals in Faith-Based Christian Schools of South Africa*".

I'm conducting this research to find out the importance of servant leadership practices of school principals in Faith-based Christian schools with a view to come up with strategies for effective implementation. I have contacted the head offices for Independent Schools of South Africa, Catholic Institute of Education and Association

for Christian schools of South Africa and permission has been granted by these bodies to conduct this research in schools falling under their umbrellas.

You have been requested to participate in this research because you have been identified as implementing the principles servant leadership in your leadership. I feel you can make very important contributions to this study. I got your contact from the association your school belongs to. At the same time I am humbling request that you invite the teacher who is responsible for religious education in your school to take part in focus group discussion.

The study collects data through individual interviews, focus group discussions as well as carrying out two observations.

You will be requested to participate in focus group discussion of to 45 to 90 minutes discussions as reflected in this interview guide.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given the information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me, the researcher will know about your responses to the interviews. Recordings of your interview will only be made with your permission and your name will not be mentioned in the recording, instead a pseudonym will be allocated to your interview to ensure strict confidentiality is adhered to. However, your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings, but you will not be identifiable in such reports.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at my home and for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If need arises to destroy hard copies, these will be shredded or burned.

It is my hope that you will not incur any costs as a result of your participation in this study. But in the vent that you incur cost, I will refund you the costs. No payment is given to you as a reward for your participation.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Education, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Melese Shula on 0784848865 or email address aneafriano@hotmail.com . The findings are accessible for the next five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research will be conducted, you may contact my supervisor Professor Christo Van Wyk, Vanwyk.christo1@gmail.com

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely

Melese Tumato Shula

Researcher

Appendix G: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview/focus group discussion on my views in response to questions on the “Importance of Servant leadership practices of school principals in Faith-Based Christian schools in South Africa”.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname : _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher’s Name & Surname: Melese Tumato Shula

Appendix H: Semi-structured questions for individual interviews with the principals

Introductory Comments

1. Thank the participants for accepting to participate in the research.
 2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.
 3. Remind interviewees of length of interview session.
 4. Assure participants of confidentiality of all responses and participants' liberty to refuse to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with.
 5. Get written consent letter signed and request permission to record interview and inform them that they may request stopping the recording at any time.
 6. Allow participants to ask questions about their concerns before proceeding to interview questions.
-
1. What does leadership in a Faith-based Christian school mean to you as a principal?
 2. What does it mean to be a servant leader at a Christian school?
 3. Why do you think servant leadership is important in Faith-based schools?
 4. How did you come to develop interest in the servant-leadership approach in your school leadership?
 5. What influences you to follow the principles of servant leadership in the context of Faith-based Christian schools? Can you please, mention some examples?
 6. Please, share with me what you know about other theories of leadership, and how you believe they differ from servant-leadership in the context of Faith-based Christian school?
 7. How do you practice the ten characteristics of servant leadership with the learners, educators and parents?
 8. In your view, why do you think servant-leadership is relevant in today's schools particularly in South African faith-based Christian schools' context?
 9. In your opinion as a principal in Faith-based Christian school, what are the strengths of servant-leadership in contemporary schools?
 10. What strategies do you adopt for success in your exercise of servant-leadership?
 11. From your own experience as a principal in Faith-based Christian school, do you think that a servant leadership practice could enhance student achievement? Please, can you share some ideas on that?

Appendix I

Questions for focus group discussions

Introductory Comments

1. Thank the participants for accepting to participate in the research.
2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.
3. Remind interviewees of length of interview session.
4. Assure participants of confidentiality of all responses and participants' liberty to refuse to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with.
5. Get written consent letter signed and request permission to record interview and inform them that they may request stopping the recording at any time.
6. Allow participants to ask questions about their concerns before proceeding to interview questions.

Discussions

1. How do you understand the leadership of Faith-based Christian school ?
2. What does it mean to be a servant leader at a Christian school in the South African context?
3. Why do you think servant leadership practice is important in Faith-based Christian schools?
4. What influences you to follow the principles of servant leadership in the context of Faith-based Christian schools? Can you please, mention some examples?
5. How do you practice the ten characteristics of servant leadership with the learners, educators and parents?
6. Please, share with me what you know about other theories of leadership, and how you believe they differ from servant-leadership in the context of Faith-based Christian school?
7. In your practice, why do you think servant-leadership is relevant in today's schools particularly in South African faith-based Christian schools' context?
8. In your opinion as a principal in Faith-based Christian school, what are the strengths of servant-leadership in contemporary schools?
9. As servant leaders what strategies do you adopt for success in your exercise of servant-leadership?

10. Appendix J

Observation Protocol

Setting/ Individual Observed;

Interactions: Staff, parents (formal interactions at the staff meeting & parents' quarterly meeting, informal interactions, principal's comments, teachers' comments, parents' comments,)

Observer:

Time:

Place:

Length of Observation: approximately 3 hours each

Descriptive notes: Reflective Notes

(Notes describing what occurred) (Notes about observer experiences, Hunches, insights, and themes)

Description of what was observed in: Leadership behaviour: Actions and words that provide insights to the servant leadership style.)

Adapted from Creswell, J. W (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, N. J: Merrill and Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (2nd ed.)

UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Appendix K

Date: 2017/10/18

Ref: **2017/10/18/44389558/04/MC**

Name: Mr MT Shula

Student: 44389558

Dear Mr Shula

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2017/10/18 to 2020/10/18

Researcher:

Name: Mr MT Shula

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Supervisor:

Name: Prof C van Wyk

Email: Vanwyk.christo1@gmail.com

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Title of research:

Servant leadership practices of school principals in faith-based Christian schools of South Africa

Qualification: D Ed in Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2017/10/18 to 2020/10/18.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2017/10/18 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that: