TOWARDS LEADERSHIP FOR SCHOOL CULTURES ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE 'POWER' OF ORGANIC EMERGENCE, DIVERSITY AND SERVICE

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Abstract

The South African government has over the past fourteen years been introducing numerous efforts aimed at improving the academic performance of schools who have been struggling in this regard for some time now. However, these efforts are not having the desired effect. Indications are that this may be due to their power-coercive and rational-empirical underpinnings. Such leanings ignore findings that have been been pointing to normative re-educative underpinnings as being more foundational for bringing about ,and/ or maintaining, change than is the case with the other two frameworks (see, McLaughlin, 1993, for example). Thus, the purpose of this article is to contribute towards a better understanding of school leadership that is related to school cultures that are associated with good academic performance in the stated context. This is informed by findings in an ethnographic study in which I explored the relationship between academic performance, school culture and leadership in two 'African' township secondary schools of varying academic performance. One of the major findings in this study was that school cultures that, in this context, have the potential of enabling participation in activities that are associated with good academic performance are those that are communal in nature but embrace 'societal' negotiations for their common understandings. In turn, the type of leadership that was concluded as being linked to such school cultures was that which emerges organically from within the African township secondary schools. The power of such emergence was found to be in the related diversity and service.

Introduction

At the core of the South African government activities over the past decade and a half has been a societal transformation that the government hopes will help reverse the past governments'

legacies such as that of high poverty levels (Christie, 2008 and Kallaway, 2005). Indications are that the government is of the view that education is to lay the foundation for such transformation (Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson, and Pillay**, 2000)**. However, the poor academic performances plaguing the majority of schools in the country (Taylor, Muller, and Vinjevold, 2003 and DoE, 2008) means that this is currently hardly the case. This is despite the numerous efforts aimed at improving these performances.

An examination of these efforts reveals a tendency towards power-coercive and rational-empirical underpinnings. Examples in support of related indications are provided in the section on historical academic performance below. Whilst such strategies may help bring about certain changes, indications are that they contribute towards short-lived change when compared to changes brought about by strategies that are normative re-educative in nature (McLaughlin, 1987). In line with this, focus in this article relates to the type of school leadership that is associated with a normative re-education that amongst 'African'[1] township secondary schools enables committed and disciplined teaching and learning. The decision to study such schools is explained in the section on the study below. Although primarily focused on leadership, the discussion will also briefly incorporate the school culture aspect. This incorporation is to facilitate a better understanding of the link between the leadership and the school cultures associated with good academic performance in the stated context.

My discussion in this respect begins with a brief overview of some of the post 1994 'transformation' intended educational changes. This is followed by a section in which I briefly trace the historical academic performance of the majority of schools in South Africa. I then proceed with a brief overview of the study on which this paper is based. The last section is on the leadership that I concluded as being associated with school cultures that 'emerged' as being associated with good academic performance in the staed context.

Post 1994 'transformational' educational changes

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[1] The term 'African' population group is in this article used to differentiate from the other two population groups loosely referred to as 'Blacks' in this country, namely: groups of individuals of Asiatic origins on one hand and those of the so-called Coloured group on the other hand.

Part of the changes aimed at enabling formal education to lay the ground for the desired transformation relates to the access to basic education policy for all of the country's citizens. This is, for example, illustrated by the norms and standards for the differentiated funding of schools in terms of stipulated quintile levels of economic need (DoE, 1998). Of particular note about this policy is its global alignment to current convictions about the 'role' of education for the alleviation of poverty, as evidenced for example in the United Nations' calls for 'Education for All' (EFA) and the 'quality imperative (UNESCO, 2005).

In addition, the government has introduced a curriculum, the Outcomes Based Education (OBE), it views as having the potential of helping bring about the transformation.. The energy that the government has spent on this curriculum helps illustrate the government's belief in this curriculum's transformational capacity. Part of the energy related to the Curriculum 2005 rollout which was then followed by two reviews. These reviews culminated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2002) and the National Curriculum Statement (DoE, 2000**.**).

Also suggesting the government's convictions about the foundational role of education for transformation have been policies, and related activities, aimed at 'improved' teacher agency. These include the increased funding of initial teacher preparation and continuing development. It also includes the recent 'quality assurance' reaccredidation reviews of related programmes by Higher Education Institutions.

SA schools' historical academic performance and improvement strategies

Although very few schools were prior to 1953 available for the formal education of the African population in South Africa, academic performance in these schools never resulted in public outcry. The few Africans children that attended these schools at the turn of the twentieth century were sold to the idea of being 'educated' whilst the missionaries that offered their service in most of these schools were committed to their teaching calling (Hartshorne, 1999). These commitments and related good academic performances continued even after the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953. This was despite the inferior education that this law prescribed for the masses.

This situation continued until disrupted by the student uprising that broke out in Soweto on June 16, 1976. The uprising was in objection to the then recent prescription of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in all 'African' secondary schools in the country. However, as the uprising resurfaced in the 1980s the objections also embraced other challenges such as the legitimacy of these schools' managers. This left most of these managers ineffectiveness in helping maintain or resuscitate school cultures associated with good academic performance in these schools. The post 1994 national education department's immediate response to this situation was to 'acknowledge' the importance of school culture for academic performance in that in 1995 it introduced a programme it initially referred to as the Culture of Learning. In 1996 this focus was extended to the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (COLTS) which was launched by the then Deputy President (Mbeki, 1997).

However, despite this apparent 'acknowledgement', most of the strategies that the government has adopted in an attempt to improve the school's academic performances have been demonstrating power-coercive and rational-empirical underpinnings than they have demonstrating the normative re-educative. Power-coercive strategies are informed by convictions that all that education planners need to do to elicit desired implementations is to issue instructions and 'punish' or threaten non-compliers. For example, the government has been threatening to close down those schools that are not meeting the prescribed minimum pass rates at given times. On the other hand, the rational-empirical approach to change is centred on the belief that individuals will implement change if they are armed with relevant knowledge and skills. Belief in this approach is deductible, for example, from the emphasis that is currently being placed on the 'upgrading' of teacher qualifications. This focus neglect the

importance of attitudes that enable teaching and learning behavioural norms associated with good academic performance. The normative re-educative approach on the other hand is driven by convictions that, in addition to knowledge and skills, change 'buy in' amongst change agents is crucial if change is to succeed (McLaughlin, 1999).

The study

As already indicated, the purpose of this study was to contribute towards efforts aimed at improving the academic performance of schools that are struggling in this respect. The focus was mainly on the development of a better understanding regarding school cultures associated with good academic performance in African township schools and in so doing help develop a better understanding of leadership associated with such school cultures. The main focus in this paper relates to the latter.

Two secondary schools of varying academic performance comprised the sample. Both schools are located in the same township and serve very poor communities. Their selection was based on published matriculation pass rates over a period of five years but also took into consideration the anecdotal claims of performance manipulation amongst certain schools. As a result, the validity of their performances was further bolstered by the judgement of the schools' district superintendent education manager (SEM). The school of good academic performance is hereunder referred to as Fundiseka with that of poor academic performance as Umzamo.

Central to this study was the generation of school improvement related thick descriptions rather than school effectiveness related generalizations. However, findings from this study are transferable to similar contexts (Ary, 1999**)**. This is taking into consideration that the selected schools were viewed as being representative of schools in most townships in terms of learners socio-economic backgrounds. Further bolstering the generalisability potential of the findings is what Hesketh (2004) refers to as 'generalisations as hypothesis'. What this means is that conclusions drawn from case study findings can be confirmed or disconfirmed through further research.

The key questions that guided my explorations in this study were:

*   What forms of cultures exist in these sample schools of varying academic performance?

*   What features of school cultures are potentially enabling with respect to academic performance in African township secondary schools?

*   What forms of leadership exist in the sample schools?

*   What features of leadership are potentially enabling with respect to school cultures associated with good academic performance in African township secondary schools?

The main purpose of these questions was that they would promote identification of what might be argued to be the most significant implications for leadership regarding the creation of school cultures that enable good academic performance in historically disadvantaged African township secondary schools. These questions were thus not aimed at generating 'cause and effect truths'. Instead, the understanding was that certain school culture and related leadership features have important roles in providing environments that are either enabling or disabling to participation in activities associated with good academic performance in particular contexts.

Research method and theoretical framework

Both the school culture and leadership concepts are socially constructed and complex. This complexity persuaded the adoption of an ethnographic exploration in the belief that ethnography enables engagement with 'the world of everyday life' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 264) as is the nature of the school culture and leadership concepts. Also viewed as of further advantage about ethnography is its capacity to generate thick descriptions that stand to inform practice much more than is the case with quantitative and other short-term qualitative methodologies. This consideration was viewed as of importance in that none of the studies in the literature I had reviewed focused on such school improvement related descriptions regarding the relationship between academic performance, school culture ad school leadership. The above consideration then persuaded a grounded theoretical framework. The view was that such a framework would help remove 'blinkers' that could threaten to 'blind' my data gathering and analysis to certain emerging data, categories or theories. Related to these frameworks was a relativist and interpretive epistemology.

Conceptual frameworks

The conceptualizations of the core concepts were informed by the desire to generate school improvement related findings.

(i) Academic performance

However, the conceptualisation of academic performance merely related to matriculation examination results. This focus on matriculation was in consideration of what appears to be governmental perceptions that good performance at this level is foundational for societal transformation in that it 'opens' doors to higher education and increased economic independence. This is as conveyed, for example, by the 'standardization' of these examinations and the widespread publications of related results.

(ii) School Culture

Pointers to the link between school cultures and academic performance include Stolp's (1994: 1-2) claim that 'healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation and with teacher productivity and satisfaction' (also see Prosser, 1999, Lumby, 2003). An explanation for such a link is that cultures are highly 'visible' and 'feelable' and therefore impact readily on people's feelings, thus determining their performance. This makes school cultures of critical importance for performance in educational institutions, considering that these institutions are 'people-centredness' and therefore depend highly 'on the nature and effectiveness of interpersonal relationships' for their success (Law and Glover (2000: 116).

However, access to school cultures is not an easy task as this concept is rather intricate, nebulous and elusive. This means that although always present, this concept does not readily reveal itself and therefore requires great patience if it is to be fully understood and articulated (Schein, 1985). A conceptualisation viewed as potentially enabling for this call is that which incorporates both the readily available behavioral normative aspect of 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1992) and that of underpinnings such as people's philosophies, beliefs, values and assumptions, (Schein, 1985). The view was that such an incorporation would enable exposure to targeted groups' 'shared learning' and 'meaning systems', both of which are important for (school) cultural 'formation', 'change' and 'maintenance' (Fuglestad and Lillejord's, 2002 and Prosser, 2003).

(iii) Leadership

The conceptualisation of leadership began with views by authors such as Schein (1985) that leadership is basically about normative education and re-education whose claim is that:

> Organizational (school) (bracket mine) cultures are created by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership may well be the creation, the management, and – if and when they may become necessary – the destruction of culture. Culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin, and neither can really be understood by itself. In fact, there is a possibility – underemphasized in leadership research – that the only thing of importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture. If the concept of leadership, as distinguished from management, is to have any value we must recognize the centrality of this culture management function in the leadership concept. (Schein, 1985: 2)

Furthermore, Schein's (1985: xi) view is that 'much of what is mysterious about leadership becomes clearer if we separate leadership from management and link leadership specifically to creating and changing culture'. As a result, the conceptalisation of leadership in this study merely referred to individuals' ability to influence others attitudes and activities (Owens, 2002). This meant the exploration of this capacity needed to be preceded by the identification of individuals that actually had this capacity in the sample schools.

Data gathering and analysis

Data gathering, analysis and literature review were undertaken throughout the fieldwork and emerging issues helped inform the other aspects. Gathering at Fundiseka lasted for three school quarters and for one school quarter at Umzamo. The latter gathering coincided with the Fundiseka final data gathering quarter and was mainly for 'comparative' purpose. The aim of the comparison was to 'eliminate' similarities between the two schools' cultures and leadership that could not therefore be linked to the schools' academic performances. The 'gathering' itself was by means of school and classroom observations, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, short questionnaires and document analysis.

The observations were conducted throughout the fieldwork and were mainly unstructured and non-participant. This was except when I offered to invigilate written tests in both schools. These provided useful windows for exploring student bahaviours in the absence of familiar figures of authority. Towards the end of the data gathering the observations also included the shadowing for a day each of individuals identified through questionnaires as being the four most influential people in these schools. The data that emerged from the shadowing helped reinforce data gathered by means of interviews and also helped fill in remaining 'gaps'.

The short questionnaires helped identify individuals perceived as being influential in bot schools. Data gathering towards the end of the fieldwork then included semi-structured interviews with the identified influential teachers, focus groups of influential learners and focus groups of randomly selected teachers. This enabled the probing of issues that thus far had been emerging but needed further clarifications. In addition, unstructured informal conversations were carried out throughout the fieldwork with various members of, and visitors to, the schools. The documents from which I gathered the data included the schools' strategic plans, examination results' schedules, and, attendance and school fee payment registers.

The analysis itself involved continuous *note taking, comparisons of emergent issues, open and axial coding, memoing, process and theoretical sampling* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)*. These enabled the shying away from taking issues for granted and focusing on what people were saying and could be meaning (Strauss and Corbin 1990, pp. 76-7). Furthermore, I conducted a 'findings'' workshops with influential staff at each of the schools about two months after fieldwork had ended.

Findings

The section below begins with a brief presentation of my findings regarding school cultures in the sample schools and then proceeds with a more detailed discussion of findings regarding related leadership in these schools.

1. School culture

School culture at Fundiseka was predominantly characterized by communality but also embraced negotiations. It also reflected issues characterising Africans cultures such as vibrancy (Olie, 1995) and Ubuntu (Mbigi,1997). These characteristics were not part of the Umzamo school culture

(a) Communality

Part of the Fundiseka communality was common understandings regarding the school's goals and acceptable behavioural norms. The former comprised academic excellence and holistic education whilst the latter included discipline, hard work, issue-based respect (e.g. of school property and individual dignity), problem solving and equality. On the other hand, the Umzamo school culture was characterized by fragmented understandings.

Further characterising the Fundiseka communality were member feelings of belonging, trust and pride in the school and each other and determination to do the best to preserve these and the good name of the school. Also found to be associated with the communality was a sense of ownership amongst the schools' community. Responses pointing to these and their absence at Umzamo were the tendency at Fundiseka to refer to teachers and students as 'our teachers' and 'our students. Contrary to this, Umzamo references were in terms of 'teachers of this school' and 'students of this school'.

Comments relating to the potential empowering capacity of communality for organizational success include claims that belonging to a community:

> … feels good: whatever the word 'community' may mean, it is good 'to have a community', 'to be in a community'. If someone wandered off the right track, we would often explain his unwholesome conduct by saying that 'he has fallen into bad company'. If someone is miserable, suffers a lot and is consistently denied a dignified life, we promptly accuse society – the way it is organized, the way it works. Company or society can be bad, but not the community. Community, we feel, is always a good thing.

> The meanings and feelings the words convey are not, of course, independent of each other. 'Community' feels good because of the meanings the word 'community' conveys

> – all of them promising pleasures, and more often than not the kinds of pleasures we
> would like to experience but seem to miss.

(Bauman, 2001: 1)

(b) Societal negotiations

Another issue that was found to be potentially enabling about the Fundiseka leadership for similar contexts was its nature was variously negotiated. This is particular importance considering the heterogeneity of these contexts.

(c) Vibrancy

Another difference between the two schools' cultures was that while Fundiseka engaged in more extra-curricular activities than Umzamo, it also did so with more vim than was the case at Umzamo.

(d) Ubuntu

Although some characteristics suggested Ubuntu in both schools, some underlying differences existed. For example, while both schools contributed financially to the bereaved members, the Fundseka community went much beyond bereavements and was greatly involved in members' ongoing concerns. These included the counseling of students experiencing emotional traumas and the raising of funds for needy students.

2. Leadership

What was most striking about leadership at Fundiseka were its ratification that I found to be elated to its organic emergence, diversity and service. The opposite was the case regarding the leadership at Umzamo.

(a) Organic leadership emergence

That the Fundiseka's leadership emerged organically was, amongst other things, first hinted at on my first day of fieldwork when I observed a female student effortlessly taking command of a drum majorettes rehearsal session. This was whilst awaiting the arrival of the responsible teacher who I learnt was on this day unusually late. Although in Grade 10 at that moment, this student was later that year selected into the schools Learner Representative Council (LRC).

Further suggesting the Fundiseka organic leadership emergence the consensus displayed in the questionnaire identification of individuals perceived as being the most influential people at the school. These individuals included Level One teachers and students who were part of the LRC. Actually, the person identified as being most influential individual at this school was a Level 1. On the other hand, Umzamo's identification of influential individuals had been thinly spread across the school's staff and students. Furthermore, the school principal had during an interview with him indicated that he had decided that the school was not to have an LRC because of the school's previous experiences in which its LRC had been ringleaders in a class boycott that had left part of the school's property damaged. On the other hand, the Fundiseka LRC had worked hand in hand with the school's senior management team. Also pointing to organic leadership emergence at Fundiseka was the ratification of the leadership, as conveyed for example, by member respect for, and trust in, the leadership by most of the school's intra-community. All of these proved to be absent at Umzamo.

Of particular note about the Fundiseka leadership was its unified direction as opposed to the fragmented direction that was found to be part of leadership at Umzamo. The unified direction was apparent, for example, in the unified front that the SMT, LRC and identified influential individuals presented to staff and students. This related to efforts by influential staff towards preparing the elected learner representatives for their leadership role through a number of workshops and meetings.

Leadership diversity and distribution

Another issue that characterized the Fundiseka's leadership was its diverse and distributed nature. The diversity related to the leadership organic emergence and was displayed by different members of the leadership. Features characterising the diversity included orientations towards situational, charismatic, transformational and transactional, democratic and autocratic, and relationship and task-oriented leadership. Such a diversity hardly existed at Umzamo.

Situational leadership

Members of the Fundiseka leadership such as the Deputy Principals (DP) who was identified s the second most influential person at the school exercised their influence differently in different situations. This was the case when I shadowed him for a day at the school. While the DP's

behaviour had in the Grade 12 been rather firm, his behaviour was more relaxed in the lower classes, particularly with the Grade 8s. He had been so relaxed with the latter that he had even passed a few jokes with the class and addressed gir students by pet names such as 'mam'ncane's (little mum's). His sternness had not been off-putting to the Grade 12 students, some of whom had even followed him out of class in search of more clarifications on aspects of work not well understood during the lesson. On the other hand, his relaxed manner with the Grade 8 class appeared not to be breeding familiarity. Instead, it had made it easy for the new coming class to be relaxed enough to participate in his lesson.

Charismatic leadership

On the other hand, the young Level 1 male teacher identified as the most influential person at the school convey charismatic leadership. The charisma was discernible, amongst other things, from the articulate and persuasive manner in which he expressed the aims and rules of the school at opportune moments such as the school's morning assemblies and staff meetings. His charisma had, for example, enabled him to bring about solidarity among the members of the school in somewhat dramatic and emotive ways that Ferrinho (1980) maintains typifies charismatic leadership. However, although this teacher was very adept at identifying and defining potential problems for the school community, he personally did not develop or carry out solutions to these problems. Instead, after articulating he would then very effectively seek to influence those he thought were best suited for this task. This, according to Ferrhino (1980), is one other characteristic of charismatic leadership.

One of the incidents that portrayed this teacher's charisma was his involvement in the resolution of a tension that had threatened to derail teacher cohesion at this school. This followed an instruction to learners at assembly by the DP presented above as examplifying leadership contingency at the school to report teachers who were in the abit of 'bunking' classes. Angry responses to this instruction by teachers amongst themselves persuaded this young teacher to convene a meeting with a group of teachers he trusted would be able to handle the matter with success. The group then approached the DP and was able to convince him to alter his stance in handling matters of concern at the school and to apologise to staff for the manner in which he had handling this particular matter.

Transformational and transactional leadership

Further illustrating the Fundiseka leadership diversity was that the leadership was both transformational and transactional. For example, interviews with various members at the indicated that the school's principal leadership was what may be labeled as being transformational. Despite being ranked as 'only' the third most influential member at the school, the interview responses indicated his leadership was valued by perhaps everybody at the school. An explanation for the principal's third ranking despite the value attached to his leadership possibly resided in a 'deficiency' of what Bauman (2001) describes as aesthetic influence. What this implies is that the names that had readily come into mind for the majority of the respondents to the questionnaire that helped identify influential individuals at the schools were those of people whose influence the school community experienced most frequently and explicitly. The principal was not such an individual considering that he did not coordinate activities that would regularly bring him into contact with the school's masses. For example, he did not make announcements at morning assembly on a daily basis but shared this responsibility with other SMT members and whoever else needed to make announcements for whatever reason. In addition, he was not part of extracurricular activities and classroom teaching that might have brought him into contact with the majority of the school members on a regular basis.

That the principal's the principal's leadership was transformational could, for example, be attributed to his practice of involving others in decision making during which he would show genuine regard for their inputs. Some of the responses pointing to this and to the Umzamo contrary were:

> *All the decisions that are made in this school have to go via the teachers, the principal and the RCL. Obviously once they reach the RCL, the RCL members go back to the learners and invite them when something in the school needs to be done and ask them how they feel about it. If the learners have problems they will speak up and if they agree then those things will be done. There haven't really been changes that have been made that the learners have not been in agreement with. Most of the time when these decisions are made the learners already know about them and they know that they will benefit them. **(Student)***

and

> *We are still very poor there. We do make decisions as a group, that is the teachers and the SMT. But what I have noticed is that most of them they come from top down, instead of coming from the teachers, from the ground and then up.***(Umzamo teacher)**

Contrary to the above, a number of issues indicated the school leadership's also embraced a transactional dimension. These included the practice by two teachers observed to be offering sweets for good performance in the Grade 8 classes; the school's practice of honouring student achievements at morning assembly and Prize-Giving Days; and 'name-calling' of the Grade 8 class newcomers. The message conveyed by the latter seemed to be: 'tow the line or else you will continue being called such stupid names'. Interview responses conveying the power of this form of 'transaction' to help bring about desired behaviour included:

> *It (name calling) used to upset me, but then I realized that I was new and had to look to others to see how things were done. I do the same to those who have come after me, but I tell them that the same happened to me. **(Student leader)***

On the other hand, whatever leadership existed at Umzamo tended to be more transactional than transformational. It was, for example, ineffective in bringing about discipline amongst the students. A number of the students frequently left the school by jumping over the school fence whilst lessons were still going, were often absent from school and did not do their homework.

Democratic and autocratic leadership
What was also found to be charactersing the Fundiseka leadership was democratic decision-making. One of the issues that pointed to this was the following response by one of the teachers that participated in the focus group interview:

> *I think that the decisions, because we have many departments, although the principal may have the final say, the main motivations come from the departments.*

The leadership at Fundiseka also tended to be autocratic when deemed necessary and appropriate. An explanation given by the group of influential teachers that participated in the 'findings workshop' regarding this practice acceptability at the school was because the school

community trusted the leadership, particularly the principal, to have the best interest of the school at heart. Furthermore, principal welcomed inputs whenever dissatisfactions arose regarding certain decisions he had taken unilaterally. For example, one of the school's HoDs had the following to say in this respect:

> *Decisions are taken with consensus with regard to management… Sometimes it is not really possible to get consensus all the time. Some decisions have to be taken on the spur of the moment. The principal, the person who is in charge and in authority takes decisions. But the decisions that need to be taken via consensus is done via consensus.*

Contrary to the Fundiseka combination, the general practice at Umzamo tended to be what may be described as 'contrived' democracy. For example, teacher respondents complained that individuals in formal positions of authority hardly followed through with decisions that staff had agreed upon in meetings. Responses pointing to this included the following response by one of the school's heads of departments:

> *We are still very poor there. We do make decisions as a group, that is, the teachers and the SMT. But what I have noticed is that most of them they come from top down, instead of coming from the teachers, from the ground and then up.*

Relationship and task-orientation

In addition, the principal's leadership, responses pointed to the principal's leadership as being relationship-oriented. One of such responses was the narration by the group that participated in the findings workshop regarding the principal's handling of an unnamed offense by an unnamed staff member. The offence had made the SMT extremely angry that it had wanted strong action, also unnamed, against the teacher. On the other hand, the principal had handled the meeting with the teacher in which all SMT members were present in a manner that had found the teacher quickly apologizing to the team for his misbehavior. The group stated that it had initially been shocked by the principal's relaxed manner in this meeting but had ended up being impressed by the consequences as the principal's handling found the teacher mending his ways and his relations with the rest of the staff. This integrative capacity is one of the issues that

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related strongly with the school's culture of negotiated common understandings. None of the interview responses at Umzamo conveyed relationship orientation at this school.

While the school community found the maintenance of good relations at the school to be of value, some of the school's influential individuals such as the DP that was ranked as the second most influential person at the school were task-oriented. One of the examples of task-orientation included the occasion I presented above in which he had instructed students at morning assembly to report to him all the teachers who without prior notification stayed away from classes. Also serving to highlight his task-orientation was his comment during an informal conversation with him that his priority was to make sure that the school's academic performance was on par with that of historically advantaged schools. His view was that there was no justification for teachers at this school to send their children to 'Model Cs' considering that all of them had academic and professional qualifications that qualified them to teach what they taught. For him, all what was needed was for the senior management team to ensure that all staff undertook their work diligently.

(c) Diversified service

In addition to the above two major characteristics about the Fundiseka leadership was a service to the school members which depicted itself in various forms such as emotional and financial support, information provisioning and physical security, direction provisioning and problem solving. Responses alluding to these differences included the following that:

> *Another thing is that here at school there are organizations, groups that deal with learners' problems. For example, people who get abused at home, they try to help them…*
> *(**Fundiseka** student)*

Emotional and financial support

One of the features that characterised the leadership of Fundiseka teacher identified as the most influential female teacher at the school was her focus on HIV, spiritual and poverty related matters and student peer counseling. Responses pointing to the influential capacity of these services by the Fundiseka leadership for the school's community included:

> *Mrs Z. usually tells the young people how to behave, to take care of themselves, telling them about AIDS. They must be aware that there is AIDS. They must not discriminate the one who have HIV-AIDS. (**Teacher**)*

The only time such a service was mentioned during interviews at Umzamo was in relation to the female teacher who taught the "Life Orientation' learning area.

Information provisioning

Another feature of the Fundiseka leadership was that it helped keep the school community well informed of matters of importance and interest to it. For example, most of the teachers identified as being highly influential at the school also held prominent positions in popular teacher unions and helped keep the staff up to date of labour- related developments. The 'power' of this service, for example, was that at Fundiseka, discussions in the information provisioning meetings I attended were mostly 'positive'. On the other hand, such meetings at Umzamo seemed to provide participants with forums for challenging one another by staff. One such occurrence was when the school principal used this forum to object to certain staff practice of having long conversations with students at break. This the principal had voiced as a follow-up to a discussion of labour stipulations that prohibited 'relationships' between teachers and students. That this comment was not having the desired effect was ascertained from the objections that were voiced by certain male teachers at the meeting.

Direction provisioning

Also characterizing leadership at Fundiseka was an ability to provide direction to its members on various issues. Examples pointing to this service included reminders to students of various school rules or of class rules by teachers at morning assembly, during lessons or whenever occasions called for this. Contrary to this, the Umzamo leadership made negative or ambiguous remarks regarding expected norms at the school, for example:

> *This school is not a halfway house for students who have nothing else to do! (**Principal**)*

Problem solving

Also characterizing the Fundiseka leadership was its problem solving preparedness and ability. Examples pointing to this included the incidents presented above about the charismatic teacher, the principal's solution of a problem concerning one teacher and the lady teacher's involvement with learner peer counseling.

Physical security

Further characterizing the Fundiseka leadership was the security it provided the school community. For example, a group of male staff had taken it upon themselves to spend break times in a particular spot next to the school's gate in order to prevent entry into the school premises by individuals who posed threat to the school community's safety. This concern and commitment was even though the school had two security guards who took turns manning the main gate.

Conclusion

The apartheid legacy finds most schools struggling to improve their academic performance to a level where most students who reach matriculation are able to pass examination at this level. This calls for increased efforts aimed at improving this situation. Such efforts need to include projects that, in addition to searching for school effectiveness related factors, also seek to develop better school improvement related understanding regarding each of the identified factors. Such a stand is of particular importance regarding complex contexts such as South African township secondary schools. It is also of particularly importance regarding the study of links between complex concepts such as school culture and leadership. It was for this reason that my explorations in this regard were by means of ethnography. The ethnography enabled me to explore both the readily available behavioural norms and the not so overt related beliefs, values and assumptions regarding academic performances, school cultures and leadership in relation to the stated context.

One of my conclusions from the study was that school cultures that have the potential of enabling committed and disciplined teaching and learning in the stated context are those that are predominantly communal in nature but also incorporate some societal aspects. What was found to be potentially enabling about the former was its integrating power in relation to school

goals and acceptable behavoural norms in this regard. Further potentially enabling about communality are associated feelings such as a sense of pride about belonging to an institution with which the community members identify or have been made to identify with and is respected. On the other hand, what was found to be potentially enabling about societal negotiations was their capacity to bring about common understandings amongst complex modern societies. This is taking into consideration that common understandings in traditional communities occur implicitly over protracted periods. Another potentially enabling aspect of the negotiations is their empowering capacity. This is of particular importance that the schools are populated by groups of people who for a very long time were denied of such empowering ownerships in terms of decisions relating to them in general and schooling in particular.

My conclusion about the type of leadership that is linked to such school cultures was that it draws its influential capacity from organic emergence, diversity and service. Of importance of about organic emergence is that it relates to membership leadership needs and therefore is accessible to relevant members and enjoys widespread ratification as a result. Further relating to the capacity of organic leadership emergence for the stated context is the emergence of leadership whose diversity relates to the complex nature of these contexts. Lastly, also found to be related to the leadership effectiveness was the value with which the school members attached to the services that the leadership provided them. The relevance of such services for complex contexts such as township schools is made possible by organic leadership emergence.

What the above conclusions imply is that the selection of school principals needs to search for candidate potential to enable organic leadership emergence. Furthermore, it is important for existing principals to facilitate organic leadership emergence and then work towards establishing integrated direction amongst the leadership. Further research is needed regarding the generalisability of findings in this study and their relevance for other South African contexts.

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