

# The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school

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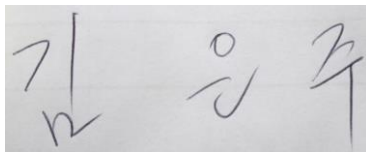
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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in Korean ink on a light-colored surface. The signature consists of three main characters: '김' (Kim) on the left, '은' (un) in the middle, and '주' (ju) on the right. The '김' character has a vertical line through it, and the '은' character has a small circle above it.

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Signature

30 November 2022

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Date

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## SUMMARY

This study aims to call for the ethics of care approach to school leadership to bring about a change of socio-historically and morally challenging South African disadvantaged schools – identified as township schools. Despite of considerable discourses on leadership styles and development for school reform amongst academics and educational government policy makers, the reality of schooling remains problematic. In this context, the literature study on Gilligan's ethics of care theory led to critique the practice and to reconfirm the agentic role of moral and relational leadership approach in schools. As a theoretical framework, the following key concepts of the ethics of care were identified: human vulnerability and interdependence; a relational caring approach; thick democratic norms against patriarchal paradigm; commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform. Eventually, they were utilized for the analysis for the subsequent empirical research.

A qualitative single case study of a male principal from the interpretivist paradigm was utilized to explore the relationship between the principal's leadership practice and the ethics of care approach in a purposefully designated township school. To gain thick and in-depth understanding and verification, data were obtained from individual semi-structured interviews, the principal's autobiographical narrative, an observation of a regular morning briefing session, and document reviews. For data analysis, verbatim transcriptions data of the interviews were mainly used in the form of content analysis, whereafter analysis of autobiographical narrative data and the other data reviews were conducted to verify the interview transcripts data.

The main findings of the research present with the following themes:

- *Capturing the ethics of care as normative framework for a hopeful school community*

It was concluded that discourses of the reorientation towards relational caring schools and community-oriented approach and cultivating responsible citizenship critically brought the ethics of care theory to addressing hopeful schooling. As well, it is viewed that the ethics of care theory provides a normative theoretical framework in reflecting and evaluating current educational leadership practices as well as schooling in terms of its ontological implication.

- *Township school leadership and curriculum management accountability*

Both literature and empirical study concluded that in the South African township school context leadership agents should apply their critical accountability to fostering a culture of teaching and learning community. Fundamentally and strategically, vulnerable township schools call for the

enhancement of curriculum management and development carried out by the principals (and the SMT) as a vital task. It implies the necessity of relevant leadership development so that school leaders can carry out the job effectively.

- *The principal's embodiment of the ethics of care and democratic leadership*

The single case study on a principal's leadership revealed that SMT members perceived the principal as an accountable leader manager role-model for a change of township school. Likewise, it was found that the principal's embodiment of the ethics of care was characterized by ethical as well as natural caring/support where the emphasis was on two-way communication, caring responsibility and disciplining for teacher empowerment. In spite of the critique on invisible cultural obstacles such as generation gaps, the danger of paternalism in the ethics of care, as a variation of patriarchy, it was concluded that the principal's leadership practice oriented towards a horizontal democratic leadership from hierarchal one.

- *Instilling the ethics of care attributes in leadership knowledge and practice*

Conclusively, it was argued that thick democracy in the ethics of care which is characterized by not only an ordinary ethics and practice, but also the need for a different voice to be heard in our leadership practice, especially in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school. As strategic suggestions in view of the ethics of care, empirically, mitigating power asymmetry by humility and open communication, and mobilizing community support for schools were addressed.

Finally, recommendations were made to the Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education, and teacher training institutions, and school principals in relation to the introduction of the ethics of care approach in leadership development training programs.

### **Key terms**

Ethics of care, thick democracy, leadership practice, township schools' principal, teaching and learning community, democratic leadership, patriarchy, critical, leadership development, moral approach

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie het ten doel gehad om 'n beroep te doen op die etiek van sorg en omgee benadering tot skoolleierskap om 'n verandering teweeg te bring van sosio-histories en moreel uitdagende Suid-Afrikaanse benadeelde skole – geïdentifiseer as township-skole. Ten spyte van aansienlike diskoerse oor leierskapstyle en ontwikkeling vir skoolhervorming onder akademici en opvoedkundige regeringsbeleidmakers, bly die realiteit van skoolonderrig problematies. In hierdie konteks het die literatuurstudie oor Gilligan se etiek van sorgteorie gelei tot kritiek op die praktyk en om die agentiese rol van morele en relasionele leierskapbenadering in skole te herbevestig. As 'n teoretiese raamwerk is die volgende sleutelkonsepte van die etiek van sorg geïdentifiseer:

'n Kwalitatiewe enkel gevallestudie in die interpretivistiese paradigma is gebruik om die verhouding tussen die skoolhoof se leierskappraktyk en die etiek van sorg/omgee-benadering in 'n doelbewus gekose township skool te bestudeer. Ten einde duidelike indiepte begrip en bevestiging te bewerkstellig, is data deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude ingesamel, asook deur die skoolhoof se outobiografiese vertelling, die waarneming van 'n gereelde oggendvergadering en die data van die onderhoude. Vir data-analise is 'n verbatim weergawe van die onderhoude hoofsaaklik gebruik in die vorm van inhoudanalise, en daarna is die outobiografiese vertelling en ander data-onderhoude geanaliseer om die getranskribeerde onderhoud-data te verifieer.

Die belangrikste bevindings van die onderhoud het die volgende temas opgelewer:

- *Aanvaarding van die etiek van omgee en sorg as die normatiewe raamwerk vir 'n hoopvolle skoolgemeenskap*

Die gevolgtrekking is gemaak dat gesprekke oor die heroriëntering tot 'n verhoudingsgebaseerde omgee-skool, 'n gemeenskapsbenadering en die kweek van verantwoordelike burgerskap kan lei tot hoopvolle skoolonderrig. Die teorie oor die etiek van sorg en omgee voorsien 'n normatiewe raamwerk om huidige opvoedkundige leierskappraktyke, sowel as skoolonderrig, in terme van die ontologiese implikasies daarvan te oordink en te evalueer.

- *Verantwoordbaarheid van township skool-leierskap en kurrikulumbestuur.*

Die literatuur- sowel as die empiriese studie het tot die gevolgtrekking gelei dat binne die Suid-Afrikaanse township skole, leiers die kritiese verantwoordbaarheid moet aanvaar om 'n kultuur van onderrig en leer in 'n gemeenskap te vestig. Fundamenteel sowel as strategies vereis die realiteit van kwesbare township skole die verbetering en verfyning

van kurrikulumbestuur en –ontwikkeling deur die skoolhoof en skoolbestuurspan. Dit impliseer dat relevante leierskapontwikkeling dringend nodig is, sodat skoolleiers skole effektief kan bestuur.

- *Die skoolhoof se vergestaltung van 'n etiek van omgee en sorg en demokratiese leierskap.*

Die enkel-gevallestudie van 'n skoolhoof se leierskap het aangetoon dat die skoolbestuurspan die skoolhoof en sy leierskap aanvaar as 'n model van verantwoordbare leier-bestuurdermodel vir die transformasie van 'n township skool. Dit het ook bevind dat die skoolhoof se vergestaltung van die etiek van omgee en sorg gekenmerk word deur etiese sowel as natuurlike omgee en ondersteuning, met die klem op tweerigting-kommunikasie, sorgsame verantwoordelikheid en dissiplinerig om onderwysers te bemagtig. Ten spyte van die kritiek oor onsigbare kulturele struikelblokke soos generasiegapings en die gevaar van paternalisme as 'n variasie van patriargie, is die gevolgtrekking gemaak dat die skoolhoof se leierskappraktyk vanaf 'n hiërargiese leierskapstyl na 'n horisontale demokratiese leierskapstyl beweeg.

- *Vestiging van die etiek van digte, diep demokrasie in die kennis en praktyk van leierskap*

Uiteindelik is bevind dat digte, diep demokrasie binne die etiek van sorg en omgee gekenmerk word, nie net deur gewone etiek en praktyk nie, maar ook deur die behoefte aan 'n ander stem binne ons leierskappraktyk, veral in die ontwikkeling van 'n onderrig- en leergemeenskap in 'n township skool. As empiriese, strategiese voorstelle ten opsigte van die etiek van sorg en omgee, is die vermindering van magsongelykheid deur nederigheid en oop kommunikasie aangespreek, asook die mobilisering van ondersteuning vir die skoolgemeenskap.

Uiteindelik is aanbevelings gemaak vir die Departement van Onderwys, die Departement van Hoër Onderwys en onderwysersopleiding en skoolhoofde ten opsigte van die insluiting van 'n inleiding tot die benadering van 'n etiek van sorg/omgee in leierskapsontwikkelingsprogramme.

## **Sleutelsterme**

Etiek van sorg/omgee; digte/diep demokrasie; leierskappraktyk, townshipskool-skoolhoofde; onderrig- en leergemeenskap; demokratiese leierskap; patriargie; krities; leierskapontwikkeling; morele benadering

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## **ABBREVIATIONS LIST**

T/L: Teaching and Learning (teacher and learner)

TLC: Teaching and Learning Community

HOD: Head of Department

DBE: Department Basic Education

SMTs: School Management Teams

SIP: School Improvement Plan

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

LP: Leadership Development

SASP: South African Standard for Principalship

ESC: Empowering School Culture

OLP: Ordinary Language Philosophy

PLCs: Professional Learning Committees

CSLQ: Caring School Leadership Questionnaire

# CHAPTER 1      ORIENTATION

## 1.1 Introduction

In the South African context, it is crucial to address ‘socio-economic inequality and poverty by education’ as one of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs 2030) suggested by the UN. However, in the reconstruction of the country and in spite of a relatively high expenditure on education, South African education is of notoriously poor quality. Mlachila and Moeletsi argue that increasing the governmental spending itself will not improve learner outcomes (2019:50-51). During the Apartheid regime, education for people of colour was not given much attention, subsequently poor educational quality resulted from the Apartheid policy.

The discourse about quality education or cultivating a teaching and learning community orients towards the dysfunctionality of poor township and rural schools. As education and wealth in South Africa are related, those socio-economically disadvantaged learners continue to have academically “low educational outcomes” (Spaull, 2013:6; Van der Berg *et al.*, cited by De Bruyn & Mestry, 2020:1). Mohale, Litshani, Mashau, Sebopetsa, and Moyo (2020:15218) assert that South African learners’ poor performance when compared to other African countries testifies to a collapsed culture of teaching and learning in public schools (cf. Spaull, 2013:116). In addition, Ramphela (2020:28) argues that “poverty cannot end without quality education”. From this discussion leadership accountability for teaching and learning comes to the fore.

However, despite a significant report on the struggling of quality education (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019), Mohale *et al.* (2020:15218) point out that very limited research exists on what actually generates a culture of teaching and learning in dysfunctional schools in South Africa. Possibly, it can be assumed that the absence of the practice of a relational and ethics of care moral approach creates a distance between the theory and practice of leadership. Further, ontologically, it is perceived that the reality has something to do with macro external factors like socio-political environments beyond the educational level (Taylor, 1999:5-8, 96). Yet, currently, it seems that scholars of the educational leadership and management field have been pointing out “the factors that influence learner performance” with diverse themes such as societal, moral, curriculum and organizational climates (Challens, Wolhuter & Van Jaarsveld, 2020; Tapala, 2020; Van Jaarsveld, Challens & Wolhuter, 2020; Van Jaarsveld & Mentz, 2020; Wolhuter, Van Jaarsveld & Challens, 2020).

In this context, I pose a question: Is quality education possible without considering ethics of care? Socio-historically, in the paradigm of neoliberal economy ideology which stresses, exclusively,

productivity or individual outcomes as results, it might be so. Yet, I claim that the awareness and appreciation of the ethics of care account among principals, their self-reflection and following caring leadership practices can effect the cultivation of a teaching and learning community in township schools (Mitchell, cited by Beck, 1994:56-57). Bryk (cited by Beck, 1994:36), while remarking that education inherently and traditionally is a moral enterprise, concludes that this approach leads to an enlarged vision of the purpose of education, where the goals of schooling are concurrent with the goals of caring. Further, Mitchell (cited by Beck, 1994:56-57) contends that a sense of belonging is prerequisite for “healthy human development”.

Caring relies on a special kind of relationship between persons, characterized by some measure of commitment (Beck, 1994:10). While emphasizing the concept of relation, Gilligan (1993:139) advances care/caring in light of cooperation and interdependence rather than the completion of an obligation derived from mere moral ideal. In the end, for Gilligan (1993:149), the notion of care leads to acting responsibly toward self and others for sustaining of connection. Such a deliberate and consistent exploration on psychological theory on human relationships and women’s moral development has brought about Gilligan’s ethics of care approach (Gilligan, 1993).

In light of human capital theory which values people within organizations, Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen and Meyer (2014:6) posit that it becomes globally indispensable for school leaders to display and model a caring leadership. In this context as well as in the challenging South African school contexts with a lack of accountability and morality of leadership, it seems desirable to consider the relational moral theory of Gilligan’s ethics of care for an alternative leadership approach, or as a critical premise.

## **1.2 Problem statement and rationale**

The educational environments in South Africa seem complex and face numerous challenges; there is still inequity between public schools owing to the trauma of the racial segregation policy there is still inequality amongst public schools as a result of the trauma of the Apartheid system’s legalized racial segregation policy, which was in place until 1994 (Spaull, 2013:8-9; Bush & Glover, 2016:3). Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (cited by Mouton *et al.*, 2013:32) remark that “it is the majority of South African schools that have inherited the legacy of dysfunction”.

As a result, many dysfunctional schools exist, especially concerning the culture of teaching and learning (Niemann & Kotzé, cited by Weeks, 2012:2; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). For example, in a qualitative study on learners’ and teachers’ response on poor performance of schools, Makgato and Mji (2006:262-263) identify direct and indirect conditions pertaining to the poor results. They are listed as content knowledge, non-completion of the syllabus content, motivation,

the parental role in education, and general incompetence in the use of language (*ibid.*). On the other hand, in identifying main challenges facing learners, Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013:33) refer to violence in schools, low moral values, and high dropout rates.

To cope with these obstacles, the Department of Education policy makers and relevant scholars suggest the Guidelines to cultivate teaching and learning communities in the form of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (DBE, 2015b; DBE, 2019). Heystek and Lethoko (cited by Weeks, 2012:2) claim that “one of the main goals in education today is to restore a culture of learning and teaching in South African schools.” It seems that such policy suggestions stress the challenging situations in historically disadvantaged schools and communities in South Africa.

In order to ignite the transformation of township schools, most of all, it is desirable for leadership to focus on developing a teaching and learning community (cf. DBE, 2015b:17). Ciulla (2009b:4) stresses the accountability of leaders: “a leader’s job is to be in the right place and paying attention to the right thing”. Thaba, Kanjere, Malatji, and Wadesango (2016:90) contend that “the South African public schools’ failure in management and leadership has resulted in a moral collapse of the education system due to a dereliction and marginalization of ethics of care.” For South African school leadership practice to be transformed from moral corruption and the negligence of responsibility into establishing an ethically caring community, I argue that the ethics of care perspective should be placed in the centre of leadership practice.

Furthermore, through a literature review on the context of educational leadership and its relevant development of theory, I have realized, from the perspective of ontological and existential philosophy, the inconsistency between theory and practice. Giles (2019:60) emphasizes the priority of relationships by stating that leadership is always relational, and relationships are the essence of leadership; ontologically, every leadership is based on a relational way of being. In theory, the understanding of leadership tends to be defined by an epistemological recognition of the leader as a critical agent for change, but such an understanding does not advance the reform of the present counter structure and practices being underpinned by the neoliberal market ideology. These practices are characterized by the focus on individual private good like the achievement of academic standards and an instrumental way of thinking about the purpose of education. Consequently, in educational practice and discourse it seems rare that moral and relational human beings are fully formed; nor is a sense of community striven for to seek for the common good. In short, when considering the development of a culture of learning and leadership in township schools, it is argued that attending to the ethics of care approach for a school leader can be the first step towards building a teaching and learning community in a township school,

since perspective of the ethics of care centres on relational moral values and leads to responding to the learners' educational and formative needs.

In the case study on effectively performing schools, Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007:58) remark that the schools that work show the characteristics of openness. The teachers are cooperative and also work with other schools towards the common good of the community of schools. This aspect seems to reflect the nature of interdependence and cooperation which the perspective of ethics of care entails.

Recent research discusses ethics of care for leadership development in South African education and also to address challenges like bullying in schools (Smit & Scherman, 2016; Thaba *et al.*, 2016). More recently, in a qualitative study on the role of care in terms of a principal's leadership philosophy and the implementation of leadership decisions and actions, it was concluded that an ethics of care is a viable leadership approach to achieve school success (Oakley, 2019:1); thus, substantively, the ethics of care should work as the foundation for school leadership practice.

It is considered that this study is worthwhile to explore, as research on the ethics of care related to developing a teaching and learning community in a township school context is scant. Furthermore, it seems timely significant to investigate the case of a principal's leadership of a hypothetically exemplary positive school. Along with the conceptual theoretical investigation on South African educational leadership practices, the empirical part of the study focuses on a principal. It explores one principal's experiences relating to the influence of ethics of care on leadership; also, it gathers this principal's SMT members' and senior teachers' views in this regard. Ultimately, this study attempts to fill the gap between leadership policy/theory discourses and practice by presenting how the ethics of care approach assists leadership in promoting a teaching and learning culture.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The main research question is as follows:

**How can the ethics of care influence leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school?**

To explore the main research question, this study will focus on the following sub questions:

- What is the importance of the ethics of care for schools?

- What is the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school?
- How are the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practice related?
- How do the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school?
- How can the ethics of care approach assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools?

#### **1.4 Research aim and objectives**

The aim of the study is thus described as follows:

**To explore the influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.**

The objectives related to the aim are as follows:

- To evaluate the significance of the ethics of care for schools.
- To determine the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school.
- To explore the relationship between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practices.
- To investigate how the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school regarding the ethics of care.
- To suggest strategies of how the ethics of care approach can assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools.

#### **1.5 Theoretical framework**

For this qualitative case study which explores one principal's leadership practice in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school, Gilligan's ethic of care will be positioned as a theoretical framework. In discussing women's different understanding of moral development in her influential work titled 'In a different voice', Gilligan (1993:74) remarks that "an ethic of care,

which entails a cumulative knowledge of human relationships, develops from a core insight that the self and others are interdependent.”

According to Gilligan (2013a:14), the ethics of care concerns voice and relationships, thus it can be defined as the ethics of love and of democratic citizenship; further it is also described as the ethic of resistance to moral injury. Gilligan (*ibid.*) advances the ethics of care by describing the dominant patriarchal human reality as moral injury. Remarkably, this approach has contributed to the recognition of a neglected or unarticulated nature of human beings as relational social beings. Concurrent with Gilligan’s conceptualization of care, Noddings (2012:36) emphasizes that care is a moral value and a way of life fundamentally based on relationships.

The care focused feminist approach suggests a deconstruction of patriarchal perspectives concerning gender binary and gender hierarchy to orient towards thick democracy. Gilligan argues that “the initiation of children into a patriarchal order remains a legacy of loss and some of the scars we associate with trauma” (2013b:52). Gilligan describes:

“(t)The word ‘patriarchy’ as a hierarchy, a rule of priests, where the hero, the priest, is a pater, a father. His is the voice of moral authority. Gender binary and gender hierarchy are the DNA of patriarchy, the building blocks of a patriarchal order. According to this ideology, being a man means not being a woman or like a woman, and also being on top” (Gilligan, 2013b:46-47).

Gilligan’s (2013b:47-48) work on listening to women led her to the understanding that “within a patriarchal framework, care is a feminine ethic. Caring is what ‘good women’ do and the people who care are doing women’s work. Whereas, within a democratic framework, care is a human ethic; it is a natural human capacity to care about oneself and others. The contrast was not between care and justice, women and men. It was between democracy and patriarchy.” Gilligan (1982:167) motivates towards attending to women’s voice by arguing that “When women construct the adult domain, the world of relationships emerges and becomes the focus of attention and concern.” In resisting patriarchal ideology, the ethic of care articulates a different voice, that is, thick democracy, which is practically expressed as paying attention, listening, responding with integrity and respect (Gilligan, 2013a:31). These activities are also acknowledged as those of relationships as well as of care (Gilligan, 2013a:29).

As one of the characteristic features of the ethics of care, Gilligan (2013b:60) identifies interdependency as a manifestation of human vulnerability, from both an ontological and an anthropological perspective. Gilligan is of the view that in the worldwide crises of “climate change, pandemics, and nuclear weapons, interdependence” has been self-evident. Moreover, in this

context, vulnerability is a characteristic of human beings, not one associated with just women, or the poor (2011b:42-43). In this regard, the ethics of care theory emphasizes mutual understanding and cooperation.

The feminist perspective will inform this study to critique the educational leadership practice and present a timely significance of the ethics of care in cultivating a teaching and learning community in a township school context. Consequently, it is expected that the ethics of care approach can guide educational leadership to promote a teaching and learning community because it underpins a trusting, supportive community. Such a view puts the priority on a moral centred perspective on a concern for cared ones – learners, teachers, and their needs, while rejecting an authoritarian approach.

To conclude, as the theoretical framework of this qualitative case study, the ethics of care theory is considered appropriate for advancing transformative educational leadership to promote a teaching and learning community in a township school. It seems that caring relationships and a morally connected community are in contrast with patriarchal ideology and the current educational reality. Thus, they must be heard as a different voice in educational leadership practice, which is what this case study ultimately aims for.

## **1.6 Concept clarification**

The concepts that need clarification are: (1) ethics of care, (2) leadership, (3) teaching and learning community, and (4) township schools.

### **1.6.1 Ethics of care**

The concepts ‘the ethic of care’ or ‘ethics of care’ are expressed respectively or interchangeably according to the authors. For example, it seems that Gilligan (1993; 2011a;2013b) uses both expressions. First of all, Gilligan (1993) distinguishes the ethics of care from the morality (ethics) of justice; whereas it is found that the expression ‘the (an) ethic of care’ also is used in order to address her feminist moral theory (Gilligan, 2011a;2013b). On the other hand, Held (2006) and Noddings (2013, cited by Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019) mainly employ the term of ‘the ethics of care’. For this study, I will use the concept of ‘the ethics of care’ since the term seems to encompass a more integral perspective.

The ethics of care refers to the ontological relational moral theory which strongly underpins interdependence and vulnerability of human beings (Gilligan, 1982:142). Thus, it emphasizes the responsible practices of care as morality to be experienced in democratic communities based on the recognition of connectedness (Gilligan, 2011b:175; 2013b:60).

For this study, the ethics of care refers to school leaders; a morally caring and thick democratic approach which counts for “the attitude and activities involved in caring as our fundamental human orientation toward, and relationship with” the teachers and learners (and stakeholders), and the communities within the school and the township community (Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan,2011b:22; Held, 2006; Noddings, 2013).

### **1.6.2 Leadership**

According to the viewpoints of scholars, different definitions of leadership exist. For instance, Gardner (1990:1) defines leadership as the process through which leaders influence or inspire a group to seek out common objectives or visions. For Rost (cited by Ciulla, 2009a:306), the concept of leadership is understood in terms of the exercise of influence rather than personal traits. Further, Botha (cited by Marx, 2018:7) believes that group engagement is what constitutes leadership. Put simply, leadership can distinctly be defined as a change-making process (*ibid.*). Ciulla (2014: xv) states that “leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion and a shared vision of the good”.

On the other hand, Raelin (2014) describes leadership as a practice which enables anyone to participate in agentic activity (cited by Chingara, 2019:12). Accordingly, Chingara (2019:12) contends that an inseparable relationship exists between leadership and agency. Therefore, in this study, leadership implies the exercise of influence, in other words, agentic processes or activities being provided by the SMT members - the principal, deputy principals and heads of department (HoDs).

### **1.6.3 Teaching and learning community**

According to Sergiovanni (cited by Spencer, 2004:12), a community, as the presence of caring relationship amongst the stakeholders is the foundation of successful schools. Likewise, Giles (2019:36-37) puts the emphasis on the culture of schools characterized by a learning community, since the existence of such a community plays a role as a critical component of the hidden curriculum. Identifying communities as fundamental settings for caring, Hobbs and co-authors (cited by Beck,1994:11) propose that a community is important for the development of reciprocal caring relationships. In addition, this concept concerns the restoration of a kind of communitarian worldview against the individualistic tendency within schools as educational organizations (Taylor, 1999:3-4).

Thus, for this study, a teaching and learning community can be understood as a culture of quality education in a school. All the relevant members within a school such as principal, teachers, learners and parents are engaged in the organic relational community, which is not characterized by a bureaucratic institution or organization. And, most of all, the community has a concern for generating an effective teaching and learning culture with the commitment of the school leader and teachers toward learners' learning and wellbeing.

#### **1.6.4 Township schools**

Townships, employed as “a method to segregate black South Africans through the Group Areas Act of 1950”, indicate the outskirts of urban areas and provide “large populations with small portions of land” (Borgen Magazine, 2014). Consequently, socio-historically, the concept of township schools is connoted to the scars of apartheid such as ongoing inequality in the provision of quality education of schools which mostly serve poor black learners, being located where low socio-economic status populations reside.

### **1.7 Research design and methodology**

#### **1.7.1 Research paradigm**

Guba and Lincoln (cited by Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26) see a paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guides an investigation”. Connecting this to research, Sefotho (2021:5) states that all scientific inquiry must be carried out within a specific paradigm or ‘way of viewing’ the research material.

For this study, interpretivist approach under the tradition of qualitative paradigm will be used. O'Donoghue (2007:9-10) points out that this approach emphasizes “social interaction” as the basis for knowledge; thus, in this perspective, knowledge construction takes place by mutual negotiation while it is specific to the situation being investigated. Sefotho (2021:7) posits that, different from the natural sciences, social reality should be “viewed and interpreted by the individual according to their ideological position”.

This interpretivist study, which aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of reality, depends on qualitative research (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014:30). The main aim of this study is to explore the influence of ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school. Rather than to find causality or generalization, this study aims to interpret subjective epistemology and reality – the relationship between a township school principal's leadership and the ethics of care to develop a teaching and learning community. Therefore, in this study, I will have “social interaction” with the research participants to understand their

subjective realities. These characteristics mirror the nuanced traditions of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:102).

### **1.7.2 Research design**

A research design is a plan to respond to a research question and deals with the *how* of the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:99). Thus, its purpose is to present a plan for the conduct of the study.

This study will be using the qualitative interpretivist research approach. As Creswell (2014:4) explains, the approach intends to explore and understand the “meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem”. Likewise, Merriam and Tisdell (2016:15) state that qualitative research is to interpret how people understand their world and their experiences in the world.

Thus, this study aims to explore a reality of educational leadership through a principal’s mental constructions and his engagement in the relationships within a specific township high school. To do so, I will be interacting with the principal and SMT members as participants to understand the relationship of a possible ethics of care approach and the principal’s leadership practice. Subsequently, this study explores the principal’s experiences, beliefs and perceptions as a school leader. In doing so, autobiographic narratives and voices of participants become the tools through which this study explores and understands the principal’s leadership and its influence on building a teaching and learning community in a township school.

### **1.7.3 Case study**

The specific qualitative design which will be used is a case study. A qualitative case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 1998: xiii). Thus, this empirical case study will be characterized as particularistic and descriptive in terms of interpreting and analysing the leadership practices of a principal in the natural setting of a township school.

Through a case study as the empirical inquiry, one investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident (Yin, cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:37).

As Nieuwenhuis (2010b:76) presents, this case study allowed me to have “greater insight” and dynamic understanding of the principal’s relational interactions in terms of who he is, and how he is to others regarding daily-based leadership practice which has a significant epistemological and ontological influence on the atmosphere of the township school community. In this qualitative case

study, I attempted to explore a principal's leadership through the process of data gathering in a designated township school located in North-West Province.

#### **1.7.4 Purposeful selection of the case study's participants**

Purposeful selection is a strategy for qualitative research, where "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected" for gaining the important information particularly relevant to the research questions (Maxwell, 2013:97). I purposefully selected one African male principal and the School Management Team (SMT) members of the school in a township in North-West Province as participants due to the school's public reputation in the community in terms of good academic performance. In other words, this study will use purposeful sampling, more specifically, a specific form of extreme case sampling through which I will be learning about a noticeably good principal's leadership regardless of the sex (Creswell, 2019:208).

This study intends to explore the interaction between the ethics of care theory and the leadership practice of a principal in a township high school in the JB Marks Municipality. The reason why the one principal is chosen for this study is that the township school as well as the principal has been known for having a good reputation in the township community, especially because of the learners' good academic results (parents' views). The reason why the SMT members have been decided upon is to ascertain how the SMT perceive the leadership of the principal.

In practice, I noticed an afterschool self-study programme being implemented in the school. As a result of this encounter and literature review on the ethics of care, I decided to explore the relationship between his leadership practices and a feminist ethics of care moral approach, and also to explore the practical influence of the ethics of care regarding leadership in developing a teaching and learning community as an effective school culture in a township school. Therefore, to approach these aspects, it was considered appropriate to select the specific male African township school principal.

As to the selection of single case study, Yin (2014: 51) motivates that:

"The single case can represent a critical contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, or extending the theory. .... The single case study is an appropriate design under several circumstances, and five single-case rationales – that is, having a critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case."

In this respect, the rationale is a critical and unusual case. Given that effective leadership is not a matter of knowledge or theory but one of situational adaptation and reflective sensitivity about the specific context, the extreme case sampling of the one principal is deemed appropriate to the

purpose of this study. However, for the purpose of gaining proof – the reliability of the principal’s narratives, interviews will be conducted with all the available SMT members to verify the principal’s interview and autobiographical narratives through their perceptions on his leadership practices. The reason why I choose SMT members as interview participants relies on the assumptions that they have more knowledge than others on effective leadership and effective schooling regarding the teaching and learning community; moreover, they might be the most qualified and most experienced teachers.

### **1.7.5 Data collection**

Data collection is identified as gathering information or data for the purpose of answering the research questions. As explained by Marshall and Rossman (2016:141) “for data gathering, qualitative research generally involves primary methods such as “participating in the setting; observing directly; interviewing in-depth; and analysing documents and material culture”.

In this regard, Yin (2014:120) remarks that the most vital benefit in the use of multiple sources of evidence is “the development of converging lines of inquiry”. For this qualitative case study, accordingly, the data generation methods included the autobiographical narrative of the principal, individual semi-structured interviews with the principal and SMT members with separate schedules, observation, and document reviews.

#### **1.7.5.1 Autobiographical narrative**

McAlpine (2016:33) frames the narrative as an everyday event while indicating less use of the approach in academic research field and underpinning its value in the area of research methodologies.

Personal documents are a personal account of “their own lives and the events in the world around them” (Strydom, 2021:342). Especially, regarding autobiography and diaries, Burgess (cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:166-167) contends that “in spite of their high subjective nature, such material does present a subjective account of the situation by the work of writing; it is a reconstruction of part of life”.

Thus, it was assumed that the narratives of the principal – via autobiographical written work – enable him to form and re-form who he has been, who he is presently and who he hopes to become as an active agent in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school while reflecting on the ethics of care in his practice (McAlpine, 2016:33).

### **1.7.5.2 Observation**

As Creswell (2019:214) explains, observation as a data collection method, allows gathering “open-ended, first-hand information by observing people and places at a research site.” Further, through observation, researchers can make inferences “about the perspective that they couldn’t obtain by exclusive interview data” (Maxwell, 2013:103). For this study, the observations on a regular staff meeting (a morning briefing session) and school environments were conducted in order to understand the context of the school and the principal’s leadership practices.

According to Strydom (2021:337), participant observation, as a qualitative research procedure, is to study “the natural and everyday set-up in a particular community or situation”. As participant observer, I attended to how the principal and the teachers interact with one another, especially focusing on the nature of leadership practice to guide the everyday tasks which the principal manages.

### **1.7.5.3 Semi-structured Interviews**

As Geyer (2021:355) states, interviews are typically utilized in qualitative research in that verbal communication is the key for gathering authentic, descriptive, rich, and thick qualitative data. Face-to-face semi-structured individual interviews will be used specifically for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:110). As Nieuwenhuis (2010b:87) describes, this technique requires participants to respond to a set of pre-determined questions, which will be gathered and formulated during the literature study; the interview allows for probing and clarification of answers.

For this study, semi-structured interviews with each SMT member were planned to understand the teachers’ perceptions on the principal’s leadership practices. The interviews grounded for substantiating the credibility of the autobiographical narrative and to gain verifying information on the principal’s leadership practices. Then, a semi-structured interview with the principal was conducted at a later stage to obtain rich information on his identity formation and epistemological views on the ethics of care. For this, the questions were prepared based on theoretical understandings on the ethics of care under the literature study.

### **1.7.5.4 Document reviews**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:162) mention that document analysis is often used as “an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material” related to the study. For the purpose of this study, documents reviews were conducted on the vision statement of the school, learners’ academic and promotion results, dropout rates, and School Improvement Plan relating to how the school leadership cares for the vulnerable learners (ethics of care) in order to

promote a teaching and learning community in the school. For this study, the documents were used as “a supplemental data source to interviews and observations”.

#### **1.7.6 Data collection process**

The data collection process is characterized as fluid in the actual proceeding of the research process even though it is here expressed in a linear way:

First, according to the different schedules, semi-structured interviews with the principal and the SMT members were conducted to obtain thick narrative data which would reveal the participants’ perspective and context for this study. During the interviews, audio-recording was done under the permission of participants and the brief notes were taken. By the use of the interview schedule (see Annexure F), each participant responded to the identical questions related to the research study – centred on the relation between the principal’s leadership and the ethics of care.

Then, the principal was asked to write his autobiography with some significant events which influenced his leadership development and practices (see Annexure I). The written narrative data were collected by electronic mail. Next, the observation of a morning briefing session was conducted to gather data on the nature of the principal’s leadership practice in the interaction with teachers in the school library. Finally, the following documents were collected: the vision statement of the school; the SMT minutes in 2022; dropout rates (between 2020-2022), and School Improvement Plan in 2022; and matric learners’ academic results and promotion rates in 2021 which were included in SIP (see Annexure K).

#### **1.7.7 Data analysis**

Wiersma and Jurs (2009:237) state that qualitative data analysis demands organization of information and data reduction. For the purpose of this study, both a content analysis and a narrative analysis of the data were performed.

Content analysis is the primary method of obtaining information by responses to “unstructured” or “open-ended” questions via systematic coding and categorizing (Smith, 2000:317). On the other hand, through narrative analysis, one applies a holistic approach to discourse that preserves context and particularity (Riessman, cited by Smith, 2000:327-328). In this view, McAlpine (2016: 36) states that the primary goal of narrative analysis is to provide “the chronological arc of meaning in an individual’s experience”.

For this empirical study, the unit of analysis was defined as a male township school principal’s leadership practice and teachers’ perceptions. This analysis process offered a possibility to look

for the categories of factors that guide his leadership by codes, patterns obtained from semi-structured interviews, and by his autobiographical narrative data and other data. In addition, theoretical concepts derived from literature reviews on the ethics of care were interweaved to make sense of the interaction between the principal's leadership and the ethics of care. Thus, this study, in the end, oriented towards addressing the implications of relational ethics of care to current leadership in promoting teaching and learning in a township school through interpreting an African male principal's influential leadership practice.

Firstly, with the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with the principal and SMT members, content analysis was employed by coding and categorizing. Then, for the analysis of autobiographical data, a narrative analysis was used to obtain the principal's perception and the context to reveal his identity formation as a principal. Lastly, for the data gained from observation and documents data, thematic reviews, as a "naturalist version of content analysis" (Silverman, 2013:238) were done as a means of supplementary verification.

#### **1.7.8 Trustworthiness and credibility**

In a broad sense, the concept of "trustworthiness" is employed as a representative concept in describing "the quality of qualitative research" (Schurink, Schurink & Fouche, 2021:393). Qualitative research underpins that reality is "holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed phenomenon" (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a:114). Thus, it is suggested that in order to verify that a study is trustworthy, I must demonstrate that the findings made are credible, dependable, transferable, and confirmable (Schurink *et al.*, 2021:393).

Denzin (cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:244) sees triangulation as the best way for elevating credibility, while Maxwell (cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:246) recommends member checks. Triangulation is to look and listen from more than one vantage, and to member check further (Stake, 2010:123). In this sense, Flick (2004:182) argues that we need to see triangulation as a form of differentiation rather than one of confirmation and validation. Put differently, triangulation is to engage "different data sources, investigators and methods of data collection" (Korstjen & Moser, 2018:121).

On the other hand, it is argued that the concept of crystallisation rather than triangulation may be more appropriate to use in qualitative research since the idea of crystal enables us turn to an infinite variety of shapes from a fixed point or object that can be triangulated (Richardson, cited by Nieuwenhuis, 2010:81).

In support of the view above, by exploring a crystallised reality, firstly, I used multiple data sources by combining observations and interviews with autobiographical narratives and document reviews. Secondly, for getting authentic and transferable data, I developed well-planned questions so that the data ultimately could serve to answer the research questions regarding the principal's leadership practice and its relationship with the ethics of care before doing interviews under the guidance of the study leader and co-study leader.

Lastly, to verify raw data, I shared the transcripts of interviews with the participants, and for trustworthiness in coding data, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2010a:114) the study leader and co-study leader supervised the process of codes and categories generation via on-line or face to face communication.

### **1.7.9 Ethical considerations**

In a qualitative study, as Merriam (1998:213) warns, ethical dilemmas are likely to appear with regard to data collection and dissemination of findings. Thus, when conducting this qualitative case study inquiry, I ensured to manage my roles and relationships with participants sensitively and honestly while observing the ethical guidelines provided by the Research Ethics Committee such as non-maleficence, transparency, privacy, and confidentiality.

To begin with, before data collection, I obtained permission from the Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University of Education (see Annexure A) Thereafter, written permission was obtained from the Department of Basic Education in the North-West Province, the JB Marks District (see Annexure B) the school principal (see Annexure C), and the School Governing Body of the designated school (see Annexure D). Then, I also approached the principal and SMT members to participate, and gained informed consent from the principal and the four SMT members and one senior teacher of the school who would be interviewed (see Annexure E).

Voluntary participation was once again emphasized, and participants were told they might withdraw from the research at any time without being done any harm in any way. By using pseudonyms for the name of the school and those of the participants, privacy and confidentiality was kept.

Lastly, to ensure the integrity of research, the collected data would be treated confidentially and stored in the study leader's custody, locked in a safe cabinet for a period of seven years, after which it all will be destroyed.

### **1.7.10 Contribution of the study**

This study in which the ethics of care, leadership, and developing a teaching and learning community in a township school are concerned, might highlight the significance of the ethics of care for school leadership in the South African educational context. The theoretical and socio-political reasoning on the lack of practical articulation and application of the ethics of care in schooling could contribute to narrowing the gap between educational leadership theory and practice.

This study hopes to contribute to the body of knowledge relating to school leadership and the ethics of care, given that studies in South Africa in these areas are scant. Other school leaders within a similar context could benefit from the experiences of the ethics of care and leadership practices identified in this study. In doing so, the study will also provide insight into the fostering of a teaching and learning community as the core factor of quality education through the interpretation of leadership practices with a possible relevance to the ethics of care. In addition, in a critique manner, this study may identify possibilities for further research relating to the theme of this study.

### **1.7.11 Summary**

This chapter served to outline the theoretical and empirical study. To orientate the study, social and academic backgrounds on the South African education and leadership were introduced. Then, the problem statement and rationale motivated the integration of moral and relational ethics of care in township schools' educational leadership; I focused on the decline of moral leadership and the gap between policy and leadership practice. Research questions and objectives, and as theoretical framework, the feminist ethics of care approach were presented. Thereafter, clarifications were provided for key concepts. I discussed the research design and methodology under the constructivist paradigm for the empirical research. Then, related data collection methods and analysis were also discussed. Finally, this chapter was concluded with reference to trustworthiness and credibility, ethical considerations, and the potential contribution of this study.

The following chapter will present a theoretical exploration of the ethics of care, leadership in a township school, and a teaching and learning community.

## **CHAPTER 2      POSITIONING THE ETHICS OF CARE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The new South African school system has been in existence since the end of Apartheid in 1994. Yet, it still seems unrealistic to detach from the scars deeply rooted in the racial segregation policy. Despite the focus on democratic values such as social equity and freedom, the South African educational context is suffering from an extreme binary schooling system – a functional and dysfunctional one. The concept ‘township school’ symbolizes the scars of apartheid representing continuing inequality in SA.

In this context, this chapter motivates the ethics of care approach to be critically positioned in the South African school context, especially in township schools. In doing so, as an active leadership agent, the role of the principal is highlighted since he/she might model ethics of care attributes in influencing, forming, empowering, and developing a teaching and learning community. Ultimately this study intends to bring the ethics of care to the heart of school leadership in South Africa by exploring how the approach can assist leaders to develop a teaching and learning community in township schools. To do so, this chapter primarily examines research findings on current leadership practice for a robust change leadership practice, prior to discussing the current academic and political discourse on the ethics of care or caring approach.

This chapter consists of the three components: the ethics of care, leadership practice, and teaching and learning community. First, with the introduction of variously articulated caring approaches and a brief comparison with other moral ethics like Ubuntu (Metz, 2013), Gilligan’s (1993) ethics of care approach will be explored in relation to educational leadership practices. Secondly, concerning leadership practices, the focus will be on moral, relational, and responsible leadership, globalization, and the influence of liberal economists’ market ideology in terms of current schooling. In the discussion, township schools and their educational leadership challenges are highlighted. Lastly, a teaching and learning community as an ethically and pedagogically critical organizational culture will be explored. In doing so, self-reflection and spirituality will be addressed in relation to leadership development bringing about collegial collaboration among teachers towards a teaching and learning school community.

#### **2.1.1 Research on leadership practices for township schools’ reform**

The analysis of primary school inequalities conducted by Spaull (2013:444) proves that South Africa has a dualistic educational system: simply, “the wealthy, functional one for quality education and the other poor, dysfunctional one which does not provide necessary education such as

numeracy and literacy”. It is generally viewed that most township schools as well as the schools in rural areas belong to the latter.

Accordingly, recently vigorous research has addressed the issues and challenges of underperforming schools in South Africa (Challens *et al.*, 2020:65-66; Mampane & Bouwer, 2011; Van Jaarsveld *et al.*, 2020; Wolhuter, 2020b; Wolhuter *et al.*, 2020:22; Zulu, Bhengu & Mkhize, 2021). As a result, a causal relationship has been found between the challenging phenomenon of underperforming schools and leadership (principal or SMT). For example, Van Jaarsveld, Challens and Wolhuter (2020) emphasize that the relationship between the principal and teachers is a vital indicator of a positive school climate, in which the principal’s characteristic attributes and attitudes related to leadership play a role. Additionally, in the case study on leadership challenges of four township school principals, Zulu, Bhengu and Mkhize (2021) highlight leadership as a vital factor in coping with problems in township life. The study reports that in spite of the principals’ apparently problematic leadership practices, their political model and complex leadership approach proved to be effective (Zulu *et al.*, 2021:221). The study shows that the principals eagerly and collaboratively communicate with relevant stakeholders and community organizations to resolve challenges of teaching and learning environments such as vandalism and drug abuse (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, a comparative study of high performing schools and low-performing schools report that a relative lack of moral leadership in low-performing schools was found (Challens *et al.*, 2020:65-66; Wolhuter, 2020b:318). Specifically, Challens, Wolhuter and Van Jaarsveld (2020:65-66) point out that a serious matter is teachers’ low performance as role models in underperforming schools. Further, the study by Wolhuter, Van Jaarsveld and Challens (2020:44) which investigates on underperforming schools’ leadership, reports that teachers and principals tend to be “helpless” as to dealing with “contextual impediments”, rather than conscious of their responsibility. As a result of the study, the authors suggest practically utilizing the system of consultation by retired model leaders (*ibid.*).

Mampane and Bouwer (2011:114-126) report that the provision of care and safety and the goal orientation of learners can be effectively implemented by the school leadership team. More strategically, Witten’s (2010) research on building a community school for vulnerable township learners’ holistic development reaffirms the importance of collaboration between school and community.

With the reality of binary schooling, it is apparent that the studies above emphasize effective school leadership which is associated with relational, moral and collaborative community. What follows is to look at another increasing concern, namely the ethics of care or caring approach.

### 2.1.2 Academic and political interest in ethics of care or caring approach

With the focus on caring relations, the ethics of care or caring ethic has been discussed in a variety of ways. Bozalek, Watters and Gachago (2015:260) remark that a renewed concern with the political ethics of care as a normative framework has been increasingly observed in recent years.

As a result, ethics of care or care ethics has been articulated diversely in the discourses of academic fields such as the humanities, social science and the economics of care (Fraser, cited by Raghuram, 2016:512) as well as being the focus of policy and political activities (Mahon & Robinson, cited by Raghuram, 2016:512). Bozalek, Watters and Gachago (2015:260) mention that the tendency has now appeared in the field of higher education policies and practices, globally as well as locally.

Also, in the work on the comparison of the western ethics of care with Afro-communitarian ethics, Metz (2013:80) points out the fundamental intention of care ethics as a way to enter, develop and maintain caring relationships. Raghuram (2016:512) notes that “Care has been adopted as a way of thinking relationally in a globalising world.”

On the other hand, Noddings (2013), in philosophically approaching ethical caring as ideal, is interested in how the transition from natural caring to ethical caring can be made. In doing so, Noddings argues as follows:

“I want to suggest that morality as an ‘active virtue’ requires two feelings and not just one. The first is the sentiment of natural caring. There can be no ethical sentiment without the initial, enabling sentiment. The second sentiment occurs in response to a remembrance of the first. But an ethic built on caring strives to maintain the caring attitude and is thus dependent upon, and not superior to, natural caring” (2013:74).

Moreover, Laugier (2015;2018) remarks that vulnerability is at the core of the ethics of care. As a French ethics of care philosopher, Laugier (2020) holds that the worldwide pandemic has transformed the French society, where for a long time, ethics of care has been neglected by dominant justice-orientation and traditional patriarchal ideology. She depicts this situation as “[a] war on care [which] continues in France” (*ibid.*). Accordingly, she remarks that the current epidemic has the power to strip away all the illusions and false promises of advanced capitalism, to make visible to all what really underpins our society.

## **2.2 Ethics of care**

As discussed above, provided that the ethics of care or caring ethics approach has been resonated in global and local contexts on account of its ample moral and theoretical implications, a more in-depth investigation on the ethics of care theory seems obligatory.

### **2.2.1 Background**

From the feminist approach, in the qualitative research on vulnerable Kenyan orphaned learners and teachers' engagement of care, Skovdal and Evans (2017:162) argue that in spite of increasing and professionalised 'care' articulations in the level of organisation like schools, "care work" still remains undervalued and related to the "private women's natural caring sphere".

More arguably, Smylie, Murphy and Louise (2016:1), in their study on exploring caring school leadership in the organizational level beyond interpersonal level of caring, address that discussions on caring leadership are conspicuously absent in education research and practice.

Yet, interestingly, recent unexpected corona pandemic situations have led us to radically attend to care ethics, or ethics of care, in relation to effective leadership practices. Laugier (2020) expects that this situation of disaster might enable us to be aware of the moral truth of our dependencies by revealing radical vulnerabilities.

In this coincidental context, it seems desirable and worthwhile to explore the relation between ethics of care and educational leadership practices specifically in the context of a township school. The reason is that the ethics of care approach demands our attention to the vulnerable township school context, leading leadership agents to respond to vulnerable learners and teacher colleagues while seeking for togetherness defined as belonging, caring, and sharing. Finally, as Raghuram (2016:512) notes that "care is at the heart of debates on how we reproduce society", it is appropriate to understand care or caring for the purpose of applying it to our educational leadership practice in a challenging township context.

Before addressing Gilligan's (1993) ethics of care, we shall discuss various views on care ethics or caring. Then the conceptualization of ethics of care with the focus on Gilligan's approach will be attempted with a brief comparison to other relevant moral theories.

### **2.2.2 Various views on ethics of care or caring**

Among the diverse articulations of ethics of care or caring, we can find several noticeable common orientations by drawing on some scholars' epistemological understandings.

### **2.2.2.1 Basis of caring: relationship or relationality**

Caring relies on a special kind of relationship between persons, which is characterized by “some measure of commitment” (Beck, 1994:10). Noddings (2012), as an educationalist and philosopher, identifies ethics of care as a moral value and a way of life fundamentally based on relationships. Noddings (2012:56-57) further identifies the language of care ethics as a “relational ethic”. In this sense, she highlights the words "care," "attention," "empathy," "response," "reciprocity," and "receptivity". Thus, Noddings argues that care ethics should be considered as “a moral way of life” (*ibid.*).

In relation to leadership, as a new conceptualization for the practice of relational leadership, Smit and Scherman (2016:3) express the concept of relational leadership as “a new language” which entails concepts such as “care, vision, collaboration, courage, and intuition”. This perspective represents common attributes among various ethics of care approaches.

### **2.2.2.2 Caring as an ethic and practice**

When care is regarded as the normative framework as well as practice, a contextualized reading of care, or the situated nature of care, is stressed. Similarly, Davina Cooper (cited by Raghuram, 2016:522) stresses a contextualised reading of care, rather discussing of care, which can lead to a “disembodied utopianism”. Concurrently, with the focus on the action of care, Sander-Staudt (cited by Raghuram, 2016:512) contends that care as a norm necessitates care completion. On the other hand, in discussing the motivation of care, instead of the rationalist view of justification for one’s action, Noddings (2012:80) identifies two sources of moral motivation regarding care: one primitive or natural, and the other one ethical.

Further, more theoretically and practically, Tronto (cited by Skovdal & Evans, 2017:162) presents four specific phases of care or caring in democratic society. Tronto (cited by Bozalek, Watters & Gachago, 2015:265) argues that caring only for those near one would lead to a privileged irresponsibility since “it would exclude a concern for more distant others”. Finally, she put the focus on the responsibility of democratic citizenship on “how to engage in caring with one another” as a politics (*ibid.*). Likewise, drawing on Heidegger’s notion of care, Ciulla (2009b:3) remarks that care indicates “attention to what is going on in the world and emotional concern about the well-being of others”. Put differently, in a more realistic approach combining caring with a focus on the perspective of authentic leadership, Tomkins and Simpson (2015) emphasize the organization and leadership of the self.

In short, the ethics of care or caring ethic accounts by diverse scholars as above have common features and their own unique emphases. The common features are summarised as follows: relationship or relational approach; the significance of caring as embodied work as well as an ethic; its expansion to political public issues beyond private caring. What follows is to compare the ethics of care with other moral philosophies.

### **2.2.3 Comparison with other moral theories: Kantian and Ubuntu ethics**

The ethics of care and other moral theories can be seen as similar to virtue ethics. Thus, it also seems proper to mention features that differ between ethics of care and some virtue ethics in order to clarify the distinctive nature of ethics of care.

#### **2.2.3.1 The difference between ethics of care and virtue ethics**

From the perspective above, Held (2006:19) advances the relation between ethics of care and virtue ethics. Held (2006:19) holds that there are both similarities and differences between the ethics of care and virtue ethics: virtue ethics focuses on the state of the character of individuals whereas the ethics of care puts the vital value on caring relations. Subsequently, Held (2006:3) posits that the ethics of care is a prominent moral theory which “has the potential of being based on the truly universal experience of care in childhood.” It is further claimed that, beyond the critical private spheres like family and friendship relations, the ethics of care extends its capacity to public domains such as political, social, and global issues to be replaced by dominant moral theories like Kantian ethics, or utilitarianism as an alternative. In addition, Ciulla (2009b:3) compares care ethics with the egalitarian traditional ethics approach. Although Ciulla does not support the division between care and justice, she stresses that unlike the judicious golden rule of objectivity and egalitarianism, care has “certain dispositions and feelings.” (*ibid.*). In this respect, care or care ethics is characterized by being contextualised, which implies its distinctive character different from Kantian ethics (cited by Nodding, 2013:75) which identify the ethical care as out of duty, not out of love.

#### **2.2.3.2 The commonality and difference with African moral ethic, Ubuntu**

Metz (2013:81) refers to the concept ‘community’ along with ‘altruism’ to introduce the African moral ethic named Ubuntu. He advances that “It is common for African moral theorists to prescribe entering into or valuing community, so construed, either for its own sake or as a means to a further good. Either way, they tend to highlight other-regarding actions and virtues commonly associated with altruism.”

On the one hand, the commonalities between the two ethical traditions (Western care ethics and African Ubuntu) help us to understand better the nature of ethics of care. As Metz (2013:83) states, it is obvious that there is overlap between the character of a caring relationship and a communal Ubuntu ethic of sub-Saharan tradition. Particularly, Metz (2013:85) points out that the Afro-communitarian ethic appreciates greatly the concept 'community' in the practice of the ethic. The concept embraces both identity and solidarity since it is associated with the concept of family. Put differently, in integrating Ubuntu philosophy with African education, Waghid (2014:56-65) identifies Ubuntu as "a communitarian understanding of respect, caring and community". Moreover, Waghid (2014:65) envisions that such an understanding of ubuntu can frame "a notion of African education", which ultimately can contribute towards advancing "moral and political concerns".

This approach, thus, enables us to experience the emotion and practice of belonging, caring and sharing. Concurrently, ethics of care shares a partial view with African ethics in that it emphasizes embodied care work which implies concrete and practical action, including emotion, mutual benefit, interdependence, vulnerability, and collaboration as ontological human conditions.

However, from a critical perspective, I posit that such an ideal communitarian Ubuntu philosophy might negatively influence individual responsibility, leading to a lack of ownership and responsibility. Furthermore, despite the clear similarities between them, we can find the difference: African moral ethics rarely speaks against the existing challenging gendered and patriarchal ideology whereas ethics of care accounts might contribute to disrupting those current practices while being based on their feminist underpinning.

In stead of subaltern virtues, referring to subverting autonomy, Laugier (2015:7-8) describes the ontology of ethics of care as follows:

"The ethics of care does not aim at enlisting compassion and solicitude in the category of subaltern virtues dedicated to soothing an unsympathetic conception of social relations, or (which amounts to the same) installing domination under the cover of protection" (Laugier, 2015:7-8).

A brief comparison with other relevant moral theories like virtue ethics, such as Kantian ethics and Ubuntu, helps us to have a more distinctive understanding of the ethics of care. In her description of Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) (2018:62-63), Laugier indicates the difference between virtue and care ethics by arguing that:

“Ethics of care encompasses human vulnerability and ordinary concepts; morality is grounded, not on universal principles, but rather starts from the experiences of everyday life in the dismantling of dominant understanding on ethics” (Laugier, 2018:62-63).

Consequently, Laugier (2015:8) identifies care and ethics as “Care is what makes a common life possible. Ethics, then, is not about how to live better lives, but how, simply, to live an ordinary life in the world”. In this respect, it seems that Laugier’s critical approach enables us to regard care and ethic not as optional and universal principles, but as indispensable to our ordinary lives. Thus, it is assumed that the approach can be appealed effectively in the human relations or organizational dimensions.

When considering the above, accounts of the ethics of care or caring generally reveal the potential value of care as an ethic and situated embodied practice along with the acknowledgement of relational human conditions such as dependence and responsibility (Ciulla, 2009b; Held, 2006; Laugier, 2015:7).

So far, we have discussed the difference between ethics of care and virtue ethics, and the commonality and difference in relation to the African moral ethic, Ubuntu. What follows is to proceed with an exploration of Gilligan’s ethics of care.

#### **2.2.4 Gilligan’s ethics of care**

The claim by Gilligan (1993) that “our life and society require relationship along with connection” rather “separation” seems still appealing in our current lives in spite of such a long chronological gap since 1970s when she started working with this topic. In addressing the ethics of care, Gilligan (1993) concerns “difference, voice and relationships”.

An in-depth discussion of its origin and entailments follows.

##### **2.2.4.1 The emergence of Gilligan’s ethics of care**

The ethics of care has its origin in Gilligan’s methodological and epistemological critique of Kohlberg’s (cited by Klaver *et al.*, 2013:2) work. While assisting Kohlberg’s work on the model of moral development of the young, Gilligan (1985) found a bias regarding sampling in the exclusion of female participants. Finally, she pointed out that a Kohlbergian perspective drawn from a kind of biased approach on moral development or orientation has led to orienting towards a more rationalistic and masculine perspective, while neglecting a relational caring perspective. Gilligan’s argument significantly reveals the collision between two contrasting ways of speaking/thinking

about human life, namely, “separation/detachment “and “connection/relationship” (Gilligan, 1993: xxvi-xxvii).

Further, Gilligan (1985:34) argued the necessity of expanded research of moral developmental theory which includes the difference of feminine voice. As a psychologist, Gilligan (1993) deliberately worked on the responses of adolescent females’ and males’ situations of moral dilemma. Through the ongoing study, Gilligan became to present an alternative moral orientation featured by authentic relationships which concerns interest in understanding the subjective experiences and needs of others, and thus showing true responses to these (cited by Simola, Barling & Turner, 2010:181).

#### **2.2.4.2 Entailments of the ethics of care**

From an ontological and anthropological perspective, human vulnerability and interdependence are the grounds of the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1993; 2013b; Laugier, 2018). Similarly, Laugier (2018:56), while connecting vulnerability with ordinariness, argues that “dependence and vulnerability are traits of a condition common to all, not of a special category of the ‘vulnerable’”. Based on Gilligan’s ethics of care, we can highlight the following four significant themes: interdependency, noticing another different voice, resistance to patriarchal ideology, and two different ethical voices.

##### *a) Interdependency as a manifestation of human vulnerability and responsibility*

Ontologically and anthropologically, Gilligan (2013b:60) identifies interdependency as a manifestation of human vulnerability. Contrary to Descartes’ way of rationalist (Gilligan, 2011) care, in the ethics of care theory is defined as subverting autonomy (Laugier, 2015:4). Likewise, Buber also claims that a state of interrelatedness among people is natural and desirable (cited by Beck, 1994:15). While emphasizing the implication of an act of inclusion among ethics of care, accounts presented by Gilligan (1993), Waghid (2019:5-7) also identify the following three aspects: “human attachment (inclusion), interrelatedness (relationality), and responsibility”. Subsequently, Gilligan’s ethic of care can be defined as an ideal human relationship (cited by Waghid, 2019:5-6).

In dealing with both ethics of care and transformational leadership components, Simola, Barling and Turner (2010:181) contend that as the main factors of transformational leadership, idealized influence and inspirational motivation demonstrate interconnectedness and community-oriented aspects, which are central to the transformational leadership accounts; then, this sense of

interconnection is consistent with a care approach. Concurrently, Laugier (2015:6-8) appreciates Gilligan's generality of the notion of 'care' as follows:

"The notion of "care," in as much as it covers very practical activities and a form of sensitivity, a sustained attention to others and a sense of responsibility and dependence..... The ethics of care makes it clear that we depend on others in a world that values autonomy so highly. The notion of care does not refer only to a type of attention to others and a set of practical activities; it also implies a sense of one's dependence and responsibility."

Therefore, as Laugier (2015:3) refers to Wittgenstein's approach in which care is defined as "attention to differences", it is understood that the ethics of care theory emphasizes mutual understanding along with specific caring and cooperative practices. Then, the ethics of care leads us to recognize human vulnerability as well as our neglect of attention to others, and to move toward a community-oriented responsibility.

*b) Noticing of another different voice – thick democracy*

The paradigm shift of our thinking on human beings – the reconfirmation of vulnerability as discussed above, has something to do with noticing another voice being introduced by Gilligan. Gilligan (1993: xvi) connects relationality with being human and a speaking being. While borrowing the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's (Gilligan, 2011b:22) division between 'thin' and 'thick' in interpreting of cultures, Gilligan contends that:

"[a] A feminist ethic of care rests on a thick rather than thin understanding of democracy. A thin interpretation of democracy homogenizes differences in the name of equality, whereas thick democracy depends on the premise that different voices are integral to the vitality of a democratic society" (2011b:22).

From socio-political approach, Rosenberg (cited by Schneider, 2021) points out that one of the most critical aspects of a democracy is the capacity to cultivate citizens and a public sphere that facilitates democratic thought. In this respect, Schneider (2021) emphasizes the notion of social equality which embeds "a sense of solidarity between citizens", rather than just equality. It is certain that an understanding of democracy which implies a transition from abstract freedom and individual good to the necessity of communal solidarity echoes Gilligan's ethics of care accounts as different voices. As a resistance to patriarchal ideology, the ethic of care articulates a different voice, that is, thick democracy, which is practically expressed as paying attention, listening,

responding with integrity and respect (Gilligan, 2013a:31). These activities are also acknowledged as those of relationships as well as of care (Gilligan, 2013a:29).

*c) Resistance to patriarchal ideology – deconstructing gender binary and gender hierarchy*

While attending to women's different voice, Gilligan (2013b:46-47) argues that "Gender binary and gender hierarchy are the DNA of patriarchy, the building blocks of a patriarchal order; the word 'patriarchy' as a hierarchy, a rule of priests, where the hero, the priest, is a pater, a father. His is the voice of moral authority. According to this ideology, being a man means not being a woman or like a woman and being on top." Ultimately, Gilligan (1993:167) motivates to attend to women's voice by noting that "when women construct the adult domain, the world of relationships emerges and becomes the focus of attention and concern".

Aligned with this view, with the focus on sexuality education, Bhana (2015) supports gender equality in early childhood in South African primary schools to disrupt the broader social system where dominant gender ideology prevails. In the case study of a female teacher in a primary school, Bhana confronts the reality experienced by the teacher herself. In the end, Bhana (2015:86) argues that there are real challenges in relation to dominant gendered ideologies which assign girls (and women) to subordination despite teaching against unequal relations of power oriented toward transforming gender relations.

*d) Two existing different ethical voices: ethics of care and ethics of justice*

Gilligan (1993:6) contrasts "an ethic of care" with "the logic of the justice". Subsequently, Gilligan (1993:30) points out that women have the tendency to focus on a world of relationships whose "connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another," whereas men tend to focus on adjudicating between competing rights. The ethics of justice articulates autonomy, rights, reason, and fairness, orienting toward a more rationalistic and masculine approach, whereas the ethics of care, as a more feminine approach, takes interdependence, responsibility, empathy, and relationship as fundamental. Therefore, it is understood that the ethics of care theory emphasizes neglected moral consideration of care as important as justice and rights by recognizing the role of women's "different voice" in moral and ethical development.

Laugier (2015:6-7) appreciates that Gilligan has clearly presented the generality of her approach: "Justice and care are two different tonalities, or rival voices, inherent inside each of us, the care voice being less inhibited in girls than in boys." Further, Camps (2013:8) reaffirms Gilligan's original claims on ethics of care by stating that care is a question of human concern rather than a

women’s issue since we all have a mind and a body, powers of reason and emotions; and empathy towards our fellow human beings should be a requisite.

Finally, as Diller (1988:330) critiques on Gilligan’s approach, the ethics of care requires a radical paradigm shift in which moral agents redirect their attention and efforts toward how we can create and foster caring relationships while interacting with one another as caring people, from concerns about right judgments and their ethical justification.

We can summarize the key dimensions and common features of ethics of care by interweaving the analyses by the following authors.

<b>McKenzie and Blenkinsop (2006 :1)</b>	<b>Nicholson and Kurucz (2019)</b>	<b>Common features</b>
Contextual	The primacy of a moral caring relationship (responsibility).	Attention with sensibility
Ungendered	Holistic existential human approach beyond gender binary and patriarchy.	Respect, empathy, listening to
Inclusive	Seeking for thick democracy beyond exclusively autonomy and rational judgement.	Respect, empathy, listening to
Expansion to public sphere of life	Seeking for a morally connected community.	Caring, cooperation, communication, a trusting and supportive community.

**Table 2-1: The key dimensions drawn from ethics of care analyses**

**2.2.4.3 Ethics of care as a normative theory beyond a feminist approach**

Ethics of care has been articulated in various academic and research fields on account of its inherent normative nature as well as its disruptive one against existing cultural ideology in the geographical, economic, social and educational arena (Raguhram, 2016; Bhana, 2015).

For example, Simola, Barling and Turner (2010:179) contrast two accounts of the relationship between leadership behaviour and moral problem-solving orientations, namely, an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982) and an ethic of justice.

Against the criticism that her research concerns the empirically strict stereotyping of femaleness, Gilligan (1993: xii) explicitly argues that it intends to possibly “break the historical cycle of violence and domination”. In light of Gilligan’s (2013) ethics of care, Camps (2013) also critically motivates

the indispensable care approach along with restorative justice as follows: “Moral injury consists of the destruction of trust and the loss of the capacity to love. One ceases to resist injustice when the capacity for empathy is lost. Therefore, justice must be complemented by care.” (Camps, 2013:9).

It seems that Noddings also considered the critique of the connection of ethics of care with feminine and maternal perspectives. Noddings (as cited by Bergmark, 2020: 335-336) amends the wording from ‘feminine’ to ‘relational’ in the subtitle of the 2013 edition of the work, ‘Caring’. In this regard, Bergmark (2020:335-336) argues that “this amendment allows for a widening of the ethics of care concept; it is not associated with a specific sex”.

Laugier (2015:9) suggests that giving philosophical value to care must ground itself on an enlargement of the concept of action, rather than on a particularist ethics. In this view, she appreciates Tronto’s (cited by Laugier, *ibid.*) expanded accounts of care application. In addition, against materialistic and capitalistic ways of life in the world, Laugier (2018:57) draws on ordinary language philosophy (OLP) so that it can serve as a ground for “re-defining ethics as attention to ordinary life and as care for moral expression”. In doing so, Laugier (2018:57) presents her own perspective on the ethics of care while interweaving with OLP as follows:

“Making women’s voices heard is the first aim of feminism. Making the human voice heard is the aim of OLP. And it is also the starting point of the ethics of care. I have tried to understand the ethics of care as a heterodox ethics, inspired in part by OLP, that allows us to re-center moral philosophy around ordinary language and expressiveness” (*ibid.*).

Ultimately, both the ethics of care and OLP (Old Language Philosophy) are contributing to the transformation of ethics (Laugier, 2015; 2018). While considering Laugier’s (2018:61) developmental approach to the ethics of the ordinary, I assume that the ethics of care approach can also be effectively applied to educational leadership practice due to its transformative potential for vulnerable township schools.

### **2.2.5 Toward community**

From the theoretical conceptualisation of the ethics of care, it is recognized that its accounts ultimately embrace the notion of community. While taking a more ontological stance of care, Buber (cited by Beck, 1994:15) underlines that “true caring actions will be actions that turn people toward community” which include men and women. Moreover, Laugier (2015:14) claims to attend to those “horizontal networks of relations and communities”, which implies having “an expressive

political relevance derived from the acknowledgement of vulnerability or precariousness". Likewise, as aforementioned, Afro-communitarian ethic also supports the significance of the concept of community. Thus, it is seen that the ethics of care substantiates community orientation as an organizational culture of a school.

### **2.2.6 Summary**

The ethics of care focuses the attention on neglected realities and the lack of theorization of these social realities which are made "invisible" (Laugier, 2015:9). Through the political and epistemological understanding of the ethics of care and OLP, we have come to recognize why political, ethical and philosophical thoughts in our society are blind to the realities of South African township school environments and innumerable vulnerable learners. Laugier (2015:14) asserts that the notion of vulnerability stipulates contexts of ordinary life, where human beings find their needs, interests, and fragilities totally exposed.

Finally, this widening understanding of the ethics of care which emphasizes human vulnerability, relationality, actions to specific situated needs, seeking for thick democracy, and community-orientation, assists us to apply the ethics of care to leadership practices regardless of gender. Therefore, with the current theoretical understanding of ethics of care, the following section intends to investigate leadership practice as the one form which plays a critical role in our ordinary lives.

## **2.3 Leadership practices**

Given that the ethics of care emphasizes vulnerability and interrelatedness, it is relevant to advance leadership practices specifically in vulnerable township school contexts. In this study, it is suggested that the concepts of leadership and leadership practice refer to the practice of mainly principals or SMT (School Management Team). This section explores leadership practices within their socio-historical and academical contexts.

Taking these views into consideration, the next section examines South African school leadership practices in the trend of globalization.

### **2.3.1 Globalization and educational leadership practices**

According to Johnson (2020:364), globalization may be the most noticeable trend of the twenty-first century. Practically, it is demonstrated as follows: increasing international markets, great freedom to travel, immigration, the Internet, and satellite communication systems. As a result, they have brought about greater cultural diversity as one product of globalization (Johnson,

2020:364). In this context, the field of educational leadership as well as business leadership has faced unexpected challenges to cope with. Accordingly, today's management and leadership scholars have articulated a variety of leadership styles such as relational or ethical ones for leadership agents to adjust to such rapid change (Avci, 2015; Ehrich *et al.*, 2015; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; Patterson, 2003).

For educational leadership in the USA, the worldwide demographic change of the student population in urban public schools has made leaders consider those who are vulnerable in the school community to establish a more inclusive school culture for better educational organization. Similarly, while aiming at equity and inclusivity in Australian educational accountability Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed and Spina (2015:1) claim the significance of ethical school leadership. They argue that school leaders need to consider multiple forms of accountability, along with those concerned with issues of ethics and ethical leadership (*ibid.*).

The concept of care or support is significant in the discourse of educational policy and relevant academic fields (Hay, 2021; Johnson, 2020:364; Maclin, 2018; Makhalemele & Botha, 2021; Malindi, 2021; Noddings, 2012:1091). As related to leadership practice, the notion of care or support has been understood as a movement toward the reaching of goals or outcomes. According to Department planning, monitoring and evaluation (2007:695), "leadership can be defined more as "the exercise of influence" than having individual qualities. In this sense, leadership practice is framed in view of a social relationship of power through which some enable others towards achieving goals (*ibid.*). Then, this enabling can be connected to the notion of teacher empowerment and support (Balkar, 2015:206). Balkar (2015:209) states that various research results emphasize the relationship between leadership styles and empowerment. What follows is to describe critical leadership styles surrounding educational leadership practices internationally and locally in SA.

What follows is to diagnose the reality of South African school leadership.

### **2.3.2 Challenging South African schools and the significance of leadership practices**

According to the Mail & Guardian (2015), "80% of South African schools are dysfunctional". In this challenging context, Wolhuter *et al.* (2020:33) argue that the factor of *leadership* remarkably affects learner achievement. Thus, they claim that the role of leadership (practice) has the potential to diminish contextual factors, including the negative factors of the education system and societal context (*ibid.*). Likewise, Lumadi (2017:4-5) identifies core elements of effective leadership for the purpose of establishing leadership practices that facilitate effective teaching and learning, and cultivating a caring and productive environment. They are identified as follows:

transformation; teamwork; leadership development; ethical leadership; and diversity (Lumandi, *ibid.*).

Seemingly, these elements reflect social changes as well as a paradigmatic shift of leadership to function centrally rather than top down. Moreover, this transformative approach presents the significance of principals' practices on daily-based leadership tasks. In line with this, Loader (1997:151) points out the usefulness of investigating principals' personal inner motivations as leaders and daily based leadership practices by recognizing that the role inherently has authority to have an impact within and outside schools. In other words, a leader's practice within an organization might influence the nature of the organization or the community.

Subsequently, this understanding of leadership – not a position but an influence - leads us to the transformation of an ontological understanding of leadership – towards the distribution of leadership. Then, leadership - unlike management - can occur outside and inside formal organizations, and it can be implemented at most levels in organizations and in most activities. (Christie, 2010:695-696). Educational policies also indicate the need for instructional and distributed leadership in transforming a challenging South African educational context (DBE, 2015a; DBE, 2019).

What follows is to critique educational leadership practices in relation to leadership styles articulated by academic scholars.

### **2.3.3 Various leadership styles and critiques on the practices**

#### **2.3.3.1 Transformational leadership and its practice in school contexts**

On a more strategic level, diverse leadership styles have been articulated and suggested among educational academic scholars (Bush & Glover, 2016; Christie, 2010; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019; Patterson, 2003). For example, transformational leadership has long been regarded as a powerful leadership model in the industrial, political, and military domains (Bass; Bass & Riggio, cited by Bagacean, 2016:36). Burns (cited by Bagacean, 2016:40) suggests that “the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents”. As a result, transformational leadership has also been rigorously articulated in educational leadership contexts a (Avci, 2015; Bush & Glover, 2016; Kok, 2018; Marx, 2018).

However, in the leadership practice of South Africa, some critique that it is rare to find engrossing research which concerns the use of transformational leadership behaviour in the context of education management (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010:205). Arguably, Ngcobo and Tikly (2010) contend

that a more cultural and contextual consideration is needed for the realization of effective leadership in South African disadvantaged schools. With a focus on township and rural schools in South Africa, educational scholars argue as follows:

“While the evidence concerning the links between transformational leadership styles and effective leadership is strong in high income western contexts, there is more limited evidence concerning the relevance of transformational styles for effective leadership in historically disadvantaged and culturally diverse settings such as those represented by township and rural schools” (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010:205).

Further, Bush (2011:86) indicates that when the transformational leadership approach focuses on the implementation of centralised government policies, the process might be politically controlled rather collegial. Moreover, the systematic review of educational leadership and management since post-Apartheid democratic government reports that in South Africa, in spite of extensive use of transformational language in educational leadership and management discourse, there is only limited evidence of its influence in schools (Bush & Glover, 2016:215). In the non-experimental quantitative study on the relationship between teachers’ job satisfaction and leadership practice, Kok (2018:35-36) also points out that although teachers’ job satisfaction mostly relies on school principals’ transformational leadership practice, the reality shows the lack of such leadership practices by principals.

On the other hand, Patterson (2003) points to the limitation of transformational leadership in terms of its abstract and ideal accounts as well as its focus on the organization itself and the leader. Patterson, consequently, supports servant leadership which can be better adapted to African contexts to overcome social and historical challenges.

### **2.3.3.2 Instructional and distributed leadership practices in school contexts**

The instructional leadership, being also named as learning-centred leadership, emphasizes teaching and learning (thus teachers’ behaviours) for ensuring teaching quality. Thus, the influence of leaders is aimed at student learning via teachers. However, gradually it has transited to leadership for learning (Bush, 2011:17).

While noting of the deviant reality of dysfunctional school contexts in light of curriculum management, Hoadley, Christie and Ward (cited by Bush & Glover, 2016:7-8) argue that for effective curriculum management, whole school responsibility initiated by the principal and instructional leadership is indispensable. In a study on effective school leadership strategy, Marx (2018:37) posits that the instructional leadership strategy focuses on the direct involvement of the

leader in learner achievement. Yet, Marx remarks that the participative leadership style is imperative for more effective leadership beyond merely the leader's emphasis on learner achievement (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, Williams and Mafora (cited by Bush & Glover, 2016:8) also argue that distributed leadership is difficult to be applied in traditional hierarchical contexts and address the dysfunctional and unintended consequences of the transformational agenda. Put differently, Kok (2018:51-52) argues that it needs training for transformational leadership behaviours and skills to enhance professional wellbeing of followers. It seems that the dominant traditional hierarchy paradigm indeed hinders the change of leadership practice toward transformational, instructional and distributive leadership.

### **2.3.3.3 The need for respectful leader mentors for leadership development**

In this context, Msila (2011:51) investigates mentoring for leadership development. Msila notes that:

“The mentors and their mentees had a huge role to play in the process; the personalities of the individuals involved were very crucial in their relationship . . . Change agents for both mentors and mentees learn easily and are open to ideas different from their own. In a mentoring relationship, this proves very important because one listens and understands because they have embraced change” (2011:51).

Msila (2011) also argues that the development of this approach relies on the availability of trained and respected mentors.

Given this inconsistency between leadership theories and its practice, it can be drawn that cultural traditional patriarchal and hierarchal ideologies have also strongly influenced South African educational leadership practices. As a result, it is seen that caring and morally relational voices are likely to be unarticulated in the schools. According to Bush and Glover (2016:217), it is concluded that “the discussion of transformational, instructional, distributed and teacher leadership shows that the introduction of these approaches to leadership is inhibited by entrenched managerial leadership. Academic discourse is changing but there is little evidence that these emerging models are widely practiced in South African schools”.

So far, we have discussed challenging leadership practices. Next, another critical issue also needs to be considered in relation to educational leadership and neoliberal economists' market ideology.

#### **2.3.3.4 A call for responsible leadership against neoliberal economists' ideology**

It is certain that there is a need for moral and relational, and responsible, leadership against the neoliberal economists' market ideology which has influenced the pedagogical field (Giroux, cited by Waghid, 2019:32). According to Waghid (2019:27), "Gilligan's groundbreaking account of caring regarding the ethic of care turns to the idea of human attachment (inclusion), relatedness and responsibility." Accordingly, while interweaving Gilligan's account with the Freirean notion of caring, Waghid (2019:36) tries to extend the implication of authentic caring toward a reflective, communal and ethically responsible endeavour specifically related to the public good. I appreciate the approach in that the approach acknowledges the fundamental features for a change to caring leadership.

The following section will present discourses on moral and relational, and responsible leadership.

#### **2.3.4 Discourses of moral and relational, and responsible leadership**

The absence of ethics and its results in the general practice of leadership demands a moral and relational leadership approach. The following themes have appeared in leadership discourse.

##### **2.3.4.1 The concern for a moral or ethical leadership approach**

Ciulla (2014: XV) describes leadership as a complex moral relationship between people. Yet, over the past 30 years, scandals in economic corporations have revealed a lack of ethical decision-making, and lack of the social and global responsibility of senior leaders (Tanno & Banner, 2018:1). Overcoming this crisis of leadership practice, Tanno and Banner (2018) reclaim servant leaders as change agents. They argue that increasing corporate leadership scandals reveal that those who are in the position of leadership are irresponsible in their role and decisions, although the significance of responsibility is publicly and scholarly expressed. In this regard, it is assumed that economic and social turbulence is an indication of the paradigm of neo-liberal economists which is characterized by the idea that only profit matters (Johnson, 2021). As a result, Johnson (2021:364) argues that on account of the spread of global capitalism, ethical and spiritual principles have been neglected.

##### **2.3.4.2 The concern for a relational caring approach**

Along with the moral/ethical leadership approach, a discussion of the relational caring approach has vividly appeared in educational and business leadership practices. Burns' idea of leadership led to a post-industrial conceptualisation of leadership – especially rooted in a reciprocal

relationship as an essential component of the leadership process (1978). It is identified as transformational leadership while being compared with transactional leadership.

Further, Giles (2019) emphasizes an ontological understanding of relational leadership, rather than that of a technical model of leadership. This approach considers an experiential and existential view of access to education, which is free from a neo-liberal economy paradigm; the nature of relations is the core and aim of education.

Likewise, research on educational leadership in the South African context discusses the transformation of the leadership paradigm, particularly focusing on challenges facing teacher education in South Africa. Thaba, Kanjere, Malatji, and Wadesango (2016:91) contend that school leadership needs to be competent, conducive to the ever-changing educational climate; and further remark that a transformative school leader will practise deliberative democracy without compromising the virtues of caring.

#### **2.3.4.3 The emphasis on responsibility**

In the relational and caring approach, responsibility is regarded as another critical attribute along with trust. Gardner (1990:1) emphasizes responsible engagement by arguing that “leadership is not status, not power, nor official authority”, and advances that leadership is the process of persuasion or demonstration through which an individual or leadership team encourages a group to pursue objectives. In particular, with the notion of authentic caring, Freire (cited by Waghid, 2019:36) emphasizes ethically responsible efforts as well as critical reflective, communal or dialogical ones in view of the liberation of humanity. In the case study of successful principalship in Singapore, the school principal’s understanding on leadership seems consistent with Gardner’s (Ho & Chu, 2019). As the result of the study, Ho and Chu (2019:33) emphasize the leader’s moral motive such as values, beliefs and identities for influential and effective practice.

In this regard, the core concept of being responsible as the best way to lead among the traits or behaviours of leadership has been identified through the study of variously articulated leadership theories by Waldman and Galvin (cited by Martins & De Lourdes Lazzarin, 2020:51-52). This is concurrent with Ciulla’s (2014: xv) claims of attending to responsible attitudes and following actions. Ciulla (2014: xv) states that “leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion and a shared vision of the good”.

Concerning organizational and business sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the recent work published by Martins and De Lourdes Lazzarin (2020:81) unpacks the meaning of irresponsible

leadership (IL) as a threshold, by which the authors try to deliver responsible leadership (RL) education for the purpose of leadership learning and development.

### **2.3.5 Shared leadership and professional collegiality in community orientation**

Interest in the relational and shared leadership approach has been increasing in the field of the educational leadership development and its practice, as Bass (2000) foretold about the leaders of the future two decades ago. Hargreaves and Fink (cited by Marishane, 2013:98) state that shared leadership is also called collaborative leadership and distributed leadership.

#### **2.3.5.1 Relational shared leadership**

When we look at leadership definitions as formulated by Rost (cited by Martins & De Lourdes Lazzarin, 2020:49) from a historical perspective, it proves that the focus has shifted from the authority or exclusively one leader's action orientation to relational and shared leadership practices. Accordingly, considering the transformational approach, the concepts of partnership or collaboration, and change reflecting mutual purposes, are critically considered.

In a study of relational leadership and ethics of care in dealing with bullying in schools, Smit and Scherman (2016:2-3) emphasize the school principal's quality of relationship with staff, learners, parents and the community. For the conceptualization of relational leadership, they address the concepts such as "care, vision, collaboration, courage, and intuition". In a more philosophical sense, Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011:1433-1434) posit that relational leadership is about "a way of being in the world, together with practical wisdom, intersubjectivity, and dialogue".

While supporting the shared leadership approach from three decades ago, Sergiovanni (1992:41-42) insists that "community norms provide the school with substitutes for direct leadership". Furthermore, he asserts that it points to collegiality as a professional ideal identified as less individual and more collective. In other words, it implies an alternative integral community against an authoritarian bureaucratic approach to the school system. While discussing managing teams in secondary schools, Bell (1992:42) emphasizes the significance of collegial authority or professional interdependence while describing the features of a well-managed school. The leaders and teachers share the responsibilities associated with the work of the school. Different individuals take the lead in different areas of school life, depending on their expertise. Then, it is seen that teachers work within the framework characterized by professional interdependence.

From a distributed or shared leadership perspective, Chingara (2019:12) defines school leadership as an agentic process or activities being provided by the principal and relevant stakeholders like SMTs. This perspective emphasizes a significant mutual responsibility and an

integral approach to attain the goals and vision of the school rather than a hierarchical order or handing down regulations or tasks to be performed. In this sense, school members experience professional interdependence and a caring ethic which allows us to feel a sense of belonging and being supported.

### **2.3.5.2 Increase of interdependence and collegiality**

Interdependence and collegiality as a critical element found in effective leadership practice is increasingly emphasized. Adair (cited by Bell, 1992:40) describes the three elements in his work on effective leadership as overlapping circles: achieving the task; building and maintaining the staff team; developing everyone. According to Bell (1992:40-42), the three elements need to be considered as critical for effective leadership to be implemented. Consequently, it can be argued that the key elements in leadership are the integration of the individual, the team and school goals. In doing so, schools become more collegial and the fact that team members as well as leaders are responsive as professional colleagues can be recognised. Accordingly, those teachers who work within such framework are apt to exhibit professional interdependence rather than isolated independence.

In the study on transformational leadership and leader moral orientation, Simola, Barling and Turner (2010:181) remark that the transformational leadership components of idealized influence and inspirational motivation underpin interconnectedness and community-oriented features; these elements are also considered as central to the articulation of an ethic of care. It seems that the central articulation of leadership converges into claiming interdependence / collegiality as a critical element in effective leadership practice. Similarly, as we referred to previously, Lumadi (2017:4-5) proposes teamwork as one of the core elements for effective caring school leadership environments.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate Gilligan's ethics of care approach which seems to assume a critical underpinning of relational caring dimensions in leadership. This study specifically focuses on the relationship between the principal and the other SMT members or senior teachers with the persuasion that the roles of agentic members in a shared leadership are critical to the change of a school community. What follows is to advance the discussion of schooling before we attempt to address the last component of this theoretical study, which is the nature of a teaching and learning community.

### **2.3.6 The aims of schooling and its identity**

Fullan (1998) underscores the importance of education in any country and speaks about the "moral purpose" of schooling, which he defines as work that "makes a difference in the lives of all students, and helps produce citizenry who are committed to the common good" (cited by Witten, 2010: 220-221). Yet, the current schooling seems to reflect conflicting identity and aims. We will discuss the aims of schooling and its identity in view of organisational structure.

#### **2.3.6.1 Identity of public schools as the space of caring and support**

Despite the geographical differences and the differential access to educational resources in the global South and North, it is commonly viewed that schools are "sites of preparation' for children's future roles" (Collins & Coleman, cited by Skovdal & Evans, 2017:160). As to this orientation, Foster, Addy and Samoff (cited by Skovdal & Evans, 2017:161) argue that:

"Educational institutions have tended to regard children as 'human becomings' who need to be instructed in preparation for productive roles in adulthood, rather than focusing on them as 'human beings' who actively contribute to society in the present and may have needs for 'care and support', rather than just 'learning'".

More recently, a qualitative study on the role of care in terms of a principal's leadership philosophy and the enactment of leadership decisions and actions concludes that an ethics of care is a viable leadership approach to achieve school success (Oakley, 2019:1). In the context of HIV, Skovdal and Evans (2017) indicate, in their qualitative study on the ethic of care being experienced by teachers and orphaned learners in rural Kenyan schools, the importance of the recognition of an ethic of care and the provision of institutional support for its development in schools. The research claims the fundamental identity of schools as fields of caring, engagement, and support for such vulnerable pupils.

#### **2.3.6.2 The space for social learning and experience of democratic citizenship**

In this study which explores the significance of the ethics of care in the context of public schools, the roles of public schools that our society requires, also need to be described. First, the public school system is to become the space for a community of teaching and learning; regarding this, the concept of community emphasizes a common vision and goals, collaboration, and collegiality. This view implies that schools have the elements of thick democracy, such as trust, respect, communication, interdependence, collaboration, moral ethic and caring (Giroux, 2001). Following Freirean pedagogy which is based on authentic caring, Giroux (cited by Waghid, 2019:32)

stresses the importance of “engaging students with critical dialogue, criticism, and the cultivation of their ethical (social) responsibility towards others...”.

It is important that schools must practise authentic caring and maintain conversations /discourses about ethical and social issues relevant to the common good and the practices of democracy (Freire, 2001:120; Zyngier, 2013:120). Then, schools might be the space where learners search for and experience the public good or the common good by cultivating their responsibility towards others through self-reflection and critical examination of our ordinary lives (cf. Freire, 2001; Dantley, 2003). A brief outline of theoretical perspectives on schools as organisations in society follows.

### **2.3.7 Perspectives on schools’ function as organisations**

#### **2.3.7.1 To transit from private domain of family or home to public world**

Concerning the public role of schools or teachers in Korean educational and social context where there appears to be competition in striving for a good life, Bhang and Kwak (2019:931-932) draw on Arendt’s concept of the public. They argue that the nature of a school is influenced by it being private or public. Bhang and Kwak address the public role of a school while citing Arendt’s remark:

“Then what would be the public interest of education/schooling for Arendt? Given her statement that the school ‘is rather the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all.’(cited by Bhang & Kwak, 2019:931-932), we can say that schools’ public role is to introduce young students into the common world by turning it gradually into a public realm where the future citizens of our society can appear in their words and deeds” (Bhang & Kwak, 2019:931-932).

When associating diverse perspectives regarding schools as organizations with the concept of a teaching and learning community, the following perspectives particularly need to be stressed: the school must be an organization adapted to social and cultural change; it must serve others; it must have a more informal or open organization orientation rather than formal and closed features (Theron, 2003:82-89).

#### **2.3.7.2 Central position of caring leadership**

Taking the relational approach to school leadership into consideration, Smylie, Murphy and Louise (2016:18) associate leader care basically with the relational aspect of school leadership on account of general interpersonal features of leaders’ daily implementation of duties.

Furthermore, Smylie, Murphy and Louise (2016:3) extend the importance of caring school leadership in the organizational level beyond the interpersonal level of caring between teachers and learners. As a result, they conclude that a school's caring climate can shape the organization to support the interpersonal with the reaffirmation of the central position of caring in schooling. They remark that a caring school's organizational climate is demonstrated by a feeling of community and belonging as well as its degree of openness, trust, and joint responsibility (Smylie *et al.*, 2016:3).

Chingara (2019:79) holds that the creation of better schools is bound to create enabling bureaucratic organisational structures in schools. Chingara (2019:79), in addressing the role of organisational structure in promoting academic achievement, states that enabling structures were found to create teacher confidence in organising the school in such a way that it supported them and learners as well as instructional processes. Enabling school structures can be seen as parallel to a teaching and learning community since it implies supportive and favourable leaders, trust, scholarly activities, and encouraging strong efforts toward goals, ultimately a culture of positive beliefs is created (*ibid.*).

### **2.3.7.3 Regarding the roles of township schools as agency for ordinary lives**

In relation to South African township school learners' ordinary lives, Witten (2010:220-221) addresses their vulnerability and the central role of schools as follows:

“When a child comes to school hungry or sick or is weighed down by fear or sadness related to death and loss, it means that s/he has slipped through the support networks of the family, the community, and that of broader society. This child may not get another chance if the school fails to respond to his/her needs. Thus, the community school in South Africa is an important safety net for the student.”

On the other hand, in addressing ethics of care with the focus on human vulnerability and interdependence, Gilligan (2011) also refers to the significance of meaningful others to children or youth in their social and moral development process. This approach is also valid for a young generation that is not being cared for in a selfish and competitive society.

Laugier (2018) defines the ethics of care as politics of the ordinariness in our forms of life of human vulnerability and relatedness. In this view, it can be stressed that the critical role and responsibility of school leadership is to create a caring environment where vulnerable children are cared for. These days, as Laugier (2020) has been experiencing in the context of French society, we have practically realized the importance of the roles and functions of public schools

in this worldwide Corona virus pandemic situation with poor learners experiencing the absence or lack of schooling. Moreover, this urgent situation has forced school leadership as well as government level policy makers to reflect and act to respond to these challenges.

We do ultimately expect the moral dimension of educational practice and a reaffirmation of togetherness or interdependence as the nature of existential human relationships. As discussed previously, these views are consistent with the claims of the ethics of care approach. The relationship between the ethics of care approach and cultivating a teaching and learning community in a school seems to mutually complement each other. Therefore, it is argued that the commitment of leadership toward a community of teaching and learning is significant in the transformation of dysfunctional township schools in SA.

The following section discusses township schools in detail in order to draw on the significance of ethics of care approach for the purpose of leadership practice toward the vision of developing a teaching and learning community.

### **2.3.8 Township schools**

To take notice of a trauma-based culture which manifests in the challenges of township schooling, Michel Foucault's (cited by Franklin, 2010:26) notion of genealogy seems appropriate since it can be understood as a means of using our historical understanding of past cultural practices regarding education during apartheid. Thus, it is seen that such understanding enables us to grasp better the current practices through critical reflection on those past cultures.

This section attempts to investigate township communities' trauma-based culture and township schools' challenges. To develop township schools, the ethics of care approach must be in the centre of the school's organizational culture.

#### **2.3.8.1 Trauma-based culture: challenges of schooling**

In international complex and unstable social contexts, today's school leadership has been encountering challenges to carry out much more timely and accountable roles responsive to social change. Lumby and Heystek (2012:5) argue that education is "a primary means of facilitating the harmonious development of a diverse society." However, South African educational contexts seem more complex and face mixed challenges; public schools are still unequal due to the trauma of the racial segregation policy of Apartheid, which had been implemented until 1994 (Spaull, 2013:437).

Accordingly, township communities are currently battling with a deficient leadership and lack enough role models in a trauma-based culture; those who belong to the community live in the midst of physical and psychological unhealthy environments such as unemployment, malfunctioning family structures, HIV/AIDS related diseases, domestic violence, high criminal rates like rape, theft, along with sexual abuse and drug abuse (Makgato & Mji, 2006; Mampane & Bouwer, 2011:114-115; Mouton *et al.*, 2013; Runhare, Ouda, Vele & Mudzielwana, 2021). In this regard, from a qualitative study on learners' and teachers' experience of poor performing schools, Makgato and Mji (2006:262-263) identify direct and indirect influences in relation to poor achievement in mathematics and physical science. Makgato and Mji's (2006) report that for direct influences, "teaching strategies, content knowledge, motivation, laboratory use, and the non-completion of the syllabus content over a year" were identified whereas indirect ones were relevant to parental roles concerning education and general language use.

On the other hand, in the study of the role of the school and community in curbing learner dropout in township schools, Runhare *et al.* (2021) conclude that there should be indispensable collaboration diverse community stakeholders and school stakeholders to resolve learners' problems. Through learner participants' narratives in the study, it is assumed that the problem of learner dropout needs to be dealt with by ethically inspired community and school agents.

More positively, Mampane and Bouwer (2011) explored how a township school can influence resilience in learners living in a township. In doing so, Mampane and Bouwer (2011:114-115) identify strong and weak points of school environments in encouraging resilience. Further, they suggest a proper support process.

In the end, at a macro level, Spull (2013:436-444) suggests that government policies need to attend to the dualistic nature of an educational system as well as to take the current inequalities in primary education into consideration. Mouton *et al.* (2013:41) remark that "most importantly, moral values within individuals, families, schools and communities should be realised and instilled. This critic seems aligned with the moral approach suggested by Challens *et al.* (2020). Thus, as Spull (*ibid.*) argues, the national concern needs towards encouraging the restoration of productive curriculum management, in other words, the task of teaching and learning.

### **2.3.8.2 Townships' societal culture and school organizational culture**

Bush (2011:177-178) describes the misalignment of values and practices in South African educational context in terms of developing a learning culture. He argues that the societal culture of the post-apartheid era has influenced schools in township contexts. In this situation, education transitions from racist to equal education and education towards democracy. The disruptive way

teacher unions and youngsters engage with political government policy issues cause barriers which hinder a culture of learning in schools. Further, poor conditions of township schools have also challenged the holistic culture of learning. Subsequently, pointing out the challenge in light of a culture of learning in schools in South Africa, Bush suggests (2011:179) that it is time to prioritise a commitment to teaching and learning beyond resistance to Apartheid education. A culture is needed which attends to both educational values and an increasing competitive world economy.

In line with Bush's (2011:179) argument regarding a culture of learning in township schools, it can be added that there is a lack of a thick democracy culture – a focus on moral values like respect, carrying out responsibility and commitment - in many societies of South Africa. It is assumed that this societal culture partly might have been derived from the absence of a genuine democracy in the post-Apartheid paradigm. Societal culture is difficult to be changed compared to organizational culture. The quality of leadership in individual township schools might provide the potential or agency for a change of townships' societal culture. In this regard, the ethics of care in educational leadership fields seems reasonable in that the approach is consistent with thick democratic discourses. To address these culturally challenging barriers, requires committed actions for change, which might be possible from an ethics of care approach, since this encompasses ethical moral values and spirituality while attending to human vulnerability of ordinary lives.

In a similar vein, in his research on how four principals lead in the building of community schools as an approach to educational social challenges in South Africa, Witten (2010) indicates that the quality of learning and learning support is an internal factor in a teaching and learning community. However, these internal factors require rules and policy to foster physical and emotional safety against external factors of the socio-economic community environment, such as poverty and unsafety. Accordingly, Witten (2010) suggests that township schools' leaders should aim for the provision of care, protection, encouraging learners for setting and attaining goals, and finally a parents-school community bound to cultivate a learning culture.

Thus, it seems urgent that an ethics of care approach should assist leadership in township schools to become accountable in the fostering of a teaching and learning community which can also promote the well-being of the learners. In this regard, dedicated leadership practices of a principal who prioritizes ethics of care can contribute to cultivating such a teaching and learning community.

### **2.3.8.3 The ethics of care and the culture of township schools**

While agreeing with Skovdal and Evans' (2017) accounts on the need for the provision of institutional support as well as the recognition of an ethic of care, this theoretical study on ethics of care orients school leadership practices toward the organizational level of school climates or culture and extends the individual or personal ethic or virtue.

On the one hand, the ethics of care approach as related to educational leadership knowledge and practices contributes to ontological and epistemological reasons for building positive organizational climates and the culture of schools as teaching and learning communities. On the other hand, when noticing the physical and cultural situations of township schools, the commitment of leaders as critical human capital or agency toward transformation is needed. As we employ the concept of engagement by Murphy and Torre (cited by Smylie *et al.*, 2016), commitment is defined as "a higher form of engagement". The ethics of care which is embodied as the activities of receiving, responding and committing, therefore introduces school leaders potentially to a high level of engagement in the transformation of township schools. In a similar voice, Witten (2010) considers leadership engagement in building community schools as a moral imperative by insisting on township schools' agentic roles in addressing a physically and emotionally challenging township environment.

Thus far, we have discussed that schools and township schools need to play the role as the practical space of leadership practices of ethics of care on ontological and epistemological levels. In what follows we detail leadership components of quality education concurrent with ethics of care attributes.

### **2.3.9 Ethics of care and educational leadership practice**

This section addresses the correlation between quality educational leadership components and ethics of care attributes. In doing so, we find the tendency of integrating ethics of care in addressing standards of leadership practices. Teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership practices will follow.

#### **2.3.9.1 Recognizing of the ethic of care as a leadership policy**

Studying African male school leaders in the USA, Bass (2020:359) highlights the remarkable position of the ethic of care for a quality education and leadership policy such as the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). Bass presents the statement of Standard 5 that "effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, *caring*, and supportive school

community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student” (NPBEA, 2015:27, cited by Bass, 2020:359).

Similarly, the research on developing the caring school leadership questionnaire (CSLQ) presents the main determinants regarding principals’ care, namely psychological, organizational/workplace and management determinants (Van Deventer & Van der Vyver, 2016:96-97; Van der Vyver *et al.*, 2014:2). The research aims to identify the determinants of care experienced by teachers from educational leadership for the purpose of developing an instrument for measuring the extent of the caring. Among them, emotional intelligence is identified as a key element of caring as well as the critical psychological determinant for effective leadership. Van der Vyver, Van der Westhuizen, and Meyer (2014:2) take, as the foundation of the determinants of care, an emotionally intelligent leader who shows empathy and sympathy, who is optimistic and who builds morale and motivates. Thus, the emphasis on emotional intelligence presented by the study seems significantly relevant to Gilligan’s notion of the ethics of care, which voices itself as different from the ethics of justice.

Concerning management determinants, trust, active listening, and accessibility are likewise identified as significant characteristics of a community of care; further, management through commitment, not by control, is accompanied by shared leadership (Van der Vyver *et al.*, 2014:3). The management determinants mentioned above seem especially concurrent with Gilligan’s elements of thick democracy, which are derived from the ethics of care.

Yet, when assuming the role of a leader, critical matters such as the relations of power must be addressed, which is an inevitable challenge and complexity in human relationships. In this regard, the complexity of principal leadership practice in schools needs to be examined. We discuss teachers’ perception of principals’ leadership practices next, while bearing this challenge in mind.

#### **2.3.9.2 Teachers’ perception on principal’s leadership practices**

Murphy and Torres (cited by Smylie *et al.*, 2016) express the view that the organizational climate of the school has relevance to the perceptions which school stakeholders have of “each other, of their relationships, and of the school as a place of caring and learning”. Similarly, with the focus on the relationship among stakeholders, Naidoo (2019:12) clearly points to the roles of leadership practices of the twenty first century as follows:

“Twenty-first century principals are required to develop and maintain healthy relationships with all stakeholders, ensuring that effective teaching and learning, being the “core business” of schools, takes place. Principals also manage resources efficiently,

and additionally, are required to make sure that legislation and education policies are implemented fastidiously.”

Naidoo (2019) explores the perceptions of teachers and the school management team (SMT) members on principals' leadership qualities. Naidoo (2019) employs a mixed method sequential, exploratory approach – by integrating the analysis of a qualitative investigation and literature review in developing quantitative questionnaires.

To the question on the factors which may hinder the principal's ability to implement and sustain his/her leadership practices, some meaningful responses were identified in ranking order as follows: presence of an abundance of administrative work (1); staff's resistance to change (3); inappropriate use of leadership style (5); staff's lack of commitment to the school's mission (4); ineffective communication between the principal and the staff members (11) (Naidoo, 2019:8-9). For the researcher, these factors seem to imply that collaboration and effective open communication between principal and teachers may overcome the obstacles against quality leadership practice. In doing so, the recognition of human vulnerability might lead both parties to embrace interdependency and mutual respect toward common good and school vision.

Yet, on the other hand, it is understood that these hindering factors reveal the nature of human relations – relations of power and shared leadership challenges. Before addressing the interaction between ethics of care and leadership practices, the leaders' challenges are discussed.

### **2.3.9.3 Leaders' practical challenge: relations of power**

We can understand the reality of the teachers' perceptions above as the framework of relations of power inherent in the relationship between leader and the followers. Through each party's language use, the relations of power usually can be perceived. As referred to above, it is seen that leaders' language use reveals the extent of their caring or leadership types in educational practice. Also, the manifestation of communicative language can be varied according to a leader's inherent worldview: whether it is autocratic, authoritarian, democratic, or not. In this respect, ethics of care strongly motivates democratic caring communication by attending to careful listening and supportive and empathic attitudes. In this regard, horizontal and open communication by the leader is significant since it becomes a tool to overcome or mitigate relations of power. The ethics of care approach has the possibility to resolve such relational challenges of power by developing open communication on the basis of shared leadership.

### **2.3.9.4 Shared leadership challenge: hierarchal paradigm**

Regarding shared leadership practice, we need to consider its challenges, including the matter of

responsibility of decision making or policy implemented by the delegated leadership. While identifying the nature of current school leadership practice as bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerialist, Du Plessis and Heystek (2020) indicate the gap between leadership policy and practice. As Bush and Middlewood (cited by Marx, 2018:21) argue, most principals rarely dare to acknowledge delegation as a shared leadership, or hesitate to give the authority for decision making to others since they have not experienced enough autonomy of responsibility or distributed leadership as they have been immersed in a culturally hierarchical paradigm. As Connell and Messerschmidt (cited by Dziwa, Postma & Combrink, 2020:2) refer to 'cultural hegemony', it seems that the reality of this hierarchical paradigm reflects a kind of domination of societal practices by the dominant players in a society (here in an educational institution).

Regarding the phenomenon of top-down and bottom-up discordance in local leadership/management practice, Du Plessis and Heystek (2020:850) mention principals' challenges in coping with managing requirements or voices from both educational authorities and in-school teachers. Furthermore, Du Plessis and Heystek (2020) suggest a policy change for greater school autonomy and accountability accompanying external accountability structures for local district offices.

In spite of this seemingly structural obstacle in view of accountability and thick democracy, the ethics of care approach strongly appeals to the own responsibility as an act of caring. Thus, it is expected that by considering teachers or SMTs as colleagues who are available to perform the responsibility, shared leadership practice might be infused in the school contexts. Finally, Du Plessis and Heystek (2020:854) emphasize the critical role or capacity of the principal promoting distributive leadership in schools. Accordingly, the discussion suggests the necessity of training for principals as well as for fellow leaders for an ideal practice of a distributed approach toward the harmonious interaction between a distributed approach and practice (*ibid.*). We do now see the significance of power relations in leadership practice, and it is subsequently critical to mitigate the asymmetry between the principal and teachers or education authorities and principals. To overcome the asymmetry of relations of power, the conceptualisation or understanding of leader/leadership should be considered; the concept 'leader' turns from a position of power into the role of service as the commitment to responsibility. This requires a kind of spiritual self-reflection on leadership identity.

#### **2.3.9.5 Spiritual self-reflection on leadership identity**

The potentiality of the ethics of care as educational leadership approach implies embracing spirituality beyond cognitive dimension in leadership practice. Significantly, the concept of 'care' needs to be regarded as the expression of spirituality or daily morality in ordinary life. Laugier

endeavours to “recenter moral philosophy around ordinary language” (2018:62). Epistemologically, this perspective leads us to the ethics of care which is expressed as attending to the life of the ordinary as Laugier (2018:62) advances as follows:

“Care is a sensitivity to the ordinary details of human life that matter. Hence, care is a concrete matter that ensures the maintenance (e.g., as conversation and conservation) and continuity of the human world and form of life.”

Put differently, Dantley’s (2003:3) critical spirituality perspective which is derived from the African American spirituality tradition, holds that through school leaders’ moral agentic action accompanying discourses which embrace optimism and pessimism, the asymmetrical relations of power might be deconstructed. From a critical theoretical perspective about the role of transformative leadership, Dantley (2003:15) argues that educational leaders should “critically examine the asymmetrical relations of power in the organizational context” to dismantle those practices.

In doing so, for leadership actions, it seems that the task of self-reflection and open communication matters. Thus, for principals to cope with practical relational challenges, an epistemological and ontological awareness of current leadership situations is required and the courage to be activist toward “a community of democracy, liberation and hope” beyond mere leadership training on a technical level (*ibid.*).

What follows is to address maintaining ideal caring relationship dealing with asymmetry in terms of relations of power.

#### **2.3.9.6 Maintaining the ideal of a caring relationship in power asymmetric relations**

Research on the relations of power between school leaders and teachers has not been found to fall in the framework of ethics of care. More detailed discussions on the relations of power seem beyond the scope of this study. Thus, instead, we can refer to some relevant work regarding power asymmetry (Bergmark, 2020; Bozalek, Watters & Gachago, 2015; Waghid, 2019).

Bozalek, Watters and Gachago (2015:271) explore the potential dangers of care for teachers in higher education and indicate the possibility of paternalism and parochialism of ethics of care as well as unequal power relationships between teacher and students. Following the theoretical framework of Tronto’s (Bozalek *et al.*, *ibid.*) political ethics of care, they suggest the necessity for dialogue between these parties.

On the other hand, Bergmark (2020:337), as researcher, recognizes the challenges in establishing symmetry between researcher and teacher, due to power relations, responsibility, and knowledge. In this regard, Bergmark (2020:337) suggests that firstly, it needs self-reflection on our own vulnerability as humans to develop caring relationships. Secondly, as a critical factor in dismantling the hindrance of relations of power, Bergmark suggests continuous reflection on relations of power or asymmetry of power (*ibid.*).

Similarly, the findings of the work by Bozalek, Watters and Gachago (2015:278) indicate the necessity of self-reflexivity in the engagement of practices of care with teaching in the field of higher education. They conclude as follows:

“Like any other practices of care, teaching is inevitably in danger of succumbing to the problematic sides of care – parochialism and paternalism. To be cognisant of these dangers of care, teachers in higher education may need to constantly re-evaluate their assumptions about teaching as a practice and the constituents of 'good care'” (Bozalek, Watters & Gachago, 2015:278).

Lastly, open communication serves as the basis of reciprocity which stresses the other self, rather than focusing on the topic. Thus, Noddings (cited by Bergmark, 2020:339) suggests:

“Reflection and communication are ways for learning the other’s perspective and, therefore, to promote a caring relationship by stating that ‘The attempt to maintain a caring relation is an attempt to keep the doors of communication open . . . requires continuous reflection on part of the carers.’”

Likewise, in the perspective of the relation between educator and student in higher education institutions, Waghid (2019:8,11) stresses inclusion as an act of ethics of care. Accordingly, he claims that “without the courage of speaking and listening to others, human beings will not be in relation to one another, and they will not exercise their equal opportunity to act responsibly towards themselves and others.”

To conclude, to cope with the challenges in cultivating an ethics of care in educational leadership practice, leadership agents need to reflect and apply the approach to the educational leadership context more vigorously. The critical ethics of care should be understood as follows: it is a moral and relational approach with the focus on contextualized commitment as an ethic and practice. Additionally, it offers theoretical potential for a paradigm shift from authoritarian leadership to democratic shared leadership. Lastly, the ethics of care serves as a means to recognise systemic

challenges against school reform. To do so, power asymmetry should be overcome through self-reflection, dialogue and ongoing recognition of vulnerability and interdependence.

### **2.3.9.7 Implication of schools as a morally connected community**

The ethics of care refers to the ontological relational moral theory which strongly underpins interdependence and vulnerability of human beings (Gilligan, 1993:142). It emphasizes the responsible practices of care as morality to be experienced in democratic communities based on the recognition of connectedness (Gilligan, 2011b:175; 2013b:60). In this regard, it is recognized that the significance of ethics of care can motivate a new leadership paradigm for a change of schools to become morally connected communities. In more detail, while referring to the scholars who have explored the caring approach, Beck (1994:12-13) identifies the three activities caring always involves: “receiving the other’s view; responding appropriately to the awareness; and remaining committed to others and to the relationship”. Particularly, it is worthy to note that “truly caring actions will be actions that move people toward community” (Buber, cited by Beck, 1994:15).

On the other hand, as to the foundation of caring ethics, Thaba *et al.* (2016:7) identify a willingness to serve others. They posit that “... it is possible to have a leader who is willing to listen, learn and accept criticism. A leader who leads by heart, not by mind, - is able to provide motivation to make others to participate and be involved in caring”. In this sense, it is seen that ethics of care puts the emphasis on spiritually, the role of the heart in human activities. Finally, it is agreed that “love, compassion and respect for God’s creation” cause caring (Ciulla; Gudyanga, *ibid.*).

The community-oriented approach in accordance with the ethics of care points to more communal democratic citizenship formation rather than the pursuit of atomized individual goals as referred to previously (Johnson, 2021; Freire, 2001). In doing so, it is noticeable that Gilligan’s (1993) feminist accounts of ethics of care fundamentally highlight the ontological barrier of patriarchal ideology – and gender hierarchy - hindering democratic leadership transformation.

However, as we discussed earlier, the feminist view goes beyond the claims of superiority in the feminine orientation and does not neglect the masculine justice approach. Rather, feminism should be dealt with as a further development of critical theory in that it shows forms of oppressions which critical theory did not indicate, while addressing the move from the ethics of justice to the ethics of care; from objectivity to subjectivity; from a reliance only on the cognitive to the inclusion of emotion and subjective experience. In this view, the feminist approach attends to a different but indispensable voice of care in responding to universal human relations and organizations. Then, as McKenzie and Blenkinsop (2006:1) contend, it is certain that the ethics

of care approach is characterized by being “ungendered and inclusive both in the private and public” domains.

### **2.3.10 Summary**

For the effective management of schools which are consistent in fostering a teaching and learning community, it is crucial that educational leaders are responsible for good leadership. In this regard, with the focus on the guidance of leaders, the components in building relationships such as motivation and communication and the sharing of leadership are critically concerned. Then, we can appreciate that such discourses regarding leadership styles and practices are relevant to the ethics of care approach since the desirable aspects can be practically motivated and generated from acknowledging the nature of interdependence and vulnerability as human conditions.

Finally, the discussion on leadership practices and surrounding socio-political and academic backgrounds ultimately confirms the significance of ethics of care within schools as a morally connected community in a new leadership paradigm. Accordingly, what follows is to present a teaching and learning community as a key feature of such educational leadership practices as have been discussed so far.

## **2.4 Teaching and learning community**

In discussing the management of schools or school systems, academic scholars and educational empirical researchers have mentioned the significance of schools as communities or teaching and learning (Beck, 1994; Freire, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992; Witten, 2010). In doing so, the inherent characteristics such as caring, belonging and sharing of the concept ‘community’ have been highlighted.

In a critical manner, Bass (2020:358) addresses the negligence of care articulation in educational contexts as follows:

“The theory espoused by care ethicists suggests that care in teaching and school leadership may be a missing piece in unsuccessful reform efforts which previously sought to close persistent gaps in student achievement.”

On the study of leadership dimensions which might influence student outcomes, Robinson (2007) stresses the necessity of connecting leadership more directly with the task of teaching and learning. As one of the five leadership dimensions addressed in the study, “ensuring an orderly and supportive environment” seems consistent with the ethics of care accounts since it implies the significance of the relational supportive culture of a school community.

Taking the above into consideration, it follows that in the South African educational context, leadership practices on cultivating a teaching and learning community need to be emphasized.

#### **2.4.1 Conceptualization of a teaching and learning community**

In terms of an alternative paradigm to organization as well as to leadership, the concept of community needs to be highlighted against the traditional approach (Sergiovanni, 1992:41). To do so, this section describes the concept of a teaching and learning community with the focus on the concept of community.

##### **2.4.1.1 An ethically community-oriented schooling paradigm**

The concept of 'community' is critical in understanding the African culture. Metz (2013:81) points out that "In the African tradition, the word 'community' is used not merely to signify some existing group or society but is used to refer to an ideal regarding the way the members of a group ought to relate to each other." It is thus seen that applying the concept of community to schooling has potential for schools to be culturally and ethically established. Metz (2013:81) appreciates the nature of altruism which the term 'community' itself bears.

While supporting the shared leadership approach, Sergiovanni (1992:41-42) notes that "community norms provide the school with substitutes for direct leadership". According to Sergiovanni's (cited by Mentz, 2002b:52-53) application of the theories of binding (*Gemeinschaft*) value and bonding (*Gesellschaft*) value to schools, the first value implies that the relationship is formed without any tangible goal or benefit; whereas the latter implies that the relationship is formed to reach some goal or to gain some benefit. He argues strongly for a move towards *Gemeinschaft* in schools by stating that "what educational administration theory needs is that the root metaphor for schools be changed from organization to community" (*ibid.*).

In line with the argument above, the 'community' concept provides normative values in terms of the aims of schooling. Johnson (2021:364) diagnoses current society by stating that ethical and spiritual values have been overlooked by "the profit motive". As such, international and local educational contexts have also been influenced by this neo-liberal market ideology, which focuses on the academic result of individuals as well as creating future workers for the economy markets. It has resulted in neglecting a normative pedagogical goal as the formation of the whole person as a democratic citizen. In this regard, it is important to mention that the pedagogically community-orientated approach overcomes the input-output process or the profit motive paradigm. In other words, the community-oriented school organization considers holistic thick democracy qualities such as respect, trust, cooperation, mutual understanding, care, and justice. The school

community addresses the schools' societal roles beyond that of maintenance and order, to fulfil the role of renewal and improvement of society. This addressing resonates Waghid's accounts of the integration with African education and Ubuntu. Waghid (2014:62-63) states that "communal sharing is a moral good, people exercise an obligation towards one another". Moreover, Waghid holds that the positive membership extends to "be responsive to problems in their society along with cooperation and harmony" (*ibid.*).

Significantly, this communitarian approach has been articulated in relation to educational reform in the global North. From the study on an American urban disadvantaged high school's smaller learning communities' initiative, Franklin and Nye (2010:205) remark how the concept of community is useful and meaningful in understanding the school reform in that it orients towards "ideals, beliefs, and visions that are vital in our social life". In a similar vein, according to Franklin (2010:172), "the notion of community employed for urban school reform in UK as a critical concept, orients toward the advocacy of partnership or the activation of civic capacity". In this view, it can be noted that the concept of community characterized by communitarian elements implies collaboration and partnership (Franklin, 2010:144; Misfud, 2017:2).

#### **2.4.1.2 As a critical culture of school**

Organizational culture symbolizes the totality of beliefs, values, and norms that are shared by those who are involved in the school, which provide the motivation for all actions in the school. Thus, culture can be viewed as both a determinant and the result of actions in the school culture; in an organization it is considered as an intrinsic characteristic (Mentz, 2002a:150-151).

In the conceptualization of community concerning school culture, we can firstly perceive a feeling of belonging in the community where teachers and learners are motivated to be committed to their roles, goal and vision while experiencing a sense of unity. Similarly, Mitchell (cited by Beck, 1994: 56-57) argues that a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for "healthy human development". Ultimately, Mitchell claims that for the transformation of schools where economic metaphors have dominated educational policies, administrators or leaders should embrace the view of "a commitment to mutual growth and development" rather than "survival and self-interest" (*ibid.*).

Secondly, the concept of community leads us to understand schools as fundamental settings of caring. A caring relationship flourishes in environments that emphasize a sense of community (Beck, 1994:10-11). In this regard, Hob and his co-authors (cited by Beck, 1994:10-11) remark that "In communities, individuals experience a sense of membership, ... and share a psychologically and personally satisfying connection with other people."

Lastly, this mutual growth and development referred to above represent a culture of sharing inherent in the concept of a teaching and learning community. As a result, we can find a communicative and collaborative working atmosphere between the leader and staff members, and further among teachers since they have common goals and values. Accordingly, the notion of community implies collaboration among the stakeholders in schools as well as related supportive communities out of schools, such as a neighbouring community, churches, and universities (Mentz, 2002b:52).

In short, the concept 'community' as culture embraces belonging, caring, and sharing on the levels of teaching and learning as well as of leadership. However, in establishing a culture of community-orientation in a school, the role of the principal is essential and decisive as discussed so far. Then, for the reform or development of a school into a teaching and learning community, it is indispensable that principals need to reflect on ontological and epistemological ethics of care prior to fostering a community and relevant activities. In this regard, it is desirable that a leadership development programme includes the introduction to and reflection on the ethics of care theory.

#### **2.4.2 Bringing ethics of care to the heart of leadership**

To respond to the paradigmatic change in leadership, a theoretical and ontological awareness of the ethics of care approach is required. It can be done through associating leadership practice with ethics of care accounts such as listening to the other voice, interdependence, questioning gender binary and patriarchal ideology, and collaboration for the building of caring relationships. In doing so, as Laugier (2018:71) states, the development of ethics of care may start from recognizing human vulnerability as the basis of politics of ordinariness.

In addition, in fostering a teaching and learning community, the following tasks relevant to ethics of care can be identified: self-reflection and spirituality; mentoring; interschool collaboration; community partnership; and, most fundamentally, developing open communication for shared leadership. The emphasis is on school leadership to improve in-school factors to cultivate a teaching and learning community. At the same time school leaders must systematically and urgently respond to township school learners' and teachers' needs.

As a simultaneous approach when dealing with improvement of township school, school leadership should deal with in-school factors and the combined and cumulative effects of hunger, trauma, crime, and violence. Witten (2010:224-225) stresses that "While a strong argument can also be made for first getting the basics right by focusing on improving the in-school factors that support more effective teaching and learning as the first step, this may not be the most effective approach in many schools."

Similarly, Runhare, Ouda, Vele and Mudzielwana (2021) uphold “stronger school–community partnership” to share responsibility for “children’s educational access and opportunity”. Moreover, while supporting the building of a school community, Witten (2010:224-225) adds inter -school collaboration, community partnership and government support. For the realization of township school improvement, Witten suggests that more work needs to be done on the school-based complementary learning framework that considers the collective work of a number of schools and their leaders who connect, co-ordinate, align and integrate their work to bring improved school and community outcomes to whole communities in the country (*ibid.*).

We find it significant that all the factors being addressed above are deeply aligned with ethics of care narratives as explored so far. What should be done to realize this community is to infuse teacher performance and collaboration with the visions above to build caring relationships.

### **2.4.3 Toward the vision of developing a teaching and learning school community**

Primarily, collaboration with teacher staff (SMT) and between teachers within the school is required to promote a teaching and learning community. Inter-school collaboration and community partnership are also essential. To do so, principals need to put the priority on building caring relationship with individual members. In this respect, the research on the principal’s leadership practices elevating teacher performance shows that leadership support, modelling good practices, and intellectual stimulation are critical (Van der Bijl & Prinsloo, cited by Marx, 2018:38-39). These narratives point to the aspects of ethics of care which highlight the morally relational caring approach.

Likewise, Bass’s (2000:25) study indicates the significance of the quality of relations between the leader and the follower. He argues that the quality rests on the leader’s supportive roles to develop “the self-worth of the follower by showing confidence in the follower’s integrity, ability, and motivation, and attending to the follower’s feelings and needs” (cf. Balkar, 2015; Meyer *et al.*, 2022).

To sum up, in light of today’s educational leadership approach, it is recognized that the concern of morally relational and responsible caring approach and shared leadership is conducive to existential social and global change as well as an academic and philosophical paradigm shift. In this regard, the tendency of inconsistency or the gap between the articulation and the reality of educational leadership practices reflects another challenge for a personal and organizational paradigm shift. Especially, in the school context, the school leaders’ frame of mind toward SMT members or senior teachers and their relations play a key role in enabling timely appropriate leadership practices beyond existing hierarchical paradigm accompanying relations of power.

Therefore, for the leadership development, reference to self-reflection and spirituality would be desirable before closing this chapter.

#### **2.4.4 Involvement of self-reflexivity and spirituality**

A holistic approach to leadership would include cognitive, emotional, and spiritual elements. For a leader, ongoing self-reflection seems crucial for the change or growth of an organization or a community. In underpinning the relational leadership approach, Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011:1443-1444) emphasize attending to “the present” as “the moment” when everyday relationship exists. Consequently, they suggest critical self-reflexivity and open dialogues as actions necessary for enabling such a way of being a leader. They remark that:

“At the heart of such an examination is a critical and self-reflexive questioning of what assumptions we hold about people; of how those assumptions play through our relationships and conversations; and of how others respond. It requires understanding the importance of creating opportunities for open dialogue and the need to be responsive to the subtleties....” (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011:1443-1444).

Yet, sociologists have argued the atmosphere of the absence of critical reflexivity in this materialistic society. Bauman (cited by Giroux, 2001:1) remarks that “our civilization has stopped questioning itself”. In this socio-cultural context, however, the South African educational policy makers seem to consider this action indispensable. For example, as a core value, the Standard for Principals (SASP) states the need for critical reflection on practice and perspectives in terms of participatory and ethical leadership practice (DBE, 2014; DBE, 2015a:6).

On the other hand, on spirituality, Johnson (2021:126) mentions that interest in spirituality associated with leadership practice has been increased in many workplaces or organizations. He reasons that the phenomenon primarily derives from the huge influence of such organizations as workplace in our daily lives (*ibid.*) According to Paloutzian, Emmons and Keortge (cited by Johnson, 2021:126), spirituality entails “transcendence, a striving for something bigger than, or beyond the self”. Then, more specifically, Johnson (2021:127) remarks that spirituality often takes the form of supportive behaviour. In this regard, in identifying common spiritual practices, Johnson refers to demonstrating caring and concern as well as respect for others’ values (*ibid.*).

In line with this, as Ciulla (cited by Smylie *et al.*, 2016:7) mentioned, spirituality can be defined as love which is usually expressed as care or caring activities. When considering the above, motives for caring as well as for transformation toward caring ethics are likely to be associated more with the heart and emotion than with cognition.

In this sense, caring ethics which is underpinned by the spirit of a willingness or a moral good to serve others would be beneficial in motivating SMTs as well as the principal to engage in the change of township schools to the culture of a teaching and learning community.

In fact, a relationship requires responsibility and continuous commitment to ensure its sustainability and efficiency. Thus, the fundamental feature of the ethics of care is the ethics of love. Practising the ethics of care is parallel to serving others, which needs the agency of spirituality, since love and a higher vision or goal inspire and sustain the commitment.

As for township school leadership, the task of promoting a teaching and learning community, is to embrace visible and invisible challenges, which includes the lack of physical resources and dualistic South African school structural barriers. However, simultaneously, the presence of vulnerable learners in township schools ethically forces school leaders or relevant stakeholders to engage as one agent to change the learners' lives. In this sense, self-reflection as well as collegial reflection among relevant leadership agents is required.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This literature review aimed to justify the engagement of ethics of care with leadership practices while putting the focus on fostering a teaching and learning community in the context of township schools. At the level of educational institutions, the ethics of care offers to school leaders a moral, and also a kind of political, perspective which prioritises the attitude and activities related to caring as our fundamental human orientation.

A theoretical framework based on Gilligan's (1993) ethics of care theory and Laugier's (2015) accounts regarding leadership practice can be developed on the premise that our contemporary world has called for a deeper understanding of the interdependence of humans and the diversity among human beings. Consequently, I would like to identify the following key concepts: human vulnerability and interdependence; a relational caring approach; thick democratic norms against a patriarchal paradigm; commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform.

Throughout this theoretical study, it was emphasized that aforementioned attributes or concepts should be present in the principals' personal beliefs and values, especially when embracing the ethics of care. However, concerning township school principals in South Africa, the dimension of spirituality is seen as another requisite beyond the cognitive dimensions. In other words, the complex and challenging situation in the township context requires a much higher level of commitment and perseverance for the embodied work of caring leadership to both teachers and learners.

Therefore, an empirical study on a principal's leadership practice of a township school is worthwhile since in the specific context, we can explore in depth how his practice is related to the ethics of care in developing a teaching and learning community as a culture. As a result, the investigation will attempt to understand and suggest how the ethics of care approach can assist principals (or SMT) to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools. In doing so, it is expected that the key concepts of the ethics of care developed in this chapter will contribute to facilitating an in-depth empirical study on an exemplary case's leadership practice in the neglected but ordinary vulnerable township context. The following chapter will present research design and methodology to plan and conduct the empirical study.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter 2, a literature review on the ethics of care, leadership practices, and a teaching and learning community was conducted to obtain theoretical knowledge concerning the aims of this research study. As a result, the following key concepts were highlighted as the theoretical framework developed from the ethics of care: human vulnerability and interdependence: a context specific caring approach; thick democratic norms against patriarchal paradigm; commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform. The theoretical study emphasized that these attributes or concepts should be present in the principals' personal values and leadership practice in township school context of South Africa, while embracing self-reflection and spirituality.

Being based on this understanding, this chapter attempts to address research design and methodology to investigate empirically how the ethics of care can assist a principal's leadership practice in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school. It entails research paradigm, research design method, further data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Research design and methodology**

Choosing research design and methodology depends on the purpose and aim of the research study. It also reflects the worldview of the researcher as the subject of the systematic work. The following section will discuss the entailments of the research design under the introduction of research paradigm for this study.

#### **3.2.1 Research paradigm**

Every scholar addresses diverse articulations on how qualitative research is discussed. For example, regarding philosophical perspectives, paradigms can be expressed as perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:8); others employ theoretical traditions and orientations (Patton, cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:8). On the other hand, some understand the difference between quantitative and qualitative research in light of methodologies rather than a view of the world of philosophical traditions (Lichtman, 2010:12). Thus, for this study, paradigm will be considered as a way of knowing as well as a way of doing, as Lichtman writes (*ibid.*).

For this study, an interpretivist paradigm will be used. According to Babbie and Mouton (cited by De Vos *et al.*, 2011:8), this paradigm is also called the phenomenological approach, as an approach that aims to understand people. The term social constructivist paradigm can be used

since the approach assumes that reality (knowledge) is socially constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:9). Rather than to find causality or generalization, most of all, this qualitative study intends to understand and interpret subjective epistemology and reality – a township school principal’s leadership practice in relation to the ethics of care approach. Therefore, I attended to how the principal’s leadership practice was characterized ontologically and practically, and further how the principal himself and teachers perceive and interpret the relation between his leadership practice and the ethics of care in the natural setting. In the end, this study aimed to get an insight on how the ethics of care assists principals to develop a teaching and learning community in township schools.

Regarding conducting interpretivist qualitative research, Merriam and Grenier (2019:7) note its critical nature by describing that the meaning under study is mediated through the researcher as instrument, data analysis is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive. In this regard, the researcher’s narrative on the phenomenon under study – embracing data collection, analysis, and interpretation - plays the critical role in this study.

Realizing that building a trusting relationship between the participants is pivotal to draw trustworthy data from them (and also with them), and adhering to standardized regulations by the NWU, I strategically took some measures to minimize harm according to the principle of “non-maleficence” (to do no harm) (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:119). They are listed such as sharing thorough information about the research study and the potential impact of the investigation with participants; the researcher’s commitment to the anonymity and confidentiality of participants in managing research data (Strydom & Roestenburg, 2021:124); seeking for objectiveness in data collection, analysis, and interpretation to complement the engagement of reflexivity and subjectivity. These will be addressed in relevant sections in this chapter. Finally, this interpretivist study will accomplish its aim when participants’ voices are heard accurately, and the inductive meaning-making process is conducted under professional supervision.

### **3.2.2 Research approach**

Research designs are logical blueprints (Yin, 2016:83). Denzin and Lincoln (1998:28) outline research design as follows: with a clear focus on the research question and the purpose of the study, it is to describe a flexible set of guidelines that relate theoretical paradigm to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical material.

I used the qualitative research approach in conjunction with Yin’s (2016:9) accounts on its features. Starting from the personal interest on educational reform of South African local schools, the literature review on the ethics of care in leadership practice as well as culturally cultivating a

teaching and learning community in a township context followed. As a result, I decided to conduct a case study of a principal in a natural school context to investigate empirically to what extent the principal's leadership practice has relevance to the ethics of care approach. Furthermore, I wanted to attend to multiple sources of evidence, including those who are in the natural setting, for the purpose of accounting for the principal's leadership practices with rich data. Finally, in the expectation of a possible contribution of the ethics of care approach to leadership practice in township schools, I intended to understand and interpret how the principal's leadership practices are related to the ethics of care approach via participants' own understanding and meaning-making processes.

### **3.2.3 Case study**

Lichtman (2010:81) identifies case study as in-depth examination of a particular case or several cases. Yin (cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:37) expounds that a case study as empirical inquiry investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

As a critical educational issue, while pondering on the reality of township schools which appear to fail to achieve quality education as mentioned in the previous chapter, I came to notice an exemplary principal's leadership case via a parent's introduction. As a result, for the purpose of envisioning a kind of school reform, I chose the case study as to the principal's leadership practice, as one of the specific qualitative designs.

Case study was fit for this study since it intends to answer descriptive and explanatory questions e.g. What and how? Then, case study also worked as this study was characterized by particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998:29-30).

Firstly, I chose an exemplary principal's leadership practice as a unit of study or bounded system to understand the relationship with the ethics of care approach. Next, this study strived for thick description regarding the principal's leadership practice and its possible relationship. This feature appeared throughout the process of data collection, analysis including the account for the result findings of this study. Lastly, this study was informative in nature, as the expectation was that the exploration of the principal's leadership practice would provide a potential reader with a chance to get a new insight to develop a teaching and learning community by the help of the ethics of care (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, regarding case study, Yin (2014:37) emphasizes that prior to conducting any data collection, it is vital for researchers to review relevant literature and theoretical propositions

as to the case under the study. He adds that this orientation makes case study understand differently from other methodologies such as grounded theory and ethnography. Since the purpose of this study is to investigate an exemplary principal's leadership practices while focusing on the ethics of care approach, it was required to do in-depth literature review on the ethics of care and leadership practice. Accordingly, after the literature review on discourses around the ethics of care, Carol Gilligan's approach was discussed closely studies. Later the background information was also introduced to the participants in the process of data gathering.

Finally, this qualitative case study enabled me to explore the principal's leadership through interaction with the participants in the process of data gathering in a designated township school located in JB Marks District in the North-West Province. This case study was conducted after the approval of the Research Ethics Committee with the consent and permission of the participants. I visited and provided the participants with brief study background information so that they could understand the aims of the study. Then, according to the schedules of empirical research (under the agreement with the schedules), the data collection process was conducted.

### **3.3 Selection of the case study's participants**

I purposefully selected one male African principal of a township school and its SMT members as the participants in this empirical study. Most of all, the researcher's practical interest was to understand how to transform township schools, to find generalization or causality on the topic. Thus, this study employed a form of extreme case sampling through which I would be learning about the case of a noticeable principal's leadership (Creswell, 2019:208). Yet, further, as Denzin and Lincoln (1998:94) suggest, "what can one learn from a single case? From the case reports, we learn both propositional and experiential knowledge"; it is expected that this single case study might be able to provide a kind of naturalistic generalization such as awareness and understanding.

Specifically, the researcher's decision of the extreme case sampling was motivated by the theoretical encounter with the feminist ethics of care approach as well as the empirical encounter with the case principal's leadership practices in the midst of the challenges of post-Apartheid educational practices in South African township schools. Even though the case is a male principal, his leadership testimonies delivered by parents and community neighbours made me inquire about the relevance with the ethics of care accounts. As a result, such inquiry led to the exploration of a possible relationship between them.

Moreover, to gain a holistic insight into the case principal's leadership practices, I included SMT or senior teachers as participants to conduct semi-structured interviews. That is, SMT members

or senior teachers (5-7) were asked to participate to verify the principal's autobiographical narrative and semi-structured interviews with the case. The criteria for selecting them were as follows: 1) those who have over five years experiences in the school; 2) those who have experience as HOD in the school; 3) the ones who are the members of SMT.

After obtaining the permission of the NWDBE and the University, I informed the principal and other SMT members of the aims of this study by means of a letter. Then, voluntarily, a total of six participants including the principal were included for the data collection.

### **3.4 Data collection process**

As McAlpine (2016:40) mentions, in interpretivist research, data collection implies an interaction or co-construction between researcher and participant, subsequently both become responsible for the stories which emerge. As a critical and responsible instrument along with the participants of this research study, I kept the followings suggested by Yin (2016:158-160) in mind throughout the entire data collection process: be a good listener; be inquisitive; be sensitive in managing others' time.

Accordingly, in the practical data collection procedure, I had to change the initial prospective steps for this empirical study after considering triangulating (as a frame of mind as well as methodologically) evidence and managing time in the communication with the participants as Yin recommends (2016:158-160). As a result, the following modified data collection process was followed.

#### **3.4.1 Semi-structured interview**

Greeff (2011:351) remarks that doing semi-structured interviews intends to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or account of, a particular topic. In this regard, this method was fit for this study as it aimed at obtaining detailed perceptions and accounts concerning the nature of the principal's leadership practices in conjunction with participant observation and auto-biographical narrative data.

I generated carefully designed open-ended questions to cover the topic thoroughly, and in redrafting, these became gentler and less loaded (Greeff, 2011:352). Prior to the practice of semi-structured interview, I conducted a trial interview with the interview guides designed under the supervision of the study leader and co-study leader (see annexure F).

Then, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the SMT members and a senior teacher according to individually agreed time schedules via mobile communication. All five SMT

members and one senior teacher participated in the interview. I became to conduct the interview with the principal as the last because of his busy schedules. Just before conducting the actual interview, each participant was provided with a copy of the interview guide so that they could reflect on the questions precisely. It could also guide in conducting the interview and allow flexibility for probing, and elaboration to the questions. All of them participated eagerly and in a positive manner despite their busy schedules due to preparing for a special class programme for supporting Gr 12 learners from neighbouring schools during the winter school holidays and the first part of term three (about the period of July to September).

With the permission of each interviewee, a voice-recording was taken, and the prepared interview guide directed the whole interview session. Each teacher responded to identical questions related to the research study, centred on the relation between the principal's leadership and the ethics of care. Before or in the course of the interview, I gave them a brief written introduction on the ethics of care approach.

For active interviewing, I tried to be respectful and made them feel comfortable by proper modest responses while monitoring myself on time and the transition of the category of questions. Participants were given verbatim interview transcripts to modify as required, as this provides the best data base for analysis (Merriam, cited by O'Donoghue, 2007:134). They were asked to comment on it; and they were free to check and modify their transcript. They all were satisfied in terms of accurate reflection of their perspectives.

While using body language like clapping or acting during the interview, all participants showed interest, and in a considerate manner answered the questions confidently and comfortably. They attended to the interview thoroughly, with respect and in a collaborative manner. I also expressed keen interest by agreeing to their responses or asking probing or guiding questions. They were assured that their privacy would be protected, and of confidentiality in terms of dissemination of the findings of this study.

After conducting each interview, I started transcribing the recorded data. The interview transcriptions were made of all the participants, and they were asked via email to check whether they were satisfied with the contents. They were satisfied with the contents. Then, all verbatim transcripts were organized into categories and sub-categories by a deliberate codifying process so as to develop reliable and plausible themes and findings for this study.

The following aim guided this empirical study: To explore how the ethics of care is practised in a designated township school through the principal's leadership practice. Accordingly, the interview guide was prepared for obtaining authentic meaningful answers to the aim.

Ultimately, the interviews were aimed at finding answers to the following research question: How can the ethics of care influence leadership in developing a teaching and learning community (TLC) in a township school?

### **3.4.2 Autobiographical narrative**

By sending e-mail on the auto-biographical narrative guidelines, the principal was asked to write his autographical narratives on his own (about two pages) while focusing on the following headings: his background (family and meaningful others); career and educational training background; current leadership practices and related vision / philosophy. I obtained the narrative data by e-mail. On account of the chronological delay in obtaining these data, they were used for in-depth understanding related to the interview data.

Following the narrative guidelines (see Annexure I), the principal wrote his autobiographical narrative with some significant events which influenced his leadership formation and practices. It took quite a long time to get the autobiographical narrative data. Later, I could perceive that it might have been uncomfortable for the principal to create the narrative written in English, not spoken or in his mother tongue, considering the time restraint with his busy daily schedule as a principal. However, he did his best to complete and sent it to me via electronic mail. Finally, I could use the data to motivate the questions generated in the analysis of interview data with him and other participants, as well as for the verification of the interview data.

### **3.4.3 Observation of a morning briefing session**

As Silverman (2013:127) explains, the aim of observation in this study was to gather first-hand information about the nature of the principal's leadership practice in the interaction between the principal and teachers occurring in a natural context.

I observed a regular staff meeting which was also named as morning briefing session to gather data on the nature of the principal's leadership practice in the interaction with teachers in the library. Insufficient communication on data collection schedule of observation and the principal's official busy schedule led to conducting only one observation. However, the observation conducted in later stages enabled me to support or prove the findings which emerged from the interview data in conjunction with document reviews. The meeting lasted about 30 minutes and an audio recording was made, with permission. Focusing on the nature of leadership practice to guide the everyday tasks which the principal manages, the following were identified: the subject of initiation, the reaction of the participants and the principal's non-verbal signals.

#### **3.4.4 Document reviews**

Documents, as a rich source of data for social research, provide the conceptual density required for authentic research (Punch; Strauss; cited by O'Donoghue, 2007:108). Yin (2016:156-157) furthermore points out that collected objects can reduce the problems and challenges of reflexivity, and documents are used to complement interviews and other conversations.

To understand the school as the natural setting, I had asked the principal for some document materials as a data source to supplement interviews and observations. Finally, with permission, the following documents were collected in the form of copies or pictures: the vision statement of the school; the SMT meetings minutes in 2022; dropout rates (between 2020-2022); School Improvement Plan (SIP) in 2022; and learners' academic and promotion results in 2021 (through SIP) (see Annexure K). The data obtained from those documents at a later stage were used to prove the interviews and autobiographical narrative data as to how the school leadership supports and cares for the learners to promote a teaching and learning community in the school.

#### **3.5 Role of the researcher**

In conducting qualitative research, stories, narratives, and excerpts from interviews are collected as data by the researcher. In addition, the researcher's narrative on the phenomenon under study – embracing data collection, analysis and interpretation - plays the critical role in this study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019:7). I realized my critical role as human instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1998:20). Moreover, this role reminded me of my responsibilities – honesty and trustworthiness for research integrity (Marušić, 2010) so that this work could give value to knowledge field and participants also.

Before visiting the designated school, I contacted the principal via electronic mail and explained about the study through the attached written permission letter. The principal gave me permission positively and arranged the schedule to meet SMT members. During the meeting for informed consent for the study, to build rapport with the participants, I shared a simplified version of my personal story - why my family came to SA - with them. Then I could feel that it worked to make them feel comfortable. Then I talked about the reputation of the school and the reason why I chose the school for my study. I understood their uncomfortable stance to be an interviewee as SMT, a management position. I referred to the intention of this study, which is about the relationship between the principal's leadership practice and the ethics of care, rather than evaluating the principal. Finally, I could get informed consent letters with signatures from the five SMT members. The principal could not sign then since he was absent on that day owing to his schedule.

Because of the absence of the principal in the meeting, and later because of his other duties, the interview schedule with the principal had to be postponed to the last. As a result, data collection procedures were modified flexibly according to the availability of participants and the school. On the other hand, facing such delayed data gathering which was related to the principal regarding autobiographical narrative and observation made me feel challenged.

However, in order to attend to the role of a researcher, I was respectful and tried to ensure confidence. Thus, I approached the school site as well as the SMT participants with utmost sensitivity for the interviews, observation and documents review data gathering.

I carefully monitored the course of the interviews and put the participants at ease. With well-prepared interview guidelines, I attended to the questions and body language of the participants. Participants were assured that their responses would be managed with confidentiality.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Schurink, Schurink and Fouché (2021:391) state that data analysis is seen as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data collected. In practice, as Lichtman (2010:193) remarks, qualitative analysis is an ongoing process, not a linear process following the collection of data, but more as an iterative process. Put simply, Merriam and Tisdell (2016:204-206) define category construction as data analysis while regarding a category the same as a theme, a pattern, a finding, or an answer to a research question.

For Lichtman (2010:199), the goal of this analysis is to move from coding initial data through identification of categories to the recognition of important concepts. Most of all, keeping the purpose of this study in mind, several files were created to organize the data in a way that different data sources were kept separate in a folder. A journal file was created to record the researcher's reflection on the process of data collection and analysis (see Annexure L).

What follows is a description of the process of practical data analysis for this empirical research. After obtaining permission from the DoE, about three months - from the end of June to September - were spent on the data collection and analysis. This process occurred in a non-linear fashion (Yin, 2016:187). With Saldaña's (2013) approach of coding in mind, I tried to follow Yin's (2016) guidelines to conduct data analysis of semi-structured interviews while referring to the guidelines of Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and O'Donoghue (2007:135-136). Thus, the analysis process was conducted in an inductive way. Subsequently, for the principal's autobiographical narrative data, a narrative analysis was conducted. Lastly, document reviews and staff meeting observation data

obtained at a later stage were used as supporting data to verify the findings of the analysis of the semi-structured interviews data.

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interview data analysis process**

With the data obtained from semi-structured interviews with the principal and SMT members, content analysis was conducted by coding, categorizing, and identifying themes or concepts. As the coding of each interview transcript proceeded, the initial codes of the first interview transcript were used for comparison between the transcript data, and new codes were also added. This iterative process continued until the codifying of all the interviews transcripts was completed (see Annexure G).

Firstly, I generated codes from meaningful segments while reading the first transcript. The labelled codes were featured as unique wording being inferred from the transcript. Based on the initially generated codes, I could also compare and generate new codes while using the initial codes and conducting constant comparison of similarity and difference. These codes enabled me to quickly examine and scrutinize all data. I could finish this coding process when the initial coding of all the data was completed. During this process, my supervisor and co-supervisor guided me by giving examples on coding and data analysis.

Having completed coding by re-reading all the transcribed data, related codes were combined into categories. All five categories generated were labelled by using descriptive and analytic expressions. They all corresponded to the main research questions.

After identifying subcategories under each category, I embarked to describe and integrate them with the ethics of care approach discussed in chapter two. The intent of the process was to move to the interpretation phase. By linking the categories identified as above with the research questions of this study, themes emerged which contributed to the findings of the study.

Finally, in a deductive way, the derived themes were analysed again to ensure that they could embrace the authentic meaning of the original data by rereading and checking them constantly, and possibly supporting existing knowledge or forming propositions as the base of new knowledge.

### **3.6.2 Autobiographical narrative data analysis**

Narrative data analysis has relevance when performing a deep descriptive and interpretive analysis. While comparing narrative analysis with traditional analysis methods, Riessman (1993:3) claims that “precisely because they are essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be

preserved, not fractured by investigators, who must respect respondents' way of constructing meaning and analyse how it is accomplished."

Similarly, Smith (2000:328) contends that narrative language grants access to subjective experience, providing insights into conceptions of self and identity and guiding towards new ways of studying memory, language and thought, socialization and culture. The analysis of all interviews data preceded the analysis of the autobiographical narrative data, as it took long to obtain the latter. The findings which emerged from codifying and categorizing the interview transcripts contributed to developing vital concepts in analysing the autobiographical narrative data. The following categories emerged from the narrative analysis of the autobiographical data:

- experience of physical vulnerability
- encountering meaningful others
- becoming an inspiring teachers' educator
- working together
- commitment-centred approach.

To conclude, those categories seemed to meaningfully resonate with the ethics of care accounts, working towards the triangulating of data in relation to the semi-structured interviews and the observation of a staff meeting.

Ultimately, the principal's autobiographical narratives could play the role to perceive his own interpretation of leadership, the ethics of care, and of the context to reveal his identity formation as a principal and its idiosyncratic features. Here, a level of consistency of the narratives made them appear credible or trustworthy (Merriam & Grenier, 2019: 263). Thus, this autobiographical data was used to prove consistency with the aid of mainly semi-structured interview data analysis.

### **3.6.3 Observation of a regular staff meeting (morning briefing session)**

Grix (2000:63) points out that one needs to remain aware of the potential role of those factors that are not so easily assessed: for example, the effect of tradition, the concept of trust, and the influence of social context on their behaviour. Recognizing these factors, the observation data for this study intended to grasp the nature of the interaction between the principal and all the teaching staff in a natural context. The meeting was held in the school library at (07:25) twenty-five minutes past seven in the morning and lasted about 30 minutes. The principal was sitting on the chair in the front and seemed prepared for the meeting while the teachers were sitting on learners' chairs in a group. One female came a little late and one male teacher joined the meeting later.

In the front, the principal sat on the chair at a big table while all 41 teachers sat on chairs in the library. There was vibrant communicative interaction between the principal and teachers regarding Gr12 learners' caring/supervision as well as delivering information critical to the teachers from the NWDE District officials. It was found that mostly SMT members shared their opinions to the agenda the principal presented. After finishing the observation and before leaving the setting, I wrote down my perceptions of the observation to elevate the reliability (see Annexure J).

While I was focusing on the nature of leadership practice to guide the everyday tasks which the principal manages, the following themes were identified during the observation:

- the subject of initiation and interaction
- the reaction of the participants
- the principal's non-verbal signals.

The meeting proceeded by discussing the caring supervision for Grade 12 learners, sharing information from the DoE, and articulating the activities and events relevant to the learners. The principal initiated the discussion with the participation of mostly SMT members in raising their opinions to the relevant agenda. Female and male teachers shared their views relatively equally. The principal's body language, such as the using of his hands and eye contact, and the change of the volume of his voice seemed to make the staff attend to him better. There was humorous talk, and also laughter – initiated by the principal - and different views were expressed during the meeting in dealing with the caring of Grade 12 learners. However, most of the teachers except grade 12 learners' teachers seemed uninvolved even while they were listening to the speakers. Finally, finishing the morning briefing session, the principal informed the teachers of another meeting during the lunch time break to reach a decision about managing grade 12 learners during the preparatory examination period.

#### **3.6.4 Document review**

The documents which served as data were the picture of the school vision statement and mission, copies of minutes of the SMT meetings in 2022, dropout rates' copies (between 2020-2022), the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in 2022 and learners' academic and promotion results in 2021 (through SIP). Those documents were used as critical data to support interview and autobiographical narrative data in establishing how the school leadership and teachers support and care for the learners to promote a teaching and learning community in the school. I repeated

a critical reading of the documents. Finally, the findings via thematic analysis of the documents contributed to the credibility of this study.

The derived themes are as follows:

- seeking for critical pedagogy
- fostering a teaching and learning environment
- vulnerable township schools and learners
- implementing strategic caring actions for learner performance.

The analysis process of all collected data intended to explore the interrelation between the principal's leadership practices and the ethics of care approach. In doing so, mainly the results of the interview data analysis guided the following data analyses.

I chose various collection methods for getting thick data. However, to keep this analysis process simple due to their late collection, I decided to use observation data of a staff meeting and document reviews to verify or corroborate semi-structured interviews data with the principal and the SMT members. Thus, auto-biographical narrative data and interviews transcripts data were more focused in this analysis.

As proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016:204-212), via a hand coding process, open coding and axial coding with the first interview data with SMT members were conducted. Then, the next verbatim transcript was checked whether there were any similarities and differences with the first transcript. Also, a separate list of new terms (codes) was made to the second one. In this manner, all interview data were analysed to generate categories while constant comparison method was utilized. Finally, some codes were excluded and refined, and categories were revised to identify the final ones to answer the research questions in this study. The analyses of the autobiographical narrative, observation of a morning briefing session and the review of documents served to verify the interpretation of the interviews.

By nature, even this category construction is highly inductive. Toward the end of study, a deductive stance may be taken to search for more evidence to justify the final set of categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:210). Accordingly, I completed categorization when the set of categories seemed plausible, and the study leader and co-study leader agreed that the categories make sense in light of the transcripts data (*ibid.*). I revisited the list of categories to recognise important concepts for the study. To move from categories to concepts as a final step, I had to identify from

the data what meaning could be found in organizing my codes into concepts and then I accordingly reached the development of themes (Lichtman, 2010:199-200).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:208) warn that in generating categories, the researcher should think about her own biases which may influence the study beyond the epistemological and theoretical framework. To examine and prevent this factor, I needed self-reflection and the study leader and co-study leader's supervision. I discussed with the co-study leader the process of interview transcripts data codifying and categorization.

### **3.7 Building credibility and trustworthiness**

Yin (2016:85) contends that a credible study should provide assurance that you have properly collected and interpreted the data in order to prove that the findings and conclusions accurately reflect and represent the world that was studied. In practice, the process of data collection and analysis had to be flexibly adapted to the situation of the site in the ongoing communication with the participants.

As for trustworthiness, according to Yin (2016:85), "building trustworthiness mainly results from infusing an 'attitude' throughout the research and during the design work". First of all, I must acknowledge the limitations of the method of sample selection as well as my own limitations as human instrument in terms of analysis and interpretation of data. In this regard, to mitigate the issue of reflexivity in the process of data collection and interpretation in qualitative study, I used audio-taped data collection to repeatedly listen to the data. As for triangulation, I conducted member checking as to the principal's and teachers' interview transcripts. To mitigate reflexivity and limit possible bias, I took unobtrusive measures like the principal's autobiographical narratives as well as document reviews.

On the other hand, I ensured that the responsibility for a thick and in-depth description of the principal's leadership as well as ethics of care accounts, complemented this single case qualitative study.

Next, trustworthiness resulted from demonstrating the authenticity of the work: the soundness of the data source, that participants made accurate representations of themselves. The rapport with the participants built by detailed purpose of my study enabled them to accurately represent themselves. Then, I developed well-planned questions in order to get more accurate information regarding the principal's leadership identity and perception of care, and the teachers' perceptions of his leadership practices. Subsequently, before conducting the empirical research I conducted a trial interview with a retired teacher to check the contents of the questions and time period of

the interview. Lastly, for the trustworthiness of the practically conducted fieldwork, I kept a personal journal to remind myself how the research procedures went and what challenges appeared during the data collection and analysis (see Annexure L).

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

Lichtman (2010:66) defines ethical behaviour as “a set of moral principles, rules, or standards governing a person or profession.” The credibility of a study relies on the ethics of the investigator. As Yin (cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:261) notes, in qualitative studies, the situational and relational nature of ethical dilemmas rely on the researcher’s own sensitivity and values besides attending to the pre-established guidelines.

I first obtained permission to conduct the research from the Research Ethics Committee of the NWU’s Faculty of Education (see Annexure A). Thereafter, I sought permission from the Department of Basic Education in the North-West Province, the JB Marks District, the school principal, and the School Governing Body of the designated school. In practice, the approval process took about three months and then I could approach the designated school site (see Annexures B; C; D). By the arrangement of the principal, I met other SMT members to participate and gained informed consent from the five SMT members and one senior teacher. Through this process, it was assured that participation was voluntary, and the participants might withdraw from the research at any time without being penalised in any way (see Annexure E). I treated all the data with confidentiality and ensured anonymity where applicable. Further, for data presentation I planned to use pseudonyms for confidentiality and privacy. Furthermore, to ensure the integrity of research, the collected data were treated confidentially and would be stored in the study leader’s custody, locked in a safe cabinet for a period of seven years. After that, it will be destroyed.

In practice, while being respectful for participants in terms of time management and privacy, firstly, I contacted the principal of the prospective participating school and thereafter contacted the different participants to set up interview dates and times suitable for the participants. I was also responsible to obtain the informed consent from the participants. I agreed on a timeframe for the auto-biographical narrative with the principal and made regular contact to track the progress. However, during the data collection process I had to cope with the situational challenge like delayed schedules with tolerance and flexibility.

I conducted the interviews with strict adherence to the approved protocols. I ensured to stick to the scheduled dates and times, and to be in communication with the participants before the interviews to ensure that all parties were still in agreement on them.

Next, for building a reciprocal relationship with the participants, I kept the modes pertinent to all data collection processes in mind. In practice, data collection and analysis processes had to be flexibly adapted to the situation of the site in the ongoing communication with the participants. For example, I tried to be a nondirective investigator during interviews, providing information of the study background and promising to honour their privacy and confidentiality. The participants had the chance to comment on the content of the transcripts to ensure data ownership pertaining to the content sharing (Lichtman, 2010:66).

Lastly, I experienced the possibility of multiple interpretations due to the realities of qualitative research as incessant mind work. To mitigate the subjectivity or reflexivity in data collection and analysis against the tendency to selectively analyse data, I continuously posed questions about my data and made a constant comparison with regular supervision of my study leader and co-study leader (Yin, 2016:185). I also kept a personal journal to monitor the implementation and progress of the research throughout the research process (see Annexure L). Ultimately, I ensured the integrity of the data collection process and ensured the safety of the participants as well as their privacy and confidentiality.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter presented a methodological plan for conducting the qualitative case study following the interpretivist paradigm. Accordingly, there was the introduction of case study as a strategy for this empirical study, which entailed the justification of a single case study of the male South African township school principal accompanying the SMT members' interview participation under study. Then, the data collection methods and their collection process used for the study were described. For this qualitative study, I collected in the form of the principal's autobiographical narrative, the semi-structured interviews with the SMT members (separate schedules), observation of the regular staff meeting and document reviews such as SIPs, and minutes of the SMT meetings. This study mainly focused on the relationship between the ethics of care and single case of the principal's leadership practice along with the aid of SMT members' participation for verifying. Subsequently, the introduction of data analysis was presented, along with the role of the researcher. Lastly, the issue of ethical considerations as well as that of credibility and trustworthiness were discussed. In the following chapter, I will present the generated codes, categories and interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented research design and methodology for this empirical study. According to the qualitative interpretive paradigm, the data collection methods of a case study were chosen. Thus, a detailed collection and data analysis were planned and conducted for the purpose of answering the research questions. This chapter focuses mainly on data presentation and interpretation of the analysis in the form of a discussion. As Simons (2009:121) remarks, coding and categorizing are characterized as systematic, comprehensive, and cumulative, which gradually builds up understanding or explanation. Therefore, data were coded, categories were formed, described, and integrated with the ethics of care approach. In doing so, as a theoretical framework for analysis, the four key concepts in the ethics of care which emerged from the literature review were incorporated in the discussion.

Before proceeding with the report of the analysis, I will briefly describe the demographical background of the case school and participants' profiles along with the conceptual introduction of coding and categorising.

### **4.2 Background of the school and the interview participants**

The school is located in a socio-economically disadvantaged extension township area in the JB Marks District in the North-West Province. As such, it is categorized as a Quintile 3 school according to the division framework of the DoE of South Africa. I found on entry a recently renovated school gate, and in the back of the school site, a well-managed vegetable garden and a neat kitchen which provides the learners with meals. A pleasant atmosphere prevailed in the school and the bright and eager look of learners and teachers gave a unique and refreshing impression. Every time I visited the site for data collection, the principal was busy meeting parents, talking to administrative staff, and communicating with people on the phone. His office was full of award trophies and the pictures of the matric learners' graduation ceremonies. And on the walls in the corridor, I could also find the framed school vision and mission statements.

The principal was appointed when the school was established in 1997 and he has been serving the school since then. Being categorized as a Quintile 3 school, school fees are not expected from parents and the financial management of the school relies exclusively on government grants and funding.

Currently, the school has about 1100 learners and 42 teaching staff – 16 male and 26 female teachers. The school has six SMT (School Management Team) members – two male and three female, and the male principal.

For the semi-structured interviews, the participants were the principal, four SMT members and one senior teacher as the one female SMT member couldn't participate in the meeting. Instead, one senior male teacher was invited to participate in the interview.

The following presents the profile of the participants in the interviews.

Participants Codes/name	Position	Male or Female	Teaching Experience in the School	Overall Teaching experience
The principal	Principal	M	15 years	29 years
T1	Head of Department	F	7 years	32 years
T2	Head of Department	M	8 years	20 years
T3	Deputy Principal	M	12 years	29 years
T4	Deputy Principal	F	11 years	28 years
T5	Senior Teacher	M	7 years	17 years

**Table 4-1: Interview participants' profile**

According to Newman (cited by Grix, 2000:64), the level of analysis decides what evidence is regarded permissible and thus guides the fieldwork process and underlines the way in which the data are ultimately interpreted. For this empirical study, the unit of analysis was defined as the leadership practice of a township school's male principal, and the teachers' perceptions. Therefore, the level of analysis in this study was identified as a micro-levelled single case principal's leadership practice in a designated school (Grix, 2000:63-64).

### **4.3 Data presentation of the semi-structured interviews**

Prior to presenting the interview data, what follows is to discuss the concepts surrounding coding and categorisation since the conceptualization was needed to facilitate the interpretation for this study.

#### **4.3.1 Understanding coding and categorizing**

Traditionally, the data analysis process comprises data collection, data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, cited by Silverman, 2013:140-141). On

the other hand, put simply, the data analysis process can be identified as coding and categorizing. Scholars might have different understandings in employing the terms 'category' or 'concept'. For Merriam and Tisdell (2016:204), category is equivalent to a theme, a pattern, a finding, or an answer to a research question. They remark that "category construction is data analysis" (ibid.). This ambiguity - the diverse perspectives in employing terminology - demanded a clear understanding.

Saldaña (2013:8-9) underlines that "to codify is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize". Further, Saldaña has the following claim on qualitative codes:

"I advocate that qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity (a pattern), they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connections" (2013:8-9).

Ultimately, the potentially confusing process of coding, categorizing and the finding of themes was illuminated by one of Charmaz's (cited by Saldaña, 2013:8) metaphors. She states that coding "generates the bones of your analysis. ... [I]ntegration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton" (cited by Saldaña, 2013:8).

On the other hand, in doing the analysis, pre-codes can be generated either from a theoretical or methodological framework or issues identified by the researcher (Simons, 2009:122). In practice, I established the key concepts in the theoretical framework, so that they might contribute to a solid academic grounding for a holistic interpretation. I did however decide to generate the codes and categories from the data, that is, the specific context of participants, and then I ensured that they are congruent with the key concepts found in the literature review. As Simons (2009:122) states, the reason was that I wanted to use language and the specific context of participants to highlight that categories are based on the data rather than stemming from a priori preconceptions of the researcher.

I used classification reasoning via constant comparison while utilizing my intuitive senses when grouping main categories and sub-categories from selected codes (Lincoln & Guba, cited by Saldaña, 2013:9). In other words, content analysis was followed in this process. As the result of ongoing modifying processes, final categories and accordingly a list of sub-categories, were generated.

I used pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the school and the participants; the designated school is called 'the Township Secondary School', and the principal is referred to as "Mr Chepo"; the SMT/senior teacher participants were numbered as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5; the individual SMT members' position was not indicated respectively.

In this phase, it needed to be verified and confirmed whether the set of categories seemed plausible through the guidance and feedback of the supervisor and co-supervisor as well as member checking (with the principal). After the process of several modifications, the final categories were made in descriptive or analytic terms. In the initial categorization phase I generated four categories, but in the second one, all five categories were identified by including township school realities.

To check all the criteria - similarities, differences, and frequencies - in my category scheme (Woods, 2006:32), I chose to display the sets of categories in the form of a table. To compare with selected codes, I reread the interview transcript materials. About 30 codes were generated. Finally, by grouping relevant codes, the finalized categories and accordingly sub-categories were identified and presented as a diagram.

#### 4.3.2 Categories and sub-categories

Relevant codes, categories, and sub-categories are presented in a tabular form as follows:

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>	<b>Related coded examples</b>
1.Principal's leadership characteristics	1.1 Inspiring and accountable 1.2 Strategic and organized for effective T/L 1.3 Risk- taking communicator	*P-PCI: Principal – personal characteristics inspiring *P-MSE: Principal – managerial skills effective
2.SMT members' work orientation	2.1 Cultivating professional collegiality 2.2 Commitment to achieving of the school vision 2.3 Resolving conflicts by leadership Support	*TWS-WT: Teacher work satisfaction – working together *P/T QEA: Quality education accountable

3.School as a teaching and learning community	3.1 Diversity and solidarity of the school vision 3.2 The culture of caring /cared and ownership 3.3 Toward tolerance and growth	*SCCaF: School community concept as family
4.Township school realities	4.1 Vulnerable learners 4.2 Lack of resources/infrastructure 4.3 Potential agency for change	* S/C: Providing SS (need specific support)
5. Leadership actions	5.1 Humility and open communication 5.2 Leading by modelling/discipline 5.3 Mobilizing (school/ community) caring strategies	*P-CSU: Principal communicative skills for problem solving utilizing

**Table 4-2: Coding and categories**

#### 4.4 Interpretation

This section proceeds to integrate them with the ethics of care theory by which the key concepts were identified as theoretical framework in Chapter 2. Relevant quotations will also accompany this analysis.

##### 4.4.1 Describing the categories and subcategories

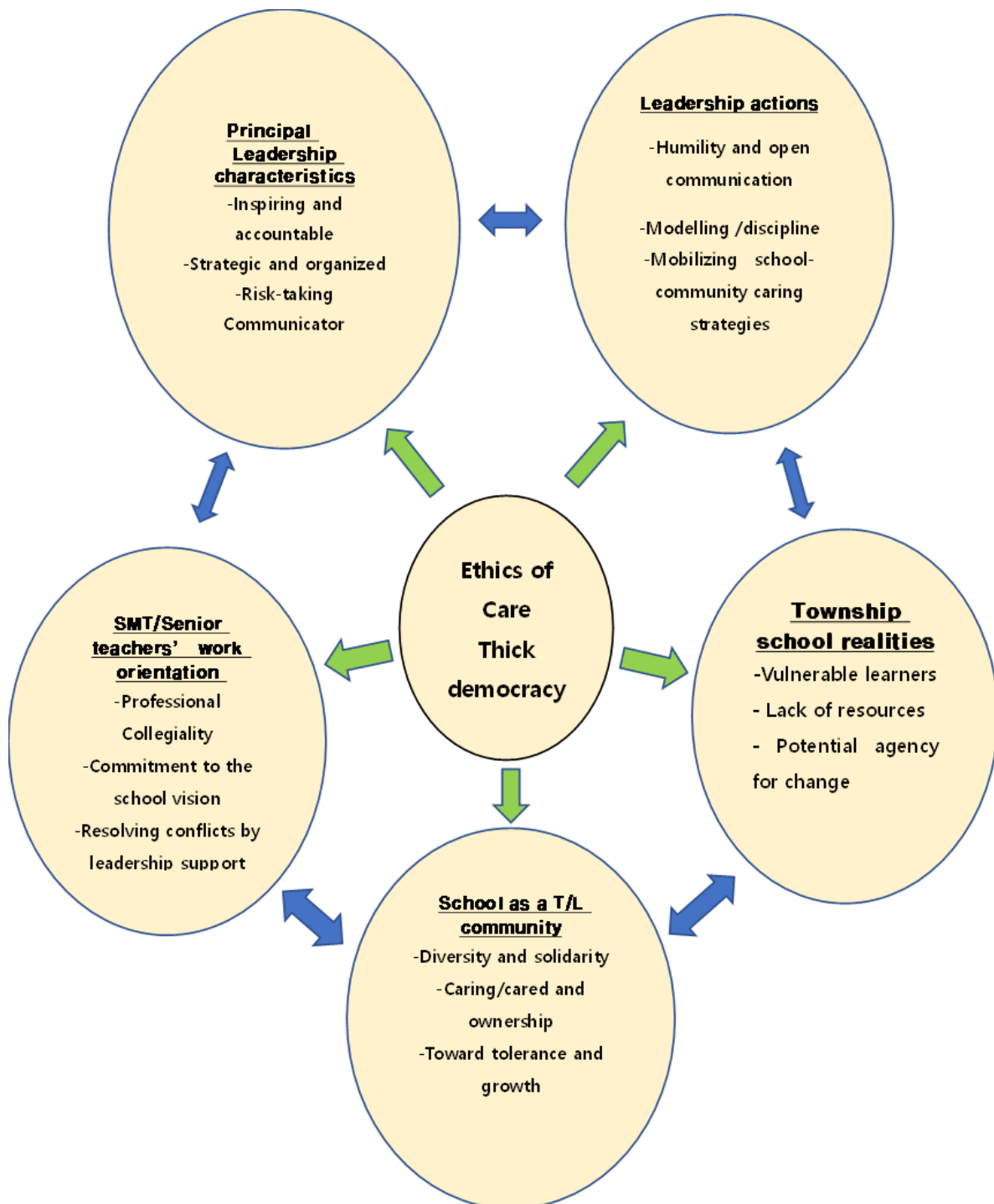


Figure 4-1: Diagram of the principal's leadership analysis from the interviews

#### 4.4.1.1 Mr Chepo's leadership characteristics

All the interview participants agreed and emphasized Mr Chepo's hardworking and fair attitude to all the staff regardless of gender, and his focus on responsible teaching and learning. The most highlighted characteristic was his modelling of ethical leadership traits as Joubert (2018b:26) states that respectful leaders are consistent, punctual, responsive, and proactive to help, in a firm manner, those struggling, in order to ensure the school, staff members and learners.

The following sub-categories will be described in more detail.

##### *Inspiring and accountable leadership*

According to the responses of the participants, it was inferred that Mr Chepo's exemplary personal characteristics led the SMT/senior teachers to have trust, which contributed to the subordinates' willing participation in their jobs including teaching and learning.

With the emphasis of Mr Chepo's supportive characteristic, T4 added:

*Our principal is a very good person... and he is one of the principals that is always supportive. You know when we go to him regarding any issues, he will assist you and then show that at the end the solving of the problem or the problem you talked to him. He will show that at the end of everything each one is very happy. He is a very good leader.... He is a very good leader .... who can lead...*

In this regard, T1 said sympathetically:

*T1: (confidently responding) My principal is a good manager. He is also a good leader. He is very humane because he respects his values in life. He even values of other people, not forgetting his self-respect and self-discipline. ... Above all, he is a good communicator.*

Moreover, Mr Chepo himself stressed the role of a school leader as an inspiring agent. He remarked in a normative way:

*Mr Chepo: ... So, I think it could also be because as a principal, one is inspiring the educators, and we also have good educators... eh... who also understand why they are here. So maybe I don't have a lot of work to inspire them, but eh one is trying by all means to reinspire them to see their need for us to really assist these kids who are coming from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, whose parents will not leave anything for them. When their parents die, they won't get any money from their parents. .... "*

As to the issue of accountability, T2 emphasized that Mr Chepo himself acknowledged his role as ultimately responsible for general school management including daily based tasks. Put differently, T1 identified his commitment to accountability as a coordinator as to daily-based tasks including curriculum management and development. To the request for drawing (see Annexure H) of the relationship between Mr Chepo and other stakeholders, T1 added:

*T1: (laughing and slowly and clearly saying) The principal is always a coordinator of all the stakeholders at school by making them to be responsible and accountable in each and every activity they do. (Pause) And ... to be given feedback.*

To explain the feedback in detail, T1 continued:

*... After delegation and after the job delegated to us being done by us, we are the ones who are going to give him the feedback. And he is going to tell us when he needs this feedback. We must respect... the time of giving him the feedback.*

On the other hand, it was assumed that the learners' vulnerable situations delivered by Mr Chepo led him to having a spirit of moral or ethical responsibility as a school leader who served socio-economically disadvantaged township school in South Africa. This seems to support the research of Challens *et al.* (2020:65-66) which claims to call for moral leadership for the change of township schools.

Values can be defined as those things that are important to or valued by someone (Joubert, 2018b:24). In every culture, the same five shared ethical values are predominant: honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, and compassion (Institute for Global Ethics, cited by Joubert, 2018b:25). Throughout the interviews and especially in the participants' answers to the question regarding the value which Mr Chepo considers most important, these factors could be found.

In this regard, his ethical leadership characteristics can also be aligned to the ethics of care accounts. Mr Chepo's approach to attend to the specific context seemed to identically reflect one concept of the ethics of care approach from the literature review (§2.2.4.2). In making the claim that the ethics of care indicates that "we depend on others in a world that values autonomy so highly," Laugier (2015:7-8) emphasizes the extended nature of the notion of care in the ethics of care. According to Laugier (*ibid.*), "the notion of care does not refer only to a type of attention to others and a set of practical activities; it also implies a sense of one's dependence and responsibility".

### *Strategic and organized character for effective T/L*

The analysis of the interview data firstly revealed that Mr Chepo had a clear school vision related to the provision of quality education in the Township Secondary School. In responding to the question “Do you think the teachers / SMT/ the staff regard you as a leader who inspire cooperation amongst the staff and enact it?”, Mr Chepo mentioned the school vision as follows:

*Mr Chepo: I think so, I think so. Because eh... we have set ourselves, you know, a vision that says that we want to create a centre of excellence. We really want the Township Secondary School to excel in everything that we do. And I think we are... we are moving toward that vision.*

As said above, Mr Chepo guided the teaching staff to cooperate and support one another to attain the vision. Collaboration is first and foremost a change in attitude and behaviour of people throughout an organization such as school (Joubert, 2018b:27). Robbins (cited by Van der Westhuizen, 1991:138) mentions that “planning is a way to anticipate and offset change”. As such, Mr Chepo seemed to emphasize the strategic sharing of the school vision in implementing effective planning. It follows that Mr Chepo guided the school not through command or control, but through shared purpose and vision (Joubert, 2018b:27).

Secondly, the result of the interview analysis revealed that Mr Chepo’s emphasis on time management or punctuality played a critical role in fostering a culture of teaching and learning in the school. Furthermore, in responding to the question of “which management task is the most important to Mr Chepo, such as planning, organizing, leading (guiding), and controlling?”, most of participants identified ‘planning’ as most critical (4 out of 6). One participant answered ‘leading’; the other one referred to all the tasks. One participant also indicated his preparedness for the whole year’s curriculum management with SMT teachers. T4 expressed as follows:

*Every time at the beginning of the year, here meeting as SMT, and there each and every SMT member will have a meeting with the departments, and outline every agenda needs to be done in a term and makes sure that everyone understands what they have to do...from the beginning and until the end of the term. So, Mr Chepo also ensures and oversees all of the departments. He is there to ensure that now with all of the departments -teaching and learning is also taking place where there also expected that meeting now where SMT members are supposed to account about the different departments. So, in such meeting we are able to assist one another as SMT members.*

Joubert (2018a:79) argues that a striking feature of successful schools is the way principals and their staff together analyse and use data to inform the crafting of goals and strategic plans. Likewise, Mr Chepo's strategies were to collaboratively implement planning via communication in the formal regular meetings.

In addition, T4's narrative as well as T1's reflects Mr Chepo's exercising tasks of controlling - prior control, control in progress, and control after the completion of the work (Marx, cited by Van der Westhuizen, 1991:218). Van Wyk (2020:132) also notes of principals' accountability for supervision on daily implementation of teaching and learning (curriculum management) including school programmes. As T1 referred to previously, Mr Chepo's characteristic of exceptional organization ability seemed to enable him to consistently carry out the critical tasks as a controller and coordinator.

#### *Risk-taking communicator*

Interestingly, all the participants also strongly affirmed Mr Chepo's communicative capability. This sub-category stressed Mr Chepo's communicative nature and methods in his disciplinary task to the teachers and learners. He deliberately emphasized the necessity of disciplining and correction; and he dared to challenge the teachers or the learners, and even parents, through authentic communication when he noticed irresponsible and unethical situations. Mr Chepo explained his point of view on disciplining as follows:

*Mr Chepo: Yeah, I think it will also depend on the.... individual interpretation of my actions. But normally when I discipline people, I would want to give them, what we refer to as a professional guidance or counselling, just to say to them, "Look, this is what you are doing. The rules of the school said this. So, you don't need to continue doing this wrong thing. Because, if you continue doing this wrong thing, you are going to destroy the image of the school. You may also put yourself in serious trouble." But I also listen to their views when I am disciplining them so that they are able to realize that I am not doing it to punish them. I want to correct their behaviour for the better.*

Likewise, all interview participants asserted unanimously that Mr Chepo made much effort in the task of correcting or disciplining of all the stakeholders - even parents and teacher staff. T1 viewed Mr Chepo's disciplinary action as a positive support, being a good controller. T1 answered to the question of "Do you find the principal compassionate in all his actions, for example, when he has to correct or discipline someone?"

*T1: (saying in quieter voice) Coming to discipline as a principal of the school (pause)...*

*R (Researcher/I): It's not easy?*

*T1: It is not easy sometimes. But he tries by all means to discipline ... staff members together with learners, even the parents, fairly. It's not easy but he tries by all means to discipline staff members, learners at school, even the parents of the learners (very strongly) fairly.*

Particularly, as for teachers, Mr Chepo stressed their professional responsibility such as the respect of the act of teaching and learning, keeping instructional time, and readiness for the class. For learners, he emphasized respect for teaching and learning and valuing time. In the case of parents who showed lack of tolerance on account of conflicts between their child and the teacher, he always intervened and disciplined them, focusing on tolerance and mutual respect.

T3 expressed Mr Chepo's concern for disciplining as a noticeable culture of the school.

*T3: .... This is the culture of our school.*

In a personal narrative, T5 also argued that learning and growth of social attitudes result from disciplining. In accordance with their remarks, Mr Chepo himself reasoned that his disciplining actions via personal interviews were for the stakeholders' professional development as well as for reaching the school vision.

In this regard, I reflect on the relation between disciplining, and personal social and ethical development. The question is how discipline can cultivate responsibility in the South African dysfunctional school context.

Transforming towards a more responsible member in the society might result from education which includes discipline. Du Plessis (2005:126) states that "bringing about the change requires strong and firm leadership, where discipline and authority yet needs to be utilized for strongly highlighted values".

According to Mr Chepo's narrative above, it can be inferred that his communicative action of guidance may cause the counterpart to feel punished. Nevertheless, as a risk-taking communicator, his objective and open communication about relevant issues seemed to have a remarkable influence on the development of the school culture as an accountable organization. It can be argued that Mr Chepo is also in the process of transforming as a democratic leader.

In short, the conclusion could be drawn that Mr Chepo had the courage to face risk-taking human encounters even if it was presented in the form of correcting or intervention as a mediator. For him, such disciplinary focus intended to help the stakeholders to grow for the good of the school and become morally and ethically better persons. In doing so, Mr Chepo's communication is characterized as the interaction of listening and responding. Consequently, it was evident that his guiding task is characterized by motivating communication (Allen, cited by van der Westhuizen, 1991:202-203).

Van Jaarsveld *et al.* (2020) remark on the pivotal influence of a school principal's leadership on the school climate in underperforming schools. While acknowledging ontological subjectivity in the analysis of qualitative data, it was concluded that the principal's good leadership and management features contributed directly and indirectly to the school's positive climate and its culture, such as accountability orientation. A positive school climate will be enhanced when factors such as remuneration, a safe and healthy working environment, collaborative decision-making, delegation, recognition, and open communication channels are in place (Mentz, cited by Van Wyk *et al.*, 2016:70).

Thus, taking these factors into consideration, the following section describes the SMT/senior teachers' work orientation as the second category.

#### **4.4.1.2 SMT/senior teachers' work orientation**

It is of the utmost importance for education managers and schools as organizations to create a working environment that will stimulate educators' positive emotions towards their work (Joubert & Naidu, 2018:136). The interview participants showed their feelings about being a teacher in the Township Secondary School as follows: *a good experience* (T4); *hardworking* (T1); *very much interesting* (T3); *challenging, working hard but growing* (T2); *marvellous* (T5).

T2 seriously added:

*T2: Eh.... to be a teacher in this school is it's... it's... I don't know, it's challenging. I am not.... eh but at the very same time, it grows a person because... eh... we are working, we work very hard.*

T5 initiated by referring to "performing school, and poor resources of the school", yet answered to the question:

*R: I see... Anyway, do you enjoy working here?*

*T5: (Promptly responding) Yes, I enjoy working here, marvellous!!!*

As a whole, the SMT/ senior teacher respondents expressed positive views on working at the school and their own commitment to support learners' academic progress or emotional wellbeing. Now, the following sub-categories will present the nature of their work orientation.

#### *Professional collegiality and collaboration*

SMT and senior teacher participants mentioned that Mr Chepo focuses on a supportive and cooperative working atmosphere. While conducting the interviews, concurrently it was found that all the respondents used expressions such as “assist each other, support one another, united relation” among the stakeholders, even with the learners.

T1 responded to the question “Have you experienced any challenges or positive support to sense a feeling of community in the school?” as follows:

*T1: .... Now I am saying to those all-different challenges, we always get (emphasizing strongly) support to solve challenges that we face on daily basis. We get support.*

*R: Support from?*

*T1: Yeah. We get support from the staff, from the principal, from the SMT, from the parents, even our learners do. They can give you support to this challenging... meaning we are working corporately together. We are cooperating together. We are very, very much cooperating.*

From this orientation, it could be inferred that Mr Chepo's leadership practices are based on a relational and collaborative approach as related to education management. As a result, the collaborative nature seemed instilled in the school stakeholders. Joubert (2018b:22) states that after more than 20 years of focusing on the transformation in South Africa, collaborative problem-solving is becoming an extremely relevant and necessary competency, not only at schools, but also in public and personal life. Kivunja (cited by Joubert, 2018b:22) identifies “four super skills” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration. Lumadi (2017:4-5) also proposes teamwork as one of the core elements for effective caring school leadership environments (§2.3.2).

Here, it would be helpful to discuss the relation between Ubuntu philosophy and the ethics of care theory in view of communitarian approach (§2.2.3.2). Mr Chepo expressed his view on these:

*.... To me they are interwoven. To me, they are something that is promoting selflessness. If that we must not be selfish as human being, we can be able to impact possibility. Because you cannot want to look at yourself alone as a successful person when you leave everybody behind.*

*R: I like the word in the ethics of care 'vulnerable'. Even though we are smart, we are still vulnerable."*

*Mr Chepo: Still, we are vulnerable. But, if other [people who] are showing care to us, our vulnerability will not be exposed to many dangers. In western thinking, individual is more important. I am more important than everyone. But not our thinking....*

According to the Department of Education (2015a), Ubuntu, an African philosophy, provides a spiritual, philosophical base for responsible management. Literature on leadership and management as well as teacher education have common view (Ngara, 2022:69; Waghid, 2014: 65). For example, in the study on parental involvement as a school-community relationship, Xaba (cited by Conley & van Deventer, 2016:390) stresses that African philosophy embraces the values of humaneness, goodness towards others, a moral nature that is based on trust, sharing, cooperation and participation. Basically, it is seen that what such claims have in common with the ethics of care is that both approaches ontologically highlight an accountable communitarian way of thinking and human interdependence (§2.2.4.2).

It seemed that Mr Chepo's firm conviction on the views as aforementioned – promoting selflessness against individualism - was manifested through his leadership and managerial actions. As such, it could be concluded that his focus on accountable and collaborative nature of working contributed to the achievement of the school vision as most interview participants mentioned the school's current remarkable academic results. The next subcategory seemed to be supporting this perspective.

#### *Commitment to achieving of the school vision*

The Township Secondary School vision was stated as "creating a centre of excellence" with detailed mission statements, which were displayed in the reception building of the school. As stressed in the School Improvement Plan, it seemed that Mr Chepo's dedicated communication concerning the school vision motivated all the stakeholders to act responsibly.

All interview participants themselves noted that they are committed to promoting a culture of teaching and learning, thus celebrating the results of mutual collaboration with teachers and learners. T2 remarked conversely, while referring to the challenges of the vulnerable learners:

*T2: ... But now the positive view. It would be now, at the very result that we are getting at the end, we work hard we, are able to compete with schools in town. The schools that have got everything, the resources. Then at least it becomes positive because even the willingness that we are getting from the learners, it is a good thing. It shows that there's something good that we are doing. That's the positive I would get.*

*R: For students, they also have willingness?*

*T2: Yeah !! they are very willingness.*

*R: Do they also see your willingness? your commitment?*

*T2: Yeah, willingness ... yeah commitment. and they also give us the commitment that we want.*

Mr Chepo consistently prioritises the instilling of a responsible professional identity into the teachers with words and actions as referred to above. All the participants remarked very strongly on Mr Chepo's critical concern about basic professional attitudes like punctuality, respect for learners, and readiness for teaching. This was seen as his strategic focus to bring about forming and sustaining a culture of teaching and learning.

SMT members also presented identical views which were similar to Mr Chepo's. Therefore, their collective values and norms such as the vision of excellence, collaborative teamwork, committed attitudes of all stakeholders, seem to coherently represent the culture of the Township Secondary School.

Research findings also highlight the critical role of establishing a school vision and its sharing with stakeholders. A shared vision creates a sense of community that will strengthen the organization's efficacy and effectiveness, bring coherence and common purpose in the face of diversity, and foster commitment to the school's development (Marx, 2018; Mestry, 2018:177).

#### *Resolving conflicts by leadership support*

In resolving conflicts amongst various school members in the complex context associated with educational change, creative leadership strategies are called for (Mestry & Ngcobo, 2018:110). Thus, it is crucial for school leaders to be sensitive to the complexities of contextual challenges regarding educational change and diversity (Mestry & Ngcobo, 2018:111).

Some participants mentioned aspects such as conflicts and challenges generally seen in schools. Yet, a participant noted in detail that Mr Chepo stressed the necessity of unity and cooperation in diverse stakeholders' relations.

To the question of "Do you think that the principal is a leader who inspires cooperation amongst the staff and enacts it?" T5 answered.

*T5:(Promptly) Yes, he does inspire eh.... tell us to be united as a staff. And he always talk about cooperation between the staff. Because our school could not or will not perform. If we are not cooperated as a staff, if we are not working as a unit. So, it's very important. If the submission that is doing to the department of education, we will do it. All of us are working together as a unity. We work together as a unity.*

*R: All staff members follow? or some maybe?*

*T5: Uhm it's very difficult for .... maybe 42 people to follow or to do the same thing. I think 90% to 95 % people are following. There will always be those five percent of people who won't follow. He always encourages us to cooperate.*

Regarding Mr Chepo's conflict intervention, T4 mentioned Mr Chepo's effective communication when dealing with the conflicts between parents and teachers or between SMT and teachers.

To resolve the problems, amongst the tactics of influence of a leader, it can be inferred that Mr Chepo used rational persuasion and inspirational appeal (Yukl & Falbe, cited by Vrba, 2014:146). However, it could be assumed that Mr Chepo's extraordinary capacity and actions to resolve conflicts on behalf of the SMT or teachers might lessen the empowerment of teachers themselves. Or more critically, we could imagine of a kind of patriarchal approach in that teachers as followers are easy to conform to the principal's remarkability as an exceptional leader (Bozalek *et al.*, 2015:264). In the student – educator relationship of teaching and learning in South African higher education institutions, Bozalek, Watters and Gachago (2015:264) argue that with paternalism, decisions are taken by the caregiver or those in power (teachers, managers) on behalf of the care-receivers (students). That is, in light of participation in decision-making, there is the presence of paternalism, in which the caregivers (educators, managers) fulfil the roles of decision on behalf of the care-receivers.

On the contrary, the biographical narrative data obtained at a later stage allowed a different interpretation, in which the principal's disciplinary action and intervention as part of his leadership tasks were found related to his long experience as a mediator in cases where diverse conflicts between stakeholders within other schools had to be resolved.

Nonetheless, it can be argued that to empower other leading teachers like SMT members, it needs to allow them to experience more of solving conflicts by using their expertise, instead of doing it on his own as a leader with authority. Considering this, we can refer to the potential patriarchal attitudes such as paternalism which might be inherent within the ethics of care.

In relation to this argument, an interesting point found during the interviews was that only women interviewees reported about “resolving conflicts by leadership support”. It could be motivated that it might be associated with patriarchy inherent in African culture. This is resonated in Connell and Messerschmidt’s (cited by Dziwa *et al.*, 2020:2) view. They maintain as follows:

“The hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force. There are, consequently, multiple hierarchies that can be discerned in societal structures such as schools, workplaces and communities, and therefore hegemony implies dominance in terms of culture, various social contexts as well as institutions and persuasions. In this view, there are multiple masculinities and power relations at play in a given society ” (Connell & Messerschmidt, *ibid.*).

However, in spite of the critical viewpoint on his intervention leadership implementation, it can be deduced that individual teachers’ commitment to their duty and Mr Chepo’s leadership and management capacity which centred on cooperation, unity as well as his intervention in conflict situations led to the positive working culture of the school. Most significantly, Mr Chepo’s timely intervention in conflicts and challenges in relationships and the hardworking orientation of the school enabled learners’ academic progress by maintaining the culture of teaching and learning conducive to the provision of quality education. The next category addresses the school as a teaching and learning community.

#### **4.4.1.3 School as a teaching and learning community**

In conducting the semi-structured interview, I sensed that one specific question regarding the school as a community confused the participants. When I added my explanation to the question, some interviewees understood the concept of community in a cultural way, rather than as a geographical space. Yet, most of them understood the concept as a geographical space.

##### *Presence of diversity and solidarity*

According to Sergiovanni (cited by Mosoge, 2018:212), the concept of community refers to a “collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound to a set of shared ideas and ideals”. Similarly, most of the participants explained the concept of school as a community where there are differences but also togetherness with the common vision.

In this view, T3, T4 and Mr Chepo primarily pointed out the role of ethnical diversities of black South African populations when advancing a school as a community. Mr Chepo said:

*So, a school is a community because in a school you don't have people who are homogeneous, they are heterogeneous. We are having people from different cultures. The school should allow these people to grow and display their culture without oppressing any culture. That is why a school is a community. Yes. School is a community.*

It is congruent that the term school community embraces not just a place of learning but also a community with members interacting with one another, leading to a sharing of physical space, ethos, and culture (Mosoge, 2018:213).

#### *The culture of caring/cared and ownership*

T4 considered the caring leadership approach as positive. To the question of “do you think that the ethics of care approach can assist principals/ SMTs to promote a teaching and learning in township schools?” T4 elaborated:

*T4: Yes, ethics of care can assist the principal... eh... to promote teaching and learning because if learners realize that now the SMT cares a lot about them, then they will start to love the school. And as well as the educators, they realize that now SMT here cares about them now. They will also be so eager to do their duty.! We are realizing that now everyone cares about them here in the school. The parents, the principal, SMT, whoever, whoever, here also. That enhances teaching and learning.*

*R: That ethics of care enhances teaching and learning. Do you think so?*

*T4: Yes.*

In the position of SMT, T4 seemed to stress the positive effects of a caring leadership on teaching and learning. Moreover, the following presented a caring relationship within the school staff.

To the question of “Have you ever experienced a feeling of support or challenges?” T3 identified some specific caring actions among the school staff as follows:

*T3: Yes... eh... eh... as I indicated previously, the school has got a community and positive support that we are always getting from each other from the school. For an example, at our school, for an example, eh...eh... if you are sick, you are in hospitaling, always we donate and something buy you a basket of fruits take that basket to you in hospitaling. And also it happens if you lose your parents, one of the parents, then they*

*always donate and then also come to the funeral of your parent and so on. So that is the positive support as a holistic community, as a school community.*

T3 also responded promptly to the question, “Can you explain the drawing? Just tell me or write down some words. “

*T3: Healthy relationship between the principal and the school community. All these people are the school community.*

*R: Umm, you also have drawn the arrows. Like interaction or?*

*T3: Yeah interaction. ....*

Concurrent with T3, most of the interviewees noted relational and interactive atmosphere in their drawings of the relationship between Mr Chepo and other stakeholders of the school (see Annexures H).

According to the result of the analysis, the Township Secondary School had the characteristics of a community where there is a sense of mutual caring and being cared for among the SMT leadership, teachers, and learners. Literature also states that in identifying types of organizational climates, in the type of open climate where the principal is a facilitator, good relationships exist between the principal and the personnel and among members of the personnel (Halpin, cited by Basson, Van der Westhuizen & Nieman, 1991:632).

Thus, it is evident that the sub-category of ‘caring/cared’ derived from data highlighted the positive cultural features of the Township Secondary School as a community of teaching and learning. In particular, the responses of all the interviewees revealed that such affective factors were regarded as prerequisites for promoting a culture of teaching and learning in a school and all stakeholders’ commitment to the vision of excellence.

On the other hand, as a school leader and manager, Mr Chepo seemed to attend to the primary role of emotional partnership or ownership that all stakeholders have as follows:

*Mr Chepo: If learners or teachers do not feel that they are part of the school, then the school be to the trouble. And, when we often ensuring that learners and teachers feel being part, it is to value their contribution. The school should be able to value the contribution that each learner and each teacher brings to the school and appreciate those contribution. And encouraging them to contribute make them to understand that this school does not belong to the principal. (Stressing in a soft voice) It’s our school.*

Literature concurs that learners' academic performance as well as all stakeholders' holistic wellbeing, premise the presence of emotional and relational factors like caring, belonging and being part (Smylie *et al.*, 2016; Khan & Lauzon, 2018:120; Kok, 2018). It is also remarked that it is of the utmost importance for education managers and schools as organizations to create a working environment that will stimulate educators' positive emotions toward their work, and in this way, improve the quality of education that they deliver (Joubert & Naidu, 2018:136). While comparing with traditional exchange-based power and control-oriented leadership, Smylie *et al.* (2016:18) consider caring leadership as associated primarily with the relational side of school leadership. In this respect, the significance of emotional and psychological wellbeing for effective teaching and learning needs to be emphasized (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011).

Then, it normatively calls for the re-culturing of schools towards a caring community in the framework of the ethics of care approach. Yet, the concept of caring in this view becomes one of embracing a thick democracy (Gilligan, 2011b:22; Schneider, 2021).

#### *Orienting toward growth and tolerance*

Cultural experiences such as the respect for the differences and psychological wellbeing of stakeholders might bring about learning tolerance and personal or collective growth of mind or spirit.

Democracy or democratic culture can be more cultivated with ample and effective communication (Freire, 2001; Steyn, 2005). Regarding the topic of tolerance, Mr Chepo demonstrated an example where the communication with an intolerant parent was challenging. To the question of "Have you experienced any challenges or positive support to promote a feeling of community?", Mr Chepo narrated like a storyteller:

*.... But if parent comes and is already on the side of the child, said 'no, the teacher did so and so that to me.' The parent come here in a fighting mood. I feel that's what we must do in a community. In a community people should be tolerant toward one another. They must come and say, 'A child has told me so, may I find out what happened?' Before you get to know what happened, you can't be fighting. So, there are instances where we find some few parents coming to us and blaming what we are doing because their children told them so. But we will explain, then they finally know that 'no, that is not how things are done'.*

It was viewed that Mr Chepo's emphasis of 'tolerance' implied that it is a critical and also challenging norm to be developed in a township community as well as in today's self-centred or

individualized society. On the other hand, leadership must be concerned about the development of communication skills or training so that the leaders can encourage open communication among stakeholders of the school. Likely, research on leadership of low performing township schools critically emphasize commonly the necessity of development training or education for in-service leaders (Wolhuter, 2020b).

Furthermore, in relation to the ethics of care approach, Mr Chepo demonstrated some concrete caring strategies relevant to community sectors' support as follows:

*Mr Chepo: Individual cannot succeed alone without getting the support from other people. You can't say, 'I am so bright, I am going to be successful alone.' You also need that interdependence of human being. We depend on one another, that is the ethic of care. So to me I think, if we we get ... support, from different community organizations, supposed that we have got teachers who are teaching particular subjects, maybe teaching the matric learners, but they are struggling with a particular topic, and the university come and say, 'we will offer this topic to the educators to assist to empower them.' That is part of the ethics of care. They visit us and say, 'we can see that you are struggling with this topic, let's have a capacity building workshop where we make your teachers, we empower your teachers to have a proper understanding of this topic.' If once us teachers understand this topic better, there will also the benefit who? Learners in the class. It's part of the ethics of care.*

As seen above, Mr Chepo seemed to value the teachers' professional development as an element of a critically empowering school culture. The analysis revealed that Mr Chepo empowered teachers by facilitating cooperation among teachers and providing them with the support to develop their professional knowledge. Research also emphasizes that a principal's role as a mediator is conducive to positive school culture so that teachers can contribute voluntarily to the school vision and goals (Balkar, 2015; Meyer *et al.*, 2022).

To consider a school as a community which establishes and sustains a firm culture of teaching and learning, it must orient towards a relational leadership approach, which comprises respect, tolerance, caring, belonging, cooperation, ownership or partnership. Likewise, this approach can be also associated with the key concepts of the ethics of care, which implies thick democracy (Gilligan, 2011b:22). Gilligan contends that a thin interpretation of democracy makes similar differences in the name of equality, whereas thick democracy relies on the premise that different voices are essential to the vitality of a democratic society (*ibid.*). As the fundamental concept of the ethics of care, relational and moral community orientation requires educational leaders to foster an 'I-thou' dimension of relation, not an 'I-it' alternative (Buber, cited by Loader, 1997:100).

In this respect, from the result of the analysis it was inferred that, as a critical agent in forming a culture of school, Mr Chepo's risk-taking human encounters manifested in the form of intervention, correction, or discipline, had a kind of deep relation with the ethics of care.

How *democracy* in the field of education is perceived in relation to the framework of thin and thick democracy, Zyngier (2020:77-79) identifies education of thick democracy as encouraging students to grow as more engaged citizens in a society beyond being an individual responsible citizen. As such, Mr Chepo's narratives focus on relational and thick democratic oriented qualities like tolerance and ownership. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sub-category generated from the interview data analysis above indicates a form of development of democratic citizenship. Steyn (2005:8) states that the object of democracy is, after all, to reconcile differences and to ensure peaceful co-existence. This statement also seems to resonate thick democracy as an aspect of the ethics of care.

Similarly, Waghid's (2014:70-71) potential accounts of Ubuntu orient toward the transformation of education in SA. Starting from employing the concept "politics of humanity", Waghid (2014:89) claims that it might enable teachers to engage them with other and to have solidarity by connecting themselves with others. As well, Waghid (2014:89) relates democratic citizenship education with the nature of teachers' deliberations with colleagues and learners. After all, this enactment would contribute to the fostering of humaneness.

To sum up, the interview data above showed that the school as a T/L community implied mutual respect in the diversity and the sharing of the school vision in the collective and communitarian approach. Further, the manifestation meant to grow as a caring democratic citizen and to tolerate fellow educators and other stakeholders.

#### **4.4.1.4 Township schools**

When advancing the realities of township schools, the concept of 'necessary support' follows inevitably. As addressed in the literature review (§2.3.8.1), the interview participants shared the challenges the Township Secondary School faces.

##### *Socio-economically vulnerable learners*

Most learners' families are in a socio-economically poor context, so they rely on government grants. Therefore, the Township Secondary School had to mobilize funds from the parents or diverse community sectors. To the question of the challenge in promoting a community of teaching and learning in the school, T2 detailed sympathetically the school's and the learners' socio-economic vulnerability:

*T2: Yes! there are challenges. Because, if you can see our school where we are, we are at the disadvantaged place. We are not even in the location, we are outside, we are at the extensions. At an extension. Eh... and most of the time... eh... even the kids that we are teaching here are disadvantaged. Most of them are poor. They don't have anything. So, it is a challenge ... because ... eh... I come that when it is winter now. It's cold now. You come to work in very warm clothes. The child is not wearing warm clothes. You come; you are full. You have eaten breakfast, but there are kids that did not have breakfast. So, it is a challenge in that way because even us unfortunately don't have enough money to be able to help them.*

#### *Lack of resources/infrastructure*

Some teachers referred to the lack of infrastructure of the school, others detailed the realities of vulnerable learners and the practical school and community support which they were provided with.

T3 answered the question of "Have you ever experienced a feeling of support or challenges?":

*T3: The challenges... that we are always having challenges... what can I say.... that lack of infrastructure and also yeah lack of infrastructure, for example, we don't have a hall. When Gr12 learners must write an exam, they must go to the hall, the community hall. We also sometimes learners come late, but...it is not such big. We are able to control it. We are still dealing with it. Those are the challenges that we have. Yes.*

Mr Chepo narrated in detail some specific areas for school support while responding to the question, "How can you as a school principal be supported to promote a feeling of community (feeling of belonging, well-being) for learners and teachers?"

*Mr Chepo: (Reading again the question) We would really require this situation where eh,, different sections of the community identify the school and provide support,, like from the Social Development we expect social workers to come and say 'Look! if you have got children who are facing some social problems here we are as social workers we can be able to give you support.' They can also support teachers, in terms of social problems, we are having employing assistance program where teachers go and having some social problem to be assisted. But who need to get support? If people from the Health Department coming to our schools and say 'Let's test the eyes of your kids', let's do this. So if their kids are not able to see well, they are able to assist them in terms of getting*

*the specs. Those are support that we need to get as a community. Yeah, we must get those support from even the department of Health.*

With the lack of emotional and physical parental support for the learners' holistic development, the school seemed to critically play the role in assisting them by leadership actions - planning and implementing some strategic caring activities with the teachers. The interviews and document reviews proved that the school implements after- school classes, provides meals for even the learners who were absent, and provides the girls in need with sanitary pads. Furthermore, for the teachers' professional subject knowledge development, Mr Chepo seemed eager to utilize possible agencies from the neighbouring community such as specialized assistance programmes from the NWU (the North-West University).

Literature also points out the benefit of school-community collaboration (Mosoge, 2018:215). Taking the above into consideration, it could be concluded that Mr Chepo had a deep understanding of the significance of school-community networking and collaboration for school support in township schools.

#### *A potential agency for change*

Ironically, the lack of resources and vulnerable learners' realities led the school leadership to dedicate themselves to the provision of quality education by establishing a culture of exemplary teaching and learning. It seemed that as result of a long persistent commitment to assisting the learners and teachers, the school community stakeholders are also celebrating the school's extraordinary transformation such as the high pass rates of matric learners. All the interview participants mentioned it with excitement. T4's response reflected the collective atmosphere of the school community:

*T4: Yes. .... very good experience to be one of the teachers teaching here because at the same time our learners are also playing parting and all the educators here are really playing their part because every year we are celebrating the good works of our learners. So, every year we are celebrating.*

Most of all, since having worked long for the school with the SMT, Mr Chepo (the principal) knew about the context of the community where the school is located. According to the perspective of ethically caring for the vulnerable learners, Mr Chepo persistently strived to promote the community of teaching and learning toward the provision of quality education.

Concurrently, against this vulnerable township school context, Mampane and Boucher (2011:114-126) address, as a potential agency for change, the role of school support for the marginalized

learners. Further, in a holistic way, Van Jaarsveld *et al.* (2020:101) remark that an incorporation of strong leadership and a positive school climate which is characterized by the presence of trusting, transparent and supporting relationships, contributes to the academic performance of learners.

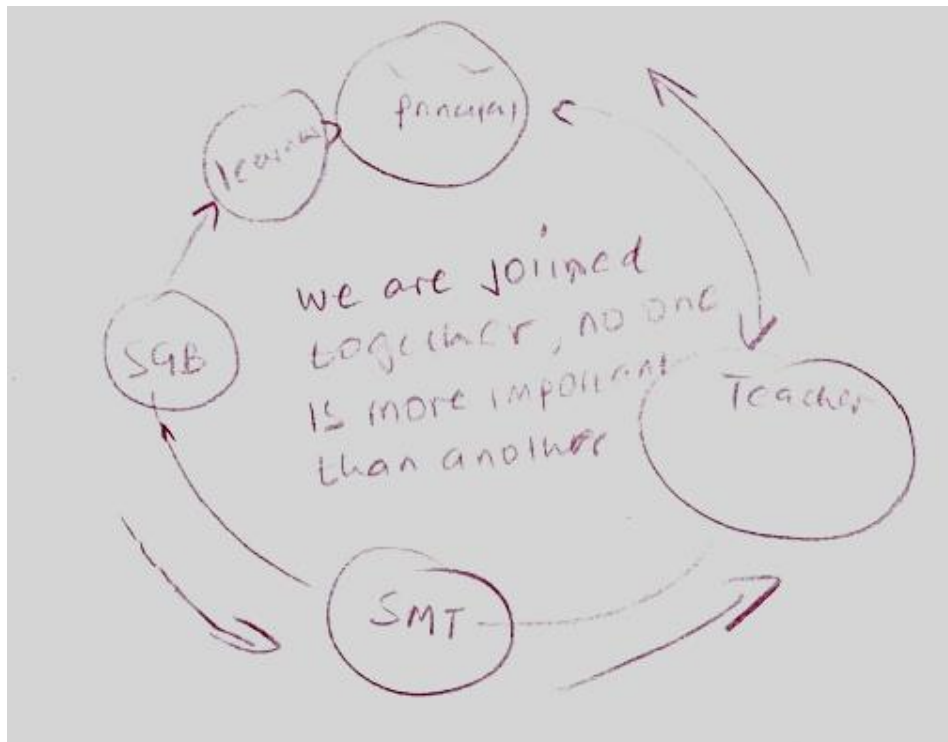
In the end, the hopeful efforts of teachers and learners and corresponding results seem deeply connected to practical manifestation of the ethics of care or caring approach by a school leader (Challens *et al.*, 2020:61-63). As such, it can be argued that Mr Chepo's detailed accounts regarding collaborative support between school and diverse community sectors should be critically considered in the South African township school context (Witten, 2010; Conley & van Deventer, 2016:385). It was crucial to identify potential leadership actions which contribute to establishing and sustaining the culture of teaching and learning in township schools. As Mr Chepo noted, normatively it is the most significant duty of township schools' educators (§2.3.8.2). The next category, thus, details on Mr Chepo's leadership actions or strategies.

#### **4.4.1.5 Leadership actions/ strategies**

This category seems to embrace all the categories mentioned so far. In brief, the description of interview data analysis as well as autobiographical data showed that Mr Chepo's leadership practices were characterized by being an inspiring, educators' collegial, leader. He sought for true goal-oriented leadership actions like inspiring, disciplining, and accordingly empowering teachers. Also, his managerial supervision was characterized by combining consistent and specific words with actions for attaining the accountability of the school. The following sub-categories describe noticeable leadership actions among them.

##### *Humility and open communication*

Primarily and significantly, Mr Chepo's confident but modest attitude seemed effective in carrying out his daily-based leadership and management performance. Further, it could be inferred that these traits lessen the impact of hierarchical power relations in the school. When asked to make a drawing expressing the relationship between himself and other school stakeholders, Mr Chepo drew it as below and explained as follows:



**Figure 4-2: Relationship sketch of the principal, Mr. Chepo**

*We are like in a circle. So, all of us are joined together. No one is more important than another. So, it means that I just started saying the principal it doesn't mean that the principal is the most important one. I am just saying I see myself fitting into the whole circle ensuring that we provide the quality education to our kids.*

Further, Mr Chepo viewed both the ethics of care and Ubuntu approaches as “promoting selflessness”. From his remark, it was inferred that he was striving to mitigate power relations with other stakeholders as a leader. Most of the participants’ drawings were similar and supported his accounts (see Annexure H).

T4 asserted Mr Chepo’s interactive relationship while using body language.

*I think... it's all two-way (while clapping hands.) The principal is related with the SMT, SMT related with him, the principal is related with the parents, the parents in turns relating with him, just like that. It's a two-way.*

In particular, the data of drawings were effective to reveal their intuitive perceptions on Mr Chepo’s leadership practice and the relationship with stakeholders. They all appreciated his communication mode of two-way interaction. Thus, it seemed that the two-way communication

culture and Mr Chepo's humility in the school weaken the potential negative influence of hierarchical relations (§2.3.9.3; §2.3.9.4).

In the end, Mr Chepo's drawing of the relationship with the stakeholders of the Township Secondary School seemed to summarize figuratively such attributes of thick democracy. In this view, it can be pointed out that Mr Chepo's leadership practice was approaching democratic culture as a thick democracy. Howard and Pattern (cited by Zyngier, 2021:74) remark that a thick democracy focuses on "how citizens understand themselves as members of a public with an obligation to promote the public good". With relational approach, Zyngier (2021:77-78) weighs more on an agentic individual's ethical action in infusing thick democratic culture, not on organizational level while concluding that that "everything relies, then, on the will to be good, to remain in caring".

On the other hand, as reported earlier (§2.2.4.2), Gilligan (2011b:22) associates the concept of a thick democracy with the significance of different voices which focus relationality on the lens of a feminist ethics of care approach. In this view, acts of speaking and careful listening to another voice can be critically regarded. Also, as noted by Steyn (2005:8-9), "open communication is a prerequisite for the existence of public opinion as a powerful tool in a democracy". Furthermore, it is indispensable in motivating people, managing conflict, and creating change (Steyn, 2005:8-9). As such, it can be argued that the ethics of care relational approach has the possibility to resolve such relational challenges of power by developing open communication.

#### *Empowering teachers by modelling and discipline: punctuality and cooperation*

The first example of leadership actions was related to modelling of punctuality or readiness to the learners. Commonly some SMT members mentioned their commitment to planning and organizing before the year commences as a form of leadership. All the interviewees had the consideration of and respect for class time in common. In the end, to effectively manage schooling and to cultivate a culture of teaching and learning, it seemed that punctuality was prioritized. As found in the narrative data, the principal's current influential role-modelling resulted from the experience of working together with such exemplary senior colleagues during his initial teaching career.

*T3 remarked: We know automatically, we should know that officially when the bell rings, I go to class. And when I get to my class, I must going teach. That's the culture of the school.*

T3 also identified the focus on punctuality to the question, “What are you or the principal currently doing to promote a teaching and learning community in your school?”

*T3: (After reading himself the question) “Eh, this one all what that I can say... We are making sure that eh... eh... through... timetabling. It makes sure that every teacher goes to their class and learners are being taught. Yeah, this is what I think we are doing...”*

Both T1 and T5 also emphasized punctuality by expressing that “keeping time is an expression of respecting to others; time is important.”

In short, SMT/senior teachers seemed to naturally follow Mr Chepo’s leadership practices by role-modelling. In this regard, forms of modelling or mentoring would be useful in professional development training or programmes (Joubert & Naidu, 2018:127).

The second strategic action could be identified by encouraging cooperation. Mutually cooperative relationship comes from a two-way trustful communication. It was inferred that the cooperation in the school entailed sharing of diverse opinions regarding caring for learners and the exchange of feedback along with responsible delegation, further extending to the inter-schools’ collaboration. Along with the significance of cooperation, his remarkable disciplinary action with transparent communication was presented in the first category. Thus, it could be reported that Mr Chepo’s professional and personal leadership characteristics and managerial actions are inherently complementing one another.

Respect for diversity and tolerance, valuing of time, and mutual cooperation are relevant to the principal’s concerns for discipline. From his perspective, it was inferred that his commitment to discipline was directed to the realization of tolerance and growth of all stakeholders, which was ultimately a critical part in the vision of the school, along with that of creating a centre of excellence. However, his autobiographical narratives surpassed the micro local level by referring to the transformation of South Africa. In other words, for Mr Chepo, an empowering local school culture fulfils the vision of a future South African society.

Finally, the principal’s leadership approach is directed toward an ideal form of democratic leadership characterized by the ethics of care as a manifestation of thick democracy (§2.2.4.2). To the question of “Which value do you consider as most important to leadership practice and teaching practice, and why?”, Mr Chepo responded:

*Mr Chepo: (after thinking) The value?*

*R: The value...*

*Mr Chepo: Yes, ehm..., I think, (strongly emphasizing) human dignity. Human dignity to me is a very important value. When we are teaching learners, we must instil in them eh.. the need to respect, you know, each other. Educators must also display their understanding of human dignity. As they teach their kids, they must show them respect. So, these kids can also grow up respecting other children, and we may have a society of people who really respect one another.*

Furthermore, Mr Chepo reported his own understanding of the ethics of care by responding to the question of “According to your understanding of the ethics of care, do you think that the ethics of care approach can assist principals/SMT to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools? If so, please motivate by suggesting some kind of strategies for it.”

*Mr Chepo: (after reading the brief informative background of the ethics of care) “Yeah, I know. This is how I understood it. This is also my understanding of ethics of care. Individual cannot succeed alone without getting the support from other people. You can’t say, “I am so bright, I am going to be successful alone. You also need that interdependence of human being. We depend on one another, that is the ethic of care. So, to me, I think, if we we get ... support, from different community organizations, supposed that we have got teachers who are teaching particular subjects, maybe teaching the matrices, but they are struggling with a particular topic, and the university come and say ‘we will offer this topic to the educators to assist to empower them’. That is part of the ethics of care. They visit us and say, ‘we can see that you are struggling with this topic, let’s have a capacity building workshop where we make your teachers, we empower your teachers to have a proper understanding of this topic.’ If once us teachers understand this topic better, there will also the benefit. Who? Learners in the class. It’s part of the ethics of care.*

Finally, Mr Chepo’s exemplary values and specific support actions to empower teachers in view of CPD (continuous professional development) seem to shed light on a thick democracy attribute.

#### *Mobilizing (school/ community) caring strategies*

As for the last strategic action, thus, Mr Chepo’s interest in mobilizing school/community caring strategies was highlighted. It was found that a school community as a caring family on the school level was established. The school provided the learners with breakfast and lunch to all learners. A neatly managed vegetable garden also provided food for the learners’ meals.

T5 replied to the question of caring strategies as follows:

*... And at some stage, when the school closes, our kitchen makes some parcels for those learners who do not have parents or food something like that.*

In addition, for academic support, the school organized an extra class programme to the learners after school. And a cultural activity like chess class was implemented. It was ensured that the school was practising the role of parental care. To be sure, Mr Chepo and the SMT are actively solving the problem of the lack of parental support at home (Challens *et al.*, 2020:61-63).

For the researcher, those activities were enough to sense the ethics of care physically and emotionally - as an ethic and practice (§2.2.2.2). More clearly, Raghuram (2016:514) argues that while discussions of care as ethics have been tied up in normative notions of what good care looks like, care as practice ultimately focuses on caring as embodied, physical, and emotional work.

On the other hand, as for school - community networking for support, the school seemed connected to every sector of the regional community. The Township Secondary School utilized the chances of community support suggested by different sections of the community like NWU, Department of Health, Department of Basic Education, further private corporates. While referring to the significance of community support in detail, Mr Chepo told of the local community sectors' contributions to support the learners and teachers for promoting a culture of teaching and learning in the school.

*Mr Chepo stated: .... Also, you know inspires them to really want to study math and science. So that is the support that we require and that we are starting to get from the university, which is very good.*

*R: That's good! Community support.*

*Mr Chepo: Community support is very important.*

Concerning community support, Ainscow, Chapman and Hadfield's (2022:3) research-based discourses on educational system change in the context of British schools also seem to resonate with this relational community-oriented approach. With the underlying assumption that relationships are fundamental to system change, Ainscow, Chapman and Hadfield (2022:3) argue that effective system change necessitates the collaboration of processes of "social learning and actions within settings that stretch from multiple classrooms to the committee rooms of senior policymakers". In the preface of the work by Ainscow *et al.*, Louis (cited by Ainscow *et al.*, 2022:x)

appreciates that Ainscow *et al.*'s discourse highlights school-to-school network, which implies the power to create professionally centred relationships that are alternative to top-down management of change.

In a similar vein, it is claimed that in creating an ethos of shared responsibility and collaborative leadership, school principals need to move away from rigid bureaucracies to become truly democratic organizations (Joubert, 2018b:30). For Mr Chepo, the core of strategies for developing a teaching and learning community in a township school was to be a role model of the ethics of care. The proposed diagram represents a significant relation to the ethics of care as indicated by the five categories' shared element of the interview analysis. The principal's consciousness of human vulnerability and dedication to empowering school culture; the presence of communication where a different voice could be heard; and his community-networking approach, are remarkable.

To sum up, this section described all five main categories and sub-categories developed from the semi-structured interviews data analysis in the support of other triangulating data. The following section discusses the results of Mr Chepo's autobiographical narrative analysis.

#### **4.4.2 Autobiographical narrative data**

##### *Experience of physical vulnerability*

In the interview session with Mr Chepo (the principal), the challenges of his young adult days were shared sympathetically. His autobiographical narrative demonstrated it once again:

*I am the first born in a family of seven children. I attended both my primary and secondary schooling in Limpopo. Due to financial challenges, I could not further my tertiary education immediately after passing grade 12 and had to take an offer as a private educator for 12 months in 1988.*

It could be assumed that such physical vulnerability as he experienced, drove his current concern and strategic actions for the learners' future in the Township Secondary School.

##### *Encountering meaningful others and professional leadership development*

He mentioned that encountering caring relatives and their specific support caused his life to be transformed:

*My cousin stayed with me in his house in Soweto free of charge and continued to help me with my applications for admission at tertiary institution. In 1989 I was offered a*

*salesperson's job in a shop by my father's nephew which assisted me to meet my basic financial needs.*

*.... I was lucky to be admitted at ooo College of education in 1990 to study teaching. The assistance I received from my cousin and my father's nephew provided a solid foundation my achievements later in my life.*

This narrative also revealed his modest agreement on human vulnerability and stressed the mutual support and care for one another. By nature, it could be associated with the principal's relational approach in terms of his leadership practice in the school.

In addition, he stated that his encountering hardworking senior teachers as a novice teacher also contributed to his current leadership practice:

*At the primary school there were a number of educators who inspired me to work hard because they led by example.*

Likewise, inside and outside the school, his social life as a leader seemed to contribute or compel him to develop himself as a peacemaker to carry out interventional tasks. In the interviews, some teachers described him as a coordinator and excellent conflict resolver, which led me to inquire on his role as a mediator related to those tasks. As a result, it was interpreted that these capacities are his strong points.

This narrative reminded me of his claim in the interview conversation that schools can be regarded as places "where there exist tolerance and growth, and thus should be allowed discipline".

Furthermore, Mr Chepo continuously strived for self-development via participating in further professional learning or leadership training courses. Both his leadership knowledge development along with practical experiences as an external educational association's leader practically developed his leadership and management implementation. He referred to:

*... then decided to further my studies by enrolling for Advance Certificate in Education for School Leadership with North-West University which I completed. I also completed my Honours degree in education and post graduate diploma in public management with the University of North-West (Potchefstroom campus).*

#### *Becoming an inspiring teachers' educator*

Finally, it seemed that he became an inspiring teachers' educator who prioritises his task most critically. What caused his commitment? As we discussed in literature review chapter (§2.3.3.2;

§2.3.9.3; §2.3.9.4), it could be inferred that the principal might have experienced the hierarchal or patriarchal nature of school leadership practice; and also faced irresponsibility issues of school stakeholders such as teachers' lack of subject knowledge and of learners' discipline (Bondesio & de Witt, 1991:343-344; Challens *et al.*, 2020:65-66). Adversely, it could be said that his attending to this insufficiency of a culture of learning in many South African schools impelled him to commit to such an empowering role for the change of township schools.

Further, it seemed that the principal had a big picture far beyond the local school level. While focusing on the devoted commitment of the school's educators, he remarked:

*As a school, if we fail to lay a solid foundation for the success of learners we teach, South Africa will not be able to address the triple challenges of inequality, poverty, and unemployment. The safety and stability of the country depends on the success of its education system. I have committed myself and staff of the Township Secondary School to engage in this national building exercise with all the focus and sacrifices required. As nation builders the teaching staff of the Township Secondary School go beyond the call of duty. They organise extra classes for learners without any expectations for monetary rewards, which is a clear indication of a caring institution.*

The narrative above showed that Mr Chepo had a big dream as well as a hopeful belief in the relationship between the task of national building and the power of education. The interview data also revealed that this shared normative motivation of accountability enabled him and the SMT members to do their basic daily duties right. As a school leader, his ethics of care seemed extended to the broader boundary. However, its practice as embodied work was carried out in the form of ordinary caring lives in the Township Secondary School.

#### *Working together and commitment-centred approach*

In his narrative, one could see not only a big vision of SA, but also ordinary practices for such a hopeful school community, while trusting his colleagues and strengthening concern in this world where materialistic and monetary values are overemphasized.

However, the journey towards ideal democratic caring schools is surely challenging in the SA context, as the principal argued above.

Fundamentally, I agree with Mr Chepo that toward ideal thick democratic – caring schools, discipline as well as respect, diversity, tolerance, and growth are vital. He first instilled trust with other educators by the coherence of both saying and doing, that is, by taking authentic action. He also acknowledged individual human vulnerability. Prioritising the relationship between himself

and other stakeholders implied that he envisioned ordinary ideal democratic leadership practice characterized by professional collegiality and collaboration via two-way open communication.

Riessman (1993:4-5) expounds on the unique significance of narrative analysis by mentioning that the approach underscores human agency and imagination, so it fits studies of subjectivity and identity.

In detail, Etherington (2013) appreciates the features of narrative approaches to case studies as follows:

“The emphasis is on co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants. While being involved in / listening to / reading the conversations, researchers take in what is being said and compare it with their personal understandings, without filling in any gaps in understanding with 'grand narratives', but rather inquiring about how pieces of the stories make sense together.”

In this regard, Mr Chepo’s autobiographical narratives provided us with significant meaning-making process and also proof as supplemental data to his interview data.

What follows is the descriptions of the observation data and documents analysis to corroborate with the narrative and interviews.

#### **4.4.3 Observation of the morning briefing session**

As referred to in the previous chapter, the observation conducted in the later stage of the data collection (after the interviews and narrative) enabled the researcher to support or contradict the findings which emerged from interviews and the narrative. However, due to the limitation that the observation was conducted only once, I could not completely ensure the credibility of the data. Nevertheless, it was found that the principal communicated sufficiently with the teachers while inviting diverse views on the issues being discussed. Thus, the observation data proved to some extent that the interview participants commonly referred to the principal’s effective utilisation of communication for effective leadership and curriculum management.

On the other hand, when comparing with my personal experiences in South Korean public school contexts, what was found in the observation was that considerable daily tasks in the school seemed to be managed by the principal. From the limited observation, I sensed the necessity to distribute these tasks more and allow for the empowerment of middle leadership like SMT and other teachers (§2.3.3.2). Distributed leadership practice results in varied patterns of influence and interaction among staff (Joubert, 2018a:88).

#### **4.4.4 Description of documents analysis**

Document reviews contributed critically to verifying and confirming the findings generated from the interview and narrative data analysis.

##### *Seeking for critical pedagogy*

The school vision and mission statements were ontologically characterized by critical pedagogy for the transformation of the Township Secondary School and ensuring for providing a supportive teaching and learning environment as a caring action. Addressing of missions, the focus of critical thinking, self-discipline and selfless community service confirmed and verified the result of interview data analysis.

Concurrently, Moloji (2019)'s study suggests the possibility of township and rural school educators and learners as social agents for change on the condition that they experience critical pedagogy which implies fostering emancipatory methods of teaching and learning. It is thus claimed that for the improvement of learner performance in dysfunctional schools, structural factors of the South African education system must be addressed (*ibid.*). From the review of the vision and mission statement, it was clear that Mr Chepo and teachers' primary interest was in learner performance in the Township Secondary School. As a result, it could be assumed that the school also might be one of the agencies for change (§2.3.7.3; §2.3.8.2).

##### *Fostering a teaching and learning environment toward the school vision*

The SIP (School Improvement Plan) addressed in detail strategic interventions, fostering an improved school environment as well as improving learner performance. Interestingly, it was found that the descriptions of the interventions were correspondent to those of the categories and sub-categories generated from codifying interview data of the other participants, including the principal. For example, as for a focus area, quality of teaching and learning and educator development entailed specific strategies in improving educator subject knowledge and learner discipline. And as for a leadership, management, and communication area, it was clearly stated that it needs cooperation with all the stakeholders in achieving the school vision (see Annexure K).

It was found that the minutes of the SMT meetings which had been held five times until the 31st of August stressed the SMT's role of monitoring and reporting and feedback, management of the subject departments, supervision, which intended to inspire and sustain basic functionality of pedagogy as well as quality of teaching and learning, and educator development.

*Implementing strategic caring actions for learner performance.*

Similarly, it was found that the school implemented strategies such as providing extra classes to improve learner performance in all grades. In addition, the SIP encouraged the educators to support Grade 12 learners to qualify for bachelor's degree passes. For them, setting high level targets like 100% in terms of academic results was also impressive. In fact, the plan showed that the Matric pass rate (NSC) in 2021 was 98.9% - 181 learners passed out of 183 learners who wrote.

*Vulnerable township schools and learners*

However, on the other hand, when comparing with the descriptions of categories derived from the interview data analysis, what was missed was the reference to improving on sports and cultural activities in terms of curriculum provision and resources. The strong focus on the achievement of academic learner performance might cause a lesser amount of emphasis on cultural and sports activities. Yet, this gap made me realise once again the lack of infrastructure and human capital resources in township schools.

Next, document analysis of dropout learners between 2020-2022 presents another reality for vulnerable township learners (§2.3.8.1). According to Mr Chepo, during the Covid pandemic disaster, some female learners' pregnancy caused the increase of dropout rate in the school. The phenomenon was evident when reviewing the documents. The result of review was presented as follows:

Year	Male learners	Female learners	Total
2020	9	21	30
2021	28	25	53
2022 (08/31)	12	23	35

**Table 4-3: The numbers of learners who left the school (between 2020/01/01–2022/08/31)**

The principal in conversation mentioned that the school was planning to meet the parents of the learners who left the school owing to the unexpected situation. The results of document review and observation were used to support and give a better interpretation as to the results of other data analyses. However, as mentioned above, I had to consider that the observation data of the staff meeting conducted only once was not enough to be convinced of its credibility.

To sum up, the empirical data were interpreted by coding and categorising process as well as by conceptual and theoretical references. The work intended to develop themes for investigating the relation between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practice.

#### **4.5 Summary**

By starting to describe the historical background of the case school and participants' profile, this chapter embarked data presentation with coding and categorising. Then it served its interpretation in the form of discussion with the categories developed in the analysis process. Therefore, there was the description of content analysis to the semi-structured interview data of all the participants. Then, Mr Chepo's (the principal) autobiographical narrative, the observation of the morning briefing session, and documents data were analysed. Finally, as the result of codifying and categorization of the empirical study, interpretive discussion was established in the integration with the ethics of care approach.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the themes which were developed. The research questions as well as the key findings will be addressed. It will also include the summaries of each chapter, recommendations, limitations, and a conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 5      SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented and analysed all the data obtained from the empirical research on how the designated school principal's leadership practices relate to the ethics of care approach. Then, I conducted interpretive descriptions on each category and sub-categories while integrating the key concepts of the ethics of care approach.

This chapter proceeds to discuss critical findings of the research by integrating the findings of the literature review and those of the empirical research. Finally, from the iterative data analysis and its critical reflection, I have come to develop four themes along with overall propositional concepts on Mr Chepo's (the principal) leadership orientation. Therefore, the four themes will contribute to answering the research question and sub-questions of how the ethics of care assists leadership (principals or the SMT) to develop a teaching and learning community in a township school. Subsequently, recommendations about relevant educational levels and suggestions for future study follow. This chapter ends with the limitations and the conclusion. Before addressing the findings of study, a summary and the research questions of the study will be provided.

### **5.2 Summary of study**

Chapter 1 proposed the complete plan to conduct this study. Firstly, as the background to the study, challenging South African school contexts and issues in academic discourses on educational leadership, the problem statement and rationale were advanced. Then, from the complex and challenging South African school contexts with the lack of accountability and morality of leadership, a discussion followed on the justification of the moral and relational ethics of care theory of Gilligan as theoretical framework.

Chapter 1 established the research question and sub-questions. This was followed by offering a theoretical framework from the ethics of care approach by Gilligan (1982). The concepts used in the study were clarified. Thereafter, the research design and methodology for the empirical study was covered, in which the rationale for the use of a single case study of a principal's' leadership practices in a township school were argued. The use of the interpretivist paradigm and related data collection methods and analysis were also discussed. Finally, chapter 1 concluded with ethical considerations and the potential contribution of this theoretical and empirical research.

Chapter 2 presented a literature review of the ethics of care theory and of the context of educational leadership practices. This literature review aimed to justify the engagement of ethics

of care with leadership practices while putting the focus on fostering a teaching and learning community in the context of township schools. The discussion addressed leadership styles, the challenge of township schools, aims of schooling, and power asymmetry in relation between the principal and teachers. Accordingly, theoretical underpinnings to present the developing of a teaching and learning community as a key accountable feature of educational leadership and management practice were offered. In addition, spirituality, and self-reflexivity on the level of leadership development were discussed; these are all required for such a change. A theoretical framework for the empirical research was developed in which the following key concepts of the ethics of care were identified: human vulnerability and interdependence; a relational caring approach; thick democratic norms against patriarchal paradigm; and commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform.

Chapter 3 addressed the research design and methodology to investigate empirically how the ethics of care can assist a principal's leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school. It entails the research paradigm, design method, further data collection, analysis, and ethical consideration. For conducting the qualitative case study following the interpretivist paradigm, the case study was introduced as a strategy of the empirical study, which entailed the justification of a single case study of a South African male township school principal with the accompanying SMT members' participation in this study. Then, the data collection methods used for the study were described. For this qualitative study, data were collected through the principal's autobiographical narrative, semi-structured interviews with the principal and SMT members with separate interview schedules, observation of a regular staff meeting, and document reviews such as the SIP (School Improvement Plan) for 2022 and SMTs' (School Management Teams) regular meeting minutes for 2022. Subsequently, the introduction of data analysis along with the role of was presented. Lastly, the issues of ethical considerations as well as that of the credibility were discussed.

In Chapter 4, the data were codified and categorized through the process of analysis and accordingly interpreted in the form of a discussion while integrating the analysis results with the ethics of care key concepts. The description of the content analysis process applied to the semi-structured interview data of all the participants were also alluded to. Subsequently, the five categories and their corresponding sub-categories were presented as a diagram as well as in tabulated form. During the interpretation process, a critical ethics of care feminist approach was applied for reflection and for generating theory or knowledge or for confirming existing knowledge. Similarly, the principal's autobiographical narrative data, the data of observation of a staff meeting and document reviews were analysed and interpreted to corroborate or verify the interview data.

### **5.3 Research questions and sub-questions**

This study primarily aimed to establish how the ethics of care can influence leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school. The sub-research questions were as follows:

1. What is the importance of the ethics of care for schools?
2. What is the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning (TLC) in a township school?
3. How are the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practice related?
4. How do the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school?
5. How can the ethics of care approach assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools?

### **5.4 Findings of the research**

#### **5.4.1 Crystallised concepts and personal reflections**

The work of codifying, categorization, and its interpretation, led to identifying Mr Chepo's leadership (practices) orientation in a holistic way. A qualitative study conducted by Balkar (2015) confirmed that principal leadership and teachers' trust in the principal become components of Empowering School Culture (ESC). Balkar (2015:218) notes that what makes teachers perceive their principals as a leader is when school principals allow their autonomy and support collectivism and teamwork at schools.

Taking the above into consideration, it can be inferred that the concept 'empowering school culture' concurs with the concept of school as a teaching and learning community in this study. Using longitudinal data from interviews with principals and teachers in Germany, Meyer, Hartung-Beck, Gronostaj, Krüger and Richter (2022:2) describe principals as initiators of teacher collaboration and organizational change in schools. Coincidentally, the findings of the data analyses – the interviews, autobiographical narrative and documents - identified Mr Chepo's strategies of empowering the teachers. They are summarized as role-modelling, disciplining, and support for continuous professional development (CPD).

Thus, aligned with this addressing of the role of leadership, Synthetically, Mr Chepo's leadership orientation might be described as follows: empowering school culture; empowering teachers;

creating hopeful township schools via caring action. To begin with, I assume that moral and relational ethics of care aims for “empowering” people around the leaders themselves. To do so, ethics of care- oriented leaders become to remain in the relationship via two-way communication. Secondly, the result of analysis showed that a teaching and learning community is congruent with the concept of “empowering school culture”, where there is focus on curriculum management as well as education of democratic citizenship. Lastly, such leadership orientations and actions initiate transformation of challenging township schools into a hopeful school community via school-community collaboration. As a leader, Mr Chepo attended to physical and cultural realities of the community in terms of relational aspects of ordinary lives. Consequently, the interpretations to date and the diagram of categories showed that the ethics of care accounts as a remarkable relational approach might influence in educational leadership practices.

### ***Personal reflections***

The researcher’s personal reflection is to capture his/her own feelings in that they may later disclose insights through the research lens and any unwanted biases (Yin, 2016:183). Additionally, reflexivity can work as critical component in qualitative study (Etherington, 2013).

I sensed that the participants’ trust of Mr Chepo, based on his exemplary leadership and inspiration, was empowering them very highly. Accordingly, it also seemed that Mr Chepo’s main task of empowering educators was effective (Balkar, 2015: 218). On the other hand, in an organization, the extent or density of the tension that causes power relations might depend on the selfless capacity of leadership. My self-reflection leads to the following questions: Is the leader people-oriented? Or task-oriented? Or goal-oriented? Inferentially, what the analysis for this study revealed was that the leader showed the three orientations proportionally in that his personal/leadership characteristics and actions were depicted by human encountering via communication, the commitment to the tasks of management, and lastly, his strong visionary inspiration. Thus, he had power to influence teachers, learners, and parents, and used strategic tactics consistently to empower them.

This summative reflection on the result of analysis has generated themes. What follows is to display the four themes, which will serve to answer the research question of this study as well as to advance the final interpretative discussion.

#### **5.4.2 Introduction of the themes related to main categories and ethics of care**

The provision of the themes intends to answer the research questions and to draw conclusions that will form the basis of new knowledge or support existing knowledge. In the theoretical

framework of ethics of care for this study, the four themes are presented in tabulated form with identifying related main categories as follows:

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related Categories</b>	<b>Key concepts of the ethics of care</b>
<b>1.</b> Capturing the ethics of care as normative framework for a hopeful school community	- School as a T/L community	1. Human vulnerability and interdependence 2. A context specific caring approach
<b>2.</b> Township school leadership and curriculum management accountability	- Leadership characteristics - Leadership actions - Township schools' realities	1. Human vulnerability and interdependence 2. A context specific caring approach 4. Commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform
<b>3.</b> The principal's embodiment of the ethics of care and democratic leadership	- Leadership characteristics - SMT members' work orientation - Principal's leadership actions - School as a T/L community	1. 2 .3. 4 All concepts: 3.Thick democratic norms against a patriarchal paradigm
<b>4.</b> Instilling the ethics of care thick democracy in school leadership knowledge and practice	- SMT members' work orientation - Leadership characteristics and actions - School as a T/L community	3. Thick democratic norms against a patriarchal paradigm 4. Commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform

**Table 5-1: Presentation of the themes and key concepts of the ethics of care**

To report the findings of the study, the themes developed from the data analysis and interpretation, key concepts of the ethics of care theory, and the above research sub-questions will be used in contributing to the discussion.

### **5.4.3 Themes and discussion**

To answer the research questions, the confluence of findings of literature review and findings of empirical study are discussed under the following four themes:

- *Capturing the ethics of care as normative framework for a hopeful school community*
- *Township school leadership and curriculum management accountability*
- *The principal's embodiment of the ethics of care and democratic leadership*
- *Instilling the ethics of care thick democracy in school leadership knowledge and practice.*

#### **5.4.3.1 Theme 1: Capturing the ethics of care as normative framework for a hopeful school community**

The following question was addressed under this theme while focusing on the concept of restoration of the nature and aims of robust schooling (§2.3.6.1; §2.3.6.2). As Foster, Addy and Samoff (cited by Skovdal & Evans, 2017:161) remark, the current schoolings seem to reflect conflicting identity and aims (§2.3.6.1), where the emphasis is on the preparation of 'human becoming' for the future economic market rather than human beings who currently need caring and support.

#### **Research Question 1. What is the importance of the ethics of care for schools?**

The first research question was aimed at investigating the importance of the ethics of care for schools (§1.3). The following are the main findings:

##### 5.4.3.1.1 The reorientation towards relational caring schools

To discuss this question required ontological and epistemological understanding of schooling and the ethics of care. To do so, findings of literature study reported of the key concepts of the ethics of care as above. Then, literature review emphasized that the presence of relational caring schools should be called for to provide the environment conducive to teaching and learning activities for the holistic development of learners (Smylie *et al.*, 2016:3). Evidence of research showed of the reaffirmation of the central position of caring in schooling (Smylie *et al.*, 2016:3). Findings of this empirical study concur as the one sub-category of 'school as a T/L community' indicated- the features of belonging and ownership as a manifestation of caring school (§4.4.1).

##### 5.4.3.1.2 Community-oriented approach and cultivating responsible citizenship

###### *Community-oriented approach*

Findings of the literature study pointed out community-oriented approach as primary part of the nature and aims of schooling (§2.3.9.7). Synthetically, this claim underpinned the justification of

the ethics of care owing to its democratic and communitarian attributes such as relational caring responsibility, cooperation, mutual support. Likewise, in the data analysis of the empirical study, the sub-category of tolerance and growth supported the nature of schooling as such a community (§4.4.1.3).

#### *Cultivating responsible citizenship*

While supporting the community-oriented perspective, findings of literature review suggested that nature and aims of schooling need to be reoriented toward authentic caring approach, which implies the presence of critical open dialogue, cultivation of ethical attitudes and “a culture of questioning that demands far more than competency in rote learning and the application of acquired skills” (Giroux, cited by Waghid, 2019:32) (§2.3.6.2). In this view, it is worth noting again that that schools are to function for learners to experience the transition from the private domain of family or home to public world (Bhang & Kwak, 2019:931-932) (§2.3.7.1).

Similarly, document analysis of the school’s vision and mission statement also supported the aims of schooling in light of developing democratic citizenship - self-discipline, critical thinking and selfless community service (§4.4.4). Accordingly, findings of the empirical study concluded that the principal’s leadership practices presented implicitly and explicitly, a role-modelling of respect and open communication, with disciplining towards responsible attitudes (§4.4.1.5). It can be asserted that these are vital components towards life as a citizen of a democratic society.

#### 5.4.3.1.3 Hopeful schooling, the ethics of care and thick democracy

Importantly, learners need to experience future citizenship attributes in schools, beyond preparing for being a competing worker in a neoliberal market-oriented society. As it is the tendency of our contemporary societies to be atomized and seeking for individual private good, normatively schools need to facilitate moral and relational thick democracy directly and indirectly (Brown, 1997; Freire, 2001). As discussed above and in the literature review (§2.3.6; §2.4.1.1), the introduction of the ethics of care in schools, particularly to educational leadership practice, might contribute to the restoration of the aims of robust schooling. Specifically, the ethics of care theory – the four key concepts - provides a normative theoretical framework in reflecting and evaluating current educational leadership practices as well as schooling in terms of ontological implications (Bozalek *et al.*, 2015). In particular, in the South African township school context, this approach seems to have potential for change since it helps us to examine the practice of a teaching and learning community and critique barriers to the social-cultural and political creation of a responsible school community (Zulu *et al.*, 2020). By doing so, the ethics of care can form a theoretical cornerstone in creating a hopeful school community.

### **5.4.3.2 Theme 2: township school leaders' curriculum management accountability**

The following question was discussed under this theme with the emphasis on promoting a community of T/L as a critical leadership and management task in a township school.

#### **Research question 2: What is the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school?**

The second research question was aimed at exploring the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school (§1.3).

The following are the main findings:

##### **5.4.3.2.1 Township school reality**

The literature study on township schools and practices of leadership on curriculum management in South Africa addresses this theme. Challenging dysfunctional schools must be reformed (§4.4.1.4) and the quality of teaching to cope with the crisis of South African school system has to be improved (Mouton *et al.*, 2013:41). The empirical study reaffirms that the reality of township schools is characterized by the scarcity of resources, human capital, and of infrastructure; furthermore, by vulnerable learners who experience a lack of physical and emotional care from their families (§4.4.1.4).

As the challenges faced by township schools in the literature review (§2.3.9) as well as the empirical study revealed (§4.4.1.4), it is contended that establishing and sustaining a culture of teaching and learning is vital in a township school context.

##### **5.4.3.2.2 Potential resilience of township school leaders**

The empirical research showed that within a socio-historically disadvantaged township school context, the principal had a more creative vision of township schools. On the other hand, as to his consistent focus on the provision of quality education seen in the data analysis, it was inferred that his personal life history motivated him toward such an enthusiastic concern of teaching and learning (§4.4.2). The principal had trust in the power of education, especially educators' roles in empowering the socio-economically marginalized to recover their human dignity. To do so, the leader strived to empower teachers in terms of professional knowledge and leadership development (§4.4.2).

Consequently, it is evident that the task of township school leadership is to provide quality education, more specifically, to cultivate a school community of teaching and learning to support

and care for the marginalized learners. In this sense, the first and second concepts – human vulnerability and interdependence - a context specific caring approach might provide a significant theoretical framework for the call of caring/support in the leadership practices of township schools or rural schools. Therefore, the field of educational leadership and management needs to appreciate the ethics of care approach as the normative theoretical framework.

#### 5.4.3.2.3 Sustaining curriculum management: a critical task in township schools

In the National Planning Commission report (NPC), Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011) argue that structural factors surrounding the South African education system must be addressed if learner performance in dysfunctional schools is to improve. For instance, Hoadley, Christie and Ward (cited by Bush & Glover, 2016:7-8) refer to the interrelatedness of weak management and instructional leadership in South African primary schools by identifying the issues of insufficient curriculum coverage, poor management of resources and loss of teaching time. In addition, Van Wyk (2020:132-133) points out the significance of monitoring and evaluation systems as a priority for a change towards effective teaching and learning.

On the other hand, critically, Hoadley (2012:197-198) draws attention to the risk that in the field of research, relatively remarkable focuses on management or professionalism can result in losing the essential point of leverage for enhancing students' learning, namely, instructional dimensions. Then, she notes that there has been the attention to specific features or dimensions of classroom practice, which is likely to affect student learning (2012). It is seen that the addressing reflects the diverse and complex realities of South African schools in view of improving teaching and learning.

However, the results of this empirical study clearly demonstrated that the school leadership (the SMT) implemented curriculum management in a successful manner. It was clear that the principal's consistent instructional leadership approach remarkably aimed for teacher empowerment toward developing a T/L community or a COLT (Culture of Learning and Teaching) in the school, as showed by the descriptions to the related categories – SMT members' work orientation and the school as a T/L community (§4.4.1.2; §4.4.1.3). The statement made by an interviewee that "everyone does their job" was one of the examples representing the culture of the school. Therefore, it may be assumed that the SMTs' efforts and approach for carrying out the curriculum sustainably caused the school to develop a culture that is different from that of typical dysfunctional township schools.

### **5.4.3.3 Theme 3: The principal's embodiment of the ethics of care and democratic leadership**

The following two questions were discussed under this theme with the emphasis on the interrelatedness between the principal's leadership practice and thick democratic attributes of ethics of care. In this regard, the SMT members' perceptions of the principal's leadership practice were inferred from the integration of the teachers' work orientation and the principal's leadership characteristics and actions, and the school as a T/L community as shown in the interview data analysis (§4.4.1). To support the results of data, other supplementary data – autobiographical narrative, documents review and staff meeting observation, were significantly reviewed (§4.4.2; §4.4.3; §4.4.4). At the same time, the findings were measured in the perspective of the ethics of care.

In the end, to conclude the findings, a critical feminist and critical leadership approach will be involved to view the leadership practice.

**Research Question 3: How are the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practice related?**

**Research Question 4: How do the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school?**

The third and fourth research questions were aimed at investigating the relationship between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practice (§1.3).

The following are the main findings:

#### **5.4.3.3.1 SMT members' general perceptions**

It was found that on the basis of the SMT members' perceptions, the principal's personal traits and leadership practice had the following features: hardworking, responsible, caring and supportive, disciplining-focus, inspiring cooperation, vision/goal-oriented, fair (no gender binary) and organized curriculum management implementation with open communication and facilitating community support (§4.4.1; §4.4.2; §4.4.3). Thus, the overall perceptions can be summarized as follows:

*An accountable leader manager role-model for a change of township school*

It was found that the principal is an accountable leader manager model, dedicated to facilitating a community of teaching and learning for the purpose of township school learners' moral, ethical

citizenship development and best academic performance as a visible target. Finally, the results of the empirical study concluded that the principal's leadership practice is strategically directed toward empowering teachers to be role-models for the learners.

A detailed discussion in relation to the ethics of care approach follows.

#### 5.4.3.3.2 The principal's initial embodiment of the ethics of care

##### *Caring leadership traits*

The findings of the empirical study reported that the principal showed, to a great extent, caring leadership traits. From his autobiographical data, it was inferred that his empathy and motivation for caring/supporting learners originated from his own personal experiences of vulnerability. Specifically, in light of caring leadership traits suggested by Van der Vyver (cited by Van Deventer & Van der Vyver, 2016:96-97), the traits relevant to the principal can be identified as follows: emotional intelligence, humility, motivation, servitude, respect, trust, empowering others, fairness, listening, accessibility. These were revealed in the interviews with the participants. His inspiring, accountable traits and risk-taking communication as leadership characteristics were especially expressed in the interviews.

##### *Inspiring teachers' collaboration*

On the other hand, his unique caring approach to the teachers seemed to focus on teachers' professional collegiality by encouraging working together and resolving conflicts to maintain a conducive teaching and learning environment (§4.4.1.2; §4.4.2). These could be identified as relevant to the key concepts of the ethics of care: human vulnerability and interdependence; a context-specific caring approach.

#### 5.4.3.3.3 A developed form caring

In the theoretical framework of the ethics of care, findings of the empirical study report that the principal's leadership practice was characterized by embodiment of the ethics of care. The examples were his self-awareness of human vulnerability and two-way communication; the commitment to disciplining school stakeholders – teachers, learners and parents - to instil democratic attitudes and a collaborative community-centred approach (§4.4.1.1; §4.4.1.3; §4.4.1.5). Among these were risk-taking, communication and the commitment to discipline to develop democratic attitudes in schools.

### *Risk-taker and two-way communicator*

According to the data analysis, the principal had the ears to listen to the teachers as well as a communicative passion to share challenging issues honestly (§4.4.1.1; §4.4.1.2). To resolve conflicts or problems with teaching staff or parents, he attended to their voices, then tried to settle the conflicts in a just way while paying attention to being selfless (§4.4.1). While being free from professional fears like to ‘what will people say?’ as Brown referred to (cited by Loader, 1997:11), rather, the principal showed openness and honesty to the challenges including relational or professional conflicts. Thus, it could be inferred that the principal is a risk-taking human, daring deeper human encounters. The empirical study showed that the communication channels such as regular staff meeting and SMT meetings might have contributed to the teachers considering themselves to be active participants in the running of the school.

### *The commitment to the responsibility of disciplining*

What was found remarkable was the principal’s emphasis on disciplining all stakeholders. Such an attitude seems to reflect the claims of the author who studied the School Governing Bodies’ support of schools to promote quality academic performance. In the study, Galetuke (2017:117) mentions the issues of power struggle and suggests the necessity of democratic training. A study on educational leadership in the context of Zimbabwe indicated the gap between the articulations of educators’ democratic leadership and its practice (Chingara, 2019:185-186). Regarding the roles of change agents in South African educational support services, there is a conclusive imperative: what matters is the responsibility of schools, districts, and universities (Malindi 2021:166). The concept of responsibility needs to be highlighted in this discussion while drawing on the last concept of the ethics of care - commitment to accountability as a critical agency for reform.

The principal’s leadership practice and the ethics of care as perceived by him and the SMT members were found to be positively correlated. Nevertheless, it seems important to note another invisible aspect of his leadership practice.

#### 5.4.3.3.4 Invisible obstacles to strong leadership

### *The doer-leader and pacesetter approaches*

In bringing the emotional intelligence-based approach to leadership development in the American educational context, Taylor (2022) identifies and critiques seven invisible obstacles to strong school leadership. Among them, attending to both pacesetter and doer approaches while

reflecting on the principal's practice in this study seems useful. These approaches are explained as follows:

“Pacesetters are driven by an admirable desire to reach and exemplify excellence. ... School leaders often assume that embodying this ideal means sacrificing themselves for the mission. This is an emotionally contagious phenomenon. When school leaders lead this way, their teams respond in kind” (Taylor, 2022:5).

The principal's autobiographical narrative data seem correspondent to the above leadership approach when one excludes the difference between the geographical contexts of the USA and SA.

The other obstacle is as follows:

“Doer leadership behaviours also have an excluding effect on teams because they tend to employ white supremacist culture norms such as perfectionism, only one right way; power hoarding; individualism; I'm the only one”(Okun, cited by Taylor, 2022:151).

When comparing to the case principal's leadership orientation, this approach seems contrary to his approach. Rather, it is viewed that his approach – favouring Ubuntu African philosophy - seems to overcome this obstacle. However, assertion or objection on the views above remains impossible in this study since diverse teachers' perceptions were not presented on this topic.

#### *Generation gaps*

Moreover, the SMT members' generation (exclusively Gen X) also motivates this limitation. The publication “5-Gen leadership: Leading 5 generation in schools in the 2020s” emphasizes that leaders need to recognize each teacher's formative decades because they all tend to see the world through the lens of their age group, finally helping them bridge the generation gaps and understand each other (White, 2022:7-8).

Concerning gender binaries and gender discrimination, the principal asserted in the interview that he does not support any form of gender discrimination as was the case in ‘the older days.’

Mr Chepo remarked:

*Yes, yes. In the older days, there could be some problems with male or female. But with us, we regard each other as colleagues. We are working in the same environment. If*

*you are a female, and you are done a right thing, we must appreciate that. If you are a male, and you have done a wrong thing, you must also call into orders.*

More critically, what follows is to develop the discussion to the dangers of the ethics of care and overcoming patriarchy and hierarchy toward a thick democracy within the ethics of care perspective.

#### 5.4.3.3.5 Invisible obstacles within caring leadership

##### *Paternalism in the ethics of care*

From the empirical study, it was found that to resolve conflicts between teachers, or teachers and parents, amongst the influential tactics of a leader, the principal used rational persuasion and inspirational appeal.

However, as discussed previously (§4.4.1.2) it could be critically inferred that the principal's extraordinary capacity and actions to resolve conflicts on behalf of the SMT or teachers might be seen as a possible manifestation of paternalism. It is argued that the paternalism relevant to patriarchy can be a danger in the ethic of care approach (Bozalek *et al.*, 2015:264). Thus, it can be claimed that the danger of patriarchal attitudes mediated within the ethics of care needs to be self-reflected as one of critical leadership skills, given that a critical role of a leader is to empower teacher leadership. In addition, it can be recommended that democratic communicative skills between middle leadership like the SMT and teachers need to be cultivated to overcome the possible danger of paternalism.

##### *Power relations and overcoming patriarchy and hierarchy*

The literature review reports that power relations might be present in implementing leadership in schools (§2.3.9.3; §2.3.9.4). In the study titled "Gender conversations in Zimbabwe" Connell and Messerschmidt (cited by Dziwa *et al.*, 2020:2) maintain that "the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force". They continue to argue that:

"There are, consequently, multiple hierarchies that can be discerned in societal structures such as schools, workplaces and communities, and therefore hegemony implies dominance in terms of culture, various social contexts as well as institutions and persuasions. In this view, there are multiple masculinities and power relations at play in a given society" (Connell & Messerschmidt, *ibid.*).

To the interview question whether there is the presence of gender difference in terms of the principal's delegating the task or appointing posts, all the respondents noted his fairness in delegation except special tasks which need inevitably gender-based consideration, and his respect for all the educators irrespective of gender. As seen above, the principal's response also confirmed this.

Yet, as Bhana (2015:15) addresses gender relations of power, we can safely say that the hidden culture might still be perceived in the current South African society. Concurrently, the literature review reported that the hierarchal paradigm results in hindering the implementation of distributed leadership in South African schools (§2.3.3.2).

Considering the nature of cultural hegemony as above, we could also consider the possible presence of asymmetrical power relations in an organization (the school), which implies inevitable impacts of patriarchal or hierarchal ideology. However, it is also positive that Mr Chepo (the principal) endeavoured to inspire and cultivate the value of cooperation and mutual support for the common vision of the school by actively assisting vulnerable learners. In this regard, it is applaudable that vital thick democratic attributes of the ethics of care were embodied in his daily based leadership practices as an open communicator for the purpose of establishing horizontal rather than hierarchical relations.

In the end, it seems that sustainable success of the principal's ethics of care leadership approach might rely on his ongoing critical self-reflection and more open communication with diverse stakeholders.

#### *Critical leadership perspective*

While looking at the darker aspects of leadership is certainly vital, there are reasons to appreciate a more positive and necessary role of leadership, at least in some situations (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). They continue as follows:

“We need to develop strong critiques of leadership ideology as a general source of domination, but supplement this with a more nuanced appreciation of how to make organizations work in local situations. We need to counteract problematic authority relations but also cultivate responsibility and acknowledge asymmetries between people in terms of experiences, skills, and other relevant characteristics”  
(Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

This means being able to both take a critical view of leadership and be willing to consider local views and understandings of leadership (Fairhurst, cited by Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). It can be mentioned that attending to this view has allowed me to measure the principal's leadership practice more equivalently in terms of the general and local contexts.

#### 5.4.3.3.6 Final reviewing of the principal's leadership practices

##### *Thick democracy*

The literature study reports that thick democracy in this approach ontologically contrasts with patriarchal ideology (§2.2.4.2). As mentioned earlier, Gilligan (2011b:22) contends that a feminist ethic of care rests on a thick rather than thin understanding of democracy. Finally, the approach intends for us to embrace different voices while focusing on relationality, not on relativism. Such thick democracy rests on the premise that different voices are integral to the vitality of a democratic society. Thus, as thick democracy attributes, the following are identified: respect, caring, responsibility, cooperation, communication, the rejection of gender binary and patriarchal hierarchal approach, seeking for communitarian approach or common good beyond private and individual wellbeing.

##### *Journey to democratic leadership*

Findings of this empirical study revealed that the principal's leadership practice seemed to transit from instructional caring leadership to the ethics of care thick democracy, in other words, democratic leadership (§4.4.1.3; §4.4.1.5). Therefore, in spite of inevitable gaps in reaching ideal democratic leadership, it could be concluded that the case study's principal was on a hopeful journey toward democratic leadership, that is, the infusion of the moral and political ethics of care in the vulnerable township school.

As a result of the data analysis – semi-structured interviews, autobiographical narrative, document review, and observation of a staff meeting - it could be concluded that the school's public reputation as one of the best performing schools resulted from the teachers' teamwork in the role-modelling of SMT members. In doing so, the communication channels such as regular staff meetings and SMT meetings might have contributed to the teachers considering themselves active participants in the running of the school. As a result, the five interview participants illustrated the relationship between the principal and the stakeholders in the form of a horizontal or lateral two-way interaction.

### *Limitation of assertion but hopeful expectation*

However, it could not be firmly asserted whether the principal's leadership practice was characterized by ideal bottom-up or grass roots fashioned thick democracy or not. The reason was that I only could directly reach SMT members (which includes one senior teacher) to gain data because of methodologically purposeful sampling in this empirical study. In addition, through the self-reflective process, I had to acknowledge that I focused more on confirmation among data rather than on finding differentiation. As a result, the interpretation of the study had a limitation regarding thick descriptions of multiple points of view. Accordingly, the study's a possible conclusion is that there might be still room for improvement in the relationship between the principal's leadership and thick democratic ethics of care. Nonetheless, still, it is hoped that the principal's journey of leadership would result in democratic leadership in the ethics of care. Thus, with ambivalent perspectives, the empirical study reported positive relatedness between the principal's leadership and the ethics of care approach, as well as the gap between his leadership practices and a thick democracy as a manifestation of ethics of care.

#### **5.4.3.4 Theme 4: Brining the ethics of care thick democracy to school leadership knowledge and practice**

The following research question was addressed under this theme while highlighting the theoretical reflections and practical strategies of the ethics of care found throughout the process of this study.

#### **Research Question 5: How can the ethics of care approach assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools?**

The fifth research question was aimed at suggesting strategies how the ethics of care approach can assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools.

##### 5.4.3.4.1 To mitigate power asymmetry as strategies of the ethics of care

Effective leadership tasks have something to do with maintaining ideal caring relationships in the presence of power asymmetry. Thus, as the findings of literature review show (2.4.4), in approaching leadership practice of challenging township schools, spirituality, self-reflection as well as collegial reflection among relevant leadership agents are required.

#### *Spirituality*

Practising the ethics of care is parallel to serving others, which needs the agency of spirituality as a moral will since love and a higher vision or goal inspire the commitment against negative power

relations. The literature review presents the significance of spirituality of care ethics which implies willing support or love to keep serving others for a higher goal (§2.3.9.5; §2.4.4). This empirical study showed that the feature of spirituality seemed to motivate SMTs as well as the principal's humble attitude to engage in the change of township schools (§4.4.1.4). As the empirical study reports, the principal's humility – awareness of vulnerability and trust of other colleagues - is seen as a manifestation of his spirituality (§4.4.1.5).

#### *Self-reflection with open communication*

Noddings (cited by Bergmark, 2020:339) suggests that reflection and communication are ways to learn about the other's perspective and, therefore, to promote a caring. In this view, as the one strategy of ethics of care, self-reflection on our own vulnerability as humans to develop caring relationships is needed. In addition, as critical factors in dismantling the hindrance of relations of power, Bergmark suggests continuous reflection on relations of power or asymmetry of power (*ibid.*). In this regard, as the other strategy, open communication serves as the basis of reciprocity, which stresses the other self, rather than focusing on the topic. From the findings of the empirical study, it is inferred that the principal's accessibility for communication and his awareness of human vulnerability played an important role in building healthy relationships while lessening power asymmetry (§4.4.1.5).

#### 5.4.3.4.2 Critical application of the ethics of care approach: responsibility

##### *Responsibility of knowledge development for accountable curriculum management*

The findings of the literature study emphasize the significance of leadership practices which are responsible and willing to cultivate a conducive teaching and learning environment (§2.3.9.2). In this view, it can be argued that the failure of successful management results from both the shortages in teacher practice and the leader's lack of knowledge and accordingly negligence to the role of curriculum management implementation. Consequently, an important aspect of the job of a school principal is to be the leader of curriculum implementation (Van der Berg *et al.*, 2011:9).

Concurrently, findings of the empirical study support the critical roles of principal and SMT members in schools by presenting relevant data in terms of ethics of care-oriented leadership and sustainable curriculum management (§4.4.1.2). Research also holds that a gap of leadership and management exists between teaching responsibilities and principalship (Sepuru & Mohlakwana, 2020). Accordingly, compared to international standards, beginner principals in SA are inadequately prepared when they are appointed as school principals (*ibid.*). Thus, it can be argued that there should be programmes for providing the principals with knowledge development

regarding curriculum implementation. Further, the principals' own CPD (Continuous Professional Development) should precede the teachers CPD in the South African township school context.

### *Responsibility for teacher empowerment*

In relation to 'responsibility' in a thick democratic perspective, it can be suggested that principals' leadership practice in a township school context should direct toward the development of teacher leadership. In other words, one of the main tasks of principal leadership needs to be the empowerment of teachers to willingly contribute to creating and developing a teaching and learning community.

Eventually, it is reaffirmed that primarily, for principals' CPD, leadership development training in terms of communication skills and curriculum management tasks along with leaders' critical self-reflection and mentoring is needed (Kok, 2018: 124-125; Mestry, 2017:8; Ngara, 2022). Then, they will be able to plan and implement effective programmes for teachers' CPD, whether it is implemented internally or externally.

On the level of educational policy, the value of "working with and working for the community" along with "self and teacher empowerment", is presented as one of the key areas in the Standard for Principalship suggested by the DBE (2015a:21).

The standard concludes by calling for the practice of ethical leadership which emphasizes accountability (DBE, 2015a:22). This value implies seeking for partnership and collaboration among the principals, colleague leaders and teachers. Therefore, the ethics of care approach might provide a grounding theoretical framework with leadership agents since its accounts are based on moral and relational human conditions.

In this view, it is inferred that the principal seemed personally prepared for teacher empowerment owing to his experiences of knowledge development relevant to leadership and management as well as his cumulative interventions as a leader. On the contrary, most principals serving dysfunctional township schools seem to lack knowledge of their specific roles. As this study has theoretically and empirically claimed throughout the discussion, it can be concluded that leadership development (LP) and CPD need to introduce the ethics of care approach implying the commitment to responsibility, calling for relational and moral care embodiment as ordinary language philosophy (OLP) (Laugier, 2018).

#### 5.4.3.4.3 Motivation for the call for the ethics of care in educational leadership discourse

##### *Mobilizing school-community collaborative caring strategies*

It was found that, for the last strategic suggestion for school leaders in a similar context, the principal's actions working with the SMT teachers along with his enthusiasm of networking for caring support might be a role model in relation to the ethics of care approach in a certain way (Ainscow *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is recommended that educational leadership development and training should include practical mentoring programmes or leadership models. Then, ultimately, in-service or pre-service leaders in similar vulnerable contexts might be empowered to become capable and humble leader models who commit themselves to the provision of quality education.

##### *Impact of the ethics of care feminist approach*

From the literature study, it is argued that the ethics of care approach fundamentally might assist leadership practices ontologically and epistemologically to promote a teaching and learning community in a township school (§2.3.7.3). It would be worthy to note the following remarks by Laugier (2018:62):

“This is nothing less than a paradigm shift in ethics, with a reorientation towards vulnerability and a shift from the 'just' to the 'important,' exactly as Wittgenstein (1923) proposed shifting the meaning of importance by destroying what seemed to be important. Assessing the importance of care for human life means acknowledging the vulnerability of forms of life.”

I agree that the importance of care for human life derives from acknowledging the vulnerability of forms of life (*ibid.*). The ethics of care feminist approach also gives the room for us to hear such unvoiced vulnerability. Finally, feminism is a further development of critical theory in the sense that it shows forms of oppressions which critical theory did not indicate, such as the move from the ethics of justice to the ethics of care, from objectivity to subjectivity, from a reliance only on the cognitive to the inclusion of emotion and subjective experience.

Similarly, the empirical study asserted that the principal's intellectual knowledge as well as his subjective encountering of a leadership model in his journey as educator has facilitated his current leadership development and personal understanding of the ethics of care (§4.4.2).

In the end, all these accounts might bring us to the first concepts in the theoretical framework, namely human vulnerability and interdependence. The findings of the empirical and theoretical

study showed that the principal's narratives and leadership actions coincidentally and critically shed light on these grounding concepts of the ethics of care. Then, it is affirmed that the ethics of care might have a normative underpinning as an alternative leadership approach in South African township school context.

#### 5.4.3.4.4 Concluding the study: Is the change of township schools impossible?

As aforementioned, it is concluded that this theoretical and empirical study on the relationship between the case principal's leadership practice and the ethics of care presented similar and common results with other relevant agents' leadership practices.

In the publication "Decolonizing schools in South Africa – the impossible dream?", Christie (2020:209) readdresses schooling as a significant social institution that provides systematic teaching and learning for young people to contribute to a shared world and change it for the better. Indicating the enormous impact of neoliberalism in schooling (§2.3.6.2; §2.4.1.1). Christie contends that the task of decolonizing as part of transformation of South African schools relates to an ontological and ethical framework in viewing a better world and life (*ibid.*).

It seems uncertain whether Mr Chepo's (the principal) hopeful dream along with his actions and critical resistance to the current dysfunctionality of township schools will bring an end to a rooted colonial schooling system. We found that in his personal story of his past in a vulnerable social context depicted as inequality, poverty and unemployment, meaningful others intervened in his life so that he could be empowered. Now he is playing the role of empowering other colleagues. As a result, the principal's leadership actions transformed the socio-economically vulnerable township school.

## 5.5 Recommendations

### 5.5.1 Recommendation to the Department of Higher Education / Teacher Training Institutions

Provided that the ethics of care is an accessible alternative educational leadership approach since the terminology itself appears user friendly by nature, the introduction of the ethics of care approach in leadership development training programme or workshops in the collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and teacher training institutions is recommended.

Motivation

Firstly, studies on educational leadership in the theoretical framework of the feminist ethics of care theory in public schools are uncommon. In this regard, this study might contribute to the educational leadership and management discourse.

Secondly, in terms of terminology, caring and support seem interwoven. Psychosocial educational support has been critically articulated in the level of academics and policy (Hay, 2021; Makhalemele & Botha, 2021; Malindi, 2021). From the findings of the empirical study, it was assumed that the participants' natural familiarity with the concept of care might impact positively when it is articulated among the in-service leadership educators as a leadership approach, comparably with other terminologies of leadership, such as transformational leadership.

### **5.5.2 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education**

It is recommended that it would be effective for the relevant policy makers to collaborate with Higher Education institutions in introducing the ethics of care approach as an accessible alternative leadership approach. Moreover, the approach would effectively contribute to democratization in that it embraces democratic leadership attributes which are essential to the development of educational leadership agents as well as the South African school system.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations for schools**

A voluntary leaders' community for inter-schools' leadership communication rather than the form of bureaucratic leadership training workshop can be created. The ethics of care as ethical and political ethics beyond the implication of natural caring should be introduced. The acknowledgement of detailed ethics of care accounts might develop all school stakeholders' self-awareness and self-reflection toward thick democratic leadership. It will then encourage them to attend to holistic educational practices which imply a commitment to open communication, mutual support and accountability. As a result, teachers as well as the middle leadership such as the SMT will be empowered.

### **5.6 Recommendations for future research**

On a methodological level, a single case study and a purposeful sampled population limited a thorough exploration and interpretation of the principal's leadership practice. Therefore, it would be recommended to conduct a qualitative study with general teachers, not the SMT in the framework of the ethics of care or critical leadership theory concerning the mainstream leadership approach. It would also be interesting to study the perspectives on quality education or teacher leadership empowerment between different generations of teachers by employing the mixed method research approach.

Further, with the critical theoretical framework of the ethics of care as a morally democratic approach, it would be worthy to explore in-depth the practice and challenges of democratic leadership in the South African township schools on a larger scale.

Lastly, for a practical application of the indigenous ubuntu philosophy and the ethics of care to the school leadership context, a more deliberate study at the level of the Department of Higher Education and Teacher Training Institutions and educational research fields is recommended. Thereby critical leadership perspectives can develop effective local context-oriented leadership beyond the mere application of a western education leadership and management approach.

### **5.7 Limitations of this study**

As mentioned above, this empirical case study is limited in terms of data collection from a small sample population and observation of one staff meeting. It excluded investigating learners', parents', and teachers' perceptions on the principal's leadership practice. In this regard, complete confirmation could not be reached as to the teachers' perception of the principal's leadership practice.

Then, due to the time constraints and cultural gap caused by both the participants' and the researcher's use of English as second and foreign language, rather than mother tongue, a few challenges in data collection were experienced. Lastly, self-reflexivity or ontological subjectivity within this qualitative study in relation to the SMT/senior teachers' perception of the principal's leadership practices including the researcher's own perspective and worldview in the interpretation of the data presented an issue.

### **5.8 Conclusion**

A hopeful school community seems to envision deep human encounters beyond the exclusive preparation of learners to be workers in the neoliberal economy market. In the formation of this school community, the findings of this study showed the significance of leadership agents' role modelling and practices. For example, firstly, it was remarkable to have found the principal's persistent inspiration for promoting a community of teaching and learning. Secondly, it was noticed that the principal put into practice his communicative passion for attending and responding to the needs or challenges of stakeholders in the school community. Lastly, it seems that his ethics of care approach has sought for an ideal society where we value human dignity and coexist peacefully by caring and supporting one another.

The case study of how an exemplary principal's leadership practice is related to the ethics of care approach in developing a community of teaching and learning in a township school revealed that

there was a corresponding relation between them ontologically and epistemologically in spite of its limited proof. In this view, empowering teachers or teacher empowerment can be significantly highlighted as the leader's embodiment of the ethics of care. To be sure, it should start from empowering leaders in South African township school contexts. This study demonstrated that single case study has the potential for natural generalization in spite of its extremely small sampling.

Therefore, to conclude, the key assertion of this study is that the ethics of care approach can contribute to assisting school leadership to foster a teaching and learning community in a township school in that it critically entails morally thick democratic components such as caring responsibility, open communication with discipline, cooperative community-orientation, and finally, seeking for horizontal relation rather than hierarchy or patriarchy. Yet, most of all, it is worth noting that the ethics of care's extended nature, as a moral and political ethics, can be effectively substantiated to call for it to the heart of leadership development and training.

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# ANNEXURE A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Fax: 018 299-4910  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics  
Tel: 018 299-4849  
Email: [nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za](mailto:nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za)

## ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EduREC) on 26 May 2022, the Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

<b>Study title:</b> The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school																															
<b>Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher:</b> Dr BH Challens																															
<b>Student / Team:</b> EJ Kim (MEd student – 22364064), Dr L Postma																															
<b>Ethics number:</b>	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>7</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="5">Study Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="5">Status</td></tr></table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	2	7	2	-	2	2	-	A	2	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status				
N	W	U	-	0	0	2	7	2	-	2	2	-	A	2																	
Institution			Study Number					Year		Status																					
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																															
<b>Application Type:</b> Single study	<b>Risk:</b> <table border="1"><tr><td>Low</td></tr></table>	Low																													
Low																															
<b>Commencement date:</b> 26/05/2022																															
<b>Expiry date:</b> 26/05/2023																															
<b>Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.</b>																															

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

<p><b>General conditions:</b></p> <p>While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the ES-REC:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and</li><li>without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.</li></ul></li><li>The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the ES-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.</li><li>Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.</li><li>The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.</li><li>In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRC and ES-REC reserves the right to:</li></ul>
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- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
  - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the ES-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
  - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
  - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The ES-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the ES-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof Jako Olivier  
Chairperson NWU Education Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docx  
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\05519539\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethical\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docx  
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

## ANNEXURE B: NWDBE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



**Department of Education**

North West Province  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Orjona Building, Mmabatho,  
1st Floor, East Wing,  
Private Bag X2044,  
Mmabatho 2735  
Tel.: (018) 388-3429/33  
e-mail: sgedu@nwpg.gov.za

### OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

Enquiries: Dr T. Phorabatho  
Telephone: 018 388 3071/3433

**TO:** Dr BH Challeng  
North West University (Potchefstroom)  
Faculty of Education

**FROM:** Mrs S.M. Semaswe  
Superintendent – General

**DATE:** 10 June 2022

**SUBJECT:** PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: BY MS EJ KIM

Permission is hereby granted to you, Ms EJ Kim to conduct research in the department as requested, subject to the following conditions

- Collection of data be accompanied by approval letter signed by the HOD.
- Data Collection shall be conducted as proposed in your research observing all the research ethics protocols.
- Data collection process should be Covid-19 compliant.
- The participants will be contacted with this letter of permission in compliance with your methodological strategies.
- Considering that your research will be involving management of Department of Education let all the legislative and policy dictates be your guiding principles.
- Participation in the project will be voluntary.
- The principles of informed consent and confidentiality will be observed in strictest terms.
- The findings of the research should be made available to the North West Department of Education upon request.
- The Department of Education reserve the right to monitor the project at any stage or time.
- The Final Report and benefits from or of the research will be made available to the Department as soon as project comes to an end.

Best wishes

MRS S.M. SEMASWE  
SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

10/06/2022

DATE



BE SAFE  
ACT RESPONSIBLY

WASH YOUR  
HANDS OFTEN

WEAR A MASK WHEN  
GOING OUTSIDE

MAINTAIN SOCIAL  
DISTANCING



## ANNEXURE C: PERMISSION LETTER - PRINCIPAL



The School

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Faculty of Education**

**Edu-Lead**

Tel: 018 299 4754  
Email: [Branwen.Challens@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Branwen.Challens@nwu.ac.za)  
10 June 2022

### To THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Permission letter: school principal**

I herewith request your permission for you as principal and the SMT members and senior teachers (over 5-year teaching experience in your school) to participate in this research, which involves individual semi-structured interviews with the principal, SMT and senior teachers. The study also includes an autobiographical narrative to be written by the principal, observation of two staff meetings, and document reviews of your school's 2020-2021 Matric results, learner attendance, and other relevant documents related to caring programs.

Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

#### **TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

*The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.*

#### **ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER**

**NWU-00272-22-A2**

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr BH Challens

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr L Potsma

ADDRESS: Faculty of Education, School of Professional Studies, P/B X6001, Potchefstroom, 2521.

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4754

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: EJ KIM

ADDRESS: (M/H) 19 San Michelle, Makou Str. 6B, Van der Hoff Park, Potchefstroom

CONTACT NUMBER: 079 -112-3375

#### **FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: [Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za), Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this

committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education.

## **What is this research about?**

It aims to explore the influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.

The objectives of this empirical research are:

- To evaluate the significance of the ethics of care for schools
- To determine the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school.
- To explore the relationship between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practices.
- To investigate how the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school regarding the ethics of care.
- To suggest strategies of how the ethics of care approach can assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools

## **Participants**

- The principal
- The school's SMT members and/or senior teachers (5-7 members)

## **What is expected of the participants?**

- The principal is required to write an autobiographical narrative (3-4pages)
- The case principal and each SMT members and/or senior teachers are expected to participate in a one-hour individual semi-structured interviews.
- To grant the researcher access to two staff meetings for observation purposes.
- To grant the researcher access to relevant documents such as the previous matric academic results, learners' attendance log, relevant documents related to caring programs.
- COVID-19 health and safety protocols will be adhered to, including the compulsory wearing of masks, maintaining the required social distance between participants and availability of hand sanitisers.
- Zoom, Google Meet or MS Teams will be used if face-to-face meetings are not possible or if participants find such online modes of communication more convenient.
- During interviews an audio voice recorder will be used. Prior permission to audio record interviews will be sought from participants. Participants may state if they are uncomfortable with the audio recorder.
- An interview schedule will be used to guide discussions – participants are free to abstain from answering any question/s they feel uncomfortable with.
- Participants are assured that all information will be kept strictly confidential. The identities of participants will not appear in any audio recordings, notes or in the research findings.
- Participation is completely voluntary. A participant may withdraw from the study at any time and may ask that his/her data no longer be used in the study, without stating reasons and without fear of any form of prejudice.

## **Benefits to the participants**

The study will contribute to the understanding of an ethics of care approach which school leaders can adopt in a township school context. The participants will have the chance to reflect on their role and practice in contributing to a community of teaching and learning in their school context. A concise report containing the overall findings of the study will be made available to participants.

### **Risks involved for participants**

The research poses no physical, psychological, or economic risks to participants. Participants will be required to set time aside to engage in individual interviews. Interviews are scheduled to be completed within sixty minutes and questions are not expansive. The time is sufficient to cover the topic of research without requiring participants to proffer more of their time. The principal will be required to write an autobiographical narrative over a period agreed upon by the principal and researcher. The teaching and learning program of the school will not be interrupted. The researcher will carefully monitor the course of interviews and allow for a brief break with light refreshments to counter fatigue.

### **Confidentiality and protection of identity**

Participants will be assured of confidentiality. The identities of the participants will be stringently protected. The name of the school will not be mentioned in the study. Written notes, audio recordings and transcripts will not contain the identities of any of the participants. Letter and number codes will be used to record the findings. Information will not be shared with the rest of the staff or other stakeholders. Data will be stored in the study leader's custody, locked in a safe cabinet for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

### **Dissemination of findings**

The findings of the research study will be shared with the Provincial Department of Basic Education and participating school through electronic copies of the accepted dissertation once the dissertation has been accepted.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

### **DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:**

By signing below, I ..... agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

**[The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school]**

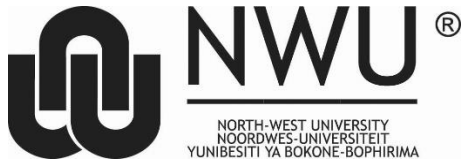
**I declare that:**

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_/2022\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Signature of School Principal/Relevant person**

## ANNEXURE D: GOODWILL LETTER - SGB



The School

Dear Sir/ Madam

### Goodwill permission: school governing body

I herewith request your permission for the principal and the SMT members and senior teachers (over 5-year teaching experience in your school) to participate in this research, which involves individual semi-structured interviews with the principal, SMT and senior teachers. The study also includes an autobiographical narrative to be written by the principal, observation of two staff meetings, and document reviews of your school's 2020-2021 Matric results, learner attendance, and other relevant documents related to caring programs.

Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

#### TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

*The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.*

#### ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER

**NWU-00272-22-A2**

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Dr BH Challens

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr L Potsma

ADDRESS: Faculty of Education, School of Professional Studies, P/B X6001, Potchefstroom, 2521.

CONTACT NUMBER: 018 299 4754

MEMBER OF PROJECT TEAM MEd-Student: EJ KIM

ADDRESS: (M/H) 19 San Michelle, Makou Str. 6B, Van der Hoff Park, Potchefstroom

CONTACT NUMBER: 079 -112-3375

#### FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: [Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za), Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education.

#### What is this research about?

It aims to explore the influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.

The objectives of this empirical research are:

- To evaluate the significance of the ethics of care for schools
- To determine the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school.
- To explore the relationship between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practices.
- To investigate how the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school regarding the ethics of care.
- To suggest strategies of how the ethics of care approach can assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools

### **Participants**

- The principal
- The school's SMT members and/or senior teachers (5-7 members)

### **What is expected of the participants?**

- The principal is required to write an autobiographical narrative (3-4pages)
- The case principal and each SMT members and/or senior teachers are expected to participate in a one-hour individual semi-structured interviews.
- To grant the researcher access to two staff meetings for observation purposes.
- To grant the researcher access to relevant documents such as the previous matric academic results, learners' attendance log, relevant documents related to caring programs.
- COVID-19 health and safety protocols will be adhered to, including the compulsory wearing of masks, maintaining the required social distance between participants and availability of hand sanitisers.
- Zoom, Google Meet or MS Teams will be used if face-to-face meetings are not possible or if participants find such online modes of communication more convenient.
- During interviews an audio voice recorder will be used. Prior permission to audio record interviews will be sought from participants. Participants may state if they are uncomfortable with the audio recorder.
- An interview schedule will be used to guide discussions – participants are free to abstain from answering any question/s they feel uncomfortable with.
- Participants are assured that all information will be kept strictly confidential. The identities of participants will not appear in any audio recordings, notes or in the research findings.
- Participation is completely voluntary. A participant may withdraw from the study at any time and may ask that his/her data no longer be used in the study, without stating reasons and without fear of any form of prejudice.

### **Benefits to the participants**

The study will contribute to the understanding of an ethics of care approach which school leaders can adopt in a township school context. The participants will have the chance to reflect on their role and practice in contributing to a community of teaching and learning in their school context. A concise report containing the overall findings of the study will be made available to participants.

**Risks involved for participants**

The research poses no physical, psychological, or economic risks to participants. Participants will be required to set time aside to engage in individual interviews. Interviews are scheduled to be completed within sixty minutes and questions are not expansive. The time is sufficient to cover the topic of research without requiring participants to proffer more of their time. The principal will be required to write an autobiographical narrative over a period agreed upon by the principal and researcher. The teaching and learning program of the school will not be interrupted. The researcher will carefully monitor the course of interviews and allow for a brief break with light refreshments to counter fatigue.

**Confidentiality and protection of identity**

Participants will be assured of confidentiality. The identities of the participants will be stringently protected. The name of the school will not be mentioned in the study. Written notes, audio recordings and transcripts will not contain the identities of any of the participants. Letter and number codes will be used to record the findings. Information will not be shared with the rest of the staff or other stakeholders. Data will be stored in the study leader’s custody, locked in a safe cabinet for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**Dissemination of findings**

The findings of the research study will be shared with the Provincial Department of Basic Education and participating school through electronic copies of the accepted dissertation once the dissertation has been accepted.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

**DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:**

By signing below, I ..... agree to give permission for the research to take place with the identified participants in the study entitled:

**[The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school]**

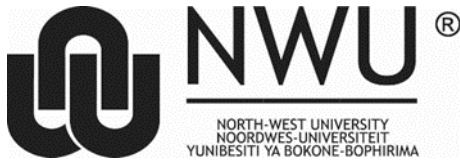
**I declare that:**

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_/2022\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of School Governing Body/Relevant responsible person**

## ANNEXURE E: INFORMED CONSENT – PARTICIPANT



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom  
South Africa 2520  
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222  
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

### Faculty of Education

#### Edu-Lead

Tel: 018 299 4754  
Email: [Branwen.Challens@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Branwen.Challens@nwu.ac.za)

13 June 2022

The School

**To: The Participant**

### participant information and consent form

I herewith request your permission to participate in this research, which involves individual semi-structured interviews with the principal, SMT and senior teachers. The study also includes an autobiographical narrative to be written by the principal, observation of two staff meetings, and document reviews of your school's 2020-2021 Matric results, learner attendance, and other relevant documents related to caring programs.

Prior to granting permission, please acquaint yourself with the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

#### **TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

*The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.*

#### **ETHICS APPLICATION NUMBER NWU-00272-22-A2**

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#### **FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Contact person: Ms Erna Greyling, E-mail: [Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Erna.Greyling@nwu.ac.za), Tel. (018) 299 4656

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the North-West University and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of this committee. Permission was also obtained from the provincial Department of Basic Education.

## **What is this research about?**

It aims to explore the influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school.

The objectives of this empirical research are:

- To evaluate the significance of the ethics of care for schools
- To determine the significance of fostering a community of teaching and learning in a township school.
- To explore the relationship between the ethics of care and the principal's leadership practices.
- To investigate how the teachers perceive the leadership practice of the principal in a township school regarding the ethics of care.
- To suggest strategies of how the ethics of care approach can assist principals to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools

## **Participants**

- The principal
- The school's SMT members and/or senior teachers (5-7 members)

## **What is expected of the participants?**

- The principal is required to write an autobiographical narrative (3-4pages)
- The case principal and each SMT members and/or senior teachers are expected to participate in a one-hour individual semi-structured interviews.
- To grant the researcher access to two staff meetings for observation purposes.
- To grant the researcher access to relevant documents such as the previous matric academic results, learners' attendance log, relevant documents related to caring programs.
- COVID-19 health and safety protocols will be adhered to, including the compulsory wearing of masks, maintaining the required social distance between participants and availability of hand sanitisers.
- Zoom, Google Meet or MS Teams will be used if face-to-face meetings are not possible or if participants find such online modes of communication more convenient.
- During interviews an audio voice recorder will be used. Prior permission to audio record interviews will be sought from participants. Participants may state if they are uncomfortable with the audio recorder.
- An interview schedule will be used to guide discussions – participants are free to abstain from answering any question/s they feel uncomfortable with.
- Participants are assured that all information will be kept strictly confidential. The identities of participants will not appear in any audio recordings, notes or in the research findings.
- Participation is completely voluntary. A participant may withdraw from the study at any time and may ask that his/her data no longer be used in the study, without stating reasons and without fear of any form of prejudice.

## **Benefits to the participants**

The study will contribute to the understanding of an ethics of care approach which school leaders can adopt in a township school context. The participants will have the chance to reflect on their role and practice in contributing to a community of teaching and learning in their school context. A concise report containing the overall findings of the study will be made available to participants.

### **Risks involved for participants**

The research poses no physical, psychological, or economic risks to participants. Participants will be required to set time aside to engage in individual interviews. Interviews are scheduled to be completed within sixty minutes and questions are not expansive. The time is sufficient to cover the topic of research without requiring participants to proffer more of their time. The principal will be required to write an autobiographical narrative over a period agreed upon by the principal and researcher. The teaching and learning program of the school will not be interrupted. The researcher will carefully monitor the course of interviews and allow for a brief break with light refreshments to counter fatigue.

### **Confidentiality and protection of identity**

Participants will be assured of confidentiality. The identities of the participants will be stringently protected. The name of the school will not be mentioned in the study. Written notes, audio recordings and transcripts will not contain the identities of any of the participants. Letter and number codes will be used to record the findings. Information will not be shared with the rest of the staff or other stakeholders. Data will be stored in the study leader's custody, locked in a safe cabinet for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

### **Dissemination of findings**

The findings of the research study will be shared with the Provincial Department of Basic Education and participating school through electronic copies of the accepted dissertation once the dissertation has been accepted.

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researchers for more information.

Yours sincerely  
MS EJ KIM

### **DECLARATION BY PRINCIPAL/OTHER RELEVANT PERSON:**

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a research study entitled:

**[The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school]**

**I declare that:**

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of the participants in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and participants will not be pressurised to take part.
- Participants may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- Participants may be asked to leave the research process before it is completed, if the researcher feels it is in their best interests, or if they do not follow the research procedures, as agreed to.

Signed at (place) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_/2022\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher**

## ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (PRINCIPAL / SMT)

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a teaching and learning community in a township school

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (mark appropriate answer with x)

The information of this interview will be treated confidentially

##### 1. Position in the school:

Principal	
Deputy principal	
Head of Department	
Senior Teacher	
Teacher	

##### 2. Your highest qualification:

Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Degree and diploma	
Postgraduate qualification	

##### 3. Your gender:

Male	
Female	

##### 4. Years of teaching experience:

	At this school	In Total
1 to 3 years		
4 to 6 years		
7 to 12 years		
Longer than 12 years		

##### 5. Number of educators in your school:

1 to 20	
21 to 30	
31 to 40	
41 to 50	
More than 50	

##### 6. Quintile of school

Quintile	
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## **SECTION A: Interview questions**

### **For the SMT / senior teachers**

- 1) What words come to your mind when you think of the principal? Please elaborate.
- 2) In your view, among planning, organizing, leading or guiding, and controlling, which task does the principal regard as the most important and why?
- 3) In your view, which value does the principal regard as most important to leadership practice and teaching practice, and why?
- 4) Do you think that the principal is a leader who inspires cooperation amongst the staff and enact it? Please elaborate.
- 5) Do you think that the principal is a leader who communicates sufficiently and effectively? Why?
- 6) Do you feel that the principal's decision-making for positioning or delegating a task is often affected by teachers' gender difference? Please elaborate.
- 7) Do you find the principal compassionate in all his actions, e.g. when he has to correct / discipline someone?
- 8) Do you think that a school can be regarded as a community? Please explain.
- 9) Have you experienced any challenges or positive support to sense a feeling of community in the school? Please elaborate.
- 10) What are you/ the principal currently doing to promote a teaching and learning community in your school? Please give examples.
- 11) In your view, why does the principal / (or you) want to promote a feeling of belonging or well-being for teachers and learners?
- 12) According to your understanding of the ethics of care, do you think that the ethics of care approach can assist principals/SMT to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools? If so, please motivate by suggesting a kind of strategies for it.
- 13) Please make a drawing with words/arrows/colouring to show how you see the relation between the principal and teachers/SMT/learners/parents.

### **For the principal**

- 1) Among the leadership tasks of principals which one do you regard as the most important and why?
- 2) Which value do you consider as most important to leadership practice and teaching practice and why?
- 3) Do you think the teachers / SMT/ the staff regard you as a leader who inspire cooperation amongst the staff and enact it? Please elaborate.
- 4) Do you think the teachers / SMT/ the staff regard you as a leader who communicates sufficiently and effectively? Please motivate.

- 5) Have you ever experienced any difficulties in making a decision or delegating a task to the teachers due to their gender difference? (If so, how do you keep the balance between the authority of male and female teachers? Elaborative question)
- 6) Do you think that the teachers / learners / staff / SMT regard you as compassionate in all your actions, e.g. when you have to correct / discipline someone?
- 7) Do you think that a school can be regarded as a community? Please explain.
- 8) Is it important for school leaders to promote a feeling of belonging or well-being for teachers and learners? Please elaborate.
- 9) Have you experienced any challenges or positive support to promote a feeling of community? (Please elaborate)
- 10) How can you as a school principal be supported to promote a feeling of community (feeling of belonging, well-being) for learners and teachers?
- 11) According to your understanding of the ethics of care, do you think that the ethics of care approach can assist principals/SMT to promote a teaching and learning community in township schools? If so, please motivate by suggesting a kind of strategies for it.
- 12) Please make a drawing with words/arrows/colouring to indicate how you see yourself in relation to teachers/SMT/learners/parents.

### **Concluding questions:**

- 1) Is there anything related to this research topic that I have not asked you that you feel is important to share with me?
- 2) If I have follow-up questions, can I contact you for a second interview?
- 3) Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Thank you for your participation!

### **<Background information on the ethics of care>**

Briefly speaking, the ethics of care has derived from arguing against the focus on reason and individual autonomy. Researchers argue that such partial claims were due to exclusive male-centred psychological moral development theory suggested by Kohlberg (Gilligan, 1982). As a result, the ethics of care, as a different voice, stresses human vulnerability and interdependence. This moral approach has its ground on relation and the remembrance of natural caring, rather than virtue or duty itself. I hope that this understanding of the ethics of care will provide meaningful implication to leadership practices in your school context.

## ANNEXURE G: EXTRACT OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION AND CODES ANALYSIS EXAMPLE

### Participant - T3 Interview Transcript with codes

Transcript	codes	evidence
<p>Re: What is it like to be a teacher in this school? T3: (reading himself again) What is it like to be a teacher in this school? Eh, to be a teacher in the school... Very much interesting because this school is a very good school. It is producing very good results and we are assisting learners, I think so.</p> <p>Re: (laugh)Ah, so you feel very interesting? T3: yes yes yes .</p> <p>Re: Oh, that's good. Ok, No1. What words come to your mind when you think of a principal? and please elaborate. T3: The principal of a school is someone who leads by example, the person who is the head of the school. And he always lead by example and give instructions and give directions all learners, educators and everyone. Yes.</p> <p>Re: Ok leading by example. That is the point. T3: Yes. yes.</p> <p>Re: Number two, which tasks among those, which one the principal regard the most important? T3: I think the most important one is planning. Because at the beginning of every year, the principal and SMT must sit down and plan, which is called strategic planning, planning for the whole year. All these other things that organizing, leading, and controlling, they will come because the planning is already there. All these other things will come. Without planning those cannot work. Yes.</p> <p>Re : Umm, in the strategy planning you mean, that time a lot of ideas come out? all the stakeholders? T3: Yes. Yes. There are in the strategic planning you have principal together with the SMT and we plan. Then They call the teachers. Then they also continue the very same strategic planning and when they come back to school, they have the plan for the whole year. Yes.</p> <p>Re: Already? when they come to school? T3: Yes. Usually, the Strategic Planning will happen in</p>	<p>TWS: ASV (achievement of school vision)</p> <p>P-PCI – Principal – personal characteristics</p> <p>P-MSE – Principal – managerial skills effective: management</p> <p>P-TME – time management exemplary</p> <p>P-PCI – Principal – personal characteristics</p>	<p>leading by example (T1- T5)</p> <p>planning – T2/T3/T5 leading (T4) All (T1)</p> <p>(T1-T5 all)</p> <p>T1: respect of time for T/L T2: fair and equal T4: organized</p>

<p>January.  Re: Do you have any development, school development plan something like that?  T3: Yes, yes. School development plan, school improvement plan, all those things they are done during that time.  Re: Each year?  T3: Yes. each year  Re: Wonderful! You have worked for 12 years here in this school. So you know very well. All right! Let's go No.3. In your view, which value does the principal regard as most important to leadership practice and teaching practice? and why?  T3: I think, as it was indicated, eh being somebody who <b>is honest and also be respected is very very important</b> because as a principal you are leading the school community. Everybody must respect and listen to you when you are giving out instructions. Yes. All those things.  Re: So, for a principal you think that respect is the most important value? And ?  T3: And honesty.  Re: Oh honesty, you think that it is important?  T3: Yes.  Re: Ok... Let's go to No.4. Do you think that the principal is a leader who inspires cooperation amongst the staff and enact it? please elaborate.  T3: Yes (quickly responding) the principal is somebody who always inspire cooperation among the staff and enact it. Because the most important thing as I indicated that a principal should be somebody who is honest and is very respected. And <b>because of being honest and being respected, all the other stakeholders will follow.</b> And as I also indicated, the principal is somebody who always acts as an example, all other people will <b>follow</b> what the principal is doing. Yes.  Re: Everybody willingly follows because he is an exemplar, something like that ?  T3: Yes! Yes. (agreeing and quickly answering) something like that....  Re: Yes, do you think that a principal is a leader who communicates sufficiently and effectively and why?  T3: Yes (responding promptly). For example, in our school, every morning we are having what is known as a <b>briefing session</b>. Now in the briefing session that is where the principal will read all the circulars and <b>give instructions as to what must happen for the whole day.</b> Yeah! Even If there is something from the department of education that</p>	<p>Inspiring (Honesty/Respect)</p> <p>Principal – PCI- personal characteristics inspiring (P: Leading by example )</p> <p>P:RCA-Regular communication available(meeting)</p> <p><u>P-CSU principal communicative skills for problem solving utilizing</u></p>	<p>attitude/ readiness T5:attitude and discipline / planning for teaching</p> <p>ALL referred to: T1: P: importance of education T2 : P work together T4: P-encouraging cooperation T5: P- united staff</p> <p>All T1/T2/T3/T4/T5</p> <p><u>( T1/ T4 )</u></p> <p>All (no gender discrimination)</p>
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<p>is where he communicate that information to all the staff. Yes.  Re: Is it held every morning?  T3: Yes. Every morning.  Re: About how long does it will take?  T3: It is About 30 mins, from twenty past seven up to ten to eight.  Re: Up to ten to eight. uh about 30 minutes.  Umm No 6. Do you feel that the principal's decision making or positioning or delegating a task is often affected by the gender difference between the teachers? If so, please elaborate.  T3: Well, it's not always the case that the principal's decision making proposition or delegating a task is based on genders. Sometimes it is not based on the gender. <b>Because he just delegates depending on the type of a task that which will be dealt with</b>, but sometimes it should be based on gender because, for example, looking after female learners that have problems, that task should be delegated to a female teacher not a male one. You see, that is why I am saying that it depends on the type of task that the principal is delegating. He just indicated but sometimes it should be based on gender.  Re: for the content of the tasks. According to the content of the task?  T3: Yes, Yes !  Re: He discerns to choose?  T3: Yes.  Re: Umm, No 7. Do you find the principal compassionate in all his actions? You have spent 12 years as a teacher. So, I think you know exactly who he is? When he has to correct or discipline someone, you find him compassionate?  T3: Yeah, yes (quick responding), our principal is very much compassionate when he is dealing with a .. when he has to discipline somebody, because usually what happens is that if somebody has made <b>a mistake, he always calls the person and speaks to that</b> particular person before he can start to follow the proper procedure of dealing with misconduct and all those things. Yeah, <b>he talks to the people. So, I think he is very much</b> compassionate. He doesn't judge or decide once and for all saying "because you have done this therefore a disciplinary action must be taken against you."  Re: So you mean it is to teaching staff ?  T3: Yes, it is to the teaching staff and also to the</p>	<p>WS/ p- BTD  balanced delegating task</p> <p>p- CDTP – Principal correction/disciplining Task Priority</p> <p>P-CSU principal <u>communicative skills for problem solving utilizing</u></p> <p>P: FHCGR- Fair and honest communication leads to a good relationship</p> <p>School: ISaCTL- Identity of School as a community of T/L</p> <p>P/T: QEA Quality Education Accountable</p>	<p>All refer to P T1 -T5</p> <p>T1/T5: talks to directly people</p> <p>T2: saying and doing/ telling the truth</p> <p>T4: saying is powerful/</p> <p>T1:listening and try to solve problems</p> <p>T2: shout but restoration to the good relationship</p> <p>respecting Teaching</p> <p>All refer respecting teaching</p>
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<p>Re: I see. All right No 9. Have you ever experienced a feeling of support or challenges?  T3: Yes. eh eh as I indicated previously, the school has got a community and positive support that we are always getting from each other from the school. For an example, at our school, for an example, eh eh if you are sick, you are in hospitaling, always we donate and something buy you a basket of fruits take that basket to you in hospitaling. And also it happens if you lose your parents, one of the parents, then they always donate and then also come to the funeral of your parent and so on. So that is the positive support as a holistic community as a school community.  Re: So, they sense a feeling of community more deeply?  T3: Yes  RE: How about challenges?  T3: (Pause) Challenges (uttering) ..... challenges ... the challenges.... you know that challenges ... that we have. we challenges ... that we always have.... what can I say... The challenges that we are always having challenges what can I say.... that lack of infrastructure and also yeah lack of infrastructure, for example we don't have a hall. When Gr12 learners must write an exam, they must go to the hall, the the community hall. We also sometimes learners come late but... It is not such big we are able to control it. We are still dealing with it. Those are the challenges that we have. Yes.  Re: Actually, it's quite a tough challenge. Learners come late.... .  T3: That one of learners coming late, not, it's only a few learners come late. not many learners that come late.  Re: Already or they changed the habit? Of coming on time, if they are disciplined?  T3: Yeah! we are disciplining them. Because every time when they come late, write them down.  We call the parents and learners will have to explain why I was late.  Re: Everytime? you identify who is late?  T3: (saying loudly ) We have our own file that is dealing with learners that are always coming late. Yeah, we write them down and then after sometimes we call the parents and then the parents will come ...and yes..</p>	<p>Good support :  SC:CO- collegiality orientation/mutual support orientation (Assisting one another in the school community)</p> <p>Challenge:  School community challenges: DI deficient infrastructure</p> <p>Late comers</p> <p>No hall</p> <p>School Community:  SCCF –caring family</p>	<p>T1:  Care/love/respect learners  T2: compassion and knowing learners' situation</p> <p>All refer to respecting teaching time  T1-T5</p>
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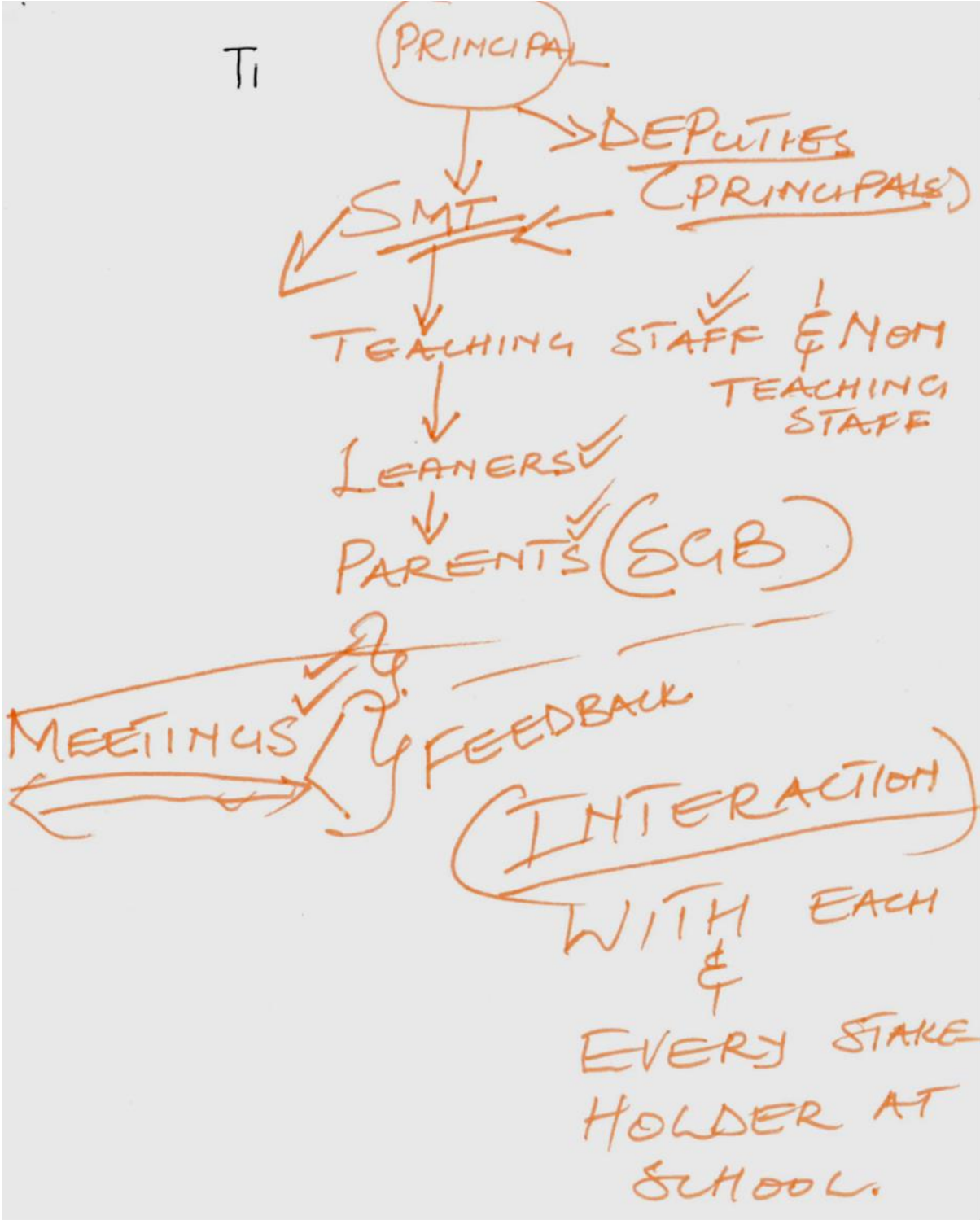
<p>Re: hard work .... very tough?</p> <p>T3: Yeah, it's very tough.</p> <p>Re: So I saw you someday. You standing outside and check...</p> <p>T3: Yes.. Yes check whether all learners are in classes or not. If learner is outside, the learner has to explain why he is outside because school is on. We don't have to see learners outside during teaching and learning. Yes.</p> <p>Re: uhm... All right. NO10. What are you or the principal currently doing to promote a teaching and learning community in your school? please give examples.</p> <p>T3: (after reading himself the question) Eh, what does this one mean? This one all what that I can say...</p> <p>We are making sure that eh eh (pause) through time-tabling we make sure that every teacher goes to their class and learners are being taught.</p> <p>Yeah, this is basically what I think we are doing...</p> <p>Re: That's basic but the basic is the important thing.</p> <p>T3: Yes. It's all. Teachers go to class and teach, and for learners are attending classes. To make sure that the learners are absent in the school now and then. We check whether the learner is absent or not. If the learners are absent, we always consult with the parents to check why the learners are absent and so on.</p> <p>Re: So, usually who does the job?</p> <p>T3: Sorry?</p> <p>Re: Who has the job? Who is in charge of the job?</p> <p>T3: The class teacher will always consult the parent, but in case the class teacher doesn't do it, me or the principal will consult the parents. Yes.</p> <p>All right, thank you. Ok lets No11.. In your view why does the principal or you want to promote a feeling of belonging or wellbeing for teachers and learners, why?</p> <p>(Pause... saying after thinking) Because you know, eh a school everybody must be satisfied and happy. Everybody must be satisfied and happy. If everybody is happy, that person will have a high morale, and that person will work. But If you are having people that is demoralized, they will not work properly. So we must make sure that everybody has got high moral and everybody is</p>	<p>P – SCTL – sustaining a culture of TL</p> <p>P – ICTL – Inspiring a culture of TL</p> <p><u>P-TLF- Principal – focuses on teaching and learning</u></p> <p><u>P-TMP</u></p> <p>respecting time tabling</p> <p>School: PfCTL – Prerequisites for a culture of T/L (affective factors)</p> <p>caring action</p> <p>School: PfCTL – Prerequisites for a culture of T/L</p>	<p>T2: ubuntu – ethics of care =&gt;instilling care spirit</p> <p>(= common with P)</p> <p>School: P- ISBOK- instilling senses of belonging ownership partnership</p> <p>T2: Compassion is important in the school =&gt; enhancing learning</p> <p>P's reference:</p> <p>School: P- ISBOK- instilling senses of belonging ownership partnership</p>
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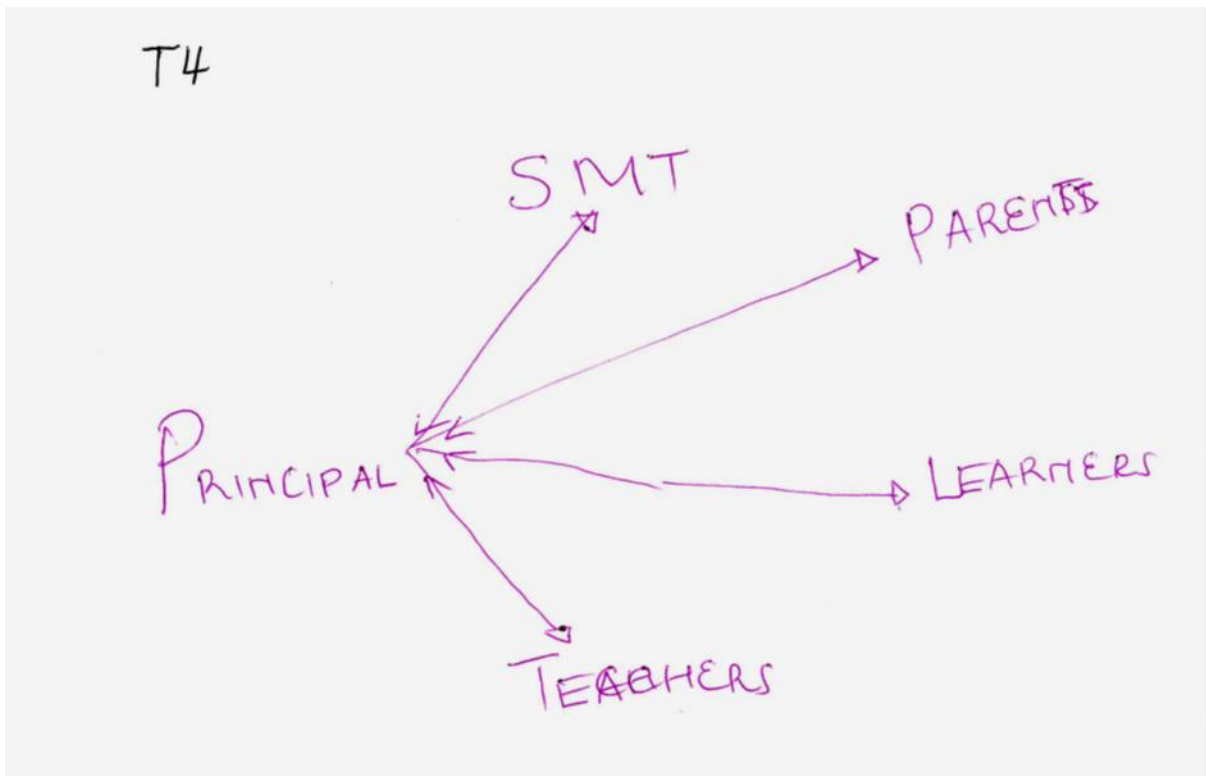
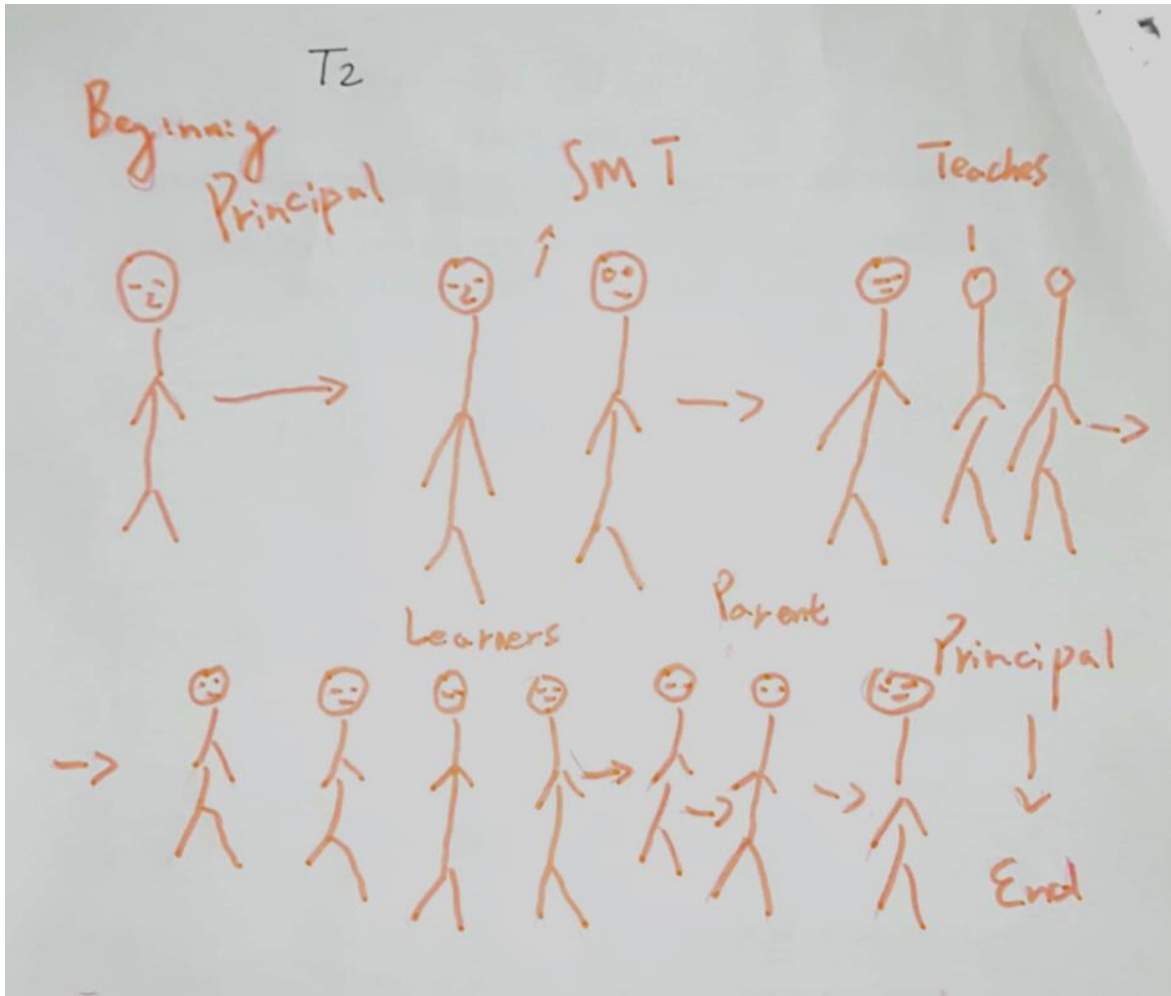
<p>content with doing his work. Yeah, I think so.  Re: Feeling and emotional is important you think.  T3: Yes. (Agreeing strongly) feeling and emotional. Because if I am not well, I will not sit there without doing anything. Yes.  Re: Happiness starts from happiness, not compulsory or duties.  T3: Yes.  Re: No.12 you can refer to the bottom part. Do you think that the ethics of care can assist the principal and SMT to promote a community of teaching and learning in township schools?  Not just for this school. I underlined...so you can grasp quickly, according to my understanding relevant to my study...  T3: So, you are saying according to your understanding?  Re: According to your understanding.  T3: According my understanding do I think the ethics of care will assist the principal and SMT?  ... Yeah yes. A lot. (Responding strongly).  Yeah, yes I think it assists (reading again the notes of the ethics of care) It motivates yes I think it assists ..... let me check (reads the summary again).  Yes, I think. It assists principal and SMT to promote .... Those people are running a school the SMT and principal <b>so they must have care.</b> If they are really caring about the school, the school will succeed. But if they don't care about the school, that school will not succeed. I think so.  Re: yeah, the ethics of care, it goes with the ethics of justice normally, so nowadays the approach is spotlighted. Originally ethics of justice, people say about, it but nowadays, nowadays People recognize its importance of the ethics of care ...  T3: Ok Ok.  Re: So, I am feeling I sense I can see the caring atmosphere in this school.  T3: Yes (Automatically, without hesitating quickly responding strongly ) That is basically what is happening in this school that is why learners are learning and doing their best.  Re: so ... they feel happy they feel belonging that' s why they focus.  T3: Yes ...  Re: So, they do work hard.  T3: Yes.</p>	<p>Caring school influences a culture of TL/ quality education=&gt; produces good results</p> <p>(strategies)</p>	<p>T1: showing love, care/ respect to learners  T2: more caring will help  T4: team building/encouraging one another  T5: showing care example by the unity of teachers</p> <p>T1T2 T5: caring</p>
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<p>Re: So, can you please motivate by suggesting a kind of strategies maybe to other schools in terms of ethics of care?</p> <p>T3: Yeah (speaking loudly) I think the most important thing for other schools is that they need to have the SMT that is caring and SMT that is united and SMT that is eh eh eh making sure that every every mem.. making sure that every person in the school is taking care of, learners are being taught and teachers are doing their work and all those things. Yes.</p> <p>Re: Do the SMT also think that they are caring and doing their jobs?</p> <p>T3: Yes, yes</p> <p>Re: Thank you. You feel tired?</p> <p>T3: No no.</p> <p>Re: Are you fine?</p> <p>T3: I am fine.</p> <p>Re: Are you interested? Are you happy?</p> <p>T3: Yes. Yes... I am happy. I am happy.</p> <p>Re: Ok, No13. Please make a drawing with words, arrows, colours to show how you see the relation between the teachers, SMT, learners and parents. Now you can synthesize, together what you talked to me and your idea... I will give you an empty paper.</p> <p>No. 13. Pease make a drawing (Quickly) please ...</p> <p>T3: What must I do?</p> <p>Re: Drawing ... to show the relationship between the principal, SMT, teachers, parents and learners ..... the relation. You are a Math teacher. Any shape, any line, anything.</p> <p>T3: Anything?</p> <p>Re: Anything, Like a child. There is no correct answer. Use your imaginary heart.</p> <p>T3: (without hesitating, finishing drawing quickly) Yeah!</p> <p>Re: Wow, so quickly! (together laughing) Can you say a short summary about the drawing? Just tell me or write down some words</p> <p>T3: Healthy relationship between the principal and the school community. All these people are the school community.</p> <p>Re: Umm, You also draw the arrows. Like interaction or?</p> <p>T3: Yeah interaction. what else?</p>	<p>P: ECLA - Exemplary caring leadership actions (SMTs)</p> <p>caring lead to school success</p> <p>SC: interrelated communicative Relationship</p> <p>Responsible and caring SMTs</p> <p>SMTs' overall Perception of Principal's relationship structure: holistic two-way interaction</p>	<p>The sketches show:</p> <p>T1: interaction T2: accountable principal T4:two-way interaction T5: two way communication</p>
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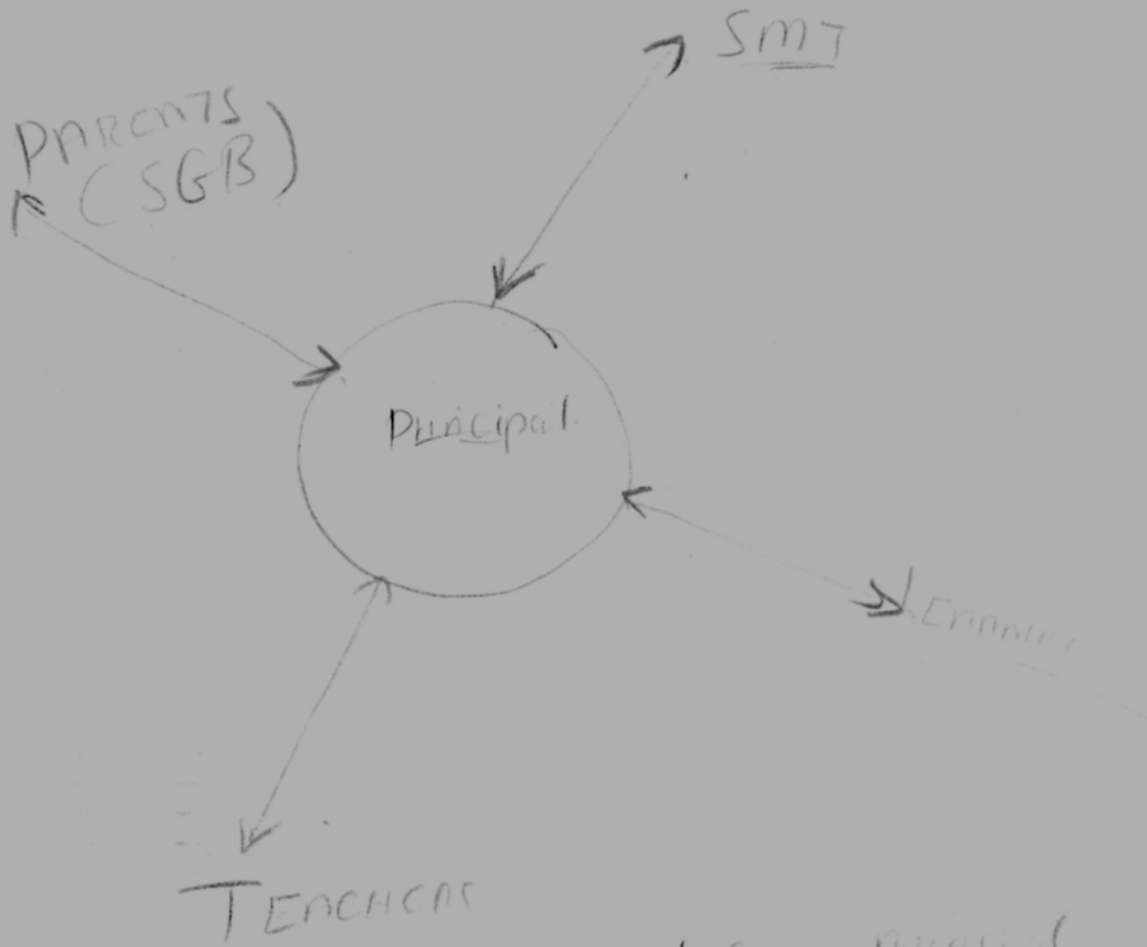
<p>Re: what else? (Laugh) where are you?</p> <p>T3: I'm Here, yeah here is the principal, the learners, the teachers and parents</p> <p>Re: Parents... their role also, they quite often interact</p> <p>T3: You have SGB here, the SGB is part of the parents and part of the governance of the school.</p> <p>Re: Do you meet regularly?</p> <p>T3: Yes yes.</p>		
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**ANNEXURE H: PARTICIPANTS' SKETCH ON PRINCIPAL'S  
RELATIONSHIP WITH STAKEHOLDERS**



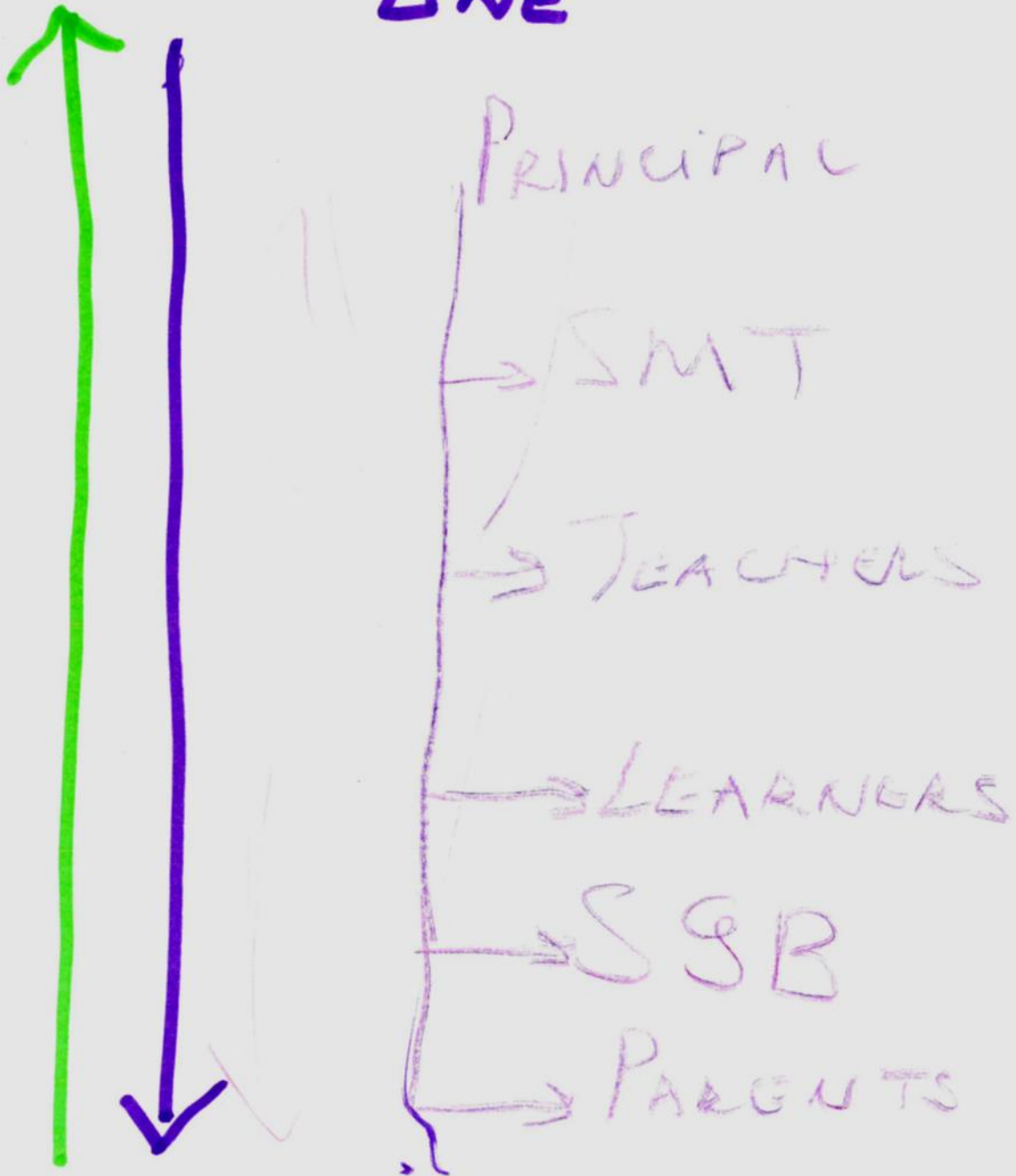


T3



Healthy relationship between principal and school community

T5  
COMMUNICATION  
LINE



## **ANNEXURE I: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE GUIDE**

### **Autobiographical Narrative Guidelines**

Please write your autobiographical narratives (about A4, 11-font size about 2 pages).

And send it to the researcher by e-mail.

### **I would like you to proceed your narrative focusing on as follows:**

1. family background and meaningful others for becoming an educator and having the principalship
2. career and educational training backgrounds
3. current daily leadership practices and efforts for the transformation of township schools (vision/philosophy as a leader)

Regarding No 3, I would like you to reflect on your own more on the following as well:

- how you fostered a teaching and learning community in the school
- lessons that you have learned over the years that informed your leadership practices and that contributed to the teaching and learning community in your school.

**Thank you for taking time to participate in this research by sharing your story.**

## ANNEXURE J: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL OF MORNING BRIEFING SESSION

Data: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022

Time: 07:25-07:55

Place: School library

Participants: All the teachers (41)

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
<p>According to the schedule agreed by the principal,</p> <p>I arrived at the school library by guidance of a teacher just before the meeting. In the library, the principal was sitting in the front and watching meeting diaries and writing down notes. I greeted him and got permission for recording from him.</p> <p>Most teachers were sitting in a row. And the principal introduced me to the teachers before starting meeting. And two teachers came a little late.</p> <p>The register log was being circulated. The principal started the meeting.</p> <p>The first main agenda was about the measure or solution of caring supervision of Gr 12 learners during the trial exam period. He asked the teachers' opinions. After raising their hands, some (1-3) SMT teachers advanced their views. Other teachers listened to them present their views.</p> <p>Several opinions came out but did not reach the conclusion. So, the principal suggested them a subsequent meeting during lunch break to make a common decision regarding the supervision as solution.</p> <p>Secondly, there was the delivery of a school activities and learners' events out of the school during the spring classes.</p> <p>during the meeting there was laugh owing to the principal's humorous talk.</p> <p>Lastly, he delivered, in a louder voice, the delivery items from the JB Marks Department of Education. They were about teachers' sick leave, study leave (unpaid leave). He clearly read the related measures from the DBE.</p> <p>Due to time restraint, the principal closed the meeting then took note while teachers left the library.</p>	<p>Principal - utilizing eye contact and using frequent body language to enhance communicative effect = looked confident and eloquent</p> <p>The existence of two-way interaction</p> <p>The focus on the coherence among the staff in caring supervision</p> <p>To some extent democratic culture but mostly the voices of SMT leadership were heard.</p> <p>He makes the atmosphere comfortable.</p> <p>Overall nature- found rather hierarchy but horizontal.</p> <p>The principal led the session but certain interaction and had even communication with the teachers (SMTs).</p> <p>I perceived his multiple roles in everyday leadership curriculum implementation.</p>

## ANNEXURE K: EXTRACT OF DOCUMENT REVIEW MATERIALS EXAMPLE

### 3. KEY AREAS PRIORITISED FOR IMPROVEMENT

NO.	FOCUS AREA	
1.	BASIC FUNCTIONALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize both summary register and period register to curb absenteeism and truancy.</li> </ul>
2.	QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AND EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve educator subject knowledge</li> <li>• Improve learner discipline</li> <li>• Manage diversity in the classroom</li> <li>• Assess weakness of lessons</li> </ul>
3.	LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify learners with barriers to learning</li> <li>• Implement strategies on how to improve results of all grades.</li> <li>• Increase the number of grade 12 learners qualifying for bachelors</li> </ul>
4.	LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display vision and mission statements to be accessible in the building</li> <li>• Keep electronic backup files for physical resource management</li> <li>• Maintain asset register</li> <li>• Improve on sports and cultural activities</li> </ul>
5.	CURRICULUM PROVISION AND RESOURCES	
6.	GOVERNANCE AND RELATIONSHIP	
7.	SCHOOL SAFETY, SECURITY AND DISCIPLINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve on reaction of staff and learners during emergencies and disaster</li> </ul>
8.	SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE	
9.	PARENTS AND COMMUNITY	

Part A: Interventions that lead to improved learner performance.

Part B: Interventions that improve the school environment.

## **ANNEXURE L: EXTRACT OF PERSONAL JOURNAL RECORDS DURING THE RESEARCH**

**June 6, 2022, AM 10:40**

I am waiting for the response mail from the DBE.

And I am visiting the school. I pray that they may give me their time willingly.

I need to prepare for data collection. Lord, give me calm spirit and listening ears and heart!

Please give the school your peace and vision. You are in control I know. I surrender. I pray for him. Lord gave him your love and comfort!!!! Give us Thanks and content heart and boldness for your kingdom!

**21 June, 2022.**

I have to visit the principal tomorrow. What happened to him?

I do not know. Maybe he feels hesitated or so busy for higher priority matter.

I put on his shoes. Actually, it is not easy because this research may make him proud but embarrassed in other way. How is the reality with the relationship with teachers?

I learn tolerance and endurance. Also, courage to face challenges.

Do not give up. Rather advance while preparing with bold and humble heart.

So long I have been occupied with this study. So, I couldn't care for those who I should look around.

Today I prepared for my husband's graduation day this Thursday. Thanks to the delay.

Anyway, I am sure that he will be answering my request. Meanwhile maybe I need to focus on something else.

Lord, help me to take heart because you are with me. And I pray your will be done.

Thank you also for leading Isaac's finishing exam. Lord we are a team for your Kingdom.

Lead us in your way.

**22 June 2022 11:24 (10:00 – 10:30)**

I have been to the school. He has not read fully.

He has been busy with application work while standing by reception place.

It is windy and cold day. He guided me into the office, and we talked about the study.

He suggested me to come tomorrow for me to see SMT members for the informed consent.

Lord, thank you for giving this time.

## ANNEXURE M: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITOR

*H C Sieberhagen*

1001489

*hettiesieb@gmail.com*

*Translator and Editor SATI no*

082 3359846

018 264 2309

### **CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING**

ISSUED ON 23 NOVEMBER 2022

This serves to certify that I have edited the language of the  
**dissertation**

***The influence of the ethics of care on leadership in developing a  
teaching and learning community in a township school***

**by**

EJ KIM

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

***Masters of Education***

*in Education Management and Leadership*

at the North-West University

*The responsibility to effect the recommended changes remains with the student*



H C Sieberhagen

**SATI no 1001489**

23 November 2022

## ANNEXURE N: THE SUMMARY OF THE TURNITIN REPORT

10589309:Final\_EJ\_KIM\_all\_one\_document\_2.pdf

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<b>repository.nwu.ac.za</b> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Submitted to North West University</b> Student Paper	<b>1%</b>
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