

# Values-Centered Leadership: Insights from Schools that Underperform

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## Abstract

There is an arguable deterioration of values in school leadership, which influences the performance of schools. Underperformance is attributed to a deficit and neglect of a values-centered leadership approach. The article reports on a study whose aim was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and principals on the role that values play in school leadership. This qualitative study in three schools sought to establish what the teachers' and principals' perceptions of values in relation to effective school leadership were. Data were generated from interviews (n = 15), documents and observations that were thematically analysed. The findings revealed that school leadership informed by values in practice was more desirable than leadership that paid lip service to values. The study makes a case for improved school performance through focused implementation of values-centered leadership approach and recommends that leadership development should dwell into practices that are performance lifting and based on communication that encourages performance.

## Keywords

Culture, School Leadership, Relations, Morals, Values

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## 1. Introduction

Values-centred leadership is important for schools to function effectively. The deterioration of some school leaders' values influences learners' behaviour and teachers' performance. A lack of values amongst school leaders has been implicated in various media reports and community protest campaigns in South Africa. For example, an allegation was made that a major teachers' union sold promotion positions (Masondo, 2015). Such actions and information, which are discordant with values-centeredness, undermine and compromise the moral integrity of schools and education. They range from compromised education systems

because of incapacitated school governing bodies, poor performance of school leadership, to their influence on relationships in schools. Often schools that suffer from a lack of strong value-based leadership also underperform academically. Underperformance of schools, especially in historically disadvantaged communities, is unacceptable because it potentially deprives learners of receiving quality education and it places their future in jeopardy.

In order to understand more comprehensively the influence of poor value-centered leadership on a school's performance, it is necessary to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders such as teachers, learners, parents and the community at large. Teachers and principals are the major stakeholders in schools and they arguably have a primary responsibility for creating an appropriate institutional culture for effective teaching and learning. School leadership style was found to be one of the factors influencing teachers' work contentment (Alkhyeli & Ewijk, 2018). As a small-scale qualitative investigation, the study from which this paper reports focused on the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding value-centered leadership and its influence on school performance.

The paper's rationale is based on two compelling, but interrelated arguments. Firstly, values are at the core of any leadership type. Secondly, without embracing personal values as essential for effective leadership, school leaders may not be able to perform optimally. The study aimed at answering the following research question: what are teachers' and principals' perceptions of values as espoused in their leadership practices? Practices in this instance referred to what teachers and principals thought (ideas), said (verbal) and did (action).

After the introduction, this article unfolds as follows: locating the study in existing literature, research methodology, findings and discussions. The article concludes with a review of the research question and implications of the findings.

## 2. Locating the Study in Existing Literature

Due to the multi-dimensional nature of leaders' responsibilities and their ability or inability to influence performance, it is imperative to understand what informs their values. Leaders influence their followers' conduct and performance (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). There is no research that is based on values-centered leadership as it applies to inspiring sound performance in schools. Frost (2014) probed values based leadership relating to staff and creating viable business, while Muscat and Whitty (2009) relates it to business and social entrepreneurship. Another study discusses values with respect to inspiring the right conduct (Kraemer, 2011).

There is a need for leadership of the underperforming schools to enthuse values that can be shared by all stakeholders while maximising performance. The extent of the leaders' ability to build sound relationships can inspire the people they lead. Leaders in underperforming schools may be struggling to extend agreeable values that inspire and sway teachers' efforts to teach and learners to learn. Waggoner (2010: p. 5) posits that influencing people ethically denotes effective

leadership because leadership is an association among people. Values are located within ethics and maybe positioned at the centre of performance. Ethical values, according to [Ramphela \(2012\)](#), are considered an invitation to reflect on personal attributes and philosophies. They enable self-reflection and a will to make choices that are informed by values that direct staff towards a professional path ([Kraemer, 2011](#)). This implies mirroring specific traits and encouraging directed goals that can inspire performance.

The leadership traits that are likely to draw willingness to participate and cooperate need to be shared among all stakeholders. [Mavimbela and Van Niekerk \(2015\)](#) submit that school leaders who apply shared values and related traits tend to influence practices favourably. This view implies that, through shared values, the leadership ought to create an enabling culture to influence collegiality, which can in turn inspire quality education ([Tschannen-Moran, 2014](#)). Effective leadership ought to model and nurture desired values by maintaining a sound school culture and influence anticipated conduct ([Sterling & Davidoff, 2000](#)). Agreeableness to apply fundamental values can instil ethos that may cause leaders to influence stakeholders to cooperate in the interest of attaining quality education ([Mavimbela & Van Niekerk, 2015](#)). Therefore, at the height of shared values should be a leadership that is influential, inspirational and knowledgeable ([Ramphela, 2012](#)). Without knowledge, leaders may struggle to pursue their leadership role as required. They may also struggle to inspire zeal to perform and build desirable relationships. Knowledgeable leaders understand that influencing efforts by everyone to pursue a common agenda improves relations. [Marshall \(2012: p. 514\)](#) maintains that “acquired knowledge” benefits leaders’ practices and the manner in which they model performance bestows trust.

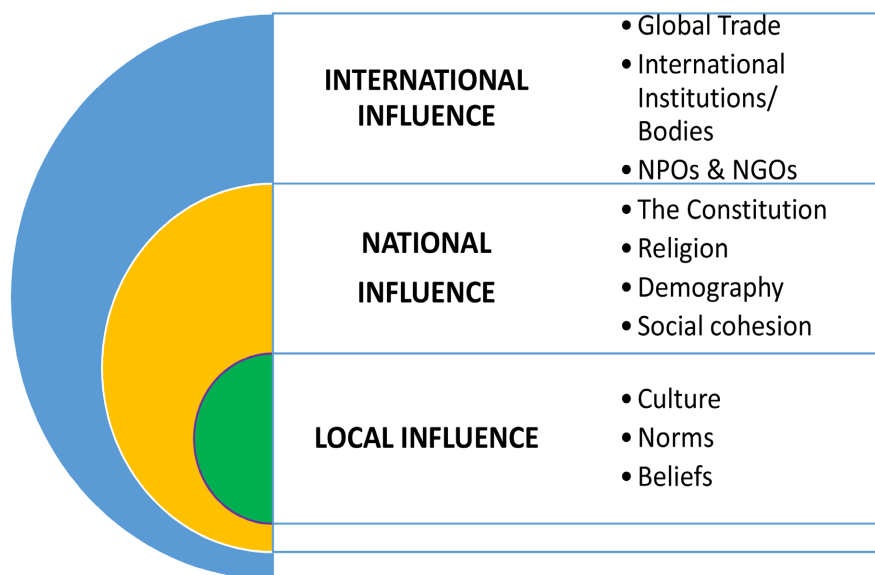
[Tschannen-Moran \(2014: p. 268\)](#) argues that reliable leaders place the culture of trust ahead of their sense of self. Leaders who are values driven are relied upon and they enjoy the support of their team. People do their work because they are influenced and “want to”. Whereas where there is doubt, relations are affected negatively. Those who comply may be doing it because they “have to”. Values centered leaders ought to understand the significance of encouraging team spirit for people to work out of their own volition and will to relate well with others. [Setlhodi-Mohapi \(2014\)](#) maintains that peoples’ socialisation, relationships and influences over time may affect their belief system, espoused values and relationships with others. The relationships and their influence form a basis of interactions within an organisation ([Schein, 2010](#)). It is essential for the daily interactions and practices to reflect values, conduct, strategies and processes that resemble organisational culture ([Lemisova & Lasakova, 2013](#)).

[Sterling and Davidoff \(date\)](#) (in [Mavimbela & Van Niekerk, 2015](#)) uphold that a preferred school culture can pretty much happen if the leadership punt desired values as a vital component of building effective long-term relationships that bestow morals. Morality and values are supposed to be at the centre of education, particularly in underperforming schools ([Msila, 2016](#)). Whilst it is important to

prioritise the quality of teaching and learning for desired results, it is equally significant to highlight the importance of values as the moral conduit through which performance can improve. Nieuwenhuis (2012) maintains that it is important that teachers be of sound morality because education is a moral precept. Sound morality can arguably enable improvement of relations. All-encompassing relations can possibly influence practices towards attainment of desired goals, such as the improved performance.

According to Setlhodi-Mohapi (2014: pp. 32-33) a code of relations and influence exists at local, national and international levels. The code of relations in **Figure 1** reflects the extent to which the relationships formed may influence practices. At a local level, people are influenced by the relationships they form with people that come to their locality (such as at school) with their beliefs, cultural practices and values. At a national level, the constitutional values are enshrined in the **Constitution of South Africa 1** (a-d) and, internationally, trade relations fostered with other countries impact on people's culture and values. Relations formed at these levels influence ideas, sayings and action. The code of relations and influence support the philosophical, ethical and rational interpretations as well as the attitudes that are central to overseeing realisation of desired and methodical performance (Setlhodi-Mohapi, 2014).

Huettenman (2013) describes value-based leadership as the principles and he classifies them in a form of the rungs of a ladder, where the bottom rung questions the legal aspect of such leadership. The next higher rung questions the ethical consideration thereof, whilst the top rung probes whether it honours the core values. However, the exception in the preceding is acceptable, based on the state of affairs within the institution. Philosophical, ethical and rational interpretations of teachers in relation to the ladder analogy builds on the notion of logic, morality and balance brought about by the flow of reason to conduct self



**Figure 1.** The Code of Relations and Influence (Setlhodi-Mohapi, 2014: p. 32).

(teachers learning from the leadership).

### ***Philosophical interpretations in values-centred leadership***

Values-centered leadership is inwardly operational, focusing on an innate drive to influence people towards common good. It is about substantial contributions to restore people's intentions in relation to their work (George, 2011). Advertently, the moral compass of the leadership whose focus is on values should be on true north, which can be philosophically interpreted as a moral cluster that is informed by beliefs and principles that are honed over time. It is where their truth lie as informed by their relations, influence and in turn influence others. The leaders' moral obligation and value define the aspects of moral standards and social influence. Influence refers to the ability to sway, with power and authority (Mann, 2012: p. 12), whereas authority is dually operational position and competence (Munroe, 2011: pp. 21-22). In this paper, using one's position and power to relate is deemed bestowing authority for conforming and to yield improved performance, while social influence refers to conforming, compliance and obedience (Mynhardt, 2013: p. 77). Leaders operating at this level prod shared values. Their intention is to serve humanity with humility and to improve lives. When performance improves, relations strengthen and people get inspired.

### ***Rational values-centred leadership***

Leaders need a sense of balance to give their teams reason to be responsive towards the shared values. Balance breeds coherence and sensibility. These characteristics make valued-centred leadership influential and inspirational. They give them passion to respond constantly to challenges and questions from stakeholders and clients alike, in a manner that influences in situations like educators in a school that underperforms. Where there is balance, there is coherence and impeccable application of knowledge to tackle challenges (underperformance), whilst progressing from poor to fair to good and ultimately to great and remaining rational. Values provide abilities that create opportunities for accomplishing rational conduct, coherence and sensibility (Sociology guide, 2016). It does not mean that leadership based on values have leaders imposing their values on others. However, it is the very nature of a leader and the values espoused that coherently and sensibly impact on practices and filter down to those under them. Their personal value factor is stimulated.

### ***Values-centred leadership and ethical interpretations***

Values-centered leaders are informed by morals that are characterised by beliefs. Values guide a person's life (conduct, attitude and worldview) and set the groundwork for ethical considerations. Ethics are beliefs, what sound attitude entails, value-adding ways of life and appropriate values to guide conduct (Opeyemi, 2013). Therefore, there are ethical actions to consider in a relationship between leaders and the people they influence. Ethical behaviours in this instance are informed by values. The said values are associating concepts supporting the quest for truth. Ethical actions of a values-centered leader increase

credibility, integrity and the level of trust. The leaders act with care and concern for others. Virtues of what is right, just prescribe good attitudes, and give a sense of knowing what is doable or not, morally (George, 2011). Because they have the well-being of others at heart, values-centered leaders share with others the criteria for doing good, acting truthfully and recognising good practices (Setlhodi-Mohapi, 2014). The two types of personal values systems girding values-centered leader are instrumental values (values serving as means to be ethical and arguably relate well) and terminal values (values serving to yield results and arguably through influence) (Waggoner, 2010). They incorporate individual values to shared values and form ethical practices, thereby revealing the significance of values to influence, inspire and engender continuous development. Consequently, building the desired leadership capacity to balance personal duties and arguably increase personal value factor (Mokoena, 2017).

#### **Personal values factor**

Every individual has elements that influence their lives. These elements can be arranged in an operational Wheel of Life (WoL). The WoL comprises a person's spirituality (beliefs and spiritual affiliations), mental models (thinking and attitudes as a result), vocational expedition (work or earning a living), social sense (relating to others), physical wellbeing (outlook of self) and is family related (belonging to a family) (Perverrette, 2015). The WoL causes people to either progress or be stuck because of the value determination of the elements of relations and influence. Values-centered leadership is informed by the ability to align personal goals and personal values. Seemingly, such arrangement allows the emergence of an industrious, inspired and contagious attitude. The attitude has an inclination of positive values. Demartini (2015) terms such positive and progressive attitude a high-order personal values factor. A high-order personal values factor uses "indicative language" such as "want to" or "would like to" which is aligned to intrinsic values and can be influential in nature. The low-order personal values factor uses "imperative language" such as "should" or "have to" which is aligned to injected values and may constrain relations. The success of values-centered leaders is determined by their language and choice of words, which create a balance between influences and prodding, and coercing and pressuring. Knowing and understanding the quality of interaction, language and questions asked to resemble, in my view, a swing-stake in terms of performance. Depending on where the pendulum swings, performance improves or declines.

The above implies that leaders' success in practice is influenced by values espoused and it depends on their relations and abilities to influence others. The recommendation is that policy on school leadership development should dwell into practices that are performance lifting and based on language that encourages performance. This, in turn, feeds to a theoretical construction of the values that school leaders' practices place as a method to influence positive relations.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study from which this paper reports was part of a broader investigation into values-centred leadership. Ethical clearance and permission to conduct this study was obtained from the college of education ethics committee, University of South Africa and the Department of Basic Education in Gauteng. Four main features informed the technique for this pragmatic qualitative study: process, verbal, data analysis and context (Hittleman & Simon, 2002: p. 39).

#### The research processes

This study followed an ethnographic qualitative design, using interviews (verbal conversation), document analysis and observation. The study sought to unearth teachers and principals' perceptions of values as espoused in their leadership practices in relation to what they think (ideas), say (verbal) and do (action) (Cresswell, 2014). I was primarily interested in describing participants' actions and I sought to understand these actions in terms of the participants' history, context and beliefs (verbal accounts) and actions (Mouton, 2005: p. 53). I matched these aspects with information from the observations I conducted over time to gain a deep, detailed and clear perspective. Finally, the documents were analysed.

Three high schools in Mogale City district, Gauteng province, South Africa, were purposively sampled (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The intention was towards understanding perceptions, perceived problems, identified needs, behaviours and context as the main justification of qualitative audience (Bogdan & Biklein, 2010). The chosen schools were, first, the lowest performing in grade 12 (National Senior Certificate—NSC) for three consecutive years. Second, all the three performed poorly in both mathematics and physical science (grades 10 - 12). Lastly, they were mainly located in inadequately resourced and serviced disadvantaged communities. Ngcobo (2010) maintains that performance in grade 12 generally and mathematics and physical science specifically is considered an appropriate benchmark for “academic performance”, particularly in deprived schools. It is also on the consideration of teachers' perceptions in that regard. Five teachers per school comprised a purposefully selected focused group because they were teaching either mathematics or physical science in grades 10 to 12. They were selected because either their subjects earned lowest marks in the district or they were senior teachers, managing these subjects.

The schools are referred to as cases in this paper. Each case was also chosen for additional reasons: case A was selected because it was the lowest performing in the district and the principal (P1), who was a principal at a primary school for more than three years before, had been working for only two months in the school. Case B was selected because it was involved in values education offered by an independent service provider. P2 was a principal for 15 years in the same school. Case C was selected because the principal (P3) kept to himself and did not involve his management team in decision-making processes. P3 had 10 years experience as a principal.

Consistent with ethnography, case A was observed for fifteen months, which were spread over the four school quarters, because it was the lowest performing in the district in the previous three years. The documents that were analysed included 18 months' minutes of the school management teams (SMT); priority schools reports (PSR) generated by the office of Quality Assurance and Evaluation in the Gauteng Department of Education; school improvement plans (SIP) and the Mogale City Education Portfolio Report (EPR) on underperforming schools. The EPR was a comprehensive report about the findings of underperforming schools in Mogale City. The research focus was on the sort of values emanating from these documents (because of practices in these cases) in relation to their influence in performance. Savin-Baden and Major (2013: p. 375) maintain that using more than one method of collecting data in qualitative methodology is normal. It enables checks and balances regarding data collected and verifies through triangulation (Cresswell, 2014). I duly observed the ethical protocol and the participants' consented to take part (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2011: p. 181).

#### **Verbal data collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used to probe teachers and principals' perceptions on the role values play in school leadership. Their perceptions in this instance as informed by their "worldview", based on beliefs that in turn guide actions (Cresswell, 2014). Participants were allowed to respond from diverse scopes (Lewis, 2000). In this context, the scope offering a flexibility of uncovering perceptions of values as espoused in leadership practices of schools struggling with performance. The anticipated advantage regarding semi-structured interviews was that I was able to cogitate responses (requesting participants to elaborate and allow them to reflect deeper) by seeking clarity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001: p. 178), therefore making it an interactive interview. Participants' perceptions were gathered on common questions, whilst meaning components were thematically drawn from across all conversations. Each case was distinctly analysed using this method.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

A content analysis technique (commenced during data collection process), which aimed to analyse similar data and comment on it, was used (Mayring, 2000). Three aspects of data collection informed analysis: principals' and teachers' perceptions, document analysis and information gathered from observations. The first step taken in the data analysis process was the data organisation procedures recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). In organising the data, each participant's conversation transcript was transcribed and later analysed according to the data analysis procedures described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), which propagates for the development of coding categories, sorting and analysis of data in each coding category. In this respect, each participant's conversation was coded separately according to the participants' perceptions related to emerging themes.



This was done in three steps, namely category definition, exemplification and codification regulation. Firstly, emerging themes were named in three separate statements: influence by punting values, inspiring collective effort through values-centered practice and, knowledgeable leader. Secondly, the conceptualised statements were brought together. Thirdly, a process to avoid repetition by cross checking statements was followed. The identified results were then explained and related to each other by building a cause-and-effect relationship among the separate parts. This was done by coding the views of all interviewees according to relevant codes until the theory emerged. The coding for educators began from E1, E2 and proceeded up to the end. This method of analysis suits the pragmatic approach because it focuses on contexts that seek to positively influence actions and reflect on the practices by addressing operational values (Evans, Coan, & Ume, 2011).

## 5. The Findings

### Teachers and principals' perceptions

Leadership has a bearing on institutional performance (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). All the three principals, who were themselves teachers at a leadership level, acceded to the significance of their leadership role in entrenching values that inspired conviction to perform. They were approached, first, because they were teachers at leadership level and, second, their perceptions would either affirm or contrast those of the teachers. Although they unanimously conceded, P1 elaborated that not only do values inform decisions and activities in his school, but they also encapsulated his interaction and association with stakeholders and staff respectively. He believed in leading by example and continued to inspire the teachers to do their best. P2 equally conceded that values were the bedrock of operations in his school and thus he strived to infuse values within school operations. Conversely, P3 approved the essence of values, even though he did not show any ardent responsiveness to assimilating shared values. Teachers in cases A and B, who highlighted the significance of the extent to which leaders went to embrace shared values, similarly echoed that the principal's morals are "intact", while another stated that "he practices what he preaches" equally in case B teachers confirmed that he does what tells them to do and he is consistent.

Contrarily, leaders whose attitudes were different to the above mentioned failed to rise to the responsibility of rallying energies around collective effort. Teachers in case C bemoaned their principal's actions. One explained, "*He does not even involve us... he does things alone. What values are those? And then he blames us when learners don't perform*" (E9). Another one said

*He sometimes doesn't give reports from meetings. So, we also don't report... We learn from him (E10).*

*He just tells us what the District wants (E11).*

*We just do what we can or remember to do. Others don't even bother (E12).*

The responses depict uninspired teachers and are a sign of doubtfulness. Teachers in this instance do not believe in their leadership. Judging by the responses, the school culture is compromised in terms of common acceptable practices. The responses signify an uninspired teacher cohort. Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson and Merchant (2014) advance that leaders who have the capacity to stimulate efforts towards common purpose, like instilling shared values, were successful in motivating and influencing people (as demonstrated by P1 and P2). On the contrary, neglecting human capital breeds dejection, uncertainty and people are uninspired (as in the case of P3). Influence is about encouraging collaboration and building relations in achieving a common purpose (Arafat, 2016), in this context, improved performance. Leo (2015: p. 465) assents that “collective expectations influence individuals to engage in correct or culturally desirable behaviour”. Values-centered leaders understand this and strive to persuade staff (as demonstrated by P1 and P2) through agreeable tenets or shared values.

Values inspire cooperation and the will to perform and adhere to covenants (Ramphele, 2012: p. 63). Values inspiration ought to be about alignment of the vision, mission, objectives and values of an institution. Although all the three principals believed in the significance of values, only P1 and P2 strived to align these to practices in their schools. Teachers in cases A and B were appreciative of their leaders’ efforts:

*The principal comes with good ideas and takes our inputs. We are content that, so far, he is leading the way in entrenching the values and living up to them. He tries his best (E2).*

Whilst a teacher from P2’s school said:

*Since the values workshop, he strives to infuse them in all our activities (E6).*

Contrarily, P3 did not seem to apply values to pull energies towards a common goal, as stated by teachers in case C:

*I’m not sure... he announces what we should do, but he doesn’t follow ... (E9).*

*I agree that if these values are not incorporated into the running of the school, then we cannot actualise them... (E11).*

All the three principals acknowledged the significance of cooperation in ensuring that work is done and the implication of knowing what to do and when to take action. For example, P1 highlighted that he considered every staff member an arsenal of knowledge. As a result, involving members of staff in decision-making processes enabled him to have clarity of expectations by stakeholders and gave him hope that relating well with his staff would encourage them to pull aside their differences and cooperate in pursuit of improving results. Knowing when and how to act in different situations encouraged everyone to participate in teachers’ continuous development initiatives to keep improving their knowledge. One teacher said:

*The principal... good ideas and takes our inputs... guide us and knows how to incorporate our inputs in the school activities... results will start improving (E2).*

P2 expressed content that he was linked to a mentor who guided him in incorporating values in every aspect of the school. Knowing what and when to do it seemed a priority for his school to turn around performance. He considered continuous development acritical aspect for him to remain competent and above board in guiding and supporting activities in his school. A teacher commented:

*The principal is aware... support the decisions taken because we agreed on our values (E7).*

Although P3 considered being knowledgeable important, his view regarding continuous development was that it had to be optional. He insisted, *“Development is a personal matter and, thus, it is not necessary...”* He insisted that there was no way that he could know everything. His teachers had this to say about him:

*It's like he is not even aware... But no one says anything... (he) doesn't involve us (E10).*

*I don't even think I understand what he expects from us... he is also not sure what to do... keeps to himself and does not involve us... (Shrugs his shoulders) (E12).*

#### **Document analysis**

Further analysis of documents and observations was used to either confirm or contrast what was said during the interviews (Fox, 2012). Both the minutes were consistent with teachers' perceptions about their leaders. P1 believed in the strength of teamwork. The analysed minutes as well as the observed proceedings during meetings, confirmed his ability to influence responsibility, communicate efficiently with his team, and belief in their individual strengths. He opened a WhatsApp group for his management team and another for all staff members, making communication a frequent occurrence. P2 had monthly meetings with his team. There was a reference to adherence to school values in 7 out of 9 analysed documents sets of minutes. With P3, only two sets of minutes in 18 months were available. The contents were mainly on distributing his planned activities and outlining expectations from the team. Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016) advocate that the manner in which a leader relates to others will positively or otherwise influence staff conduct. This may subsequently harm or strengthen relations.

The PSR in all three cases similarly recommended that the school leadership needed to consider concerns raised by teachers, learners and parents and specifically convene an internal whole school evaluation (IWSE) process where agreeable action would be solicited. A school improvement plan (SIP) would be developed after reflecting on issues raised during the IWSE process, to address factors that hindered performance in the schools. The SIPs of both cases A and B were developed through an IWSE process as recommended in RSR. P1 sourced an outsider to assist in this regard whilst P2 constituted a committee to coordinate the process of IWSE. P3 on the contrary drafted SIP and presented it in one of the two meetings held in 18 months. The ERP report further recommended

that in case A there was a need to appoint a new principal urgently for the provision of desirable leadership and this had happened at the time of data collection. In the case of B, the leadership had to work on implementing their plans and consider merging the outcomes of the values workshop with their plans, whilst in case C's situation the leadership had to initiate a process of collaboration in all its activities for performance to improve, this unfortunately was not carried out in case C.

### Observations

I was able to capture and record informal and unstructured conversations during the observations. Case A was observed over four quarters of the school's calendar (March to January). This enabled me to sit in two of the SMT meetings held and, in those two occasions, team members were required to explain how they effected agreed upon decisions; expound on the challenges they encountered; and share how they mitigated the challenges. Team members were required to own up to agreements by equally holding teachers within their line function accountable when they deviate from plans. There was constant reference to deliberations that ensued on the WhatsApp group, affirming sound professional relations. The operative language used signified high order values factor, where team members' attitudes were indicative of individuals in charge of their responsibilities (Demartini, 2015). Observation in the other two cases happened occasionally during visits for the collection of documents, interviews, and for follow-up sessions. Yin (2003) asserts that the prospects of research findings can be strengthened through cross comparison of multiple cases. In this context, occasional observations enabled connection to interview responses by teachers and reflection of the minutes and analysed documents.

## 6. Discussions

There are similarities among the principals of the cases probed. They are all male; they have been principals for over five years (five to 15) and they believe in the significance of the leadership role in entrenching values that will enable staff to strive for desirable performance. However, divergent features where there is high order personal values factor, teachers' indicative language was almost impeccably positive, and agreeable to the actions of their leaders. Contrarily, the teachers' language in a low order personal values factor (case C) reveals uncertainty and their perceptions expressed imperative (top-down) language about their leader. Teachers' attitudes (demonstrated through their expression) exposed how they perceived their leaders and the extent to which they were influenced or otherwise by them. Msila (2016), opines that school leaders have a greater propensity to influence conduct, and arguably professional language, which can enable flow of communication or otherwise. Where teachers deemed values a regular feature through how they perceived their leaders' interaction with them, a demonstration of contentment superseded where teachers contrarily expressed disconnection between the leaders' actions and values that were supposedly shared.

Consequently, there seemed to be harmony and willingness by teachers to exert themselves with intent to yield desired performance as opposed to where there was dissonance. Knowledgeableness is about putting to practice that which understanding is acquired on (Mohapi-Setlhodi, 2014). The reason for pursuing development is to sharpen the mind's sickle and to be able to improve skills as well as practice. The findings show that the leadership needs support of everyone to succeed in carrying out the mandate of improving performance. Teachers are willing to support endeavours that enable them to work better and achieve desired results. Failure to embrace such eagerness is tantamount to foregoing the value of improved relations and blocking the possibilities of positive influence (Mann, 2012). In turn, this failure contrasts the belief in shared values by valuing others and the value that is leadership.

Values-centered leadership practice differed significantly in case C as opposed to two other cases in terms of the extent to which values are harnessed in rallying teachers towards collaborative effort to turn around performance. Whereas cases A and B leadership make concerted effort to influence teachers through agreeable values, this is not the case in case C. However, the leaders in all three cases unilaterally endorsed the significance of values in leadership, which gave a clear consensus that shared values matter and that leaders who are serious about improving performance, should consider incorporating agreeable values that will serve as authorising tenets to influence attitudes and improve relations. James, Munene and Ntayi (2010) posit that the relationship between performance and attitudes is affirmed by sound support and guidance inspired by those in leadership. High order personal value factor in this instance can elevate and stimulate direction for institutional value factor through agreeable creeds. Shared values in this instance enable leaders to alter ambience and influence teachers to perform and the improvement of performance leads to desired change, which in turn inspires people, as highlighted in the philosophical interpretations. Smith and Gillespie (2007) affirm that leaders play a significant role in influencing the school culture, informs the context and a valuable course so that consequently, teachers attitudes change as found in cases A and B.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2012) values compel people to strive for a worthy course. Knowing just how to use intellect, inspire confidence, and rally efforts of teachers, leads to volitional appetite to volunteer services in support of initiatives by leaders as is the situation with P1 and P2. Boon (2007: p. 68) advances that intellectualism comprises pursuance of "understanding, knowledge, wisdom and logic". Teachers in cases A and B largely believed that their leaders knew what to do to turn around performance and understood that they had to influence others to make it happen. Expressions such as "would like to" or "want to", were more agreeable with teachers in these schools and thus deemed conciliatory because they sought to improve interpersonal relations and promote set goals. Cabuenas, Singco, and Español (2021) submit that interpersonal relations are a source of conceptual and intellectual ability to push forth with planned activities to achieve

set objectives, such as performance improvement in this context. This implies that the ability to reflect, speculate, and engage in activities that require the use of intellect, reasonableness and critical thinking to inspire desired action and responsibility or encourage them to want to succeed (by the teachers), thereby propelling will to improve and maximise performance. A sense of responsibility is heightened when there is generally mutual respect and regard for the value of valuing others (Setlhodi, 2019), and thereby complying with shared values. Whereas where the tone is demanding such as “should”, “have to”, may antagonise relations and could cause push back from teachers. It is therefore recommended that leadership development should be structured in a manner that enables participants to dwell into practices that are performance lifting and encourage language usage that inspires improved performance. A study that explores the influence of language usage in leading schools that seek to improve through-put rate could possibly reveal the embedded values or lack thereof, driving performance.

## 7. Conclusion

This article explored the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding values espoused by the leadership. Experiences of teachers in the cases probed revealed that shared values enabled practices and attitudes that pull energies towards interconnected intent to perform. Where the leadership has high order personal value factor, an indicative language such as “want to”, “would like to” is used and is aligned to intrinsic values that are encouraged by the inspiration that the leaders gather from influential practices which encourage performance. Leaders use values to wean unpalatable habits and commit people to apply themselves. On the contrary, in an instance of low order personal values factor, imperative language such as “should”, “have to”, which is associated with injected values, is used and it yields underperformance. There is a lack of influential and authorising leadership that is embedded in drawing people to work together. The high order value factor impelled relations to improve and the ability to influence practices and integrate sound culture. Influence, valuing values and knowledge of practices fit for purpose at all times and signify the value that is leadership.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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