

*Full Length Research Paper*

## Value-based leadership approach: A way for principals to revive the value of values in schools

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The qualitative research discussed in this article is based on the assumption that school principals as leaders need to establish, develop and maintain a core of shared values in their schools. Our focus is on principals' current perceptions of values in their schools. This is important because values underpin their decisions and actions and thus influence the members of school organizations. The framework of our research was informed by social constructivism. Data were collected in the form of semi-structured individual interviews with nine school principals that were designed to elicit a detailed picture of the participants' perceptions of values. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was employed because of its flexibility which makes it possible to analyze and report on the patterns identified, to provide a rich and dense description of the results. The results indicate firstly that principals have diverse perceptions of values. Secondly, they highlight the range of contributions and influences values have in their schools. Thirdly, they show that principals connect values in/directly to themselves as leaders, their leadership styles and employ values un/intentionally. We argue for a value-based leadership (VBL) approach because it provides ways of overcoming deficiencies in leadership. It is vital that school principals establish and maintain a core of shared value that underscore the school as an organization that strives for the well-being of all of its members.

**Key words:** Educational leadership, principals, human plurality, value-based leadership, values.

### INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, values such as equity, tolerance, openness, accountability, multilingualism and honour are critical components of effective teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2000). These values are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996b) which includes a Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996a).

Great store is set by cultural diversity, and therefore schools are supposed to accommodate a variety of

different cultures (Du Preez and Roux, 2010). The diversity in schools often leads to a conflict in values (Begley, 2010). This accentuates the necessity for respect for personal values and shared values that enhance the well-being of individuals in a school organization (Du Preez and Roux, 2010; Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). Buchko (2007:37) states that "[v]alues form the shared conceptions of what is most desirable in social life; in effect, values are the "glue" that binds people together

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into organizations. When a group of people shares a set of beliefs about the goals that need to be achieved and the means to be used to attain those goals, there is a basis for organization". Shared values embrace implicit or explicit basic beliefs as well as principles that inspire the culture of the school, guiding decision making and the behaviour of its members. Buchko (2007:37) posits that "without some common beliefs or values, organizations could not exist; people need a common set of beliefs to come together and create social organizations".

A school as organization is viewed as "a place of gathering people who work together under a coordinate discipline in order to realize the organizational purpose" (Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011:3703). Realising the purpose of the school organization necessitates that values manifest themselves in educational leaders, for instance in the principals' leadership and management actions, decisions and the way they conduct themselves in their leadership position (Haydon, 2007; Shapiro and Gross, 2013). When leaders' values are not clearly defined and understood, their own and others' development and growth could be jeopardised as values are located and fundamental to human-decision making (Eikenberry, 2010). As Johnson (2012: vii) notes: "it is impossible to be a leader without values". Values influence the attitudes individuals possess and how they act or behave (Baloglu, 2012). Eikenberry (2010) stresses that values are important to leaders because they strengthen their ability to influence, give clarity, reduce stress and guide decision-making and actions. Being aware of these should persuade leaders to instil values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, integrity, beneficence and accountability that can have an impact on the smooth running of the school that ultimately leads to success (De Klerk and Rens, 2013). Begley (2010) emphasises that leaders who intentionally construct and convey the school's values are likely to use their influence to ensure that values inform practice. Where the community is diverse, ethical leaders need to include a wider range of values (Begley, 2010).

## CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature has long acknowledged the importance of values in any society as a means of helping to safeguard members of society against unscrupulous people (Prilleltensky, 2000). Consequently, the values that inform political, social, cultural, personal as well as professional behaviour should be morally defensible otherwise they are seen as mere preferences (Prilleltensky, 2000). Begley (2010) emphasises that values are motivationally grounded and have a conscious as well as unconscious effect on people's actions, attitudes, speech and behaviour. The literature conceptualizes values in various ways as indicated in Table 1. Furthermore, as De Klerk

and Rens (2013) note, values dictate a person's thoughts and actions and can determine whether certain values are accepted or rejected.

Values have a dynamic nature in the sense that they can have various levels of worth at a specific point in a person's life: they can be subdued and only surface in certain scenarios or may feature very strongly if the situation warrants it (Begley, 2001). Prilleltensky (2000:144) suggests three sets of values that guide individual and organizational behaviour: "values for personal wellness, values for collective wellness and values for relational wellness". Here wellness refers to the fulfilment of basic needs. The literature also refers to various types of values (Begley, 2001; Kaye and Neil, 2009; Mueller, 2014; Prilleltensky, 2000). These include values such as: personal values (values that define who we are and how we act, that which makes us unique); relationship values (values that empower and care about others); organizational values (values that guide the perspective and actions of the organization actions); societal values (values of a specific community that dictate social conduct); human rights values (establishing shared values in diverse environment that is grounded on integral moral nature); and cultural values (group of people who have the same values about certain cultural aspects that are interconnected) (Du Preez, 2013; Kaye and Neil, 2009; Little, 2011; Mueller, 2014; Peregrym and Wolf, 2013; Schein, 2010).

It is clear that values should form the core on which the daily functioning of the school is grounded. This includes its application of the mission, vision, policies and procedures that are based on values identified as right and proper for the specific needs of a school (Johnson, 2012). This requires leadership which is "a process of influence based on clear values and beliefs and [leads] to a 'vision' for the school" (Busch, 2007:403). In addition, leadership should be about "influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends (Cuban, 1988:xx). Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others". Effective leadership thus not only depends on a leader with firm personal beliefs, values and the ability to influence others, but requires the inclusion of professional, organizational (school) and social values that underscore the school's vision. This requires significant and relevant values within the specific context of the school to be values that all concerned in the school value (Begley, 2001; Prilleltensky, 2000). Principals need to establish and clarify values and ensure that the ones chosen are midway between the personal and shared values of the school community for the general tranquillity, wellbeing and optimal functioning of the whole group. Prilleltensky (2000) is of the opinion that this can be achieved by means of VBL that focuses on endorsing shared values and keeping in mind the group of people who form part of a certain social and cultural group. Du Preez and Roux (2010) highlight the fact that people from

**Table 1.** Conceptual definitions: values and value-based leadership.

Concept	Author
<b>Values</b>	
Motivating determinants of behaviours and subjective concepts of the desirable	Hodgkinson (1996)
“Conceptions, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action”	Parsons and Shils (1962, p. 395)
Values set standards, dictate models of conduct and give direction: they reflect the important elements in people’s daily living	Rokeach (1973) Knowles and Landar (2012)
<b>Value-based leadership (VBL)</b>	
“Practice aimed at fostering cogent values in consideration of personal interests and degrees of power held by people within an organization and in a group of people it serves”.	Prilleltensky (2000, p. 140)
“Consistently leading out of personal values that are both desirable and beneficial for ourselves, those in our communities, and/or the organizations we serve”.	Peregrym and Wolf (2013, p. 5)

different cultures in the same school have to negotiate and allocate similar meaning to the shared values they determine together. Prilleltensky (2000:140) comments that when values are applied, the process takes place “within intersubjective spaces”. This implies that leaders should always take account of the needs, habits, desires and interests of the people who form part of their particular school context.

### Value-based leadership (VBL)

Prilleltensky (2000:140) contends that VBL “may be conceptualised as practice aimed at fostering cogent values in consideration of personal interests and degrees of power held by people within an organization and in a group of people it serves”. A more contemporary definition is provided by Peregrym and Wolf (2013:5) who view VBL as: “consistently leading out of personal values that are both desirable and beneficial for ourselves, those in our communities, and/or the organizations we serve”. Value-based leaders concentrate on core values and view them as directing principles that shape the behaviour and action of the members of the organization. Buchko (2007:38) refers to core values as “a specific set of publicly stated beliefs or concepts that are expected to be adhered to by everyone in an organization” and emphasises that “[w]hile not all organization values are public, those that are seen as forming the core of the organization and that are central to the organization’s existence are generally known by all members of the enterprise”. The core values of the school need to be shared and communicated repeatedly as they are indicative of what the school upholds and values (Financial Times, 2016).

These definitions accentuate that VBL requires sound values to be put into action, taking due account of the

leader’s personal values and those of the others in the organisation as well as their shared values. VBL evolved as a “bi-product of time and culture” by theorists in response to the lack of “ethics and morality in exemplary leaders (Copeland, 2014:105). This inspired the development of “strateg[ies] for increasing the effectiveness of leaders” in various organizations as it became apparent that “moral and ethical deficiencies became prevalent in many charismatic, dynamic and seemingly transformational leaders that had risen to prominence” (Copeland, 2014:105-106). In addition to moral and ethical shortcomings in leadership, the literature highlights an authentic dimension which leaders require to be effective and successful (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Copeland, 2014). These are also viewed as “foundational behaviours to leadership” (Copeland, 2014:131). Kraemer (2011:6) lists four principles of VBL that are important for leaders to put values into action: Self-reflection (find the bigger picture and engage in reflection to establish what and why it is valuable); balance (take into account various aspects and or views in a holistic way of matters that arise); true self-confidence (know yourself, accept yourself, acknowledge your competencies, be aware of what you do not know and strive for improvement); and genuine humility (acknowledge your roots, where you came from, and how you have excelled to the position you are now). VBL requires aligning the leader’s personal values with the values of the organization and ensuring shared values are adhered to in the educational, school setting (Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). Johnson (2012) adds that VBL means being guided by a solid purpose that focuses on strong positive values that guide leaders’ actions and behaviour as their leadership styles have a profound effect on others. Copeland (2014:106) adds that “some of the ensuing theories emerged as researchers, leaders and practitioners argued that leaders must be

moral and possess inner ethical qualities and values”.

### Human plurality

Arendt (1990:80) exerts that:

The world opens up differently to every man, according to his position in it; and that the ‘sameness’ of the world, its commonness (koinon, as the Greeks would say, common to all) or “objectivity” (as we would say from the subjective viewpoint of modern philosophy) resides in the fact that the same world opens up to everyone and that despite all differences between men and their positions in the world-and consequently their doxai (opinions [also splendour and fame]) – ‘both you and I are human’.

We draw on Arendt’s conceptualisation of human plurality (Arendt, 1958, 1990; Becker, 2013) to situate the VBL approach as the ‘principal’, the leader of a school, is “not altogether separated from the plurality which is the world of men and which we call in its general sense humanity” (Arendt, 1990:88). Humanity, in this sense refers to plurality that signifies “the relation self as [I am] two-in-one” (Arendt, 1990:88; Becker, 2013:26). This accentuates that “men do not only exist in the plural as do all earthly beings, but have an indication of this plurality within themselves” (Arendt, 1990:88). The relation self:other describes the “multilayered and complex self in relation(s). Self:other embraces the intersections of self as two-in-one, self in relation with another and self in relation with all others in non-linear socio-historic and political time and space” (Becker, 2013:26). Within this relation self is in continual intra-dialogue with self, another and all others (Arendt, 1990; Bauman, 1994; Becker, 2013). Becker (2013:1) similarly explains that “[s]elf:other is the relationship between self, and other, and all other. The relation self:other is simultaneously representative of all humanity in space and time and singular in difference. Self:other is used to indicate the simultaneous singularity and togetherness in this relation”.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Our qualitative inquiry was grounded in a social constructivist approach that assumes that human development is socially constructed and knowledge construction happens via interaction with others (Beck and Kosnik, 2012). In view of this, as well as the research question and objectives/aims, we selected nine school principals who are currently in the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) school leadership development programme. Purposive and convenience sampling were employed. The participants chosen had the particular characteristics of interest to us and were easy to access, making them holders of the required data in a specific context and thus information-rich individuals connected to our phenomenon of interest (Strydom and Delpont, 2011).

Data were generated by means of semi-structured individual interviews. This method offered flexibility in both scope and depth as well as creating the opportunity to generate detailed description of the participants’ perceptions of the studied phenomenon (Galletta, 2013; Greeff, 2011). These interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. The transcripts of these interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, which allowed us to identify, and analyze the various patterns that emerged from the data and then provide an account of them (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). A computer-based qualitative data analysis program, Atlas.ti™, was used to manage and aid the identification and synthesization of patterns during the data analysis process.

Due care was taken to meet ethical requirements such as voluntary participation, participants’ anonymity and confidentiality (Denscombe, 2010). LaBanca (2010:1) defines trustworthiness as a means to “[demonstrate] that the evidence for the results reported is sound and [that] the argument made based on the results is strong”. We enhanced the trustworthiness of this research by using criteria such as truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality and strategies such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as suggested by Krefting (1991) and Lincoln and Guba (1985).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The three main themes that emerged during the data analysis of the principals’ perceptions of values within schools are captured in Table 1. Tables 2 to 6 present representative verbatim quotations from the interview transcripts to illustrate and support the discussion. Each of the participants was coded as “P” and was numbered as “P1”, “P2”, “P3” ... “P9”.

Table 3 provides the participants’ diverse perceptions of values as reflected in their responses to the question: What is your understanding of the concept values? These vary from perceiving values as action or knowledge about how to behave, to values as beliefs, laws, policy and standards, to values as important, to values as personal and communal in nature.

The above responses indicate that 78% of the participants rightly perceive values as a way of acting or behaving. Byamugisha et al. (2000:9) define behaviour as:

The way in which an individual behaves or acts [towards people, objects or society]. It is the way an individual conducts herself / himself. Behaviour should be viewed in reference to a phenomenon, an object or person. It can be seen in reference to society norms, or the way in which one treats others or handles objects.

Behaviour can be constructive or destructive and yield different effects as people are social beings that try to find significance in peoples’ behaviour by “dividing it into discrete meaningful units” (Kassin et al., 2011:141). Lichtenstein (2012:2) states that “values are the invisible force that drives visible results” evident in people’s actions or behaviour or organizational performance.

Lichtenstein (2012) indicates that principals cannot

**Table 2.** Principals' perceptions of values within schools.

Major theme
Diverse perceptions of values
Contributions and influences of values
Linking values to leader (principal) and leadership styles
Employment of values

**Table 3.** Diverse perceptions of values.

Category	Sample sentences
Values: beliefs, laws, policies and standards	<i>For me values are beliefs, standards and principals that guide me in doing my job.</i> P6 <i>... laws that control a person.</i> P7 <i>... values are standards that you like to keep up....</i> P5
Values: influence and guide behaviour	<i>... principles that influence our behaviour ... values are the things that drives one's behaviour....</i> P1 <i>... a value is about behaviour ...</i> P4 <i>... unwritten laws that control a person and of which a person behaves accordingly ...</i> P8 <i>They (values) spur me to take certain actions ...</i> P6
Values: personal and communal	<i>... social issues ... human relations and social interactions ... my personal values and societal values (drive me)</i> P1 <i>... our behaviour within our communities ...</i> P2 <i>... determined by the staff, SGB and community</i> P5

**Table 4.** Contributions and influences of values.

Category	Sample sentences
School culture	<i>... in essence values influence the culture of the school ...</i> P1 <i>... values represent what the school is for and stands for ...</i> P2 <i>... values determine the culture of the school in other words good values determine good culture ...</i> P4 <i>... dictate the mood in the school ...</i> P6
School climate	<i>... for me societal values have a direct impact on institutions (school) ... sell my values to the school in order to become the best we can ...</i> P1 <i>... values have a huge impact in the school culture ... learners at the school are obedient (as a result of good values) and therefore we do not experience discipline problems ...</i> P3... <i>to achieve our goals ...</i> P6 <i>... it is how you translate your values in the working place are the once that make my school successful ...</i> [P8] <i>... control a person ...</i> P9

alter the force [values] that drive the staff, but they can alter their behaviour by understanding the values that underlie it and applying them in an appropriate manner for the culture of the school through effective communication, policies, laws and strategies. If principals enforce their own values regardless of the different values of the 'others' in the school community, the result may be resistance to change, policies or strategies and disharmony in the school organization (Lichtenstein, 2012). Principals can justify their actions and decisions

based on values that are consensually (policy and laws), consequentially (those which will have the best result), personally (individual benefit), or transcendently (faith) motivated (Begley, 2001). It is extremely important to construct values that are shared and valued by the members of the school to underpin the guidelines and policies for optimal functioning of the school (Prilleltensky, 2000).

The participants mentioned various and different values that they try to uphold in their schools. Although each

**Table 5.** Linking values to leader (principal) and leadership styles.

Category	Sample sentences
Various influences	<i>Values makes my colleagues respect and believe in me, trust and show obedience ... P3</i>
	<i>I am led by my values firstly as a Christian and secondly as a school leader ... P5</i>
	<i>... they have a positive impact as they drive me towards achieving my goals. They keep me grounded and focussed. P6</i>
	<i>My values are the ones that stand out because they determine how I handle the teachers and learners. P8</i>
Various leadership styles	<i>They sort of shape my behaviour as to how I conduct myself and related to others ... P9</i>
	<i>There is a deep influence of values in my leadership. Values actually make followers to have a particular perspective about one as a leader. I apply transformational leadership ... P1</i>
	<i>They make me to a respected and responsible leader. I make sure that my subordinates understand my values well. Both Transactional and Transformational leadership ... P2</i>
	<i>My values help me to guide me on daily basis to work towards my goals. As I “walk the talk” consistently my staff follow and determine their values alike. Participative leadership style. P4</i>
	<i>Add balance as they help with adherence to policy and harmony between myself, the SGB, staff and community and other stakeholders. Democratic leadership style. P6</i>

**Table 6.** The employment (intentional and un-intentional) of values.

Category	Sample sentences
Intentional	<i>By constantly and continuously talking about values and reminding everyone ... P2</i>
	<i>Teachers are always reminded through different meetings and discussions, and with regard to learners values are always intergraded in some of the subjects. P4</i>
	<i>... staff development meetings once a term ... P5</i>
	<i>... in a diversity of settings- in meetings, informal talks and committee discussions ... P6</i>
Un-intentional	<i>We do talk about values in our meetings and at the school assembly ... P7</i>
	<i>I am actually enforcing values by walking the talk and also infusing them within our policies of which all ... stakeholders will be represented ... discuss these values as part of the code of conduct for educators ... speak of values at assembly, staff developing meetings, as well as parents evenings. P9.</i>
	<i>Very seldom. This does not come as a planned activity ... P1</i>
	<i>Seldom only if something wrong has happened ... P3</i>
	<i>I will sometimes give them one or two values to them at a meeting ... P8</i>

participant had a different set of values that guided him/her, most of the participants viewed honesty and respect as important values in their schools. Other values the participants shared are: Inclusivity, integrity, equity, loyalty, consistency, trust, Ubuntu, christianity, cooperation, professionalism, accountability, kindness and democracy.

It is clear that not all of the values listed by participants are deemed equally important. The key factor is the context and climate of the school. Begley (2001) warns that it is important to be aware of who determines the particular values that an individual or social group upholds as good or bad. In similar vein, Du Preez and Roux (2010) caution that values are interpreted differently and have different significance to people. It is therefore important for principals to ensure that discussion of values that the organization upholds allow sufficient

opportunity for common interpretation and agreement to be reached, since a diverse organization will have different values. As Du Preez and Roux (2010) note it would be anathema to the multicultural ideals that underlie our democratic education system for a value system to be based on only one specific culture or religious view.

Although most of the participants perceive values as personal they also recognise that values are determined by various stakeholders that include staff members, SGB (School Governing Body), community and society. Personal values influence the way individuals perceive the external environment, their behaviours, actions as well as decisions and therefore have an impact on the performance of an organization (Lichtenstein, 2012). In an organization such as a school the principal's personal values, staff members' personal values and the school's

values need to be aligned in what Lichtenstein (2012:4) labels as a “values dynamic”. For leaders to be successful, they have to have a firm set of beliefs underscored by personal values, as well as having the ability to be able to reflect on the values of the organization that may be complicated by being steered by cultural and human rights values directed by policies (Baloglu, 2012). The proper alignment of values shared by all staff members has a positive impact on the achievement of the required goals and objectives in a school (Lichtenstein, 2012; Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011).

Table 4 offers the responses that highlight the participants’ perception that values are a factor that contributes to and influences the schools’ culture. These principals are aware that values play a significant role in determining and maintaining school culture. Their responses emphasise the impact values have on the school climate.

It is essential that principal’s understand the school’s culture; if values in the organization are incongruent or inappropriate the culture will enforce conflict and dissonance (MacNeil et al., 2009). Every school has its own unique culture and consequently the priorities of the principals will differ (Baloglu, 2012). Principals that attempt to bend cultures to satisfy their own ends or enforce their own values will struggle to create shared values and a culture that is valued by the staff, who all need to strive for the attainment of the school’s mission and vision and the values that underpin these (Lichtenstein, 2012).

Ninety percent (90%) of the participants expressed the view that values play an important part and have a positive impact on their management of schools, while 10% viewed values as an important means of controlling others. This is in keeping with the literature that attests that a successful school has a collective value system in place which strengthens the positive functioning of the school (Baloglu, 2012). Staff members are likely to want to retain their cultural and personal values when entering an organization (Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). It is therefore essential that principals negotiate in order to establish ‘shared values’ especially in a multicultural educational setting to ensure that the same set of values are maintained by all the stakeholders (Du Preez and Roux, 2010).

Tables 5 and 6 present results that show that principals link values to themselves as leaders (principals) and their leadership styles, and the employment (intentional and unintentional) of values.

Jamal (2014:1268) posits that leadership style “refers to something that characterizes a specific person [principal] throughout different situations”. A leadership style can also be seen as a specific method which a leader employs in the course of influencing people to achieve a specific objective (Jamal, 2014). In this study, it

became clear that the principals have a variety of leadership styles. Of the 89% who referred to their leadership styles, however, 11% were unable to clearly state what their leadership styles were. It seems that they have a ‘blurred’ understanding of their own leadership styles. Some of the 89% connect their values indirectly to their leadership styles whilst others connected values directly to their leadership styles. These participants also intentionally and un-intentionally referred to values. The data revealed that their leadership styles vary according to the demands of a particular situation, as did some of the reasons why these participants opted to employ a specific leadership style, such as autocratic, transactional, transformational, or participative leadership styles. Some them stated that they follow a combination of various leadership styles.

Principals are seen as agents who apply and enforce the values of the school and community, but they tend to enforce certain values only when serious problems arise or when consensus cannot be reached (Begley, 2001). Du Preez and Roux (2010 23) argue that such difficult or uncomfortable situations make people “move between different sets of values systems”, leading to confusion and a misunderstanding of the values they espouse.

Although people are not always aware of their personal values, these readily emerge when they are confronted by others or placed in multicultural spaces where the values of others also come into play (Du Preez and Roux, 2010).

The results indicate that 67% of the participants felt very strongly about instilling the values of the school. They said they used various opportunities to intentionally remind their staff of the importance of values. It is important to note that the results indicate that 67% of the participants employ values intentionally whilst 33% employ values un-intentionally. As Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian (2011) urge, it is crucial that leaders communicate their values clearly. One way of doing this is to ensure that their ‘actions and words’ are aligned (Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). It is particularly important for leaders such as principals to exhibit their values through their actions, especially if they represent a specific social group or community (Begley, 2001).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many values that the participants view as important as leaders in their schools. However, it is evident that they do not all have the same set of values. One size clearly does not fit all. Values need to be selected to meet the needs of each school and what it deems important. The participants asserted un/intentionally that values play an important role in building the ethos of their schools.

It is interesting that although the participants referred to

various 'personal' and 'shared' values which they view as important to them as leaders as well as for their schools, most of them did not mention any core values. Like any other organization, schools have laws, policies and regulations fundamental to educational practices. Firstly, the participants did not explicitly refer to the term 'core values' nor did not refer to tolerance, openness and honour as values that are explicitly provided in the departmental document, values, education and democracy, on values in education, that document includes values such as: Equity, tolerance, openness, accountability, multilingualism and honour, "[a]ppropriate values for South Africa to embrace in its primary and secondary educational institutions [that] has implications for the broader shaping of the quality of national character to which we as a people in a democracy wish to aspire" (Department of Education, 2000:4).

It is important to note that various laws, policies and regulations provide principals with core values. As noted earlier, core values form "a specific set of publicly stated beliefs or concepts that are expected to be adhered to by everyone in an organization" and these core values need to be known by the members of the organization as to guide their actions towards realising the schools' vision statements (Buchko, 2007:38). The Department of Education (2000:4) cautions that "[v]alues cannot simply be asserted; it will require enormous effort to ensure that the values are internalised by all our people, by our institutions, and by our laws and policies".

When 'tolerance' is not valued and practised, the result will be the violation of efforts to mutually understand one another to the detriment of "reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference" (Department of Education, 2000:22). This will impede attempts to make it possible for people to live valuable lives in which they flourish. The value of 'openness' is that it allows members of the organization to be "open and receptive to new ideas" and to engage in dialogue with one another, thus to be "willing to debate ideas in order to arrive at quality decisions" (Department of Education, 2000:39). Valuing 'honour' provides a means for members to develop their identity as a group that connects with the identity of the larger group, community or society. Schools are viewed as national resources, not belonging to any one group of people but to all (Department of Education, 2000:50). Interestingly, the participants did not refer to any values that would indicate that they value resources such as textbooks, buildings, and facilities.

We reiterate that principals as leaders have a duty to constantly reflect on core values as well as to identify values that are supported and valued by those in their specific school contexts. As every school is unique in terms of its composition of staff, learners, parents and community, it is important for principals as leaders to find the values that are shared by the group (social network)

and thus will be maintained by them. Principals have to constantly create opportunities to engage in dialogue so they can discuss and benchmark their own personal values, core values and shared values. This is important as values that are not maintained can decay, as is evident in the acts and behaviours of stakeholders that jeopardise the envisioned school culture.

Secondly, it seems as if the participants are unaware of how values (identifying, reflecting, benchmarking and maintaining values) can significantly increase social capital. Their social network has two facets: "Relationship structure" that refers the size of the social network, but includes its composition and identity; and "relationship content" that refers to human assets in these networks that are underscored by norms and values (Bartkus and Davis, 2009:2).

Thirdly, the participants gave no indication that they endeavour to align or benchmark their own personal values with core values as well as the shared values that characterise their schools' cultures. When principals as leaders omit these practices, a VBL approach is deemed necessary especially in a society where values seem to deteriorate, hampering positive functioning of people at various levels at micro and macro levels (Johnson, 2012; Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). A VBL approach can address this challenge as it focuses on harmonising and stabilising the shared values of the school as an organization, and includes the leaders' personal values (Shatalebi and Yarmohammadian, 2011). Therefore principals who lead according to VBL approach not only accommodate the organization's values but also the individual, social group, culture and community values (Baloglu, 2012; Begley, 2001).

## Implications for practice

### ***Leader (principal) and school staff members (organization members)***

A principal who does not or is unable to make meaning and construct understandings of what values encompass, or who is unaware of his/her personal values, core values (guiding principles) and the shared values that characterise the school culture is likely to find him/herself in a difficult position as a leader. Not knowing or understanding will result in a principal not being able to disrupt, critique and reconstruct "the difference within the self and the difference between self: other", regarding an understandings of values, by means of intra-dialogue that should "start with dialogue between the self as two-in-one" (Becker, 2013:30). In addition, if "individual and collective meanings and understandings" are not disrupted and critiqued, the possibility of creating new ethical self: Other relations will be diminished (Becker, 2013). This will result in the principal as leader not being

able to inspire his/her staff members or even to enhance their behaviour so that values are reflected as individual and collective meanings and understandings. This jeopardises the achievement of the school's vision.

The principal needs to engage in on-going dialogue in which shared values are regularly communicated to staff members and there is an opportunity to align the staff members' personal values and the school's vision. Without doing so, staff members are unlikely to support core or shared values or see them as important. Repeated communication and engagement in dialogue with staff members is necessary to be able to identify the relevant and essential core values (guiding principles). Leadership that is not based on values negatively affects the staff members' behaviour, the learners' behaviour, and the school's character and culture. This may leave staff members feeling dispirited, unmotivated and dissatisfied and create a school environment that does not promote the wellbeing of all.

Principals and their staff members need ample opportunities to rethink values, reflect on existing values, maintain or benchmark their values, or critically review the principals' leadership style. If they are not afforded such opportunities, they will be unable to engage in valuable decision making and or make contributions that will benefit multicultural and diverse school environments, to the benefit of society at large. Without VBL, principals and schools will fail to respond to national and international calls for moral and ethical behaviour in leadership and the provisioning of a school climate conducive to effective teaching-and-learning practices.

### The way forward

Our recommendations for school principals as leaders are based on a VBL approach and human plurality. VBL has the propensity to enable principals to rethink, reflect on values and proactively engage in appropriate dialogue in multicultural school environments:

1. Irrespective of leadership style/s of the principals concerned, a VBL approach and its underlying principles can strengthen the effectiveness of their current leadership style/s and help them avoid value conflict and ambiguity.
2. Principals need to engage regularly in self-reflection to enable them to develop their leadership skills as well as to review the effectiveness of their ideas and their practices. This self enhancement helps them to understand themselves, what values they are practising and why it is important for them as leaders to practise values. This needs to be preceded by intra-dialogue to find a dissonance of values in relation to 'self', 'the other', and 'all other'. When principals' self-reflection activities are successful, they will be able to practise values in such a way that they will be able to motivate their

members of staff.

3. Principals need to accentuate the importance of the shared values that should underpin an organization's activities, meetings, policies, procedures and vision.

4. Principals have to find a balance between 'self' and the 'other' in the relation 'self:other' and transcend their own comfort zones, thus taking a holistic view (Becker, 2013). This is important in VBL, as principals must understand and know what their own personal values are as well as understand and appreciate the personal values of others. This can be achieved by explicitly engaging in dialogue with themselves and the 'other' (staff members). Leaders have to ensure that their personal values are aligned with the social values of the organization and ensure that the agreed shared values are internalized and form part of the school's culture. Awareness-raising sessions on values could include dialogues in which various personal, core and shared values are discussed. These could occur during staff meetings, or workshops and training programmes for leaders organised by the education department.

5. Balance can only be achieved when principals have genuine self-confidence based on knowledge of themselves, self-acceptance and realistic knowledge of their personal and leadership skills, both their capabilities and their in-capabilities. This could be attained by principals who embrace themselves fully in a way that is reflected in their mature actions and behaviour that accord with the shared values of the school.

6. Principals' actions and behaviour should reveal honesty and humility based on the desire to serve the 'other' and not abuse the power their position gives them. This calls for principals to constantly be aware of their duties as leaders and to put the needs of the diverse others first.

7. Principals need to benchmark, internalise or put core values into practice in order to break with current practice in which core values seem to be 'paper-based' values to which principals and staff members pay lip service at best. Principals and the Department of Education should engage in joint ventures to benchmark core values in schools. Principals should also address the issue of values in the meetings arranged for them by the various Departments of Education.

In conclusion, it is clear that principals need ways of implementing values in schools that are meaningful and are valued by the members of the school community. A VBL approach seems to offer a way in which to address and employ values successfully in schools establishing a climate conducive to effective teaching-and-learning practices.

### Conflicts of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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