The Value of a Shared Vision at the School of Opportunity

A thesis submitted to the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education (Leadership and Management)

Submitted by:

Julie Penrose
Student Number: 0115404A
Protocol Number: 2012ECE301

Supervisor: Prof. James Stiles

Johannesburg
2013
COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The copyright of this thesis vests in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, in accordance with the University’s Intellectual Property Policy.

No portion of the text may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including analogue and digital media, without prior written permission from the University. Extracts of, or quotations from this thesis may, however, be made in terms of Sections 12 and 13 of the South African Copyright Act No. 98 of 1978 (as amended), for non-commercial or educational purposes. Full acknowledgement must be made to the author and the University.

An electronic version of this thesis is available on the Library Webpage (www.wits.ac.za/library) under “Research Resources”.

For permission requests, please contact the University Legal Office or the University Research Office (www.wits.ac.za).
DECLARATION

I, hereby, acknowledge that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Education in Educational Leadership at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

___________________________  ______________________

Julie Jane Penrose  Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a heartfelt “Thank You” to the following individuals and organisations who have contributed to this study and made this research dissertation possible:

- The School of Opportunity and the Gauteng Education Department.
- The Principal of the Primary School, who has been so accommodating and welcoming throughout the process of data-collection and arrangements of visits.
- The staff at the School of Opportunity, for their hospitality and interest in this study.
- All of the participants who shared their experiences with me.
- My research supervisor, Professor James Stiles, for all of the support, interest, motivation, editing and countless hours that he has spent with me through this process, as well as for introducing me to the research approach “Portraiture” and all of the possibilities that a methodology like this has brought to the presentment of this research. I cannot express my sincere gratitude enough!
- The principals of my school and my colleagues, for their support and the interest that they have shown in this study throughout this period.
- My parents, David and Pat Penrose, and my sister, Sue Crous for their love and belief in me to complete this mammoth project, which motivated me to accomplish more than I thought I was capable of.
- Ryno Smith-Eayrs, for his loving support, encouragement and belief in me, which sustained me and gave me the strength to push myself forward and continue over the past two and a half years.

“Thank you”
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Jean Mackay Penrose, who inspired me to be the teacher that I am today. Her reputation as a teacher outlived her, and she is remembered for her personal contribution to many people’s lives;

And to my extraordinary family: my dad, mum and sister, who have always had faith in me and supported me in my studies.

“A great leader’s courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position”

- John Maxwell Quotes - n21paul
ABSTRACT

This qualitative research report explores the effect that a strong school vision, which is followed and utilised in accordance with a considered holistic leadership practice, can have in supporting a previously disadvantaged school in Gauteng towards success. Despite the challenging circumstances in which that school functions, this study explores how leadership can help to propel the school forward.

It has been completed using the interpretive methodology of Portraiture, which is the combination of systematic, empirical description and aesthetic expression, to “paint” a portrait of the chosen township school in Johannesburg and its principal. The school is a no-fees school situated amidst the informal settlement situated next to an industrial district and which caters to the children of that area.

The researcher used the analytic frames from Senge’s Learning Organisation (1990) and the description of “Schools that Work” from the same titled ministerial report by Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) to illustrate why this school functions at such a high level. The characteristics of this school and its principal, observed by the researcher, echo the characteristics of “Schools that Work” and the principles of a Learning Organisation.

The principal’s leadership style is based on mentorship and the relationships fostered at the school. It is discussed in relation to the literature of Attuned Leadership (Khoza, 2011), Passionate Leadership (Brighouse, 2008) and Holistic Leadership (Loock et al., 2003).

Key Words:
Vision Statement
Mission Statement
Learning Organisation
Schools That Work
Principalship
Schools in Challenging Circumstances
Relationship Based Leadership
Passionate Leadership
Holistic Leadership
Change
# Table of Contents

Title Page i  
Copyright Notice ii  
Declaration ii  
Acknowledgements iv  
Dedication v  
Abstract vi  
Table of Contents vi  

## Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Origins of My Research... 1  
1.2 General Problem Statement ................................................................. 2  
1.3 Research Question ................................................................................... 12  
1.4 Significance Of The Proposed Study .......................................................... 15  
1.5 Rationale .................................................................................................. 17  
1.6 Aims And Objectives ............................................................................... 18  

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

0
2.1 Leadership Practice and Theory Linked to Change Management ................................................................. 20

2.2 Leadership Theory Based On Relationship Development .......................................................................................... 24

2.3 The Learning Organisation .............................................................................................................................................. 31

2.4 Vision and Mission Statements .......................................................................................................................................... 35

2.5 The School Vision and Mission Statement ............................................................................................................................ 40

2.6 Obstacles That Schools May Face ...................................................................................................................................... 51

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction : Qualitative Research .......................................................................................................................................... 54

3.2 Portraiture .................................................................................................................................................................................. 57

3.3 The Research Process ................................................................................................................................................................. 65

3.4 Data Collection Strategies ......................................................................................................................................................... 71

3.5 Limitations Of The Design ......................................................................................................................................................... 75
# Chapter Four: The School Of Opportunity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Celebrating Learner Achievement</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>What You See Is What You Get</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Constance - School Principal and Team Leader</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>The Staff of The School Of Opportunity</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>The Vision and Mission Statements of the School of Opportunity</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Beyond Academics - Skills Training</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Leadership Camp</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Daily Functioning - Purposeful Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five: Reflection

5.1 The School Of Opportunity

149