

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore the principals', head of departments' and teachers' conceptualisations, experiences and enactment of servant leadership in schools. The study also aimed to find out the obstacles encountered (if any) in the implementation of servant leadership theory in schools as envisaged by the Batho Pele policy. The research participants' suggestions on what should be done to enhance the implementation of servant leadership in schools were further explored in this study. The reviewed literature recognise servant leadership theory as having the ability to improve service delivery and work ethics in schools through humanity and humbleness that makes leaders sacrifice their authority with an aim of serving their subordinates and the community at large. The literature on servant leadership phenomenon was reviewed in international, continental and national contexts to gain understanding of how it is practiced in different parts of the world.

Semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and document reviews were instruments used for data generation. Semi-structured interviews were the main instrument of data collection. Findings showed that principals, HODs and teachers understood the concept of servant leadership which fastened by Batho Pele policy. Servant leadership is the theory of the study that promotes empathy, building community, listening, and so on. Findings from this study were that principals play a major role in instilling the Batho Pele principles through the word of mouth and the pasting of the principles on the wall however, one principal did not display an in depth understanding of the principles in detailed but there was an overall understanding of the meaning of 'putting people first' which is instilled to subordinates. The study found that both, principals, HODs and teachers apply various instruments as a source of implementing Batho Pele principles in their schools. Lack of parental involvement, passive staff members and lack of Batho Pele workshops from The Department of Education were the challenges of servant leadership encountered in the researched schools. This study found that principals, HODs and teachers viewed workshops on Batho Pele principles, implementation of all policies by the SMT and teachers as well as showing of trust to subordinates as the significant enhancers of servant leadership.