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2014-11-03
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/15817

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The Value of a Shared Vision at the School of Opportunity

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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