

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the conceptualisations, practices and experiences of servant leadership among the research participants, based at the three researched schools and what we can draw from the servant leadership theory to improve leadership, management and teaching. The concept of educational servant leadership, as service to others offers a unique perspective, which draws attention to the principles of ethics and caring. It also offers a shift in the way that leadership views the members of the organisation. Furthermore, this study also investigated the necessity of the implementation of servant leadership and also views on the promotion of servant leadership. This study also navigated the participants' perspectives on challenges that were faced in the implementation of servant leadership in the researched schools and possible solutions.

This study used the qualitative research approach which was located in the interpretivism paradigm. Furthermore a case study design was used and it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Three schools in the Johannesburg District were conveniently sampled on the basis of them being close to my work place. This study was underpinned by the theoretical frame work by Greenleaf (1970) and Sipe and Frick (2015)'s model of the seven pillars of servant leadership.

A research gap, was identified in that the concept of servant leadership is not well researched in the education sector, whilst, most studies were carried out in the west but not in the African context. Secondly most studies involved leaders assessing their own leadership.

The analysis of the generated data and presented data led to the findings that the servant leadership behaviours of the principals, according to the teachers' perspectives were lacking. On the other hand the general view of the principals was that they conceptualised their roles as very significant in supporting the servant leadership tenets in the schools. A significant conclusion, gleaned in this research, was that skilled communication was indeed the golden thread that kept the organisation and the people together and a lack of communication led to most of the challenges, like lack of feedback and poor conflict resolution.

Recommendations, informed by the conclusions, were also presented to suggest how each theoretical conclusion can be translated into workable practice in order to support and

promote servant leadership in school organisations. Finally, the implications of the study were proffered.