

**A critical investigation of leadership in a Technical,
Vocational Education and Training college in the
Eastern Cape**

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degree of**

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by

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Abstract

Far-reaching reforms of the TVET college system – including a merger and frequent revisioning of the colleges’ role in the educational landscape of South Africa – have focused renewed attention on this sector. The fact that the sector has been plagued by poor performance – even to the extent that several colleges have been placed under administration – suggests problems at the level of leadership. This study sought to explore key role-players’ understanding of the leadership and management challenges faced by a TVET college and, by examining responses to these challenges, develop a sense of what leadership means in the sector. The study drew on three leadership theories – distributed leadership, transactional leadership as depicted in political models of management, and critical leadership – to help make sense of the findings.

A qualitative case study design was used to explore key respondents’ views and lived experiences. The respondents were the principal, two deputy principals, a council member, three campus managers and a programme head. Interviews, questionnaires and document analysis were the chief data collection tools.

The study found that critical leadership was the dominant approach at the college. This was revealed in the college leadership’s awareness of broader societal needs and its own role in operating in a socially just manner. College leadership also revealed signs of rejecting the status quo and opposing state control and bureaucracy, in favour of reactionary initiatives. There was limited evidence of distributed and transactional leadership. In fact, ‘leadership’ as such, seemed not to be part of the college discourse, suggesting that the concept and habit of leadership was not broadly discussed, shared and promoted. This sense was strengthened by the fact that at the time of the study, the college was headed by a charismatic and visionary leader. Indeed, the problem at the college seemed to be the Department of Higher Education and Training, which has failed the college in a number of ways.

Declaration

I, Nonkonzo Chagi, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own work and that it has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any university and that all the sources quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

Nonkonzo Chagi

Date

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAPEX	- Capital Expenditure
CIP	- Colleges Improvement Programme
CLS	- Critical Leadership Studies
DHET	- Department of Higher Education and Training
EXCO	- Executive Committee
FET	- Further Education and Training
GET	- General Education and Training
ICB	- Institute of Certified Bookkeepers and Accuracy
ICBA	- Institute of Certified Bookkeepers and Accountants
JET	- Joint Education Trust
NSFAS	- National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SETA	- Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	- Technical Vocational Education and Training

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The institutions known today as TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) colleges, formerly FET (Further Education and Training) colleges, formerly Technical colleges, have a troubled and unhappy history.

For many decades the so-called ‘Technical colleges’ were regarded as second choice institutions of higher learning, serving also as educational institutions providing vocationally oriented programmes for part-time students. It is common knowledge that any education described as ‘technical’ or ‘practical’ is considered less prestigious than an ‘academic’ education. It is into this ‘space’ that Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Buti Manamela, is reported to have launched an attack on those who thought of colleges as inferior to universities. Reported in the online news journal *‘Inside Education’* in 2018, he said: “*TVET colleges are not for stupid people*”, giving voice to exactly what has long been a common perception. Manamela was on a mission to change the perception that TVET Colleges offer inferior qualifications, and he claimed that the DHET had embarked on a campaign to encourage school leavers to opt for college education. He pointed out, though, that TVET colleges were underfunded and faced huge infrastructure problems.

TVET colleges’ problems are not purely financial or associated with the stigma that dogs a ‘technical’ education. The sector has a chequered political and social history. In 1995 there were 152 technical colleges in the country, located under the racially segregated education departments (National Further Education and Training Plan, 2008). These colleges were governed and managed in different ways depending on the funding mechanisms of the department under which they resided. This meant there was no uniformity and no equality; the provisions were skewed in favour of White colleges, followed by Coloureds, Indians and the provision for Africans being the poorest.

This resulted in an uneven institutional landscape. After the realisation of a democratic state, the transformation of the education system became a priority, and the provision of vocational and technical education has become a key issue in the list of priorities of government. Already,

several innovative measures have been introduced subsequent to the release of the Further Education and Training Act 98 of 1998 (South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 1998). In a nutshell, this Act laid the foundation for the transformation of what was then known as the FET sector, first by announcing a long-term framework to change curriculum programmes and qualifications and then introducing a new funding mechanism to improve the quality and equality of provisioning within the FET sector. As a sequel to the 1998 Act, the National Landscape Task Team was established with a specific mandate to develop a national strategy for the re-organisation of the sector, as well as the recapitalisation of the ageing physical infrastructure, whilst re-aligning with the new structural curriculum changes. In the final analysis, the Task Team recommended merging the 152 Technical Vocational Education colleges to create 50 multi-campus public Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. In this way colleges were also directly influenced by large-scale national planning and re-organisation, ostensibly to eradicate differences and promote equity.

But there were also internal re-organisations waiting in the wings. In 2006, the government released the Further Education Act No.16 (South Africa. DHET, 2006) which required all colleges to establish governance and management structures in line with the democratic principles of widening participation, engaging more stakeholders and opening dialogue amongst a range of stakeholders. Regarding management, the Act stipulates that management consist of a principal and vice principals. In terms of the College Statute, the structure is referred to as the executive committee (EXCO). In addition, almost all colleges also have a structure that is commonly known as the Broad Management Team (BMT) which includes the college registrars, campus managers, assistant directors and head of programmes, in addition to EXCO. Although the Act does not directly provide for the establishment of these formal management structures, colleges – through the statutes – are mandated to set up these structures to facilitate a team approach to the management functions at college level. Organisationally, therefore, the various functions that colleges are responsible for, are meant to be shared and distributed amongst managers based at the college central office and managers at the various campuses that fall under that college. In simple terms, colleges are expected to provide quality vocational and technical education through a network of dispersed campuses that should get guidance and support from the central office.

However, recent studies on the FET sector reveal that the distribution of management responsibilities between the central office managers and campuses have created significant

challenges that negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning, as evidenced in the poor results, high drop-out rates, non-completion of programmes and poor student retention rate. The Diagnostic Report of the National Planning Commission [NPC] (2011), captured the problem well in stating that the FET college sector is criticised for providing vocational education and training that is limited in scale, scope, quality and relevance. In the same report, colleges are described as underperforming, unattractive and offering second class education.

It is not surprising, then, that the influential Joint Education Trust (JET) report, *‘Change management in TVET Colleges – Lessons learnt from the field of practice’*, uses strong language to describe TVET Colleges:

The South African Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges (formerly the Further Education and Training or ‘FET colleges’) seem to embody a fundamental institutional enigma – despite multiple changes intended to improve the quality and efficiency of the colleges, they are still viewed as underperforming, perhaps even impervious to change efforts (Kraak, Peterson, & Boka, 2016, p. viii).

For an educational sector to be described as an “enigma” and “impervious to change efforts”, twenty-five years after the achievement of a non-racial democratic political system, is an indictment. In the context of vocational colleges, this report is an invaluable resource showing, through empirical evidence, how and why colleges are failing to achieve the six strategic objectives established by the Colleges Improvement Programme (CIP). The CIP was delivered by JET between 2011 and 2014. The six objectives were:

1. To improve the quality of teaching and learning in the colleges;
2. To ensure that there are integrated student support services available in the colleges;
3. To improve management systems and capacity in the colleges;
4. To improve governance in the colleges;
5. To ensure effective EMIS (Education management information systems) are in place;
6. To provide financial and risk management in the colleges (Kraak et al., 2016, pp. 112-113).

The report is not positive, expressing reservations on each of the gains made against these objectives. The CIP seems to have been less successful than had been hoped. In terms of this study, the most worrying of the findings was the “instability at the level of management”

(Kraak et al., 2016, p. 112) encountered at colleges. The report is referring to the lack of permanence in terms of offices such as principal, deputy principal and other key management positions. Frequent personnel changes – including instances of colleges placed under administration – were seen to hamper change initiatives to a significant extent. In its concluding paragraph the report argues: “it was not possible to intervene in the way that was planned without stable management and leadership in place” (Kraak et al., 2016, p. 118), pointing to one of the key roles of management and leadership in an organisation, namely the creation of a safe and secure space for dealing with challenges and crafting a future. Constant changes at top level are likely to work against any sense of continuity and stability, leaving organisations directionless.

The report also refers to the absence of what the writers regard as an appropriate approach to leadership in colleges, described variously as “distributed leadership” (*ibid.*, p. 12), “shared leadership” (*ibid.*, p. 65), “collegial leadership” (*ibid.*, p. 66) and “participatory leadership” (*ibid.*, p. 79). All of these refer to what has come to be described as non-traditional, non-heroic leadership approaches, where consultation and teamwork replace the notion of the single individual, and collaboration replaces authoritarianism. While the report does not pursue these arguments, it is clear that the writers subscribe to this notion. In Chapter Two, I look more closely at leadership theories, and there I consider this question again. For now, it may seem strange that leadership itself was not captured in one of the strategic objectives of the CIP, but there could be several reasons for this. One may have been that the programme chose to look at fairly quick demonstrable outcomes, the kind which changes in leadership are unlikely to provide. Leadership change is typically behavioural, playing out in relationships, and therefore slow to assert itself and become apparent. Nevertheless, I am not aware of any organisational ‘force’ more likely to bring about change in an organisation than leadership, and this is one of the reasons why this study looks at college leadership with the purpose of finding out, from the leaders themselves, what it is to lead a college.

Leadership and management of the TVET colleges are under scrutiny following the massive reforms introduced over the past 15 years. The policy developments include a wide range of issues including pedagogical practices within the framework of vocational education that may assist in creating participatory, critical and reflective citizens (Baatjies, Baduza, & Sibiya, 2014, p. 92), changes in roles and responsibilities, the ethos of the institutions and “leadership rooted in deeply conservative institutional cultures” (Sooklal, 2005, p. 5). The developments

might also help in addressing generally poor learner performance in the National Certificate Vocational, a high dropout rate (South Africa. DHET, 2013), inadequate career guidance resulting in poor throughput rates (Baatjes et al., 2014, p. 91), a merger that was not accompanied by a strategy of support and development for new managers, principals and councils – particularly in weaker institutions, (Gewe, 2010, p. 24) and colleges that provide vocational education and training that is limited in scale, scope, quality and relevance (South Africa. NPC, 2011, p. 7; Wedekind, 2008).

“The pace of change and the need to be adaptable and responsive to local circumstances requires that managers develop new skills and new ways of working” (South Africa. DoE as cited in Bush, 2008, p. 21; Sooklal, 2005, pp. 4-7). For instance, one significant challenge that confronted these new institutions related to the features and disparities in the structural and cultural backgrounds of the merged institutions.

With little to none research support and no restructuring strategy to support colleges, the management and leadership were compromised. A lack of capacity in leadership and management, knowledge and experiences, and the skills and resources needed to manage the drastic changes in the system, also had a negative impact. New organisational arrangements and definitions of new roles and responsibilities brought more confusion than clarity (Sooklal, 2005; South Africa. DHET, 2013).

1.2 Background to the study

The education and training system in South Africa positions the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges at a nexus between schoolings, known as the General Education and Training (GET) band, and the Higher Education and Training (HET) band. Under apartheid, South Africa had 152 technical colleges, located in racially segregated education departments. After the release of the implementation plan for the restructuring of the FET colleges (*Reform of South Africa's Technical Colleges*) in September 2001, colleges were restructured as part of a radical reform of the apartheid education system (South Africa. Department of Education, 2001).

The Further Education and Training Act 98 (South Africa. DHET, 1998) laid the foundation for the transformation of the FET colleges sector. Driven by the Act, the Task Team for FET recommended merging the 152 technical colleges to create 50 large multi-campus institutions, renamed as Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. The merging process had numerous objectives: to widen access and optimise provision of education and training; to improve the quality of training through pooling resources; and to expand the scope of institutional activities (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEFOP], 2011).

The merging process was accompanied by much vision-crafting and advocacy by the government, promoting the need to transform colleges into institutions of choice and centres of excellence, offering high quality education by developing skills and qualifications that were globally competitive (CEDEFOP, 2011, p. 110; DHET, 2013, p. 6; Sooklal, 2005, p. 1). One of the most significant developments in the sector was at the level of governance and overhead control. Under the new dispensation, colleges were granted considerable autonomy.

The promulgation of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act (FETC) of 2006 (South Africa. DHET, 2006) introduced mechanisms to promote partial autonomy of the colleges, including the right to approve academic programmes, develop and approve policies on student admissions, set the language policy, provide student support services, set tuition fees, and calculate annual budgets. In this sense, colleges were increasingly viewed as tertiary institutions, especially when in 2012, the FETC Amendment Act (South Africa. DHET, 2012) transferred college governance to national control. This move seems to have been prompted by concerns over college efficiency, since the reasons provided included the improvement of throughput rate, the enhancement of management capacity, and the improvement of financial and human resources management (South Africa. DHET, 2012).

Also, this concern arguably underlies the fact that, for all that colleges seem now to have been structured as self-managing organisations, the ministry retained the right to control the election and appointment of College Councils, the highest decision-making bodies at colleges (Kraak et al., 2016, p. 37). A year later, the White Paper on post-school education (South Africa. DHET, 2013, p. 6) changed colleges' name from FET colleges to TVET colleges, in an attempt to align the national education system with an international trend in post-school education and position colleges as a global educational initiative.

The FETC Act of 2006 (South Africa. DHET, 2006) also announced internal structural changes. In terms of the Act, college management (EXCO) consists of the principal and vice-principals housed in the Central Office along with support personnel, namely: human resources, financial management, admissions and student support. Since each college consists of a cluster of campuses, it also has a Broad Management Team (BMT) which consists of the EXCO as well as college registrars, campus managers, divisional heads/deputy heads and assistant directors, managers based at the Central Office and Heads of Departments (HoDs) and/or heads of academic programmes. What was envisaged was that each college would be a coordinated network of dispersed campuses receiving guidance and support from the Central Office. The Central Office, also known as the administrative centre, is home to principals and support functions such as the Academic and Student Support Service, Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Marketing Services. Organisationally, therefore, the principal of the college, as chief accounting officer, has the responsibility to oversee college operations and the functionality of management structures.

The day-to-day running of campuses is the responsibility of campus managers. As key drivers of curriculum delivery, which is the core business of the college, campus managers would report directly to the Vice Principal (Academic Affairs). They are also expected to interact directly with other vice-principals, depending on the matter to be addressed. This rather complex system of management and administration seems to have been put in place to facilitate a team approach to the managerial functions at college level, and to encourage the distribution of authority to persons with different roles in different parts of the organisation. However, it is important to note here that none of these measures in any way detracts from or minimises the role of the principal of the college. As the chief accounting officer, the principal still has the responsibility of overseeing the management structures.

Structural change was accompanied by curriculum development. The introduction of the National Certificate (Vocational) in 2007 (DHET, 2007) as part of the implementation of the 1998 legislation, was geared to cater for school leavers from Grade 9 to 10, covering NQF Level 2 to 4. The NVC was a deliberate attempt to shift the emphasis to practice (rather than theory), thereby making qualifications more relevant to the demands of the labour market.

Looking at the claim that the TVET colleges are performing poorly and failing to meet their objectives, it is most pertinent to investigate the role of leadership and management as a

mediating factor in the process of social change. Researchers generally conclude that effective leadership is one single determining factor which either enables or constrains productivity in an organisation (Bush, 2007, p. 391; Smyth, 2017, p. 192)

However, evidence suggests that TVET colleges seem unable to meet these challenges. Consistently poor academic results and glaring deficiencies in leadership and management continue to plague the sector. This study is premised on the belief that rapid and far-reaching change in the sector has not been accompanied by concomitant growth and development of college leadership; further, that the position of principalship and what it means to be a principal of a college is poorly understood. Hence, the study sets out to develop a clearer picture of what leadership in the college sector entails. I believe that it is not possible to find solutions when the problem is not well understood.

Working within an environment of multiple and complex situations, the study places specific emphasis on the *experiences* of college principals and their *understanding* of the challenges they face in their organisational practices. Qualitative research following an interpretive approach seemed most suited to this research's interest. The focus is on one TVET college in the Eastern Cape. Through questionnaires, interviews of key personnel and an analysis of relevant documents, this study comes to an understanding of the leadership challenges that complicate college management, thus laying the foundation for finding a way forward.

1.3 Purpose of the research

The brief outline above gives an indication of the scope and nature of change introduced within the college sector over the past 15 years, both structurally and academically. Unfortunately though, the reform process does not seem to have had a positive effect on the performance of the colleges. Student dropout rates remain high at 60.5% and improving the pass rate (currently 33%) and completion rates (32.8%) remain elusive targets (DHET Results 2014/15/16). This is despite a further injection of R2.5 billion announced by the President of the Republic in 2012, targeting infrastructure development, professional development of lecturers and improvement of the quality of education and training (Baatjes et al., 2014).

From the outset, there was an awareness of new challenges and constraints that this restructuring process might bring. One of the chief reasons for these challenges was the fact that these colleges had unique contextual differences and were at different stages of development, emanating from their history and access to resources (South Africa. DHET, 2013, p. 6). In recognising this challenge, the Task Team indicated that the institutional strain caused by reform might require a more sophisticated type of management and leadership and that college leadership would need to be empowered in order to meet the challenges of the new developments (DHET, 2001).

The curriculum review, which culminated in the introduction of the National Certificate (Vocational) in 2007, escalated the challenges of restructuring. For example, the high number of students from diverse backgrounds who came to seek access increased the demand for a more practical orientation of programme offerings, which in turn increased the demand for competent staff in relation to the needs of the labour market. These elements impeded the successful implementation of the programmes and complicated the leadership practices of these colleges (South Africa. DHET, 2013; Kraak et al., 2016; Sooklal, 2005).

While the reasons for the continued failure of colleges are composite and many, one of the most important seems to be the challenge of leading and managing the complex and unique institutional culture that has been put in place through the process of reform. The DHET has recognised this problem in TVET colleges by placing a number of struggling or dysfunctional colleges under administration. In the Eastern Cape, for example, of the eight TVET colleges, six have been placed under administration following the suspension of the principals due to poor performance. Such poor performance is often blamed on lack of capacity or poor capabilities among the management echelons in these colleges. However, as both Wedekind (2008, p. 3) and Sooklal (2005, p. 4) point out, there is insufficient empirical evidence to assist in identifying the exact nature and scale of leadership challenges within the college sector. The Task Team's warning about the system requiring more sophisticated leadership and management, referred to above, does, however, seem to be borne out by these developments.

This brings into focus the theme of my research which was to critically engage with a college principal and his management team to attempt to develop a clearer picture of the leadership challenges. My own understanding of management's dilemma was that they seem trapped between a complex and bureaucratic system of control which expects all decisions to be

referred to superiors against the need to provide strategic leadership. Put differently, principals may well be finding it difficult to play a dual role, that of line manager or administrator as well as strategic leader. While it is true that management and leadership need to be complementarily present in senior positions (Bush, 2008), it is equally true that they do not mean the same thing, though they do overlap both in theory and practice. Cuban's (1988) distinction between leadership and management is useful here:

By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals. ... Leadership ... takes ... much ingenuity, energy and skill. Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. (as cited in Bush, 2008, p. 4)

It seems feasible that the leadership potential of college principals may be frustrated by their bureaucratically determined maintenance roles in which they also appear to be struggling. Hence this research study sought to gain a better understanding of the challenges that the principal and their senior staff face in relation to organisational practices. The rationale for this research project was underpinned by some of the DHET's supportive measures introduced recently. When the DHET appointed administrators to run some of the colleges, it also commissioned the JET Education Services to conduct College Improvement Programmes (CIP) between 2011 and 2014, as part of an intervention at all eight colleges in the province deemed to be underperforming and close to breakdown. Management and governance was one of the focus areas of this initiative.

Furthermore, scholars in the field of policy developments have identified a wide range of challenges. Some of these views are as follows:

- A complex framework of post-apartheid policies introduced to restructure the education system (Christie, 2010, p. 694);
- Growth in the diversity of institutional histories, realities and potentials (Sooklal, 2005, p. 46);
- Too many changes compressed into a short space (Kraak et al., 2016, p. x);
- Changes in roles and responsibilities, the ethos of institutions, leadership styles and approaches (Sooklal, 2005, p. 5);

- The absence of support and development opportunities for new managers, principals and councils, particularly in weaker institutions during the merging process (Gewe, 2010, p. 24);
- The provision of vocational education and training that is limited in scale, scope, quality and relevance (Wedekind, 2008, p. 7).
- Very high expectations of colleges to contribute to national economic growth (ibid., p. xi).

In short, the college sector has experienced a tumultuous 15 years, an impression I can vouch for from my own experience of heading a college until my retirement. For instance, one significant challenge that confronted these new institutions relates to the disparities in structural and cultural backgrounds of the merged institutions. Individual colleges, widely different from each other structurally and culturally, were expected to function as one new merged institution, with its own new identity. The sheer magnitude of this challenge for leadership seems to have been underestimated, and, as pointed out in the White Paper on Post School Education and Training (South Africa. DHET, 2013, p. 6), new organisational arrangements and definitions of new roles and responsibilities brought more confusion than clarity. This study aims to play a role in looking more closely at what exactly the nature and scope of the problem is.

A number of crucial issues underpins this problem. The first is the historical legacy of the college sector, as referred to earlier. The sector's transformation journey has been fraught with tensions and difficulties, and colleges are still grappling with issues in enhancing the quality of education, such as redressing historical imbalances, discrimination and disadvantage, promoting equity and equality and opening access to educational opportunities for all South Africans regardless of race and gender (Sooklal, 2005; South Africa. DoE, 1997, p. 142). The second is the effect of merging, essentially resulting in the formation of 50 new institutions, each the sum of diverse cultural and social norms. Third is the plethora of new policies and legislation introduced to transform the college sector. It is these policies that direct college operations and determine the day-to-day activities of the staff. Wedekind (2008) suggests that these have been only partially implemented in many colleges, due to the lack of support from the national office and lack of experience and expertise among college senior staff.

In light of the fact that TVET colleges are performing poorly and failing to meet their objectives, it seems pertinent to investigate the role of leadership as a mediating factor in the process of organisational change. In terms of how best to conduct this research, Christie's (2010, p. 698) observation that much of the research that exists focuses on *policy* rather than on what principals *actually do* provides guidance. Her comment also resonates with views of other scholars such as Heck and Hallinger (2005) who argue that the field of educational leadership lacks methodological and scholarly criteria for judgement of value, as there is too little rigorous, empirical research in the field.

1.4 Research questions

The college system's troubled history and current perceived ineffectiveness may well be the result of inappropriate views and practices of leadership. This study hopes to identify the chief challenges facing college leadership and work toward some answers. The research question is: *How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?*

The following sub-questions flesh out the main question:

- How do members of the leadership team see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges, and how do they account for these challenges?
- How are they attempting to respond to these challenges?
- How do they see opportunities that exist for the college sector in South Africa?

1.5 Theoretical framework

In Chapter Two I present an overview of leadership theory, focusing on those theories which were deemed relevant to the research. Given the DHET's drive towards restructuring the management and leadership systems of colleges, it seemed that distributed leadership would need to be included in the literature review. The drive towards shared leadership and teamwork seemed to suggest a distributed view of leadership, and since this theory is also enjoying much attention in research projects and academic articles, I decided to include it in Chapter Two.

Next, given the politically and structurally fraught experiences colleges have had to endure, I believed colleges may have become sites of conflict and contestation. This is why I include Bush's political model in Chapter Two; this model assumes that conflict is inherent in organisational life and places the need for power at the forefront of motivational forces.

Finally, I include a discussion of critical leadership. Critical leadership is not a theory, but a collection of viewpoints which challenge mainstream, traditional leadership thinking and presents leadership as an acute awareness of organisational context, culture and relationships.

1.6 Research methodology

I used the case study methodology in conducting this research. According to Stake (1995, p. xi), a case study is a study where one is expected to capture the complexity of a case of special interest and look for the detail of interaction with its context. Given the complexities and dynamics of the college restructuring process, the case study methodology allowed me access to, and in-depth excavation of the challenges brought about by the TVET developments. The variety of data collection and analysis – semi-structured interviews, structured questionnaires and document analysis – were conducted with the college leadership: the principal, deputy chair of the council, deputy principals, campus heads and head of programmes.

1.7 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will contribute significantly towards a full understanding of the possible root cause of the challenge, as well as the identification of possible solutions, more so as the research focuses specifically on leadership and management challenges. According to Wedekind (2008), research on these two concepts within TVET colleges is very limited. Ngcamu and Teferra (2015) argue that effective and efficient leadership has been identified as *the* major weakness in higher education today.

1.8 Limitations

The use of a case study methodology allows the researcher access to the phenomenon in its natural setting. It also allows for close investigation of the particularity and complexity of the single case. While this is the strength of the research, it is also a limitation since the outcomes of the study will not be scientifically generalisable. Whereas the multi-source of data may strengthen the reliability and validity of findings through triangulation, a study of this kind is likely to produce voluminous data, which poses a challenge for analysis. Finally, since I am the primary instrument for the collection of data, the possibility of bias is a threat. Again, finding evidence in more than one data source, and allowing the data to speak for itself can go a long way towards countering this threat.

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter One has provided an orientation to the study, providing some background, problem identification, research purpose and the methodology to be employed in the study.

Chapter Two presents a literature review and theoretical framework of the study. These study frameworks enable the research to develop a critical conceptual position that underpins the study.

Chapter Three looks at the research design chosen for the study. The research methodology and a brief explanation of the research theory is provided, as well as details on the collection of data.

Chapter Four presents the data and suggests possible theoretical interpretations.

Chapter Five discusses the findings fully, through the lens of leadership theory.

Chapter Six draws conclusions and makes recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore how members of a TVET college leadership team understood their role as leaders. My main research question, as mentioned in Chapter One, was: *How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?* Several sub-questions supported this question:

- How does the principal see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges?
- How do other members of the leadership team see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges?
- How do they account for these challenges?
- How are they attempting to respond to these challenges?
- How do they see opportunities that exist for the college sector in South Africa?

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of current thinking in the field of educational leadership. I identify three leadership theories which I believe will help me make sense of my findings, as well as help me develop a theoretical framework. These are distributed leadership, Bush's political model of organisational leadership and management, and critical leadership. I now discuss each of these in turn, showing how they complement each other, and also pointing out the role each played in my study.

However, I first need to write a brief exposition of how leadership and management relate to each other, and how they are different. This is because these phenomena are often considered to be the same thing and used interchangeably. For this study, it is essential that leadership retains its own unique meaning and position, for reasons that will become clear below.

2.2 Leadership and management

For the purpose of this research it becomes necessary to distinguish between these two concepts, leadership and management, since they provide the historical background of the field

of Educational Leadership and Management where my study is located. The origin of these concepts will help build a better understanding of my three theoretical frameworks – distributed leadership, transactional leadership and critical leadership – which serve as lenses for making sense of what was happening at colleges.

I begin by citing Lunenburg’s (2011) well-known table, because, for all that it over-simplifies the issue, it does contain some valuable insights:

Table 2.1: Comparisons between leadership and management (Lunenburg, 2011, p. 2)

Category	Leadership	Management
Thinking Process	Focuses on people, looks outward.	Focuses on things, looks inward.
Goal Setting	Articulates a vision, creates the future and sees the forest.	Executes plans, improves the present and sees the result.
Employee Relations	Empowers colleagues based on trust.	Controls subordinates by giving orders.
Operation	Does the right things by creating change and serving subordinates.	Does things right through managing change and serving subordinates.
Governance	Uses influence, faces conflict and acts decisively.	Uses authority, avoids conflict and acts responsibly.

Lunenburg (2011) makes leadership sound more attractive than management, and this is probably a common perception. It is associated with people, rather than things. It works on vision and makes change happen and it works with ‘influence’, which is not something one would associate with management. We think of management as using authority rather than influence, and as the *status quo* rather than change. Lunenburg’s (2011) table sums up the key differences effectively, though of course the differences are exaggerated. It is not as though managers do *not* work with people, or with vision, or with change. And it is not true that leaders do *not* control and use authority. It *is* true that both leadership and management work at influencing people to work towards achieving predetermined goals. Lunenburg’s exaggeration is, however, actually helpful because it helps to highlight the nature of each of these phenomena, provided the reader accepts that it is never quite one or the other. Drawing on Lunenburg’s table, one might say that leadership provides the vision and inspiration, while

management sees to it that the job gets done. Both are equally important, exactly as Kotter (2001) claims:

Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment. (p. 3)

Yukl (2013) in his book on leadership in organisations, also found it necessary to distinguish between them. He cites authors who argue that the two are mutually exclusive and contends:

For these writers, leaders and managers differ with regard to their values and personalities. Managers value stability, order, and efficiency, and they are impersonal, risk-averse, and focused on short-term results. Leaders value flexibility, innovation, and adaptation; they care about people as well as economic outcomes, and they have a longer-term perspective with regard to objectives and strategies. Managers are concerned about how things get done, and they try to get people to perform better. Leaders are concerned with what things mean to people, and they try to get people to agree about the most important things to be done. (p. 6)

Yukl disagrees with drawing so sharp a distinction and describes these depictions as stereotyping (*ibid.*). He favours a broader view, supporting the notion that managers and leaders are not different kinds of people, but different roles, often played by the same person. This is a view I subscribe to. It will become clear as this study unfolds that the participants in this research project found it difficult (or perhaps unnecessary) to differentiate between leadership and management. However, this study looked for leadership, and this is an important reason why it is necessary to be reminded of how leadership differs from management. Kotter (2001) was writing in a business context, but his claim that US corporations “are over-managed and underled” (p. 3) rings true for South African TVET colleges; perhaps the background sketched earlier accounts for this tendency, but this was one of the reasons why I chose to focus on leadership *per se*.

I now move on to an overview of leadership theory, focusing ultimately on the three approaches which I believe are important for my study, namely distributed leadership, Bush’s political model and transactional leadership, and critical leadership. Before I get there, however, I need to include some background.

2.3 A brief overview of leadership theory

Many accounts of leadership theory begin in the early 20th century, when the first serious leadership studies were undertaken (see, for example, Bass, 2008; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Yukl, 2013). Early studies were preoccupied by the notion that leaders were born, not made, and hence looked for the specific characteristics (or traits) of the great leader. This approach is today described as the Great Man theory, or trait theory. According to Bass (2008), leaders were regarded as special people, endowed with superior powers and talents, which could include physical attributes such as height, as well as psychological strengths such as confidence and charisma. Much as the theory is largely discredited today, it is easy to see how it came about. Van der Mescht (1996, pp. 16-17) argues that we are influenced by,

the extent to which history has been shaped by leaders; indeed, the history of the world might well be interpreted as the history of leadership. Stories and accounts of great leaders through the centuries abound; and while it is true that researchers have worked hard to contain the phenomenon within the confines of what may empirically be studied as a science, it is equally true that the story of the leader, as a symbolic representation of an ideal type, continues to fire the imagination and feed the human spirit's need for perfection.

We are still, in other words, easily swayed by personal attributes, and easy prey to charisma in leaders. Our own political landscape in South Africa, provides ready proof of this when one considers how powerful some of our leaders have become, not because of what they have done but because of the impression they make on people: how they speak, dress, play with followers' emotions, and so on. Indeed, this example brings to light one of the great dangers of being swayed by charismatic leadership, since there is no guarantee that their intentions are honourable and not simply self-seeking. Hitler was extremely charismatic; but his intentions (and consequent actions) were morally repugnant. The trait theory ultimately produced little that was of any value to the field, identifying lists of physical, emotional and psychological characteristics common to most leaders, but in no way a predictor of leader effectiveness and efficiency, nor of ethically sound conduct. According to Hoy and Miskel (2013, p. 430), today a version of trait thinking persists, where leader traits are grouped into three categories: personality, motivation, and skills, each group containing descriptors (such as self-confidence) which typify leader behaviour. In this way the pervasive power of trait thinking lives on, but as far as leadership research was concerned, increasing attention turned to the situation, or context in which the leader operated.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's the study of *situation* briefly dominated leadership research, followed by a focus on leader *behaviour*, rather than traits. According to Hoy and Miskel (2013, p. 434), the study of situation was an over-correction in reaction to trait theory and led to a de-emphasis of the person, or personal qualities; leaders were in fact made, not born. The situational factors considered were classified in terms of followers and their characteristics, the size of the organisation, the internal environment and the external environment. These factors were believed to be the shapers of leadership (*ibid.*). The study of leader behaviour enjoyed a longer and more enduring life.

Typically, leader behavioural studies rested on the notion of a dual concern of leadership: task, and person. By 'task' is meant an interest in getting the job done, while 'person' suggests an interest in worker happiness. Yukl (2013, p. 145) refers to concern for the task as "performance orientation". Van der Mescht (1996, p. 126) argues that this dual orientation led to the creation of numerous models of leadership based on the task-person tension, most of them prescriptive to the point of oversimplification: indeed "so intent on simplification, classification, and producing recipes that the complexity of personality (or personal traits) was reduced to a task-person dichotomy or continuum". A brief look at one of the best-known of these would be useful.

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory Model:

specifies the appropriate type of leadership behavior for a subordinate in various situations. Behavior was defined in terms of directive and supportive leadership. ... The situational variable is subordinate maturity, which includes the person's ability and confidence to do a task (Yukl, 2013, p. 166).

The model (See Figure 2.1 below), is presented as a grid of four quadrants, where each quadrant describes a different leadership 'style', moving from a directive to a supportive style, as follower maturity levels increase.

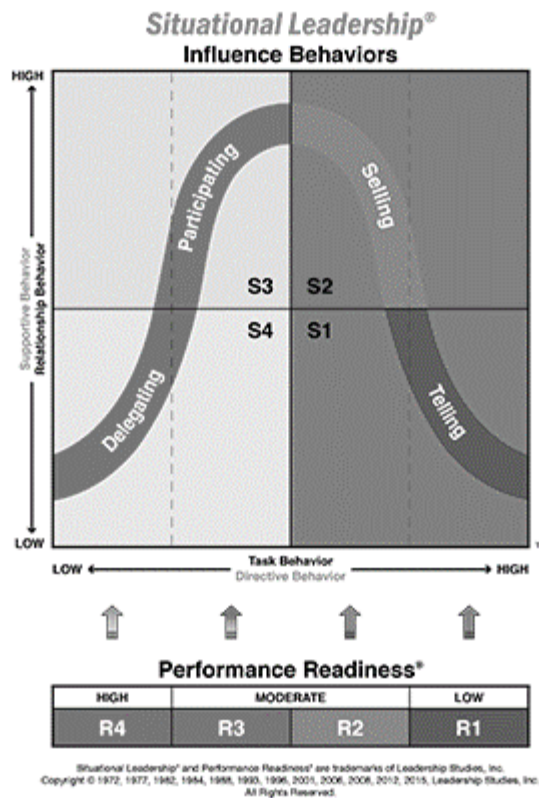


Figure 2.1: Situational Leadership Theory Model (The Centre for Leadership Studies, online).

The idea is that, as subordinates mature and grow into their roles, their need for directive leadership – “telling” – decreases, until they are in fact ready to have work delegated to them without the need for supervision. In terms of what has come before, the model incorporates both leadership behaviour and the situation. It has moved beyond thinking of leadership as a set of traits, suggesting instead that there is nothing stable or fixed in leadership behaviour: instead, the leader varies his or her style as the situation (subordinates’ maturity) changes. Naturally this suggests that leaders are sophisticated readers of people, highly intelligent, adaptive and inventive. Another influential model based on the task-person dichotomy is Blake and Mouton’s Managerial Grid (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p. 57). Arguing that effective managers have “a high concern for people and a high concern for production”, the model proposes that managers “ration their time” using “behaviours that are relevant for the situation”, since managers are generally overloaded (ibid.). So again, the manager (or leader) is seen to vary his or her approach according to circumstances.

The pinnacle of behaviourist studies and models seems to have been contingency theory, of which Fiedler’s Contingency Model (Hoy & Miskel, 2013) seems to have been the most influential. The model uses the Least Preferred Co-worker scale to establish the leader’s

“motive hierarchy” (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p. 166). By describing one’s least preferred co-worker, one reveals one’s tendency in terms of the person-task orientation. This knowledge helps one to adapt or re-focus one’s energy as a leader. Optimum conditions for success – “situational favourability” – occurs when the task is highly structured, the leader enjoys positional power, and is able to maintain healthy relations with subordinates (*ibid.*).

The next landmark in the leadership territory presents a significant change in thinking about leadership, though it is still possible to trace even this development back to earlier roots. Burns’ publication of the book ‘*Leadership*’ in 1987 “led to a more holistic and at the same time less traditionally scientific view of leadership” (Van der Mescht, 1996, p. 25). Van der Mescht (1996) explains how, although Burns in a sense returned to a version of the Great Man theory in his use of larger-than-life world leaders, his notion of transformational leadership introduces ways of thinking not previously contemplated. Chief among these is leadership as a moral activity. As Burns explains, transformational leadership occurs “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (1978, p. 20). Yukl elaborates: “Transforming leadership appeals to the moral values of followers in an attempt to raise their consciousness about ethical issues and to mobilise their energy and resources to reform institutions” (2013, p. 321). Compared to what we have seen – trait thinking, situational leadership, behavioural models and contingency theory – transformational leadership presents something new. Chiefly, it moved beyond viewing the situation as an objective reality, it moved beyond the task-person dichotomy, and it introduced a moral dimension.

Yukl’s analysis of transformational (and its close relative, charismatic) leadership draws attention to some of the dangers of excessive personal and individual influence. The dangers of charisma have been mentioned earlier in this chapter. Yukl (2013, p. 317) comments as follows:

Negative charismatics have a personalised power orientation. They emphasise personal identification rather than internalisation. They intentionally seek to instil devotion to themselves more than to ideals. They may use ideological appeals, but merely as a means to gain power, after which the ideology is ignored or arbitrarily changed to serve the leader’s personal objectives. They seek to dominate and subjugate followers by keeping them weak and dependent on the leader. Authority for making important decisions is centralised in the leader, rewards and punishments are used to manipulate and control followers, and information is restricted and used to

maintain an image of leader infallibility or to exaggerate external threats to the organisation. Decisions of these leaders reflect a greater concern for self-glorification and maintaining power than for the welfare of followers.

This description provides a picture of leadership that excludes subordinates, or followers. While transformational leadership is not identical to charismatic leadership – as Yukl (2013) points out – the danger of an exaggerated leader role is obvious.

Before moving on to the three theories which I lean on most heavily, a quick overview may be appropriate. The theories discussed up to this point have emphasised personal qualities, the context of leadership and, to a lesser extent, the relationship between leaders and their subordinates. Transformational leadership also considered leadership as a moral phenomenon. There has been an emphasis on understanding leader behaviour, especially in terms of task and person orientation. Two questions emerge: To what extent can these theories help the researcher to make sense of findings? And in what respect do the theories fail to provide a basis for analysis?

Trait thinking – and its later manifestations, transformational and charismatic leadership – is useful for alerting the scholar to the kinds of qualities (values, rather than simply behaviour), leaders typically possess. It is also helpful as a warning against the possible harmful effects of charisma. Situational leadership alerts us to the importance of context, which shapes leadership. Transformational leadership reminds us that leadership is about people, and leaders work with people's feelings and moral realities. In terms of my research question – which seeks to explore how college leaders see their role as leaders – there is something to be gained by being aware of these theories. In our country's current political climate – characterised by corruption, suspicion and extreme self-interest – a theory which asks ethical questions has a role to play.

However, none of the theories discussed so far provide what I believe to be a realistic view of organisations, especially educational organisations. Attempts to analyse the 'situation' in which leaders act are simplistic, showing hardly any awareness of the political and social nature of organisational life. The importance of power has hardly been discussed. In particular, the theories have shown no awareness of leadership being based in a community of people, in groups where contestation and cultural diversity are the norm. In this respect, the theories discussed are of limited use for this study. This is chiefly because the theories were developed

in a business context, at a time when there seems to have been little awareness of cultural differences, organisational dynamics in terms of race and gender, and the organisation's relationship to its environment. Hence, I turn to more contemporary developments in the field of leadership.

2.4 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is currently regarded as the preferred leadership practice in democratised systems of education (Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2010, p. 55). This has come about largely as a response to and a rejection of leadership approaches that foreground the individual, the so-called 'heroic' leader trend that culminated in transformational leadership theory (Gronn, 2008). In the TVET college sector, where the restructuring of the landscape led to up to eight multi-campus being created under one central office, the need to share workload and responsibility is strong. But there are many questions: How is distributed leadership understood and practised? Is it a familiar concept? Is there evidence of it in the college system? I begin by trying to come to an understanding of what the literature says.

2.4.1 Definition of distributed leadership

In some contexts, thinking about distributed leadership seems to include reference to shared and democratic leadership practices (Salfi, 2011). Distributed leadership tends to receive very diverse interpretations and/or definitions. For example, in Spillane's (2006, p. 58) view, distributed leadership is "an emerging set of ideas that are primarily concerned with the co-performance of leadership and reciprocal interdependence that shape the leadership practice". Bennet, Wise, Woods and Harvey (2002) describe distributed leadership as "encouraging the development of networks for knowledge sharing rather than relying on a traditional hierarchically structured decision-making and communication concept" (as cited in Jones, Harvey, Lefoe, & Ryland, 2014, p. 606). Put differently but drawing on the same metaphor of 'networks', Bush et al. (2010, p. 67) contend that:

In the twenty-first century a lot depends upon the formation of new networks, partnerships, alliances or federations to share leadership knowledge, to collectively address problems and to share expertise.

The emphasis in these definitions is on a collective approach to leadership practice. In endorsing their thinking, Jones et al. (2014) sum up the concept as a “leadership-plus” aspect that recognises that leading and managing can involve multiple individuals in both formal and non-formal leadership positions (p. 605). Indeed, it is a new approach to leadership that goes beyond individual power in a bureaucratic system, to a system that embraces sharing and collaboration. What all ‘definitions’ of distributed leadership have in common is exactly that: it is leadership shared by and among many. The explanation that I will draw on most heavily in this chapter is that provided by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004), because these writers best present an account which provides *a theory*: their characterisation of distributed leadership is more than a description of how people behave; it includes an account of unseen relationships and tensions among people, and between people and their environment.

Spillane et al. (2004, p. 4) define distributed leadership as a lens through which to examine and better understand the interrelationship of the social and physical environment and leadership practice “by identifying dimensions of leadership of the social and physical environment and leadership actions and practice and articulating the relations among these dimensions”.

The emphasis according to Spillane (2005, p. 144) is more on “interactions” among leaders, followers and their situations, rather than their roles and functions. We are aware that countless leadership ‘theories’ have written copiously on leadership ‘roles’ and ‘functions’ – such as the behavioural and situational theories – but these are inclined to become recipes, as pointed out by Van der Mescht (1996). Lumby (2013, p. 587) argues that focusing on interactions may be understood as making progress through the use of a greater pool of expertise for organisational improvement. To access this ‘pool’, Spillane contends that in distributed leadership the primary concern is with the co-operation of leadership and reciprocal interdependencies that shape leadership practice: “it is not an either /or: distributed leadership essentially involves both the vertical and lateral dimensions of leadership practice” (as cited in Bush, 2010, p. 59). I take this to mean that distributed leadership works ‘sideways’ across leaders of the same rank, as well as up- and downwards, through levels of hierarchy. This is because the theory sees leadership as a process or *practice*, where three dimensions – leader, follower and situation (context) – are in continual dialogue over time, as Figure 2.2 illustrates.

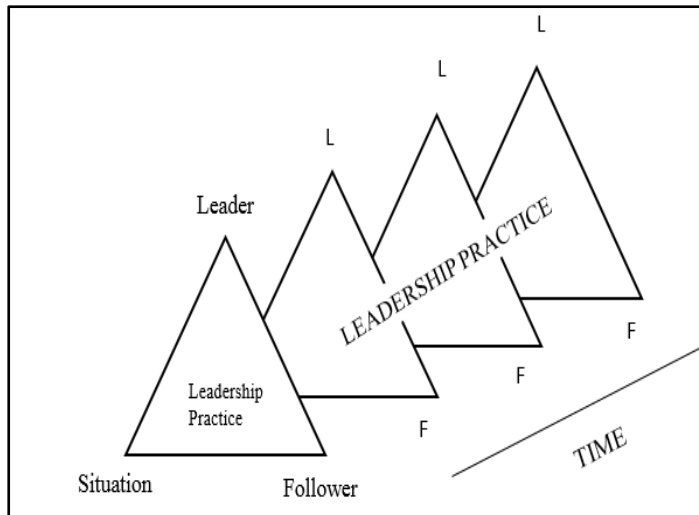


Figure 2.2: Leadership practice from a distributed perspective (Spillane, 2006, p. 3)

In this way distributed leadership focuses on the *practice* of leadership as a dynamic interplay among people and context, going beyond what Naicker and Mestry (2013, p. 1) argue, as their research focused mostly on structures, roles and routines, in the process neglecting the *practice* of leadership. What is essential is that the practice is seen to include *context*, or situation, as well as followers. In this study, the context is a rich and ever-changing set of circumstances, as discussed in Chapter One, and as will become clearer as data emerges. It seems logical that traditional approaches to leadership – which assume a stable and fairly predictable environment – are not likely to be effective in such a dynamic context. In a context as complex as the college sector, the need for a way of accessing relationships among various levels and components of a leadership structure is great.

Currently there is a preoccupation with distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 27). Distributed leadership is seen as a leadership practice that is *stretched* (distributed) over leaders and reveals a notion of leadership that goes beyond the roles, strategies, and traits of the individuals who occupy the leadership position, followers, and the material artefacts in the situation (Spillane et al., 2004).

The distributed leadership perspective also suggests an intervention aimed at changing leadership practice (Spillane et al., 2004). It is defined as a kind of leadership whose expertise and initiative are not confined to the few (Jones et al., 2014, p. 607), but available to all organisation members. In terms of the structural distribution of decision-making in the college

management system discussed earlier, distributed leadership has the potential to illuminate the relationships between leadership and management activities on the one hand, and the policy context, structures and historical factors on the other hand. This again is a significant departure from the traditional leadership thinking, which typically places the single (heroic) leader centre-stage.

Lumby (2003, p. 291) argues that:

Much of the thrust of government policy in relation to both the school and college sectors has conceptualised leadership as something that an individual does – most significantly the principal – and as a process over which he or she has total control.

This view grows naturally from a view of schools and colleges as stable, single-minded and hierarchically fashioned organisations. But it also draws on our ‘natural’ leaning towards the hero leader. As argued by Van der Mescht (1996) the notion of the heroic individual leader is part of our make-up as human beings, constantly reinforced by the emergence of larger-than-life leaders, like Ghandi and Mandela. Today, we can no longer think of leadership as the domain of one special person. Distributed leadership positions leadership as the driver of the organisation as a whole. This is how distributed leadership differs from delegation. Lumby (2003) explains this very clearly:

The distribution of the different aspects of leadership through the different responsibilities and tasks undertaken by people could be seen as deliberately engineered by the principal and senior staff, or the result of negotiation, or evolving ad hoc through the march of day-to-day activity. The latter leads to a yet more fluid conception which theorises ‘systemic’ leadership, that is, leadership which rather than being consciously distributed ‘flows throughout an organisation, spanning levels and flowing both up and down hierarchies’ (Ogawa and Bossert, 1997: 10). This is a view of leadership as ever-shifting and open to any member of an organisation. Thus, not only staff but also students can contribute to leadership.

Hence, while the distribution aspects of leadership may be ‘engineered’ by a principal, distributed leadership is a more ‘fluid’ notion of leadership, dynamic and available to all. Lumby’s use of the word ‘systemic’ clarifies the theory: a phenomenon that is systemic in an organisation is ingrained and inseparably part of the organisation. Leadership becomes a habit.

While there is general agreement that distributed leadership is the best alternative to leadership that depends on position and control (Bush, 2007), research is inconclusive on whether this

approach is in fact practicable. Lumby's (2016) research into leadership at colleges in the UK found that whereas there was much talk of 'distributing' leadership, what was most evident was how formal college leadership had been shaped by reactions to policy. She also found, interestingly, that the word 'leadership' was hardly ever used; 'management' being the preferred choice (Lumby, 2016, p. 285). In South Africa and Namibia, recent research results have also not been very encouraging. A study by John (2015) found limited evidence of distributed leadership in one school. Looking for teacher leadership as evidence of distributed leadership, she found only restricted forms of teacher leadership. Similarly, Tjihuro (2017) found that, while there was much agreement on the need to distribute leadership, the school she looked at exhibited traditional leadership approaches only. In a study of learner leadership, Vaino (2018) found so many cultural factors impeding the development of authentic learner leadership that it was not possible to apply principles of distributed leadership. What these findings suggest is that while distributed leadership theory is attractive and appealing, in practice, the true distribution of leadership remains a challenge.

2.4.2 Limitations of distributed leadership

In a similar vein, Harris (2013) portrays distributed leadership as a theory, as "rich in philosophy" but failing to present convincing empirical evidence (in Jones et al., 2014, p. 607). Hallinger and Heck (as cited in Spillane et al., 2004) also speak of blank spots and blind spots in the theory and practice of distributed leadership. Spillane (2006, p. 12) himself cautions against thinking of distributed leadership as a "one size fits all" and "cure all" approach.

However, Lumby (2013, p. 41) sums up the most significant shortcoming of distributed leadership, namely that it minimises the ability for the researcher (or leader) to be a critical thinker, chiefly because it ignores power. As noted before, it is the principal who ultimately needs to answer to higher authorities for the college's performance, and this accountability inevitably needs to rest on the power to make decisions, sometimes without any consultation at all. In theory, it is all very well to promote an open system in which leadership is available to all as an opportunity, but in reality, there may be many barriers to accessing these opportunities. It is likely that these barriers feed off power, or perceptions of power. Lumby (2013, p. 584) contends that leadership roles and responsibilities may be distributed, but not power. Distributed leadership is silent on the structural barriers, such as race and gender.

It is this limitation in distributed leadership that persuaded me to include a model which explicitly engages power, namely Bush's (2008) political model of leadership and management, as the second strand of my framework. I drew on Bush because his model is essentially about power; as in politics, the political model is shaped around power, how to attain it and how to retain it. In this way I hope to compensate for what is not addressed in distributed leadership.

2.5 Bush's political model of organisational leadership and management

2.5.1 Introduction

Bush (2008, p. 9) argues that there is no single all-embracing theory of educational management. Furthermore, the varied nature of the problems encountered in educational institutions, ranging from small, rural, to very large urban, reflect the diversity of these institutions, and each problem demands its own solution. Each theory therefore has something to offer in explaining either a behaviour or event in an educational institution (*ibid.*). Bush presents six models, ranging from the extremes of subjectivity, where organisations are seen to be products of our imagination and needs, to the bureaucratically 'fixed' and objective realities of formal models. Naturally none of these exist in isolation, but it is nevertheless possible to identify features in each model that enable analysis of organisations. I would argue that the turbulence in education policy for the last 15 years in TVET colleges in South Africa, requires a combination of theories to provide insight into college leadership practices. However, for the purposes of this study, I focus on the political model.

2.5.2 The political model

This theory draws attention to how members compete for resources and power, and is characterised by an impoverished form of leadership, that is, transactional leadership (Bush, 2008, p. 11). This would help me to make sense of leadership that seems driven by self-preservation and bargaining, rather than broader organisational and national goals. TVET colleges have been sites of struggle for decades, brought about by frequent policy renewal, renaming and re-imagining, the merging process, staffing restrictions and growing student unrest, linked mostly to the 'fees must fall' movement. It is common knowledge that the funding of higher education is an area of huge unhappiness and debate, creating instability in the system as a whole. These factors have contributed to an environment characterised by

uncertainty and confusion, in which I imagine it would be difficult to forge a sense of working together towards a common purpose.

2.5.3 Central features of political model

Bush (2019) lists the following features of the political model, which I will attempt to apply to the TVET college landscape.

- The model focuses on individual and group activity rather than the organisation as a whole. Bush (2018) argues that the main activity of these groups is the struggle for “resources and power” (p. 10). In the context of scarce resources, especially staff, severe competition is probably inevitable. Individuals and groups fight for their own territory, and those in positions of greatest power usually win.
- Political models acknowledge and even welcome conflict in organisations. One group’s interests may contrast with the aims of others, resulting in conflict between them. But unlike most organisational views, conflict is regarded as natural in political models, and can even be opportunities for further bargaining and negotiation.
- Unlike formal models, political models interpret the goals of organisations as “unstable, ambiguous and contested” (*ibid.*, p. 10). This may be of particular relevance to TVET colleges. As discussed in Chapter One, colleges’ roles have been re-defined and re-visioned several times over the last 15 years, and it is likely that not all members will agree with each new direction and role as defined by the DHET.
- Unlike collegial models where decisions are made ‘collegially’ through consensus, decision-making is characterised by bargaining and negotiation. This is also a central feature of transactional leadership which seems to flourish in political models. Transactional leadership is usually contrasted with transformational leadership. The latter is presented as lofty and idealistic and assumes that members have “shared values and common interests” (Bush, 2008, p. 8). By contrast, transactional leadership suggests a relationship based on an exchange of a resource. It is more self-interested, and not associated with concern for the organisation as a whole.

An overall impression on the features presented by Bush can be summed up in the figure below:

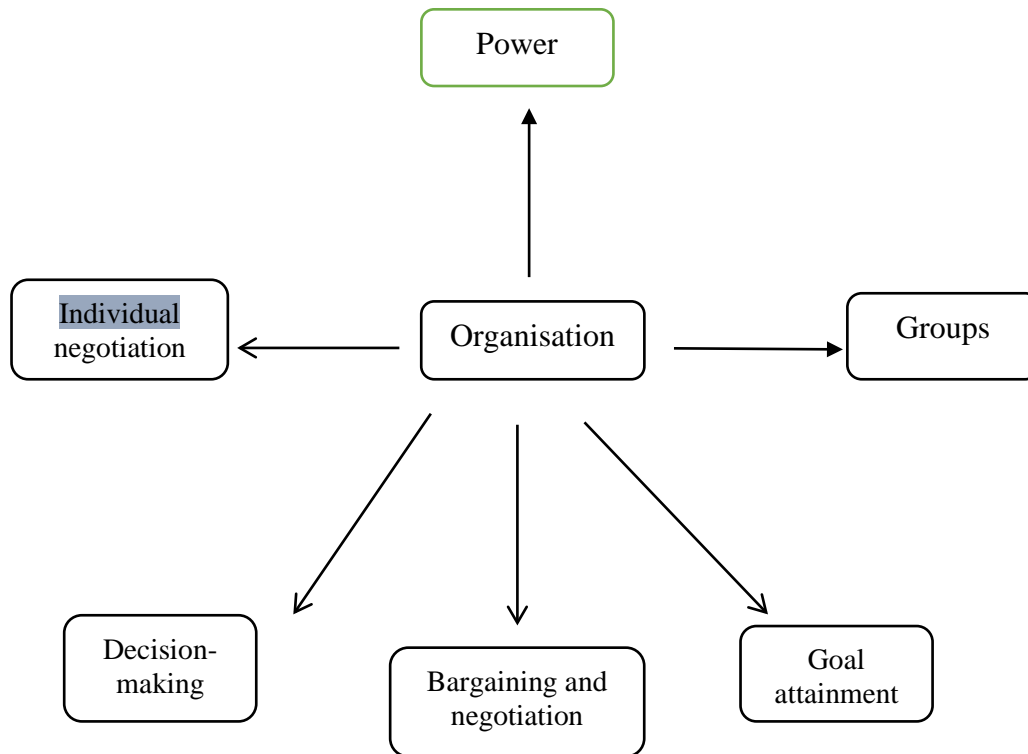


Figure 2.3: Central features on policy process in political approach (

I need to elaborate further on how power manifests in an organisation. Earlier I cited Lumby (2013) who critiques the distributed leadership theory for its failure to engage with power. The theory seems to suggest that power is not an ingredient of the leadership relationship at all. By contrast, the political model suggests that leadership rests on power. Bush distinguishes among five forms of power. I discuss these here, as I believe they are relevant to this study.

2.5.4 Power

- 1) **Positional power** is power held by the person who officially occupies the leadership or management position. In schools and colleges this would be the principal. Positional power does not necessarily derive from strong leadership qualities, or even strong followership, but rests on “legal authority” (Bush, 2008, p. 11). It is strongly related to control power and coercive power.
- 2) **Authority of expertise** rests with those who are experts, specialists, such as academic subject heads or university lecturers. In a college situation this type of power resides

with lecturers, but especially with lecturers who head subject areas. These leaders' power will of course only mean something if their work is valued, that is, if academic achievement is the college's chief goal, or in decisions where academic work is centrally involved.

- 3) **Personal power** is what we would normally refer to as charisma, personal qualities – such as good looks, strong voice, persuasive speaking skills – that people find attractive and wish to follow. We associate trait thinking with charismatic leadership, since it is the quest for those special qualities that set leaders apart. The larger-than-life leaders referred to earlier – such as Mandela – were charismatic. Charisma is not positional, and not generated by circumstances.
- 4) **Control power** rests with the individual who has control of rewards, such as promotion, and good references, and is therefore usually the person in legal authority. In a political model, where transactional leadership thrives, control power is important, since the person in legal authority has the most to offer as reward, in exchange for services.
- 5) **Coercive power** again is most associated with the legal head, since he/she can best enforce compliance, constrain, interfere and even punish. Coercion does not imply any form of agreement or willingness, but rather the opposite. It is typical of a strongly hierarchical organisational structure that what comes from the top must be obeyed. In this way, coercive power is almost the direct opposite of consultative sharing of decision-making power.

A political model of management can display all of these power dimensions. It is easy to see how positional power, control power and coercive power may dominate a system reeling from constant change and new challenges. Each of the large number of new policies colleges have had to absorb over the past 15 years, has probably been viewed as yet another set of instructions – unless of course there has been leadership which could interpret and adapt the policies for 'local' use. Charismatic power appears when it can, and authority of expertise is, one hopes, always present. The only power *not* likely to occur in a political model is the power of consultation and consensus.

A brief note on transactional leadership is perhaps needed here, as it has only been mentioned in passing. As mentioned, transactional leadership is deemed as the most relevant leadership approach in a political model of educational management (Bush, 2011, p. 119). This is because a political model is fuelled by power struggles and gain, either for self or for one's group. Because of different – often conflicting – goals, groups have to negotiate and bargain for resources, rather than debate and seek consensus. But it comes at a price. As Bush (2008, p. 12) puts it:

The major limitation of such a process is that it does not engage staff beyond the immediate gains arising from the transaction. Transactional leadership does not produce long-term commitment to the values and vision promoted by school leaders.

A quick comparison of transactional leadership with transformational leadership, highlights the model's shortcomings for education. Fairholm (2001) published an analysis of Burns' original (1978) conception of these two theories. I quote from Fairholm's article to clarify the argument:

[Transforming] leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. ... The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has transforming effect on both. (p. 2)

[Transactional] leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things. The exchange could be economic or political or psychological in nature: a swap of goods or of one good for money; a trading of votes between candidate and citizen or between legislators; hospitality to another person in exchange for willingness to listen to one's troubles. Each party to the bargain recognises the other as a person. Their purposes are related, at least to the extent that the purposes stand within the bargaining process and can be advanced by maintaining that process. But beyond this, the relationship does not go. The bargainers have no enduring purpose that holds them together; hence, they may go their separate ways. A leadership act took place, but it was not one that binds leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose. (p. 3)

One would like to think that education is driven by the lofty goals expressed in the first paragraph, "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and

morality”, and that it is more than just making a good bargain, or seeing how much one can gain from the transaction.

2.5.5 Relevance of political power

Bush (2008, p. 10) cites Baldrige’s claim that the political model best captures the reality of organisational life in higher education; higher education institutions have interest groups that may have a potent influence on policy formulation which is very crucial in decision-making and in general day-to-day running of organisations. Furthermore, emphasis on conflict is a useful counter to the optimistic picture of happiness and collegiality painted by other models; is real life really like the collegial model, or more like the political model?

As mentioned above, the college system also has several decision-making bodies, all competing for scarce resources. Furthermore, unions are increasingly playing a role in college management, including student unions, which are quick to strike and demand action. These factors suggest that colleges would be ideal sites for political models to take root. In this study, therefore, I was interested in finding out how ‘political’ the decision-making actually is, and consequently, how transactional the leadership is.

2.5.6 Limitations

The political model is also of course, open to criticism. It is said to overstate conflict. The political model is immersed so strongly in the language of power and conflict that it neglects other standard aspects of organisations. Most decisions are made based on the standard operating procedures of the organisation, without political controversy. Professional collaborations often lead to agreed outcomes with no conflict or negotiation necessary.

The model overemphasises the influence of interest groups in decision-making, at the expense of decision-making happening in mature and sensible ways by college top management structures. The value system of the theory may cause many of the educationists to be less attracted to the theory; staff members may prefer to be associated with models that promote harmony and cooperation.

Having discussed and deliberated on distributed leadership and the political model, I now move to the last and third theoretical strand which also plays a role in my study. As one of those concepts, like distributed leadership, that is not well researched, it would be exciting to

discover its influence among the college leadership and management in the development of human potential. Critical leadership allows me to ask probing questions, questions the other two theories do not allow for. Where distributed leadership ignores power, the political model is built on power. But it fails to ask questions *about* power, taking it, as it were, for granted. Critical leadership goes further, *problematise* power, leader, follower and context, asking the appropriate critical questions.

2.6 Critical leadership

The third strand of my theoretical framework is drawn from what literature describes as critical leadership studies (CLS), which developed from a branch of management studies referred to as critical management studies, an orientation which focuses on how “prevailing structures of domination produce a systemic corrosion of moral responsibility when any concern for people or for the environment requires justification in terms of its contribution to profitable growth” (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007, p. 119). This concept has gained popularity in critiques of traditional mainstream leadership theories (Seyama, 2018, p. 128).

Critical leadership assumes that organisations are inherently problematic in terms of how power is dispersed and used, promoting the notion that power is not confined to those who hold formal positions of authority (Collinson, 2011, p. 182). Critical leadership is keenly aware of “power asymmetries” (*ibid.*) suggesting an interest in social justice, built on an acute awareness of personal dynamics within organisations. In this sense, critical leadership can appear anti-establishment, driven by humane and emancipatory convictions.

Critical leadership is not a style, or an approach to leadership. Collinson (2011, p. 181) explains:

This term is used here to denote the broad, diverse and heterogeneous perspectives that share a concern to critique the power relations and identity constructions through which leadership dynamics are often reproduced, frequently rationalised, sometimes resisted and occasionally transformed.

The term can therefore be applied to any leadership approach that challenges mainstream conceptions of leadership – which are thought to perpetuate inequality and injustice – and challenges the *status quo* in an organisation or community. Collinson continues that although

CLS “comprise a variety of approaches informed by an eclectic set of premises, frameworks and ideas ... they share a concern to examine leadership power dynamics” (2011, p. 181). Furthermore, they “share a common view, in this case about what is neglected, absent or deficient in mainstream leadership research. Indeed, it could be argued that critical studies emerge directly from that which is underexplored or missing in the mainstream orthodoxy” (*ibid.*). This argument sounds familiar, because the champions of distributed leadership make similar claims, namely that distributed leadership is a reaction against the hegemony of heroic leadership theories; theories that place the single leader at the centre and assume a willing followership and stable context. This was discussed earlier. But there is one important difference between distributed leadership and what scholars refer to as critical leadership, and that lies in the way power is handled.

As discussed earlier, one of the major shortcomings of distributed leadership is that it ignores power (Lumby, 2013). This omission is seen to be a major flaw since it overlooks a key dimension of organisational life. The political model of leadership, as we have seen, is *about* power, but does not problematise it; the model simply accepts that organisations are about power and how it is used and abused. CLS, by contrast, not only alert us to the importance of power but asks critical questions about it.

One of these questions would be: How is that something that is generally described as relational usually focuses only on one person: the leader? According to Collinson (2011, p. 183), “critical writers question this recurrent tendency to privilege leaders and neglect followers”. One can see how distributed leadership attempts to address this shortcoming by including followers in the dynamic relationship among leader, follower, and context. However, in the absence of any reference to how power may be playing a role, it is difficult to see how followers can ever be more than simply followers. CLS therefore draws attention to the complexities of the relational dimension of leadership, proposing that,

we rethink leadership as socially and discursively constructed and in so doing reject the essentialism that lies at the heart of the psychological, positivist method which underpins the mainstream paradigm. (Collinson, 2011, p. 183)

This ‘essentialism’ – suggesting that the phenomenon of ‘the leader’ is not negotiable and universally true – is what needs to be challenged. CLS argue that we need to move away from the premise that we assume there is a leader, to looking at how the leader influences (and

exercises power over) the follower, and how the leader responds to and draws on the context. Rather, leadership should be viewed as a constantly negotiable quality, or force. Alvesson and Blom (2015, p. 275) point out that even approaches that present leadership as inclusive or shared are romanticising the relationship:

Many leadership researchers emphasise forms of leadership that are supposed to be experienced as facilitative rather than restrictive (e.g. Mumford et al., 2002), but leadership is hardly just about being supportive or facilitative. The majority of all organisations include a multitude of tasks that are not very stimulating or joyful and the job of managers is to manage people in doing tasks they may find stressful or boring. Therefore, when managers and other authorities are exercising leadership, it is not only about helping people to do things they really like to do, but also to make them do what they do not like to do, especially when these tasks are necessary for organisational performance.

They make the point that being a follower is not always everyone's first choice; and if leadership exists because of followership, there is clearly an issue here.

Collinson's (2011, p. 183) advice – to rethink leadership as a force or phenomenon “socially and discursively”, rather than a ‘person’, begins to address this problem. To re-imagine leadership ‘discursively’ suggests that the organisation (or body where leadership occurs) needs to be talking about leadership; it needs to be part of the discourse. It is only then that it can be discussed and seriously engaged with (Gillies, 2013). In an organisation such as a school or college, one would expect workshops or seminars on leadership; perhaps staff meetings, or professional development sessions where leadership is explored. This would help to bring the phenomenon into the discourse of the organisation.

The biggest challenge, though, is probably to re-think leadership as ‘socially’ constructed. This is because mainstream leadership theories – and management models – have for so long insisted on a hierarchically arranged ‘triangle’ of power, with its accompanying top-down organogram. To imagine that those in top leadership positions are able to think differently about their position and, more importantly, the position of their ‘followers’ is a big question.

What is perhaps less difficult is to broaden the concept of ‘social’ to include the very significant ‘other’ relationships in an organisation. A TVET college is a community college, in many respects, and strong links with the community are therefore essential. Seyama (2018) has argued that, “there is a general accord among scholars that the supposed concreteness of

leadership as a knowledge form continues to raise questions because its enactment is predominantly dependent on context” (p. 110). Pointing out the weaknesses of mainstream theories, Seyama (2018, p. 129) claims that for these researchers,

an awareness and understanding of contextual complexities, including organisational cultures, economic and political environments, institutional policies, and narrative conventions, is usually not considered to be as important as the traits and behaviours of leaders, and the perspectives of scholars and practitioners.

Seyama and Smith (2015, p. 2954) further point out that critical leadership shines a light on “the dark side” of leadership, adding: “From a critical leadership perspective, it is a fallacy to place leadership on an individual, because it needs a social context within which the course of relations gives it credence”.

In the case of TVET colleges, the social and professional context is a very complex one, and one which is still in a state of flux. In Chapter One, I attempted to sketch this context; it is a history punctuated with massive change initiatives, especially the merger, and policy overload. If leadership is indeed to be seen as a dynamic phenomenon responding to context, college leadership would be expected to show awareness of its changing role and of the challenges brought about by change and reform.

A final point on CLS relates to the rejection of leadership. Earlier I mentioned the notion of unwilling followership, but Collinson (2011) argues for a more extreme form of rejection. Pointing out that leadership theories are inclined to assume compliance and conformity, he describes efforts to name and explain “oppositional practices” (*ibid.*, p. 186), such as striking, working to rule, and whistle blowing. To return briefly to Bush’s depictions of power, Collinson (*ibid.*) points out that one is more likely to find resistance when leaders exercise ‘coercive’ power; but increasingly this resistance is seen as part of the leadership dialectic, and not a separate force, coming from ‘nowhere’. Clearly this has huge implications for leadership. Again, in the context of TVET colleges, it would not be surprising to find resistance since so much has changed, and not always for the better. Of course, the changes usually arise from an ‘outside’ source (the DHET, or simply the economy) but college leaders are nevertheless expected to act on them and enforce what may be unwanted outcomes.

Critical leadership has unique and outstanding features, but most of them are closely related to both distributed leadership and the political theory of leadership. This is a leadership approach

which explores alternatives in leadership to the traditional, functionalist view which takes for granted the one-directional flow from the leader to the led. The problem seems to be that too often what is in reality a power relationship is obscured by the label of leadership. Critical seeks to adopt an opposite view of a leadership that is too descriptive, simplistic and naïve. (Smyth, 2017, p. 8). Put differently but with the same connotation, Alvesson and Spicer (2010, p. 369) suggest that the ideas of leadership need to be reconstructed and investigation fostered into “alternative modes of leadership that already exist within contemporary organisations”.

2.7 Combining the three theoretical frameworks

Finally, I attempt to explain how the three theoretical frameworks I worked with complement each other.

Distributed leadership is the leadership dispersed among members of the organisation; leadership that is shaped by the situation. This would encourage me to look for ways in which leadership occurs at all levels of the college, given the college structure. Distributed leadership would also help me to understand respondents’ understanding of leadership, whether they saw it as a commodity, a source of executive power, or an opportunity open to all.

In Bush’s political model leadership is often purely transactional, that is, acts are performed for reward. Power is the dominant organisational driver. The model draws attention to how members compete for resources and power, and is characterised by an impoverished form of leadership, transactional leadership. This would help me make sense of leadership that seems driven by self-preservation and bargaining, rather than broader organisational and national goals.

Critical leadership is leadership that is critical of the status quo, and suspicious of power relations. It would be exciting to discover critical leadership attitudes among college management and leadership, as this would point towards the possibility of developing human potential. Critical leadership would also help to alert me to power relations, uses and abuses, and be especially helpful in identifying leadership that is particularly open to contextual forces.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The study seeks to explore and assess the leadership challenges in TVET colleges in the Eastern Cape. It investigates the leadership perspectives after the merging process, and aims at gaining a deeper understanding of challenges facing leadership in this college.

In this chapter I provide an account of my research design, provide insight into how the design unfolded, present the research approach and methodology selected for the study, and discuss ethical considerations taken to protect the welfare and the rights of research participants. Issues of reliability, validity and limitations of the study are also discussed.

3.2 Research paradigm

The research design chosen for any study is dependent upon the problem or issue to be investigated. Research design is the plan or strategy used by the researcher to gather and make sense of data Yin (1994, p. 19) defines research design as an action from getting here to there, where 'here' is the initial set of questions and 'there' is a set of answers. Research design is ruled by the notion of the fitness of purpose (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 78). Since the purpose of this research is to critically investigate the leadership of Technical, Vocational Educational and Training colleges I need to align my design with this purpose and context.

In support of this, Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004, p. 141) describe research design as a plan of action, meaning that there must be a research design judgement. These authors' argument is that there should be a logical connection between the nature of the study and the selection of the research methodology. For the purpose of this study, interpretive qualitative research was selected for the collection and analysis phases of this study as explained briefly in the next section.

3.3 Interpretive paradigm

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), the interpretive paradigm is a meta-theory, which is focused on interpreting how humans derive meaning from their behaviour in the study of human phenomena. It is also defined as research designs that make provision for qualitative

data that can be described, explained and interpreted (Henning et al., 2004). In the interpretive paradigm, Gray (2004, p. 21) believes that there is no direct link between subjects and the world. Furthermore, he argues that since natural reality and social reality differ, they require different methods; our interest in the social world tends to focus on exactly those aspects that are unique, individual and qualitative, whereas our interest in the natural world focuses on more abstract phenomena, that is those exhibiting quantifiable, empirical regularities (Crotty, 1998 as cited in Gray, 2004, p. 20).

In the case of this research, the researcher sought different opinions and perspectives of the participants from their world. In order to understand their worldview on how leadership challenges emerged post-merger in TVET colleges, the research had to engage the participants in one-on-one communication. To understand the phenomenon referred to in the abstract (leadership), the research engaged the participants by means of interviews and questionnaires, and also analysed documents to dig deeper into the concept of leadership, its challenges and impact on the running of the college.

Interpretive research in Creswell's (2009, p. 232) point of view:

is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants' setting, analysing the data inductively, building from participants to general themes and making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

What needed to be explored in this research study, as a phenomenon, was 'leadership' with the intent to understand the challenges ascribed to it as experienced by leaders in a college.

3.4 Qualitative research

According to Babbie and Mouton's (2004) explanation, qualitative research design is a naturalistic approach that does not have a fixed meaning and where there are variations, these need to be negotiated in relation to their context. Supporting this idea, Bailey (2007) and Mouton (2002) argue that this paradigm provides information on what exists in relation to a phenomenon and what and how it can be studied and understood. Methodologically, this paradigm is not merely a collection of research methods and techniques but includes certain assumptions and values regarding their use, under specific circumstances.

As this study focuses on critically exploring and analysing leadership challenges at the selected college, the primary focus is on the relationship between the central office and the three satellite campuses that made up the college. In particular, the study examines leadership and management structures that have been set up and attempts to develop a clearer understanding of the challenges facing the college.

The research is qualitative in nature and takes the form of a case study of one college that had three satellite campuses under its leadership. The participants included the principal, deputy principals, council members, campus managers and one head of programmes. Perhaps it is vital to clarify that although as a researcher I worked as an acting principal in another college, I had very limited interaction with the principal of the college and seldom interacted with the rest of the college personnel. Therefore, I regarded myself as an “outsider” to the college under investigation, but I believe that this outsider status did not prevent participants from responding more honestly and fully to the research questions that I posed.

According to Creswell (2009, p. 232), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and the setting of procedures, analysing the data inductively, and building on particular interpretations of the meaning of the data. Since the aim of the study is to investigate challenges of leadership at the college, a qualitative approach was deemed well suited for the purpose of this study.

According to research requirements, the researcher in qualitative design must suspend their beliefs and predispositions and not take things for granted; that is to make sure that everything is subject to inquiry. I listened to the participants as they were narrating their experiences and giving their perspectives on the challenges in the college and their originations. This permitted me to see the TVET college challenges and those of the sector from the interviewees’ perspectives.

In a qualitative inquiry, the researcher becomes the instrument, since the researcher collects and interprets the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 97). Those who critique the research results may judge the researcher for bias or subjectivism in the research findings. In defence of this, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that validity in qualitative research hinges on the competence and skills of the researcher in conducting their research (p. 97).

3.5 Research questions

Despite the existence of policies and the legislation that seeks to transform and improve the quality of Education and Training programmes in the TVET colleges, the sector is not performing at the desired levels. Concerns have been raised about institutional capacity required for the effective delivery of programmes. Consistently poor academic results point to possible leadership and management challenges the colleges seem unable to deal with. This study is guided by the question: *How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?* To enable access to an analysis of leader's perspectives in terms of actual organisational performance, the following secondary questions provide further guidance:

1. How does the principal see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges?
2. How do other members of the leadership team see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges?
3. How do they account for these challenges?
4. How are they attempting to respond to these challenges?
5. How do they see opportunities that exist for the college sector in South Africa?

3.6 Case study

This study is a case study. According to Stake (1995, p. xi), a case study is a study where one is expected to capture the complexity of a single case of special interest and look for the details of interaction with its context. The special interest in this study is leadership in a particularly challenging environment, given the fact that colleges are underperforming.

Stake's warning that one needs to approach the case with sincere interest in understanding the problem, setting aside one's presumptions, applies perfectly to this study. As much as I am aware from personal experience of the organisational challenges facing colleges, I needed to set these experiences aside and display the "willingness to learn" that Stake asks for (*ibid.*, pp. 1-2). Yin (2003, pp. 13-14) promotes the case study as a viable method for doing educational research because of its ability to examine, in-depth, a case within its real-life context. Hence, I planned to conduct the study in the college itself, where I hoped to encounter respondents in their 'real-life' contexts and use multiple methods to gain in-depth information.

In support of this in-depth examination, Garbers (1996, p. 283) speaks to the same depth of the qualitative perspective, which is also the research paradigm used in this study as a method of inquiry, as well as to collect data. Yin (2006, p. 9) refers to the case study as a viable method for doing education research; the strength of the case study method is the ability to examine, in-depth a “case within its real-life context”. I hoped to uncover the key significant factors (merger, transformation policies), although they were not clearly defined, and their impact on the challenges experienced by the college leaders (phenomena). The case is said to be one among many.

3.7 Research site

At the time of this study, there were eight colleges in the Eastern Cape Province and the study site was one of them.

It is necessary at this point to give a short description of the college which is the case study in this research. The research was conducted at a metropolitan college for three reasons:

- The first one relates to convenience, since the college was not far from my home;
- The second is that the college was “of special interest” (Stake, 1995, p. xi) since there has been a significant drop in its performance over the past three years, a period characterised by unstable leadership as well as far-reaching change, namely: the implementation of the National Certificate Vocational NC(V) curriculum programme.
- The third is the fact that the college was one of the six colleges that was once placed under administration.

Besides all of the above, this college is strategically positioned in the biggest metropolitan city in the province. It is a multi-cultural college, reflecting the demographics of the city. It has a rich history of merging – where three old technical colleges which were formerly grouped on race, that is, Black, Coloured and White – were then merged into one big college. The three campuses are also strategically located reflecting the race groups in different parts of the city and they offer a diverse set of programmes. In terms of student enrolment, it is currently the biggest college in the province with student enrolment just above 13 000.

Following ethical protocol as well as wishing to share information on my intentions I wrote to the DHET (Appendix 2) as well as the Principal of the college (Appendix 3) requesting permission to undertake this study. Permission was granted. A copy of the letter from the college is attached as Appendix 4.

3.8 Research sample and participants

Qualitative research is characterised by a purposeful sampling technique. Bertram and Christiansen, 2014, p. 60) argue that purposive sampling is appropriate for case research since the researcher is not looking for representivity, but sources which are likely to provide rich data. This means that the “researcher makes specific choices about which people, group or objects to include in the sample” (*ibid.*). This form of sampling is based on the judgement of the researcher concerning which participants best fit the criteria of the study. The key issue that drove the selection of this study’s participants was appropriateness. The sample must demonstrate relevance to the purpose of the research and the phenomenon of inquiry.

Participants have to be competent in the use of language to enable them to communicate their thoughts and perceptions clearly. They must have experienced the phenomenon under research and be rich in information so that they are able to give in-depth meaning of the phenomenon under study. In selecting participants, I also considered their experience and expertise in vocational education, members who were part of leadership during the era of technical colleges and who went through the merger process. Lastly, they needed to show willingness, eagerness and commitment as participants in the research (Bhengu, 2005; Goodson, 1992; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Although three of the participants were newly appointed at the college, they were rich in information and showed interest, enthusiasm, willingness and passion in the study; records of their interviews attest to that. In terms of language, there were some mixed languages here and there, but that did not weaken the meaning. The only dilemma was the time of the year and tight schedule since it was during the second semester which is shorter and closer to final examinations.

3.9 Participants and data collection

I was guided by my supervisor through an intensive interactive process on the nature of the instruments to be used and number of participants to be selected. He advised that I develop questionnaires to be administered and others to be used in interviews, as well as using document analysis. At first, he recommended that I use all the members of top management, but after review we then settled on the selection of Executive (EXCO) members and Heads of Campuses. I used purposive sampling to select participants in leadership positions drawn from the Central Office and all three satellite campuses, totalling 9 participants. The principal as an accounting officer was arguably the most significant of these, followed by the deputy principals. Next, the three campus managers as administrative heads of the campuses were key respondents, and finally the council head who oversaw the highest decision-making body.

One key principle that needs to be considered in the choice of research methods to be applied is that of “fitness for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 355), which means making an effort to relate the research questions to data and selecting appropriate data gathering tools to answer the research questions. Cohen et al. (2007, p. 355) argue that a multi-method approach is one of the most effective ways of demonstrating reliability and validity in a qualitative study by means of triangulation. It also helps to ensure that sufficient data is obtained to provide useful answers.

In the table below, the instruments used for data collection from participants are depicted.

Table 3.1: Data profile and collection instruments

PARTICIPANTS	INSTRUMENTS
Principal (P)	Semi-structured interview (I) Questionnaire (Q)
Deputy Chair of Council (DCC)	Semi-structured interview (I) Questionnaire (Q)
Deputy Principals (DP1,2,3) 2,6,7	Semi-structured interview (I) Questionnaire (Q)
Campus Managers (CM1,2,3) 9,4,8	Semi-structured interview (I) Questionnaire (Q)
Programme Head (PH)	Semi-structured interview (I) Questionnaire (Q)
Documents analysed	Annual report, strategic plan document of the college, department strategic plan document, council meeting minutes.

3.9.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to participants for them to fill in, about three weeks before the start of the interviewing process. This was used as a baseline survey instrument, to gain a broader perspective of leadership at the college, and secondly, to stimulate preliminary data relating to history of employment, qualifications, and designation. According to Bertram and Christianson (2014), questionnaires are useful data gathering tools in that they help to gather first-hand information fairly quickly, including information that people may not be comfortable to talk about in an interview. I administered the questionnaires to all my participants, that is, the principal, council deputy chairperson, deputy principals, campus managers and head of programmes.

3.9.2 Interviews

Interviews were my primary source of data generation. In interpretive research, semi-structured interviews are most likely to allow the researcher to access respondents' true feelings and perspectives. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013, p. 214) argue that semi-structured interviews offer flexibility and opportunities for probing that have the potential to enrich findings. Merriam, (2002, p. 12) giving his version of the concept, contends that a "semi-structured interview contains a mix of more and less structured questions in which specific information is desired from the participants, and the largest part of the interview is guided by questions or issues to be explored". Furthermore, Bertram and Christianson (2014, p. 240) also point out that the advantage of face-to-face interviews is that they assist in clearing up possible ambiguities in questions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and were used as the main instrument to obtain first-hand, in-depth information. The questions allowed the researcher to be flexible and probe deeper, so as to clarify misunderstandings in participants' responses to questions asked. The researcher was also able to probe and explain more fully the views of the participants concerning the phenomenon 'leadership' under study. As the schedule shows, the interviews' purpose was to probe respondents' understanding of their leadership roles in the college and the challenges they experienced. This assisted in building a bigger picture of the phenomenon. For me, their greatest advantage was the opportunity they provided for working towards an understanding of something that is extremely complex, and about what little is known, as explained in Chapter One.

All the participants in different categories were interviewed on varying issues as per the attached schedule (Appendix 6) for a period from 35 minutes to over an hour depending on the individual participant's responses. They were interviewed at an agreed time, the appointment coordinated by the deputy principal academic's secretary and all interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Three of the participants were not interviewed on the scheduled dates, and I had to reschedule on numerous occasions until the secretary finally got hold of them. This was due to the positions they held and tightness of their schedule due to the time of the year.

3.9.3 Document analysis

Document analysis was my third and final source of data generation. Because documents already existed in the institution and were part of the context, they were a strong source of data. Merriam (2002, p. 126) affirms that documentary data are a particularly good source for qualitative case studies because they ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated. Several key documents such as: minutes of management meetings, annual reports, council meetings, and strategic plans, policy documents and other relevant documents were collected from the college.

Highlighting the importance of document analysis, Cohen et al. (2007) assert that documents have the advantage of being "being always available, often at low cost, and being factual" (p. 183). Strauss and Corbin (1998) perceive documents as material that can be used to supplement interviews and stimulate the researchers thinking about concepts emerging from the data. They were therefore used as a secondary source of data, supporting the data from interviews and observation. However, the documents provided authentic evidence that was critical for the credibility and reliability of the research findings. I was lucky that the college leadership was receptive and clearly understood the purpose of my study with no reservations or qualms that I was solely looking for the weaknesses and challenges facing college leadership at colleges post-merger. The empirical outcomes may hopefully suggest or recommend possible solutions to the problems encountered by the sector at large.

3.9.4 Data analysis

As the researcher, after your data has been collected, you need to present it in a way that enhances its credibility and impact; qualitative analysis, therefore, is a rigorous and logical

process through which data are given meaning (Gray, 2004, pp. 10, 319). According to Merriam (1998, p. 178), data analysis is the process of making sense and meaning of the findings of a research study. The study has produced qualitative data derived from three sources: questionnaires, interviews and documents. These three data sets played complementary but essentially different roles in the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) put forward three rationales for organising and rationalising qualitative data: by “people”, by “issue” and by “instrument” (p. 467). In this study, the ‘people’ were the nine respondents, the ‘instruments’ were the data generation tools, and the ‘issues’ were the statements about leadership that answered the research question.

Analysis by issue seemed to be the most appropriate for this study, since I was chiefly guided by my research questions and secondly by the literature. It made sense to identify issues – which were likely to be themes – and trace them across the three data sets, as far as possible, thus also exercising triangulation. However, the approach was not without its threats, as Cohen et al. (2011) point out. The three most serious of these is that one may approach the data with preordained issues (biases, or ideas from literature), and hence miss some of the subtlety of minority reports; that the data may become decontextualised, since one inevitably quotes from data sources, such as interviews, hence may lose the context; and that one loses the uniqueness of each individual respondent in the quest for themes. It is difficult to argue against these dangers. However, if one takes care to follow the data procedure so that issues clearly arise from the data and are not superimposed, and if one attempts to retain some of the context of raw quotes, this can be the beginning of an answer to these threats.

In affirming this possible weakness in a qualitative research, Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out that:

Some researchers believe that the data should not be analysed at all but should merely be presented. This allows the data to speak for themselves, untainted by the potential subjective interpretations of the researcher. (as cited by Gray, 2004, p. 319)

Furthermore, other qualitative critical scholars’ concerns are that data collection, data reduction, data display, the drawing of conclusions and the verifying process is an interactive one, where, even at the final stage of writing up, gaps or inconsistencies may trigger the need for further data collection. Others are more concerned about theory building, interpreting the data to build concepts and categories that can be brought together into theoretical frameworks

(Strauss & Corbin as cited by Gray, 2004, p. 320). Wolcott (1994) summarised the whole qualitative research process as primarily being “about storytelling and description” (p. 17). Even though this may serve as a limitation of the study, it does not rule out the consideration of possible findings as concrete empirical ones.

The procedures I followed are listed below:

- Starting with the questionnaire, I noted any issues that arose as potential answers to the research question and draw on these for the interviews.
- I then identified and coded potential answers in the interview data, noting concurrences and divergences from questionnaire data.
- Lastly, I analysed documents, legal and organisational, to build a sense of the context within which leadership practices in the college operate.

Constant comparison across the data sets helped me to arrive at a set of themes which, through the lens of literature, would provide answers to the research questions.

3.10 Ethical considerations

This study touched on peoples’ lives and I needed access to their personal and professional information, which is required to be protected and respected. This necessitated that I conform to acceptable mandatory ethical protocol. I therefore foregrounded the ethical dimension before outlining methodology and discussed data-gathering technique and the analysis process to highlight its significance. Besides this, I also needed to adhere to the ethical standards of Rhodes University and requested that I be granted clearance by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee. This was done in the name of the participants’ protection of their dignity, rights and safety in the study.

Neuman (2003, p. 116) says that ethics in research denotes the type of research procedures that are morally acceptable, and therefore the researcher’s behaviour during and after research is critical to the credibility of a study. Access to any organisation under study needs to be negotiated at various levels. In this case, the DHET both at regional and national level and the college were contacted, before the actual study began. Christensen, Johnson, and Turner (2015)

define research ethics as a set of guidelines to assist the researcher in conducting ethical research. Contrary to this, researchers may experience what is called an ‘ethical dilemma’ that is, the investigator’s conflict in weighing the potential cost to the participant against the potential gain to be accrued from the research (*ibid.*). Areas of ethical concern are as follows:

Treatment of research participants: Treatment of research participants is a fundamental issue confronting researchers in that they must not be manipulated. The researcher has to make sure they sign a letter of consent to participate in the research without any force or intimidation. This must be preceded by a clear explanation of what the research entails to make sure the participants fully understand the purpose and objective. Other ethical issues to be considered include, right to justice, right to dignity, autonomy, confidentiality, and integrity (Christensen et al., 2015, p. 108; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, pp. 138-139; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, pp. 66-67).

Confidentiality, anonymity and right of privacy: Researchers need to assure that information gathered through them will be kept confidential to honour the participants’ rights to privacy and anonymity – they also have a right to review the report before it is published in order to be satisfied that the researcher has adhered to the research protocol and that their integrity has not been compromised. Since the researcher has access to confidential information about participants, the researcher has a moral obligation to keep that shared information as confidential as possible. Included in this is that the identity of the participants is not revealed to anyone other than the researcher and the supervisor. In this study privacy was ensured, hence the identity of the participants is unknown; anonymity is regarded as an excellent way of protecting the privacy of research participants (Christensen et al., 2015, p. 134).

Beneficence and nonmaleficence: Beneficence means acting for the benefit of others; to conduct a study that will benefit the participants is said to be a laudable goal. Furthermore, the study should produce results that contribute to the scientific knowledge of the participants which in turn should improve their wellbeing. Judging from the eagerness of the participants in my study to get feedback from my research, there was a general feeling that they were going to benefit from this study (Christensen et al., 2015, p. 120). As a result, three of the participants were so relaxed in their interviews, that they took more than an hour to finish them; this was even after it was explained to them that the time allotted for an interview was 30 to 40 minutes long. To crown it all, one of the participants who was on maternity leave, agreed that I could come and interview her at her place of residence.

Nonmaleficence implies not doing harm to others (Christensen et al., 2015). Given the behaviour and attitude of the research participants and the purpose and nature of the research, there was no prospect that the research could do any harm, physical or otherwise, or cause conflict. There was also no prospect of risk or harm to their integrity or reputation since no one's identity was revealed – this was especially important in case any of the information shared could be linked to the institution where the study took place. Secondly, their willingness to share their source documents showed trust and confidence in the process.

3.11 Research quality: Validity and reliability

The study follows an interpretive, qualitative approach. Quality refers to reliability rather than generalisability. According to Hinds (2000, p. 42) reliability “refers to a matter such as the consistency of a measure, the likelihood of the same results being obtained if the procedures were repeated”. By comparing and validating data through interviews, the researcher attempts to maintain the reliability of the research. In this study, comparisons would be made between the interview and questionnaire results. If there was correlation between the two, that would resonate with the definition of Kirk and Miller (1986, pp. 41-42), when they claim that reliability refers to “the degree to which the measurement given repeatedly remains the same” or its “stability ... over time” and its ability to give similar measurements “within a given time period”.

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 133) in qualitative research, validity can be addressed by “honesty, depth, richness and scope”, as well as triangulation and the objectivity of the results. It refers to consistency in the results when repeated using the same instrument. The fact that this study is a case study, assures depth and richness, which can be measured by the three instruments used to collect the data. It is also evident from the interview sessions that the participants trusted me and they spoke freely and openly. The participants' conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim, which made it easier to check for validity.

Participants also had in-depth knowledge of the organisation. The questionnaires reflect the number of years the respondents had at the college and experience in the positions they were holding; only two had been at the college for two to three years – the rest had been there between five to 15 years, with a few who had more than 35 years of service at the college.

In summary, given the above discussion, the engagement of multi-methods, that is, recorded interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, assured validity, reliability and the obtaining of diverse realities. Furthermore, the use of triangulation methods and multiple sources of data collection will ensure that the data is verifiable and trustworthy. The contention of the researcher is that this data verification and confirmation is enhanced through interviews consistently using the same questions across all participants and through the use of an electronic recorder as well.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses and engages with data gathered from various sources. I conducted nine interviews following the schedule included as Appendix 6 and administered questionnaires (Appendix 7) to the entire top management team, 9 in total. A third source of data – document analysis – was also introduced where appropriate. I consulted the following documents:

- The *DEHT Professional Development of Campus Managers Project (Phases 1 and 2)*;
- The *College Strategic Plan 2019*;
- A presentation by a member of council, titled *Re-Inventing the College: Towards strategic considerations*;
- Minutes of five Governing Council meetings in 2017.

In reporting the data, I chose to answer each of the research sub-questions which served as organising categories. I also chose to collapse two questions into one to avoid repetition. In particular, I found it helpful to combine the *identification* of challenges with college *responses* to these challenges, as this enabled me to work towards college leadership agency. In this way a focus on the main research question could be maintained. Where appropriate, I refer to theoretical themes reported in Chapter Two to make sense of the data. A full discussion of relevant theory will be presented in the next chapter.

This study was guided by the question: *How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?* The following sub-questions fleshed out the main question and provided the categories for this chapter.

- How do members of the leadership team see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges, and how do they account for these challenges?
- How are they attempting to respond to these challenges?
- How do they see opportunities that exist for the college sector in South Africa?

As explained above, the first two questions were collapsed into one. This is because I wanted to drive the first question towards responses, which were the most likely sources of the kind of behaviour that could be viewed as leadership.

The use of research questions as sub-headings should not suggest a deviation from the inductive mode of inference in data analysis. The sub-headings are simply organisational devices: within each sub-section, several themes emerged as a result of close inductive analysis of three sets of data: Interviews, questionnaires, and documents. Interview data was by far the richest of the three and served as the primary data source. Where appropriate I drew on the questionnaire data and documents for corroboration or elaboration. Of the two, documents were far richer. I found the '*DEHT Professional Development of Campus Managers Project (Phases 1 and 2)*' documents extremely useful in confirming how campuses are workshopped. The slideshow *Re-Inventing the College: Towards strategic considerations*, was also very useful in helping to build a picture of the kind of leadership available.

4.2 How do senior staff members see the challenges inherent in leading TVET colleges and how are they responding to these challenges?

The respondents mentioned many challenges facing them in their leadership roles. I report these in categories developed from close inductive analysis of the interview and questionnaire data. Occasionally I refer to documents to support an argument.

4.2.1 The challenge of providing infrastructure and resources

Many respondents felt that the lack of adequate infrastructure was a serious challenge. Some also thought that the college was unable to provide facilities which were common at universities, such as libraries, sports facilities and residences. Indeed, it seemed the college was even lacking in basic teaching and learning space. In the Minutes of a Governing Council meeting of 4 March 2019, the SRC reported a "*lack of availability of space to accommodate students*" (p. 3). According to the principal of the college, facilities were generally poor and "*within the college sector there were also big differences in provision of facilities and infrastructure, e.g. very rural campuses were not developed*" (I). These views were corroborated by questionnaire data, which identified the challenges in infrastructure as follows:

- *No capital expenditure budget available;*
- *Lack of infrastructure to support staff and students with special needs;*
- *Insufficient accommodation for students from outside the metro;*
- *Huge backlog due to poor maintenance. (P: Q)*

There had been an expectation that the merging would enhance college resources. However, because of the huge differences amongst merging institutions, raising the overall level proved to be extremely challenging. One Campus Manager (CM2: I) stated that:

It was never the case. We thought, pre-merger, once the small group is brought together with the ‘big dog’ we will be better off, but let me tell you post-merger, we were never better off, I do not think we were better off ... the resources have not improved ... we were worse off.

However, the situation was turned around in 2018 when the DHET decided to allocate funds for infrastructure, which aimed to alleviate infrastructural challenges. This development generated much excitement amongst the staff. One Deputy Principal (DP1: I) believed that:

The DHET will provide funding outside of the conditional grant, (CAPEX) to renovate and renew the building to its previous glory ... this project will be a priority to create a sense of pride in students.

Similarly, another Deputy Principal confirmed that “an infrastructure project manager was appointed and R9,1m has been deposited into the college bank account towards the end of 2018” (DP2: I).

These responses were representative of the general experiences of all the respondents in this study on the question of infrastructure: a mixture of *disappointment and frustration* on the one hand, and *excitement* on the other. The excitement had been brought about by positive developments, as reported above. What is perhaps most significant here is that these developments had been “driven by the college Principal on collaboration with the College Council” (CM3: Q). Even before this intervention there appeared to have been fundraising schemes to support infrastructural development, as reported by two respondents (DP1: I; CM2: Q). The Deputy Chair of Council was planning to introduce a part-time class to reduce the infrastructure strain imposed by full-time students during the day. The college leadership also engaged external stakeholders to source unused buildings in the metro. By doing that, the college was not only solving the infrastructure problem but also extending its capacity in

programme delivery. As can be deduced from the above discussion, the college was responding proactively to the infrastructure challenges, even prior to the DHET intervention.

The Deputy Chair of Council also referred to College Council structures put in place to deal with on-going problems and finding solutions. Minutes of Governing Council Meetings consulted confirmed the existence of several such structures, such as the Finance Committee, the HR Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, the Academic Board and the SRC (Minutes 25/11/17). The minutes suggested that these committees were indeed active. The Deputy Chair of Council further stated that college leadership was proactive in the sense that it did not always wait for the National Department. He explained that “*Council was set up in such a way to ensure that the college deals with matters at College level and only requests intervention from DHET in extreme cases*” (DCC: Q). Here too, the minutes revealed several instances of proactive action on the part of the college. Minutes of 25 November 2017, for example, reflected plans to conduct a “*presentation of the long-term vision of Strategic Planning*” (p. 2). There was also reference to planning for the self-assessment of the Governing Council, a redrafting of the SRC constitution, and partnerships with a neighbouring college. These are examples of self-driven, visionary and self-aware leadership practices. DCC also thought the college could introduce part-time classes to reduce the strain on resources. Finally, he felt the college could source unused buildings in the vicinity to expand its operations (DCC: I).

What emerged from this section was the respondents’ frustration at having to deal with ageing and inadequate infrastructure. While no-one clearly articulated this as a *leadership* challenge, it is in fact leadership that was providing hope and excitement. While no details were apparent at this stage, it seemed clear that the principal exercised strategic and pragmatic leadership in securing funding from the DHET, over and above the usual support. There was also evidence to suggest that some form of distribution of leadership was in place in the form of committees that reported to the council. This theme is fully explored in Chapter Five.

4.2.2 The challenge of securing funding

As was the case with infrastructure, here too respondents focused on logistical and administrative issues in pointing out financial shortcomings. Most of the respondents agreed that inadequate, limited funding was a major obstacle to efficient delivery at the college. The principal (I) explained:

Research (a government report) conducted shows that colleges are funded less than 54% of what is needed, and this impacts negatively on the provision of resources and facilities. Students with disabilities have to be catered for but colleges do not have the support and earmarked funding to provide this support. Due to lack of funding the college does not have state of the art libraries or resource centres.

Some respondents attributed the limited funding to poor payment of fees which in turn resulted in decreased student enrolment (DCC: I). The principal referred to “*an unfunded mandate*” – that is, permission to embark on projects but no funding so support them. Furthermore, he was concerned about the vast difference in funding between colleges and universities, although these entities functioned under the same umbrella (P: I). The respondents complained about funding for both programme delivery and student support (NSFAS). Some regarded funding as the main challenge that prevented the college from procuring and maintaining equipment. Documentary evidence supports these concerns expressed in interviews and questionnaires. Minutes of the Governing Council meeting of 4 March 2017 refers to the problem of “*extremely limited funding*”, (p. 2) while minutes of the 25 November 2017 meeting record:

that a letter be addressed by the Principal to DHET stating categorically that the Council wishes to place on record the dire concerns outlined pertaining to the issues of unfunded enrolments, which will no longer be carried by the TVET College, as well as the financial crisis due to outstanding funding. (p. 6)

There was clearly a degree of anxiety about the college’s financial position. The general sense gained from both interviews and questionnaires on the matter of funding was that the lack of funding prevented the college from living up to its vision statement, from delivering on its mandate of providing a viable alternative to university, and from contributing meaningfully to the economic well-being of the country. The principal expressed his frustration as follows: “*When you call me to run an institution, I am full of ideas and energy! But where is the funding? You expect me to provide a solution that is not going to cost money*” (Q), an eloquent expression of potential leadership limited by lack of resources. Furthermore, two of the respondents raised concerns about staff members not being acknowledged for the good work they had performed and said that management alleged that there was no budget for that. Moreover, in an attempt to mitigate the problem, they had presented the matter to the EXCO (Executive Committee) and recommended that the college instruct the fundraising committee to raise funds for an award ceremony. The event was viewed as a strategy that would help motivate and boost the morale of its staff. As one of the respondents in the interview explained:

It might sound a little thing, but it is very important to acknowledge good work. There is a lot of negativity amongst staff; they are demoralised and demotivated, and we can fundraise for this event. I was quite happy to take it to the EXCO and ask the fundraising committee to raise funds for the ceremony. (DP2: I)

Again, a degree of leadership seems to be evident here. The fact that college staff are prepared to show initiative on something they feel strongly about shows a readiness to lead, even if it means confronting college management. Recognising the importance of positive reinforcement is also an indicator of leadership. These small acts of resistance indicate a degree of leadership over and above ‘business-as-usual’. The fact that some staff members do not accept the *status quo* and push against it, suggests critical leadership.

Further evidence of leadership of a different kind was referred to by a Campus Manager (CM1: I), who applauded the strict financial controls practised by the college, as well as the practice of drawing on the expertise of the Auditor General to assist principals with the management of finances. He also commented on the advantages of college managers being trained by people from the corporate world, as this enabled college managers to manage the college “*like a commodity*” (CM1: Q). This tendency also had drawbacks though, as will become evident later. ‘Commodity’ is perhaps not the most appropriate metaphor one would use for a complex, dynamic organisation!

It seems that much of the strategic leadership thinking was inspired by a member of the Governing Council who developed a visionary plan for invigorating the college. The presentation – *Re-Inventing ‘City’ College: Towards strategic considerations* (2018) – demonstrates a profound understanding of higher education and how it is failing South Africa, as well as the role of TVET colleges in this landscape. Fundamental to the author’s standpoint is the notion that viewing vocational education as aimed primarily at preparation for the world of work is “*myopic*”. The author promotes a much broader conceptualisation, “*broadening its philosophical orientation to include social purpose vocational education*” (Presentation, slide 12). The author then asks for a “*reculturing process that creates a learning and reflective organisation*” (*ibid.*, slide 12), asking for more research and greater commitment to community engagement and upliftment. This is an exciting and profound view of the role of TVET colleges. The councillor’s vision resonates with critical leadership, encouraging a broader and more meaningful engagement beyond the college walls, and resisting the easy option of simply accepting what seems to be the trend. It responds to the bigger and more critically aware

demand for involved and engaged young people, driven by a “*social purpose*” (Presentation, Slide 12). I elaborate on this theme in Chapter Five.

Finally, the perception that NSFAS seemed to be falling short has also encouraged college staff to look for alternatives for student bursaries, though no details could be obtained here.

4.2.2 The challenge of providing, and maintaining, adequate human resources

The 63% threshold on cost of employment was also seen to contribute to leadership challenges as it restricted the college to employing staff according to prescripts from the DHET. According to one Deputy Principal, “*the staff establishment is governed by the 63% threshold; hence staff vacancies cannot be filled as needed*” (DP3: I). Moreover, the delays in appointments after some staff had retired or resigned impacted negatively on the delivery. The Head of Programmes (I) added: *We have HR related problems, such as, no HR plan to endorse general staff appointments, such as affirmative or equity plan from 2003 to 2011*”. He further commented that “*the organograms which are in operation are not known to the staff and do not speak to the actual structure at the college*” (Hop: I).

One of the Deputy Principal’s referred to “*a lot of resignations experienced and vacancies in the top structure, so that functions had to be shared amongst the remaining deputy principals in the interim*”. He also pointed out that vacancies existed even “*at the next management level ... which created lots of challenges; there are no assistant directors in the academic division*” (DP1: I). According to a Deputy Principal and one Campus Manager:

The understaffed academic division resulted in many challenges; lack of necessary staff resulted in staff’s workload being too big (DP2: I).

Having many acting positions created instability; workload and time constraints inhibited staff from doing the necessary research to make sure whatever we provide is what is needed out there. (& CM2: I).

This last comment resonated with the presentation referred to in the previous section, highlighting the need for genuine knowledge of what is needed, both in the community and nationally, which can only be obtained through research.

The absence of a staff appointment plan and organogram – both of which were described as being ‘nearly ready’ for implementation – was also seen to hamper development in the sense

that college management lacked a sense of direction and structure. Furthermore, changes in conditions of employment and policy amendments during and after the merger also impacted negatively on the college human resources. One of the Deputy Principals (I) elaborated on employment challenges, referring to the 2007 Act which gave lecturers the option of whether they wanted to be employed by the Council or by the DHET:

According to Act 16 of 2006, effective January 2007, the Council became an employer of staff in TVET colleges. This brought a lot of anxiety amongst staff and created a division between management / principal and staff, as staff viewed the principal to be in protected employment. The staff were not comfortable being employed by the Council. The choice of being transferred to DHET or remain under the employment of the college further complicated the situation.

Alluding to the policy amendments and challenges of Act 16 of 2006, he explained that the policies which are used to govern the workload of schoolteachers under the Department of Basic Education (DBE) were also used for college lecturer workload. This aggravated the disgruntlement of staff human resource processes at the college since they saw themselves as different from teachers (DP1: I).

Overall, college leadership and management concurred that one of the greatest challenges posed by the merger was the lack of capacity to direct post-merger *change* at the college. Particular reference was made to leadership skills, knowledge and understanding of the change that at times led to resistance, especially by older staff members from a particular race group. One Deputy Principal (DP3: I) elaborated:

Only interns (students) were employed in the HR division which was a huge challenge. The finance and supply chain management divisions were severely under-staffed and staff did not have the qualifications they were supposed to have. In other divisions as much as people are qualified ... they are old and about to retire; they are not eager, they have no drive, they question when you come and bring change, even though supported by policy.

In emphasising the issue of the skills problem at the college, it was further noted that:

Current managers do not have the necessary skills to manage the college within the ever-changing environment. Managers are not trained to perform the duties for which they are responsible ... they are not adequately skilled to lead certain functions within the college as required by DHET. (DP2: I)

It is interesting that lack of training and inadequately skilled managers are singled out as challenges when the DHET had in fact acknowledged this need by offering workshops for management. The workshop materials I consulted gave the appearance of being thorough, comprehensive and appropriately pitched. The materials also suggested a pedagogy that was likely to succeed, with the emphasis being on WORK-shop, instead of TALK-shop. So, for example, Unit 3 (DHET, 2017, p. 10) takes the position that a college has not met its funded projections and asks two questions: *What should have been done to avoid this, and what should now be done to remedy this?* The questions are meant to be discussed by groups of campus managers in training. This format of training is usually very successful as it is both developmental and respectful of professional dignity. Yet, it appears as if the workshops made little difference, as there were constant references to the need for training. It has to be conceded that the workshops were open to campus managers only, and only three of my respondents were campus managers. But because of this apparent mismatch, I conducted additional interviews with the three campus managers who had undergone the training, to probe how they had experienced these workshops. I present this data as a sub-section below.

4.2.2.1 How the workshops were experienced

The campus managers were asked how they found the workshops, how the programme was delivered, whether the programme included leadership, what they learned and whether they would recommend that other levels of management – principals, deputy principals, subject heads, and council members – also receive workshop training.

It was reported that the workshops had been delivered over a period of three years, starting in July 2016, and finishing in September 2018. The campus managers' responses to the workshops were unanimously favourable. They were impressed by the theme – *'We Are The Ones We Have Been Waiting For'* – since this emphasised how the success of the college depended on them in the first place. They welcomed the sharing of problems, challenges and solutions across colleges. In this regard, they especially appreciated the availability of documents in which case studies they had discussed were recorded. It gave them something to take away. They benefited from the workshop format and felt their input was appreciated. They learned a great deal from each other. They commended the workshop format, were impressed by how practical the presentations were and by the fact that the case studies were evidence based. They enjoyed the success stories which were shared on the last day. Although the focus

was not on leadership, leadership featured in two of the modules, namely '*Leading by Example*', and '*Leading and Managing a Campus Effectively*'.

It was not all good news though. The campus managers felt that there was insufficient support for the workshops. There were times they needed help but there was no-one to call upon. It is not clear how this happened, but one reported that a few Deputy Principals did provide some assistance, though this came very late in the programme.

Secondly, while the format was largely workshops, the managers felt they needed more time for interaction and less lecturing.

Thirdly, they felt that since the workshops had been such a commitment over such a long period, their efforts needed formal recognition, such as credits towards university degrees.

Fourthly, they argued strongly for the inclusion – or at least presence – of DHET officials at the workshops, for obvious reasons.

And finally, they regretted the fact that the workshops could not be extended to other members of staff in management positions.

To conclude this brief aside, the question raised earlier about the actual nature and quality of the workshops – rather than what they looked like on paper – seems to have been answered. They were indeed WORK-shops, where participants had hands-on problem-solving tasks, working together and learning together. The fact that some of the respondents in this study were still asking for training, simply underlines the fact that only campus managers had been workshopped.

This is why one of the respondents described the DHET's attempts to provide appropriate leadership and guidance as "*fixing a moving vehicle*" (DP1: I), suggesting the absence of a coherent, systematic approach to resolving human resource challenges. Again, it seems to be the absence of an organised and systematic approach which creates a sense of failure; or the *perception* of this absence, since the workshops suggest that a coherent approach was in place.

In response to human resource challenges, the college has gone as far as employing consultants as a means of filling the skills gap. The staff profile also showed signs of college staff taking

responsibility for their own development through obtaining qualifications: several were at the time finishing Masters' degrees and two were on the verge of finishing their PhD degrees. This suggested a positive response to the councillor's vision of the need to provide intellectual leadership. Most of the college leadership staff had between eight and 15 years' experience at the college. This meant they were part of the transformation process and were likely to understand challenges emanating from the process and its impact on the running of the college and leadership practices. However, the fact that some of the older members of staff resisted change suggested little or no identification with a transformation agenda.

In summary, the general sense of human resources was, again, a mixed bag. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction about staff shortages, unqualified staff – one Deputy Principal suggested that under-qualified staff should be “*released*” – lack of support from the DHET, and lack of skills (DP2: I). On the other hand, strong and visionary leadership was available and was being promoted among staff, and the DHET had come on board to provide much needed campus managers' training and development, which was highly appreciated by participants.

4.2.3 The challenge of managing and leading policy implementation

Management and leadership of policies were also seen as challenges for college leadership. This seemed to be due to two tendencies: one, the proliferation of policies in the wake of the merger process, both national and at the college level; and two, the bottleneck created by the fact that no fewer than 60 policies were waiting to be approved by the College Council, in this case clearly college policies. It also seemed that new policies had not been broadly discussed. One Campus Manager commented that he “*could not remember any specific policies, even post-merger, or any session to discuss policies and their implementation*” (CM1: I). Yet a quick look at Minutes of Council meetings showed a pre-occupation with policy, with constant references to internal policies such as the Attendance Policy, the Debt Management Policy and the Leave Policy.

This general ignorance of policy emerged from several responses, some alleging that there were no policies, others maintaining that there were policies, but they had not been approved. In addition, these policies were not perceived to define or guide how the college should be led. The Head of Programmes (I) felt that while there were many policies – such as on finance, employment equity, conditions of employment and curriculum – they were unhelpful and

caused confusion and unhappiness. There were also signs of policy fatigue: The DCC thought that “*frequent policy changes seriously impact on colleges. Colleges are constantly in flux of transition without having time to settle*” (I). He went on to complain of the college being “*bombarded with policies*”.

Lack of implementation also emerged as a reason why policy generally, was considered a challenge. Several respondents felt that the policies themselves were good, but, as one Campus Manager put it, “*the problem was that the policies from DHET were not always implemented at the college and there was a lack of oversight from the department to monitor the implementation of policies* (CM2: I). According to one Campus Manager, “*change management is a big challenge; staff do not want to comply with the policies introduced by DHET. Staff have to be workshopped and persuaded to adhere to the policies*” (CM1: I).

It was interesting that there appeared to have been no attempt to engage critically with policy. One Campus Manager’s (CM1: I) expectation that staff needed to be “*workshopped and persuaded*” betrayed a mindset of compliance, and perhaps the use of *position* in the hierarchy to ‘persuade’ unwilling staff to comply. This mindset suggests the type of positional or even coercive power described by Bush (2008) as typical of the political model of management. At worst this suggests a mindless managerialist mindset; at best, the use of transactional leadership, where compliance assures smooth running. However, the notion of ‘*compliance*’ – while suggesting a docile acceptance of policy and an unquestioning state of mind – is also an acknowledgement of the *need* for guidance in these difficult times. It is perhaps during times of rapid change that policy *can* provide guidelines and a sense of direction. The fact that policy was perceived as failing in this regard is thus significant.

Another interesting challenge identified by the Deputy Chair of Council was that these policies were developed from a business perspective, expecting the college to be managed more as a business than an educational institution, a “*commodity*”, as one Campus Manager (CM1: I) put it earlier. This implies that business principles have to be utilised in leading and managing educators, who are not used to this approach. A quick look at some of the units in the workshop materials – referred to above – appear to refute this claim: ‘*Effective Monitoring of Teaching and Learning by the Campus Manager*’, ‘*Implementing Effective Campus Academic Management*’ and ‘*Planning for Effective Management of Teaching and Learning at a Campus*’. Certainly, the emphasis on the *academic* work of the college is foregrounded.

However, closer analysis of the contents of these modules confirms exactly what the Deputy Chair of Council was claiming. While words like “*academic*” and “*teaching and learning*” abound, the workshops focused on *systems, planning, monitoring and performance management*. There was no reference to educational issues such as pedagogy, teaching and learning principles and theory, and assessment strategies. There was only a passing reference to academic leadership in the unit: ‘*What Leadership Qualities / Skills Set Does the Campus Manager Need to Lead the M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) of Teaching and Learning?*’ (DHET, 2017, p. 16). Rather, the focus was on *management*, and performance management in particular. This suggests a strong leaning towards business models of management, one which scholars have questioned and essentially dismissed as being appropriate academic practice (Seyana, 2018; Seyana & Smith, 2016).

Not everyone was as critical of policy as the section above suggests. The Head of Programmes (I), for example, while being critical of the large number of new policies, regarded new policy as a genuine attempt on the part of the DHET who wanted to see “*change rather than corruption*”. Here, policy is seen as a guideline to morally good practice too; emphasising ‘policing’ in policy. While the notion of ‘policing’ may not be attractive to educators, it is perhaps an increased awareness of morally corrupt leaders in South Africa that led the Head of Programmes to call on policy’s power to enforce ethical compliance. Finally, while there was general concern that basic policies such as the organogram and staff establishment were not in place, one of the Deputy Principals was confident that the department was doing its best and that a “*functional organogram and staff establishment*” (DP1: I) would soon be ready for implementation.

Similarly, not everyone raised policy as a leadership challenge. Those who did comment had strong feelings – as I have reported – but some did not comment on policy at all. This could be because policy is seen as distant, apart from their lives, and not living guidelines for practice, unlike the case for the Head of Programmes cited above. Policies are developed centrally at national level and are then cascaded to institutions for implementation. Unfortunately, implementation often simply does not happen and the lack of oversight by the DHET means that the failure to implement policy is not always picked up. In order to counteract this, an attempt was made by college leadership to focus training solely on the idea that leadership had to understand the policies and procedures which govern the college. It seems there was an

expectation that colleges should adapt policies to suit their contexts (DCC: I), but because of the sheer volume and the complex structures that needed to be involved, it was possible that this process had stalled. When as many as 60 policies were awaiting approval, this seems a fair assumption.

One Deputy Principal referred to the “*cumbersome impact on your work*” of the increased “*bureaucracy*” brought about by the merging process and its accompanying flurry of policy (DP2: I). It seemed that some of the college structures - such as Supply Chain Management - were ineffective because their operation was too rigid thereby contributing to the delay in the supply of resources. He blamed the “*the red tape within the department, the paper and processes which is cumbersome on your work and progress, complicating one’s work*” (DP2: I).

Finally, as one might expect in a bureaucratic structure, organisational barriers promoted an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. One Campus Manager argued that “*procurement processes are very challenging; ‘down here’ they say you are not productive, but ‘up there’ there are barriers*” (CM2: I).

The challenge of implementing policy was clearly huge; it did not seem that the college was coming to grips with it either, evident in the fact that so many policies had yet to be approved. There was little evidence of the kind of leadership needed here – the drive and competence to adapt national policy to local circumstances. The college seemed daunted by this challenge, exacerbated by the tendency to regard policy as more than guidelines.

4.2.4 The challenge of understanding leadership and management

The concept ‘leadership’ was hardly mentioned in interviews and questionnaires; this in spite of the fact that the questions asked were *specifically* probing for understandings of leadership. Other data sources were equally disappointing in this regard. Leadership featured briefly (in a managerial sense) in the campus managers’ workshop materials (cited above); leadership is mentioned *once* in the ‘*College Strategic Development Plan*’, and then only as a descriptor of a position or function (“*Sound institutional governance, management and leadership*”) (DHET, 2019, p. 8). The word ‘leadership’ occurred regularly in the college Governing Council minutes, but again as a role or structure rather than a phenomenon that needs to be engaged (for example, “*student leadership*”) (College Council Minutes, 25 November 2017,

p. 6). The situation is, in fact, reminiscent of Lumby's (2016, p. 285) experience of her research in colleges in the UK, where hardly anyone referred to themselves as leaders. Nevertheless, there was some engagement with leadership which needs to be reported and discussed.

Interview and questionnaire data suggest that one of the main challenges facing leadership at the college is the question of poorly defined roles and responsibilities. The principal (I) attributed this to the absence of documents tabulating these roles and responsibilities:

There were no guidelines, no process of induction to guide newly appointed principals, or an induction manual for campus managers and SSS managers on their leadership role at campus level.

Only two respondents confirmed that they had received job descriptions, but one complained about the nature of the induction that was not contextualised. He claimed that *"the induction training programme was not sufficient to prepare members to be productive"* (DCC: I). He felt that *"ongoing training and guidance of members in leadership roles had to be rolled out, including the history of the college and the specific issues within the college"*, and that *"training should focus solely on the idea that leadership had to understand the policies and procedures which govern the colleges"* (DCC: I). Several respondents expressed similar feelings regarding their induction. The Head of Programmes (I) and Campus manager (CM1: I) claimed there had been no induction at all. The principal (I) said that the only place one could find information on the principal's duties was in the job advert, and these descriptions were *"very superficial and political in nature"*, though he also conceded that the DHET had since introduced campus manager workshops where some role definition was to be found. He lamented that *"how one manages teaching and learning, infrastructure ... one has to do and interpret things his own way"* (P: I).

The Deputy Chair of Council's comments were significant. Asking for training which *"includes the history of the college and the specific issues within the college"* suggests a critical awareness of the contextual nature of leadership, the opposite of seeing leadership as generic and universal. The principal's comment above, that the descriptions of leadership roles were *"superficial and political in nature"* makes a similar point. These comments indicate a critical awareness of the futility of teaching specific leadership theories and approaches, for two reasons: one, that they had probably been generated in a business context, and two, that they assumed that all organisations were the same, and that *leadership was leadership*, regardless

of context and history. In short, these critiques reveal some understanding of what is described as ‘critical’ leadership, which dismisses traditional theories in favour of a robust and dynamic perception of the practice of leadership in a specific context. Critical leadership studies assume that organisations are “inherently problematic in terms of how power is dispersed and used” (Collinson, 2011, p. 182). Critical leadership is keenly aware of “power asymmetries” (*ibid.*) suggesting an interest in social justice, built on an acute awareness of personal dynamics within organisations. In this sense, critical leadership can appear anti-establishment. It is worth remembering that critical leadership arose as a reaction to mainstream leadership thinking, which essentially perpetuates the notion of power residing with position.

As was the case in an earlier section on policy, respondents again asked for guidelines to help them understand their leadership roles. This suggests a view of leadership as a set of roles, or tasks, rather than a constant response to fast-changing organisational context; something to be captured in documents and adhered to; in short, a transactional view of leadership. As discussed in Chapter Two, transactional leadership is task-focused, often unaware of the bigger picture, and happy to be rule-bound. It is a far cry from the kind of leadership referred to earlier in the council member’s presentation. Again, though, it would be unwise to be too critical of the obvious need for *support* and guidance which exists among college leadership members. Data suggested a tendency to blame transactional leadership trends on the merger. One Campus Manager (CM2: I) argued that:

Post-merger, the bureaucratic model had to be improved, i.e., decision-making powers had to be de-centralised to empower campus managers to carry out basic functions, such as the management of campus budget.

What emerged here is that college leadership seems, at times, almost to take its lead from national leadership. The Head of Programmes (I) argued that the DHET, fully aware of problems in policy implementation (such as with the equity policy) would wait until colleges acted ‘politically’ through strike action before providing assistance and leadership. He felt that college leadership was often caught up in political manoeuvring at the expense of other important leadership roles, such as professional growth and development.

Interestingly, the principal went on to blame the lack of knowledge of what leaders are meant to be doing on the fact there was “*no distinction between leadership and management*” (I). He complained that “*leadership is a loose concept*” and that they (college leadership) needed “*an*

alignment of elements of the concepts of management and leadership that would lead to interconnection when it comes to action on the ground” (P: I). In light of my discussion of the separateness and interconnectedness of leadership and management in Chapter Two, this is an interesting comment. Transactional leadership would usually thrive in a context where roles were clearly defined, and the sense of reward for effort was clearly evident. The respondent claimed that, because no distinction was drawn between leadership and management in the college, there was no *interconnection*. This goes some way towards explaining why leadership seemed not to be part of the college discourse; further, it suggested that staff members in senior positions were seen as managers rather than leaders. This is not surprising given the bureaucratic nature of the institution, and its dependency on policy and job descriptions.

One Campus Manager thought that this very feature, the *bureaucratic* nature of the college, was its biggest challenge. She felt it was “*crippling delivery, because everything has to go through the hierarchy before it is approved and that delays approval and delivery thereof*” (CM2: I). She (CM2: I) added:

Leadership is such a contentious issue post-merger within the specific bureaucratic model that we follow ... somehow it needs to be improved or changed. Most decision-making powers are centralised; they need to be decentralised and some of the red-tape should really be released to the campuses where the workers are.

This was a clear call for distributed leadership, which had clearly not taken root in the college, though signs of its tentative existence were present, as discussed earlier.

One area where everyone spoke with ease and confidence on leadership was in their appreciation of the college principal. Words like “*visionary leader*”, “*change*”, “*new structures*”, “*unity*”, and “*transparency*” abounded. The Head of Programmes (I) resorted to metaphor to capture his admiration of the principal:

He steers the ship and gives guidance and directs operations at the college especially in instances where the department does not come to the party. He has contributed in developing a module in the campus manager’s training manual and seems to be one of the drivers of the programme.

In endorsing this view another respondent added: “*The principal is the forerunner in capacitating and enabling collaboration with external stakeholders*” (DP2: I). In just three sentences these respondents provided a rich picture of educational leadership, exhibiting some

of the strongest trends in theory over the past four decades. The principal was seen as captain of the ship; he “*directs*” operations. He is the ‘heroic’ leader envisaged in traditional leadership theory, and transformational leadership. He has the strength and conviction to act when the DHET fails to provide support. He is a scholar, a researcher, and an intellectual, having developed one of the modules in the campus managers’ workshop discussed earlier. Hence, in terms of visibility and prominence, he exhibits the traits of a born leader. All respondents agreed that they had a visionary principal who served as the ‘*glue*’ amongst the management team members. He also held regular meetings with the campus management to resolve challenges. Head office leadership prioritised and respected the activities at campuses and gave regular feedback to campus management structurers. Open and honest communication enabled a good working relationship with the council, which yielded a positive climate. According to Deputy Chair of Council (I) there were,

regular meetings between the chair and Deputy Chair of council. Frank and open discussion helped to resolve many issues. The college had a qualified audit in the first year and a clean audit thereafter, due to dedicated managers who scheduled regular sub-committee meetings of council, which enabled regular engagement by council members.

Finally, respondents acknowledged that the principal valued strong relationships with external stakeholders and provided the leadership for this initiative. His leadership practice would therefore fit comfortably under the label of critical leadership, even though his leadership also owes much to ‘natural’ qualities, such as charisma. The point is, I think, that he does not rely solely on his personal qualities. I pursue this issue in Chapter Five.

4.2.5 The challenge of leading and managing change

As described in Chapter One, TVET colleges have undergone massive change over the past decade and a half. These changes emanated either from the merging process or became evident as the colleges sought to answer the call for transformation. In this context of policy fatigue, the ability to manage and even lead change would be very important. In citing the following example of respondents’ responses to change, I will at times be referring to items already discussed. This is inevitable, since I do want this section to be comprehensive, even if it means repeating data that has seemed relevant under different headings.

Change appears as a double-edged sword in this study. Commenting on new policy, the Head of Programmes (I) said:

Attitudinal problems during policy development and implementation resulted in resistance, and a culture of lawlessness was built by those who were not benefiting. Resistance was at all levels when people had to abide by those policies, because policies were not pleasing everyone ... policies for the equity plan, for example, were not favouring everyone.

“A culture of lawlessness” is an interesting way of describing people’s resistance to change, which often results in simply ignoring new policy. In this way, if some members are adhering to new policy and others ignoring it, one has a recipe for disaster, or at least a very difficult situation to manage. What results is a political model of management, where individuals, or groups, work (selfishly) for their own good and ignore the organisation’s vision and mission. As Bush (2003) explains, the political model is characterised by power games and transactional leadership, almost a kind of work to rule, and the idealism of transformational leadership has nowhere to grow. This is one response to change brought about by policy.

Another response, virtually the opposite, was captured by one of the Deputy Principals who felt that “*change management is exciting and motivational*” (DP1: I). This Deputy Principal identified with the transformation agenda and was excited to be dealing with issues of equity and redress. Earlier I mentioned the Head of Programme’s interesting response to new policy who felt that this was the DHET’s attempt to promote “*change rather than corruption*” (I). The suggestion here is that the change brought about by policy works *against* unethical practice. The context of this thinking is transformation, redress and equity in particular. Several respondents referred to staff members who resisted policy change. On one level, most people resist policy change because they are exhausted by constant instability and lack of clarity. Earlier I cited a response which represents this view: “*Frequent policy changes seriously impact on colleges. Colleges are constantly in flux of transition without having time to settle*” (DCC: I). But on a deeper level, resistance to and even rejection of new policy arises because the change the policy brings disadvantages them. As one Deputy Principal put it: “*As much as people are qualified ... they are old and about to retire; they are not eager, they have no drive, they question when you come and bring change, even though supported by policy*” (DP3: I). These ‘old’ staff members “*are not eager, they have no drive*”, in other words they do not share the excitement of those who see change as positive and socially just. Leading and

managing a staff complement with such diverse responses to change would be very demanding, and several respondents pointed out how difficult managing change is. This is because frequent, far-reaching change encourages people to guard what is important to them and forget the big picture. Hence the political model thrives, and transactional leadership is the preferred genre.

A quick look at the policies which appeared in close succession over that period would help to convey a sense of just how rapidly fundamental changes were thrust upon the TVET colleges. The FET Act 98 of 1998 (South Africa. DHET, 1998) established colleges as Further Education and Training institutes of higher learning. This Act can be said to be the first step in the transformation process. The Act made provision for and endorsed the establishment of governing councils at all FET colleges. The FET Act required colleges to move beyond their traditional role of technical colleges and become flexible and responsive to the needs of economy, thereby fulfilling their mandate to become viable higher education institutions.

The FET Act 16 of 2006 (South Africa. DHET, 2006) emphasised the study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. The FET colleges were relocated from provincial governance to national, under the same umbrella as universities. This was an important step, emphasising the status of colleges *vis a vis* schools and universities. The Act also laid the groundwork for the merging process.

The National Curriculum and Vocational policy of 2007 (South Africa. DHET, 2007) introduced the National Curriculum (Vocational) advocating for the integration of theory and practice in the learning programmes. Lecturers had to develop themselves to meet the demands of the curriculum whose content was pitched extremely high. This was in an attempt to close the perceived academic gap between colleges and universities.

The Continuing Education and Training Act, No. 16 of 2006 (South Africa. DHET, 2006) intended to establish Community Education and Training Colleges as another institutional type within the Post-School Education and Training system. This policy acted as a transitory policy framework for the migration of the function of the Adult Basic Education and Training sector from the Provincial Department of Education to the DHET with effect from April 2015.

These policies give an overview of the scale of change experienced by colleges. Chief of these, though, was the merger. Everyone I spoke to agreed that the college, pre- and post-merger, was incomparable in every respect. As much as there were positive spinoffs, respondents found the negative ones overwhelming. In the analysis of the data, respondents identified issues such as policy overload, whose training was too generic for one to understand them. As has been mentioned, some college staff, especially those who had been part of the college for a long time, were very resistant to these changes, driven either by age, race or both, mostly in questioning the new policies and refusing to accept new leadership.

4.3 How does college leadership see opportunities that exist for the college sector in South Africa?

I asked this question for several reasons. One, the TVET colleges have been renamed and re-envisioned several times, and I thought it would be interesting to hear how these leaders saw the future: how had they absorbed the many changes, and how did they think TVET colleges could play a role in South Africa? Two, I believed that the way they envisioned the future would reveal something of their leadership. How visionary could they be? Or, on the other hand, how focused on problems and difficulties?

The Head of Programmes (I) felt that the college was strategically located in the metro and it was making full use of the facilities and resources that were available. Companies were enlisted to assist and support the college, such as the finance and accounting SETA, participating in the Institute of Certified Bookkeepers (ICB) and Institute of Certified Bookkeepers and Accountants programmes (ICBA) where students can complete a national financial accounting diploma (NQF Level 5) in 18 months free of charge. At the time of the study, it was the only college in the Eastern Cape to participate in this programme. The college was also involved in the Dual System Pilot Project programme, a three-year apprenticeship which combines theory and practical training with workplace-based training in companies and was one of four colleges in the country to pilot the project; the college was also involved in the Renewable Energy Programme which was doing very well. The college has the best performing students in the country. The respondent was pointing out that the college was very involved in several projects of national importance, in this way claiming its space as a worthy contributor to the future of South Africa.

According to one Deputy Principal (DP1: I), TVET colleges were established to bring a skills revolution to South Africa and to empower students with much needed skills, such as plumbing. He thought apprenticeships should be re-introduced. He said that TVET colleges should be able to provide an option to the youth to establish their own businesses. He thought that colleges could produce micro-entrepreneurs who would provide employment to others. He also felt that colleges could play a role in continuing education. The principal also felt strongly about this issue, saying that colleges should be taking in unemployed and unqualified youth, and training them. One of the Deputy Principals (DP1: I) argued that:

More public/ private partnership should be implemented, such as in the motor industry where the latest engines would be donated to the college for students to gain experience. Create synergy between training and industry to maximise employability of leaners.

The Deputy Chair of Council saw colleges as “*the future driver of the economy*” since they have provided skills programmes and training for the last 18 years. Unfortunately, unemployment of TVET graduates was almost at 50%, which indicated a broader economic problem. The same view was expressed by one Campus Manager (CM3: I). Addressing this problem, the Deputy Chair of Council put forward a dream of students being part of a student ‘co-op’ which would support ailing municipalities in very real terms, such as water and electricity provision. These thoughts were captured in a document entitled ‘*Re-inventing the College: Towards Strategic Considerations*’ (2017) which I discussed earlier.

The Deputy Chair of Council (Q) explained:

The colleges need to set up a student co-operative as funding is available; the co-operative would become a service co-operative to attend to maintenance work at the college, schools and in the municipality ... with the involvement of the lecturers several services could be provided to the college, e.g. provision of food at the hostels by students managing the co-op would result in employment opportunities for the students who were involved.

One Deputy Principal (DP2: I) felt that the TVET sector could compete with universities and become institutions of first choice once people changed their attitudes towards the sector. She believed that everyone’s attitude – starting with the college staff and including politicians and industry partners – needed to change, so that colleges could be seen as institutions of first choice.

The most visionary response came from the principal whose main theme was growth and development. He argued that the underlying factor in all proposals and projects to the DHET was to earmark funding to enable colleges to grow and develop into modern institutions, which could provide facilities and resources according to the needs of the students. These would include hostels, disability units, and libraries. He also believed, along with one Deputy Principal (DP1: I), that college graduates should start their own businesses and become employers. He also saw the future of the college as lying chiefly in engineering, which needed to be expanded to more campuses, and attract more students. He saw a future in which college students worked in rural areas, providing electricity, doing plumbing and other services essential to economic prosperity. He identified a problem with the poor mathematics and science results at primary schools. These schools become feeder schools to the college, bringing these poor results with them. As a result, few students managed to enrol. Colleges also needed their own research unit to research its own practices and other related issues. One Campus Manager (CM2: I) reinforced the principal's notion of a research unit, except that he saw the unit's function as researching community needs.

Colleges of TVET are primarily institutions which play a role in providing people with skills and employment prospects that are not attainable in any other education sector in South Africa. The fact that the college programmes are made available to a diverse range of learners, such as school-going young people, out of school youth, young adults and the broader adult population is what makes them distinct. The transformation and policy development described in the Acts of 1998, 2006 and 2012, attest to that fact.

The college seemed excited to raise funds for various projects and had decided to engage in a fundraising drive to realise this vision. I was shown a '*Fundraiser*' document depicting the college's intention to fundraise in order to improve and provide necessary infrastructure such as libraries, sports grounds and facilities for students with special needs. This showed the commitment of the leadership to building a better future for the college, by addressing the infrastructure challenges. Furthermore, they were busy out-sourcing unused institutions with huge infrastructure either with the purpose of sharing or taking over the whole structure.

The college was already occupying 60% of another college in the vicinity, and the leadership was busy negotiating with the Education and Training Centre (ETC) to take over the institution because it is not being fully utilised. The DHET is in support of this (P: Q). This was a move

which was done in order to accommodate the planned growth of 10% every year and to reach the 2030 college target of 30,000 students which demands enough infrastructure and space for both teaching and learning and for students' residences. Furthermore, the college had a vision to expand engineering campuses to two or three as per the 'Fundraiser' document. Even though the DHET had abandoned their support of Vision 2030, the college was pursuing it in its own capacity and believed that that target was achievable. The Principal explained:

The vision is, in five years to reach a target of 20,000 students, 10 years 30,000 students ... take young people from rural areas back to training, organise bursaries and residences for them. That is why we are organising space, taking part of an underused college, and organising a complete taking over of the ETC, and organising funds from SETA, National Skills Fund and NSFAS, planning for every year an increase between 8% to 10%. (Principal)

This positive spirit was reflected elsewhere; the Head of Programmes (Q) wrote:

The college is making inroads ... it is strategically located in the metro, making use of the facilities and resources, and companies are enlisted to assist, such as Finance and accounting; Seta's are participating in ICB and ICBA programmes where students will do a national financial accounting diploma (NQF Level 5) for 18 months.

In addition, the college planned to transform Mathematics and Science in primary schools so as to improve results as they were feeder schools to the college. In so doing, they would be improving and strengthening the foundation in Mathematics and Science which are fundamental and crucial subjects in engineering. The second point about leadership according to them was that they needed to focus on results, so that the college did not perform below 70%. In short, influencing primary school results through negotiations with the Department of Basic Education was seen as an opportunity to improve college results, since most students had no foundation in these two subjects.

Another opportunity discussed by the principal (I) was to change the mind-set of the college graduates so that they did not look for employment once they have graduated, but started their own small businesses, and become employers:

These young people must not rely on placement. Some of these young people must start their own businesses. Rural areas are no longer building thatched rondavels, rather double storey buildings ... they need plumbers, electricians, entrepreneurs, and many others, why do college graduates look for jobs? Basile bafuna imvubu – they are silly, they need a sjambock !

This same level of enthusiasm and energy was evident in the principal's remarks on graduation ceremonies. He saw these as an opportunity to educate graduates to be employers, by engaging those who had just graduated from colleges and universities as guest speakers. In this way, the ceremony becomes an initiation programme for the young graduates:

I do not want old speakers in the graduation ceremony. I want the young people to speak to their age mates – thina sihlaba ulwamvila – give the sting! Thetha nabo, ntanga, baxelet ukuba uyaqetsha! Tell them that you are an employer, tell them!! Small companies are the way to go; these are the rules of the game! (P: I)

All the respondents were very positive about the role of the colleges in the education landscape and were convinced that the curriculum was relevant. Many programmes were offering open opportunities for schools to enrol their learners to keep them away from crime and there were many opportunities for college graduates. Some alleged that all that was needed was to change the mindset of the people.

Finally, there was a research challenge that was cited by the Deputy Chair of Council – critical skills were not being documented in the metro and they needed to be captured on a database. He then recommended the establishment of co-operatives that were likely to provide employment opportunities for college students. He elaborated:

Schools in the metro have not been maintained and present employment opportunities, farmers without land, waste disposal, repair of water leaks, care required in communities – engineering students could gain experiential training by attending to and repairing these facilities. (DCC: I)

This section has provided rich and interesting data, suggesting that the decision to ask how respondents saw the future of the college was a good one. What emerges – overwhelmingly – is a sense of optimism and hope. It is a picture of vigorous and energetic leadership, resourceful and creative problem-solving, while still having their feet on the ground. On the one hand there is the realisation of the college's strategic position in the metro, and its relationships with several professional and community driven projects. So strong is the belief, the college is in the process of expanding into another under-utilised college, with dreams of reaching 10 000 students by 2030. Undergirding these dreams is the acknowledgement of the college's place in the community – how it can best serve that community, while at the same time being served in the form of student numbers. The 'co-op' is an exciting and forward-thinking idea, addressing not only what is an obvious social need but, importantly, responding to social needs, a hallmark

of critical leadership. The college leadership vision for their students is equally exciting: essentially, they do not see them as employees, but as employers. The principal was particularly driven by this vision, even if he does use unfortunate metaphors (“*They need a sjambock*”). The idea of intervening in schools to improve mathematics and science results is also exceptionally visionary, a move that would certainly serve the country generally, but also the college, as it will help to ensure an enrolment of knowledgeable students. Finally, the fact that the college embarks on fundraising to provide what the DHET will not – or cannot – provide, is further evidence of a refusal to accept failure or refusal – a critical leadership response.

In the next chapter I discuss these findings more comprehensively in terms of the research questions, especially the kinds of leadership which seemed to prevail at the college.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the main findings through the lens of theory, referring to such theoretical arguments and propositions as seem relevant and helpful. In Chapter Two I focused on chiefly three leadership theories: distributed leadership, Bush's political model and its accompanying style of transactional leadership, and critical leadership. It is, however, unlikely that this discussion will confine itself to these three positions on leadership, and I expect it may be necessary at times to refer to other theories mentioned in Chapter Two, and perhaps also theories not mentioned at all at this stage. What is important is to make sense of the findings, so that what I have learned in this study can be of benefit to practitioners and other scholars.

In response to the research questions, the following challenges emerged:

- The challenge of providing infrastructure and resources;
- The challenge of securing funding;
- The challenge of providing, and maintaining adequate human resources;
- The challenge of managing and leading policy implementation;
- The challenge of understanding leadership and management;
- The challenge of leading and managing change.

This is in line with what I explained at the beginning of Chapter Four, where I dealt with responses to challenges as each challenge was discussed. This was done to avoid repetition, and also to enable me to keep my focus on the main research interest, namely respondents' understanding of leadership. In this chapter the interest is in how theory helps to account for and make sense of the data. Hence, instead of discussing each challenge separately again, I go straight to the theory.

At the outset I need to state that the respondents' depiction of leadership does not resonate strongly with any of the theories discussed so far. There are elements of the three dominant strands I have discussed – distributed, transactional and critical – but some of the other literature referred to also finds relevance. It would clearly be difficult to characterise the view

of leadership that emerged in terms of any one or even two or three theories. This is not surprising, since theory is only an attempt to account for, or provide the language for practice. Theory is ordered and controllable – practice is chaotic and difficult to control, predict and provide recipes for. Besides, it was not the intention of this study to ‘test’ for the presence of any particular theoretical orientation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to draw on such theory as it seems helpful to talk about what is and what is *not* happening, since this process will suggest ways forward.

5.2 Critical leadership

While there are several elements of critical leadership present in the data, what is most noteworthy is the *absence of leadership in organisational discourse*. I drew attention earlier to the fact that hardly any response even mentioned leadership, despite the fact that the questions asked for leadership challenges. I also noted at the time that Lumby (2016) had found a similar trend in her study of colleges in the UK, where college leadership referred to their roles as managers, or administrators, rather than leaders. In my study, even the nature of the challenges identified points to practical, managerial tasks rather than engagement with leadership. For this reason alone it would be misleading to describe what has emerged here as *critical* leadership. As discussed in Chapter Two, where critical leadership prevails, leadership is part of the discourse, not merely practice; that is, it is part of the organisational culture and fabric, conversations and discussion (Collinson, 2011, p. 183). This is my understanding; if organisational members are not consciously *practising* and *critiquing* their leadership, I doubt whether one can call it **critical**. In the college, leadership is most often seen as action, what the college actually *did* to make things happen. In fact, the only response that seemed to elevate leadership to the level of discourse was the interview and presentation by the Deputy Chair of Council.

The presentation – ‘*Re-Inventing ‘City’ College: Towards strategic considerations*’ (2018) – was authored and delivered by a council member. He stressed the need for “*intellectual leadership*” (Presentation, 2018, slide 10), and for the college to embrace its leadership responsibility beyond the classrooms, building “*socially engaged projects*” (*ibid.*). It is clear that the author of this presentation identified with a view of leadership that goes beyond the heroic and visionary leader and beyond transformational leadership. As discussed in Chapter

Two, contemporary leadership thinking has moved into what is described as *critical* leadership, a view which asks for a critical awareness of the *context* in which leadership happens and seeks to address not only organisational but also social needs, a “*concern for people and the environment*” (Adler et al., 2007, p. 119). The contrast between this dual concern and the dual concern of situational theories of the 1950’s – concern for people and concern for task – is obvious and sums up an important distinction. Situational leadership looks inward, towards the organisation, and is concerned with efficiency and profits. Critical approaches – on the other hand – look outwards, towards society, community and the external environment. Leadership is thus not an objective ‘thing’ which can be commodified, but a situated, context-bound process. The leadership actions of other members of college leadership actually *act out* this dimension of leadership, but from the data collected it is difficult to assert that leadership has become a construct rather than a ‘job’ in the minds of the respondents.

Hence, as mentioned in Chapter Four, it was often the college leadership’s response to the challenges that provided insight into their understanding of leadership. This was clearly the case with the first challenge mentioned, that of infrastructure and resources. It is very significant that the Deputy Chair of Council made a point of explaining that they did not take every issue to the DHET but tried to resolve them internally. The ideas that emerged – partnerships with neighbouring colleges, part-time evening classes, sourcing under-utilised buildings in the vicinity – all suggest a critical awareness of the need for a strong and strategic response to challenges, characterised by an acute awareness of context and circumstances, and a strategic response to these. This is a pragmatic approach to leadership but also, importantly, one that defies or acts in spite of poor government leadership.

A similar trend was reported earlier in lecturing staff’s unwillingness to accept that there was no money for a function recognising staff contributions. The staff members worked through EXCO to raise funds for such an event, recognising that though “*it might sound like a little thing*” (DP2: I), it was crucial for staff morale and their sense of being appreciated. These instances of resistance are typical of critical leadership and would score highly on the ‘person’ orientation of situational leadership thinking. In this sense these practices may be seen as the “*oppositional practices*” (Collison, 2011, p. 186) discussed earlier in Chapter Two; but it would be a mistake to view these as more than simply doing what seems the right thing, in spite of opposition. In other words, in the absence of discursive leadership engagement, there is no evidence to suggest that these leaders are rejecting the *status quo*; but they are challenging it.

Another feature of the college leadership that resonates with critical leadership thinking is the notion of social justice. Again, it is the presentation, *'Re-Inventing City Colleges'*, that leads the way. I wrote about the presentation's bold and exciting vision for TVET colleges in the previous chapter. The writer argued that training students for jobs was short-sighted, and that a broader vision, encompassing society and its needs, must become part of the college's thinking. Here again leadership is placed in a bigger context, beyond the confines of the organisation, an orientation 20th century theories overlook. Seyana's (2018, p. 129) critique of mainstream theories, cited in Chapter Two, emphasises the blind spot of these theories, claiming that they were unable to appreciate the cultural, social, economic and political complexities of 21st century organisations, educational institutions in particular. Recent events in South Africa's higher education landscape serve as a timely reminder of what is at stake when these complexities are ignored. There is hardly an institution of higher learning in the country that has not been severely affected, even shut down in some instances, by angry and frustrated students asking for lower fees, better and cheaper accommodation, name-changes, and so on. The extent to which these institutions are integrally part of and therefore more vulnerable to their environments has risen sharply, and leadership has been perhaps too slow to adapt. A critical approach to leadership is more likely to achieve this adaptation (or evolution) than any of the insular theories of the last century. The data reported in the previous chapter made constant reference to the inability of leadership to cope with the "*ever-changing environment*" (DP2: I), sufficient evidence to show how significant this concern is in spite of leadership training provided by the DHET.

A final thought on critical leadership is linked to the Principal's vision of the college, and the Deputy Chair of Council's notion of a 'co-operative'. Their visions were similar, and clearly, they had discussed these issues at some length. The key to the vision is the notion of students providing much-needed services to the college and the broader community, while at the same time acquiring much-needed skills and of course qualifications. The Deputy Chair saw students carrying out maintenance work – such as plumbing and electricity – at the college and beyond. The Principal linked this idea with entrepreneurship, arguing that their students should be starting their own businesses and being employers rather than employees. Furthermore, they should be working in rural areas providing services to the communities. This kind of thinking is of course strategic, pragmatic and simply sensible. But it is more than that. The visions outlined here see the college as part of a network, a social network, which it helps to sustain.

This aligns with the notion of leadership discussed above, where the leader thinks beyond the organisation and works for social justice. It is more than that even, because these visions also acknowledge the realities of poorly functioning and over-stretched municipalities, clearly not coping with infrastructural demands, country wide. This is one of the hallmarks of critical leadership.

What is *missing* is the fact that no-one else interviewed referred to these visions, suggesting that perhaps these are not shared visions, or perhaps that the top two leaders – the Principal and the Deputy Council Chair – do not disseminate their thinking throughout the leadership team.

5.3 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership similarly provides only partial insights into the picture of leadership uncovered by this study. I did, in Chapter Four, suggest that the existence and functioning of a committee system could indicate a form of distributed leadership, but drawing on my characterisation of distributed leadership in Chapter Two, it would be misleading that the mere existence of committees could be seen as ‘distributed’ leadership. A key element in distributed leadership is not simply the existence of groups or committees, and evidence of some form of delegation, but “co-performance” and “reciprocal interdependence” (Spillane, 2006, p. 58), and “networks” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 606). The question then, is whether the various committees in the college hierarchy work *together*, *collaborate* and *network*; or are they simply doing what has been delegated to them. Unfortunately I had very little data to support either characterisation, except for the instance cited above, where only the Principal and the Deputy Chair of Council were excited by their profound vision for the future of the college, suggesting the absence of dissemination. If distributed leadership had been the focus of the study, I would perhaps have looked more closely at whether leadership was “systemic” (Lumby, 2003, p. 284) or a set of tasks to be performed. But the fact that – structurally – senior staff are in separate groups leading and managing different dimensions, and that they come together regularly to compare notes must at least be a beginning.

In other respects, though, there do seem to be elements of distributed leadership captured in the findings. In Chapter Two, I cited Spillane et al.’s (2004) insistence on looking at the interactions between the social and physical environment and leadership practice. They argue

that distributed leadership is less about the role or function, or the qualities of ‘the leader’, but more about the relationships among three components: leader, follower and context, that is, the *leadership actions* brought about by the dynamic interaction among these elements. I have already referred to the context of the leadership in this study as particularly rich and challenging, dynamic and often ambiguous. It is clear that a traditional approach – such as situational leadership – would have little to say about an environment as complex as this. In a context as challenging as this, therefore, it is essential that leadership can and should come from anywhere in the organisation, not only the officially appointed leaders. And this is indeed the case at the college, where clearly there are no signs of the Principal’s holding on to power; leadership happens at all levels. However, while I have shown that staff members show initiative and take the lead in what they consider important, the truly inspiring response to environmental challenges has come from senior leadership, notably the Principal and the Deputy Head of Council.

This leads to an issue worth considering in some depth. What has been revealed in the findings is, in some respects, the opposite of distributed leadership. The description of the Principal, for example, is strongly reminiscent of the charismatic leader, supported by the fact reported earlier, of his splendid vision for the college which none of the other management members seemed to share. In Chapter Four I recorded some of the words respondents used to describe the principal: “*Visionary leader ... steers the ship ... unity ...he directs operations*” which paints a picture of a charismatic leader, universally admired. Similarly, the Deputy Chair of Council authored and delivered the presentation I have referred to; a truly insightful and inspiring collection of ideas and visions. He, too, is clearly a visionary and perhaps charismatic leader. But before one assumes the negative connotations associated with charisma applies to this case – as discussed in Chapter Two – one needs to look at the whole picture. The Principal does not, as charismatic leaders do, exclude followers and subordinates; in fact, he is described as being the *glue* in the organisation; he holds regular meetings; he provides regular feedback; he is an open and honest communicator; and he has strong relations with external stakeholders. What he and the Deputy Chair have in common is that both see the importance of working in and for the community, in other words, they grasp the notion of a broad and challenging context. I have reported on this earlier so will not repeat it here. I mention it here because it provides an example of how leadership can respond to a challenging context beyond the walls of the organisation, and in this sense, Spillane (2006) would argue for distributed leadership.

The fact that both these leaders only partially share their views, though, raises questions, and one wonders whether other members of management have simply not been as enthralled by the vision as they clearly were, which could account for why it was not mentioned by other staff.

So one has to ask: Does the Principal actively promote leadership? Does he or the Chair of Council oversee a strategy for leadership development among organisation members? There is no evidence of this. It is safe to conclude that there are signs of distributed leadership, but until leadership as such becomes part of the discourse, it is unlikely to become more than that. This calls for a more pro-active approach to *distributing* leadership, not the delegation of tasks but the *notion* of leadership, which ideally needs to suffuse the entire college. Currently there is no doubt that the spirit of distributed leadership is alive and well in the college. Once elevated beyond practice to discourse, it may be enacted.

5.4 Transactional leadership - bureaucracy

Bush's (2010) political model was identified as one of three theoretical strands that could help to make sense of findings in this study. My reasoning was that colleges have been sites of rapid and fundamental change, as well as organisational volatility for some time. The fact that so many colleges have been under administration attests to this. It seemed fair to assume that trying times may have generated modes of management and leadership that assure survival, perhaps personal survival, at all cost. The political model would be a perfect match for these circumstances, since it thrives on conflict, fails to agree on goals and objectives, and is driven by power and the need to hang on to power. Hence, the leadership approach most likely to thrive would be transactional.

However, the college I selected for study is a settled, stable and 'happy' place. The only frustrations I encountered were associated with lack of delivery and support from the DHET, and even here there was appreciation for what had been done, such as the additional funding for infrastructure and the DHET workshops. The only conflict I encountered was again mostly linked to staff perceptions of the bureaucratic nature of the sector, and this suggests that literature on bureaucracy such as Bush's (2003, p. 6) formal model would be more helpful in illuminating leadership in the college.

Respondents expressed themselves strongly in regard to the bureaucratic nature of the TVET college sector. One of the Deputy Principals had the strongest voice referring to the “*cumbersome impact on your work*” of the increased “*bureaucracy*” brought about by the merging process (DP2: I). Some of the college’s internal systems had begun to fail because of the “*the red tape within the department, the paper and processes which are cumbersome on your work and progress, complicating one’s work*” (DP2: I). There were several other references to how the merging process had cluttered the system with new procedures and policies, slowing down the entire organisation.

Coupled with this, I also found a narrow, defensive view of leadership among several college leaders. It revealed itself as anxiety: anxiety over the lack of clarity of what roles leaders should be playing, anxiety over the lack of clarity of certain policies, and anxiety over the failure to *comply* with policy, thus creating a “*culture of lawlessness*”. The contrast between this leadership response (*nervous* leadership) and the Principal and Deputy Chair’s flights of the imagination was striking. This is the effect of trying to lead in a bureaucratic organisation, where everything is so tightly governed that members are forever on their guard that they may be slipping up, rather than behaving like leaders.

In conclusion of this section, there was no evidence of transactional leadership, only of bureaucratic leadership, and then only minimally so.

In the next and final chapter I answer the research questions, discuss the study’s limitations and provide recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This research has been driven by the question: *How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?* To answer this question, I interviewed 9 senior staff members, administered a questionnaire to the entire senior staff, and analysed some key documents.

In this chapter I discuss the findings presented in Chapter Four in terms of their leadership implications, make recommendations for research and practice and consider the study's shortcomings.

6.1 How do members of a college leadership team view their role as leaders?

I have used the main research question as a heading here because I want to focus on the picture of leadership that emerged from the findings. I have listed and discussed the challenges at length, and also covered the college's responses. I will not repeat these here unless necessary.

The picture that emerged was a mixed one, as one might expect when one gathers data from a diverse group of people. In looking for trends in the findings I do not want to suggest that any of the findings are statistically significant: in a case study the sample is so small that statistics play no role at all. This ties in with notions of generalisability which I discuss later. Rather than statistical significance I looked for significance in terms of an answer to the research question, how accurately that answer captures the essence of the phenomenon, and how interesting it is in terms of painting a clear picture of the broader context in which the phenomenon occurs, in this case the TVET college which was the site of the study. In this process I have tried to be rigorous, that is, systematic, thorough and careful in the collection of data from multiple sources, identifying resonances through the process of triangulation, and referring to such theory as seemed helpful at the time. Cypress (2017, p. 254) speaks helpfully about rigour, saying:

Rigour of qualitative research continues to be challenged even now in the 21st century – from the very idea that qualitative research alone is open to questions, so with the terms rigour and trustworthiness. It is critical to understand rigor in research. Rigour

is simply defined as the quality or state of being very exact, careful, or with strict precision or the quality of being thorough and accurate. The term qualitative rigour itself is an oxymoron, considering that qualitative research is a journey of explanation and discovery that does not lend to stiff boundaries.

The picture of leadership that emerged, as presented by the respondents, had the following characteristics.

The notion of leadership as *problem-solving* emerged strongly, possibly because I probed for challenges and how the college leaders were responding to them, but perhaps also because that is how they saw themselves and their roles. The problems mentioned included lack of funding, poor infrastructure, an inadequate staff complement, inadequate space, inadequate staff development and training and too many policies with too little support for implementation. It was noteworthy that problems and challenges identified were almost exclusively external to the organisation itself, usually involving the DHET. Indeed, the DHET was seen as unhelpful, uninterested, unsupportive and often a hindrance to progress. This was not always the case: due appreciation was expressed for additional infrastructure provided by the government, and for campus manager workshops that were deemed to be useful. The only challenge or problem faced internally concerned the impression that older staff members were impeding progress, often resisting change. No other challenge raised reflected on the college itself, in terms of staff members or management. This was one of the reasons why the political model of management and transactional leadership ultimately seemed irrelevant to the situation in the college. Even problems of uncertainty and anxiety were described as external forces; for example, staff who were anxious about having insufficient guidance (and rules) blamed the DHET, not internal management.

Alongside this view of problem-solving was ample evidence of the college leadership's ability to do just that, that is, to solve problems. Here leadership displayed a fearlessness and resistance to overhead control. This emerged in the case of approaching the DHET for additional funding, acting out the Chair of Council's claim that the college would solve its own problems, and not always wait for the government. This revealed a *pragmatism* and considerable courage, fuelled by a slight distrust of the DHET.

In solving problems – such as the problem of space – college leadership also revealed a degree of *entrepreneurial skill* and boldness. The fact that the college was already using part of the

premises of another college was not enough: college management had its eye on the entire college, planning to take it over completely. There is an interesting parallel here between the Principal's challenge to the students – “be employers, not employees” – and what was actually happening on the ground. The opportunistic, entrepreneurial sense of making things happen was how he operated, and this was the quality he wanted to imbue in students of the college.

Finally, the leader as charismatic visionary emerged, albeit in the top two leaders only. In both cases though, neither leader depended only on charisma. In the case of the Principal he was lauded for ensuring that everyone was on board, through communications, meetings, and constant feedback. In the case of the Deputy Chair, he involved others through his presentations.

In terms of the three theoretical strands underpinning this study – distributed leadership, transactional leadership in a political model of management, and critical leadership – it was in fact *critical leadership* that was the most dominant. This was revealed in a number of ways.

As discussed earlier, in critical leadership research, one of the emphases is on an awareness of context, and the fact that it is the relationship with the context that is different from other leadership theories. In the case of this study, the context was complex and rich, as already mentioned. It obviously must include the DHET since this body writes policy and sends it down the line. This body also pay the salaries, carry other huge infrastructure costs and also offer workshops, though to date these have only been available for campus managers. It is also true – as has been reported – that the DHET is seen to be failing colleges, in terms of funding, infrastructure and staffing. Unsurprisingly, the college relationship with the DHET was therefore ambiguous. Respondents expressed gratitude for assistance – such as the moving of the 63% cap on staffing – but at the same resented the fact that government refused to help in other areas – such as their withdrawal of support for Vision 2030. As mentioned earlier, resistance to power is a recognised critical leadership act, but there was evidence that the college leadership was doing more than resist: for example, organising fundraising to sustain Vision 2030. Refusal to abandon their vision could perhaps also be seen as an act of defiance, and indeed there was an air of defiance in a great deal of what was said in interviews.

Even more convincing evidence of critical leadership was the college's engagement of the community, in a way which promoted both causes. This was evident in the slideshow

presentation discussed earlier, where a member of council presented a visionary but realistic picture of what the college could/should be doing. The presentation was remarkable in its grasp of the relationship between the college and its context, both “*social and political*” (Presentation, Slide 2). Politically, the college’s relationship with the state has been discussed. Socially, the presentation placed the college *within* the community, challenging it to produce “*critically engaged scholarship with important socio-economic problem and political issues ... that is available to the communities of the college*” (Presentation, Slide 1). This same thinking occurred as a theme in one or two other responses (notably the Principal) and so one may assume it is more than one person’s pipe dream. It was also strongly present in a response from the Deputy Chair of Council (I):

The college makes itself relevant to the needs and interests of different communities which requires strong leadership that is visionary, strategic and familiar with regional, national and inter developments – particularly its role in relation to the triadic challenge of inequality, poverty and unemployment that are deepening worldwide.

What the vision succeeds in doing so well is complex: it answers the need for maintenance and renewal of basic infrastructure in towns, villages and townships; it provides much needed work experience and experiential learning opportunities for students; and both of these work towards social justice in a way that is probably more affordable than any other intervention.

The third item of evidence is the vision of intervening in schools to work towards better mathematics and science results. This too has the hallmark of ‘real’ dreaming, because the college will of course also gain from being able to draw on students with better results, particularly in the mathematics and science subjects. And it is exactly in this area – engineering – where the college sees its future. This is why it also ‘dreams’ about closer relationships with industry so that the newest motorcar engines can be available for the students to study and ‘learn’ on. Exactly how this intervention might work was not pursued, as it seemed outside the scope of this study, but the dream seemed real enough to believe it may be achieved. What is remarkable – I think – is that the college can think out of the box to this extent, seeing it working in primary schools. Above all, it suggests a leadership that is acutely aware of broader societal needs and of its own role in operating in a socially just manner.

To return to Collinson (2011) briefly, he argues that a critical perspective in leadership is focused on “the socially constructed and multiple discourses and meanings that tend to

characterise leadership dynamics” (p. 183), thus distancing itself from charismatic, situational and transformational theories. Looking at the three examples of leadership recounted above, I think it unlikely that any of the behaviourist theories (such as situational and contingency) can account for this kind of leadership. Transformational leadership, too, is not likely to be able to capture these leaders’ thinking, chiefly because their leadership is not directed at a specific group of followers. Their leadership efforts are aimed at uplifting the college *and* the community, so in a very real sense the discourse they bring into being is socially driven, and serves a broader social purpose, alongside the more focused purpose of promoting the college. In a sense, then, it is not the behaviour of these leaders we are examining, but their thinking, their imagination and their creativity.

There is also evidence of the *heroic leader*, specifically in the unanimous praise and appreciation of the college Principal. It is rare to see such universal approval, and one must acknowledge that this is a case of one of those rare individuals who is blessed with unusual leadership qualities. One is tempted to refer to this case as transformational leadership, but critical theorists would disagree. To quote Collinson (2011) again, “Transformational studies typically draw on highly gendered, heroic images of the ‘great man’, viewing leaders as dynamic agents of change and followers as passive and compliant” (p. 183). There are very good reasons why this case does not quite fit the ‘great man’ mould, nor the transformational, and the most important one is that his followers are anything but ‘passive and compliant’. This study has unfortunately not looked at staff members who are not in senior positions, so nothing can be claimed on their behalf. But certainly, in the case of the staff I interviewed – all of whom are in leadership positions – passivity and compliance are not useful terms. All of them exhibit strong independent thought and are in fact active leaders themselves.

To recall some of the respondents’ descriptions of the Principal, words like “*visionary leader*”, “*change*”, “*new structures*” were in good supply and these speak for themselves. But equally prominent were words like “*unity*” and “*transparency*”, which suggested an appreciation of teamwork and open, honest dealings. In other words, there was a moral element to the principal’s leadership. While none of the theories I discussed in Chapter Two focused strongly on moral leadership, I think it worth mentioning that a sense of ethical conduct occurred several times in the data. One of them was the notion that policy was welcomed since it guarded against corruption, a surprising comment in the context, suggesting that policy provided a moral

compass as well as performance standards. The principal's ethical conduct – “*transparency*” – was also felt to be worth mentioning by a respondent.

However, there was also a pragmatic side to the principal's leadership: reference was made earlier to the principal's leadership role in securing additional funding to help manage the college infrastructure. As discussed earlier, an entrepreneurial spirit seemed to be part of the leadership approach.

There was little evidence of *distributed leadership*. Again, I need to remind the reader that I did not look more broadly than the leadership body. The little evidence that did emerge was a reference to committees, or working groups, or the college EXCO. This may be a sign of distributed leadership, or it may simply *look like* distributed leadership. To answer this question satisfactorily, one would have to look at how these committees function, and how they report to and communicate with EXCO. This being said, there was ‘soft’ evidence of distributed leadership, by which I mean that, in the absence of ‘hard’ evidence – for example, weekly meetings where staff's leadership roles are discussed and reflected upon – the fact that there was virtual unanimity when really important issues were mentioned, *does* in fact suggest distribution. If not distribution, then perhaps the fact these leaders meet often, speak and listen well, and therefore have developed a shared understanding of the organisation and its challenges and opportunities.

Why then did no-one ever use the word ‘leadership’? Is it significant, or is it simply a question of semantics? I referred earlier to Lumby's (2003) finding of exactly the same phenomenon in the UK. She does not explain it, but simply accepts that when her respondents say ‘manager’ they often mean ‘leader’. Clearly, she did not find it significant, a response I agree with. The word ‘leadership’ was simply not part of the discourse of this college's leadership team; yet they were all leading in many different ways.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

The study revealed that the roles and responsibilities involved in running the college was through the combined input and effort of all colleges stakeholders. I therefore would recommend that:

- Researchers extend their focus to other internal stakeholders such as lecturers, students and non-academic staff. Their perceptions as part of the college leadership structure might give a different perspective which is not captured in this study in terms of understanding their roles and leaders. Including other members would also open the research to rich possibilities of looking at interactions between and among staff, staff and students, and students and students. This would place the researcher in a stronger position to make claims about how organisational culture is shaped by relationships. In terms of the distributed leadership theory, the notion of ‘context’ is a rich one. In my study I was unable to pursue the internal context.
- Researchers should also focus on the external environment. It emerged in this study that the community and industry played a major role in shaping the college’s vision of and for itself. Indeed, the ideas expressed by the Deputy Chair and the Principal concerning students working in and for the community, would be a fascinating topic for research. This is precisely where contemporary leadership approaches – like critical leadership – can play such a valuable role. Unlike more traditional theories which by and large pretend that leadership exists in a vacuum, critical leadership argues that leadership can be understood only within its broad context.
- A comparative study of the same nature could be conducted to compare urban and rural colleges. In this study, situated in a city, the college was seen to draw on and interact with metropolitan phenomena, such as industry. What might be rural equivalents of this kind of interaction? Put differently, how can rural colleges work for social justice?
- This study focused on perceptions and understandings of leadership to develop a sense of how leaders and managers see their roles. What would be interesting is a study of leadership ‘in practice’, that is, a study that observes leadership, perhaps in a CHAT framework, with a view to developing leadership practices.
- One of the biggest problems exposed by this study is the failure of government to facilitate the growth and successful operation of this college. A study that looks at the intersection between college leadership and the DHET would be fascinating.

6.3 Limitations

As mentioned in Chapter One, while the use of a case study methodology allows the researcher access to the phenomenon in its natural setting, it also allows for close investigation of the *particularity and complexity* of the single case. While this is a strength of the research, it is also a limitation since the outcomes of the study cannot be scientifically generalisable. However, notions of scientific (or statistical) generalisation are inappropriate to interpretive research, and indeed to any case study research. It is clearly absurd to imagine one could do a sufficient number of case studies to make one's findings representative of a wider population, such as a region or province. And yet, it would be equally absurd to imagine that a reader of this study would recognise nothing of what is described or found. It is more likely that a reader with a similar interest and experience would 'recognise' much of what has been said and reported in this study, and probably find much of it applicable to other contexts. In this sense the findings are 'transferable' (Firestone, 1993), and exhibit what Stake and Trumbull (1982) describe as "naturalistic generalisation" (p. 1). Of course, this presupposes that the study was rigorous, and the findings valid.

Since the usual, positivistic criteria of reliability and trustworthiness cannot be applied, one would look for other criteria, such as the quality of the study. Kitto, Chesters and Gbrich (2008), writing in a medical research context in which qualitative research is a fairly recent development, argue that instead of generalisation and reliability, "terms such as rigour (thoroughness and appropriateness of the use of research methods), credibility (meaningful, well presented findings) and relevance (utility of findings) are used to judge the quality or trustworthiness of a study" (p. 243). Earlier I cited Cypress's depiction of rigour in qualitative research; for her it is about accuracy, clarity, and systematic data collection and analysis. In other words, how thorough and systematic has the process been? In the case of this study I believe I have worked in a systematic and careful way and used appropriate research methods. It is a qualitative study, and interviews, questionnaire and documents are word-rich sources of data. It is an interpretive study, and I have let the data speak as far as this has been possible. In terms of credibility, I believe the richness of data I have worked with and the fact that I have been able to triangulate from three data sources, have helped to strengthen the findings and produced believable results. Since all of my findings point precisely to problems experienced by this college in terms of leadership and management, I believe the study is also highly relevant and helps to point the way towards a better future.

6.4 Recommendations for practice

The most pressing need is for leadership to become part of the organisation's discourse. This may be achieved through staff development workshops, either run by senior management or outside agencies. In addition, the DHET needs to be encouraged to present leadership workshops to all levels of leadership in the college, not campus managers only. Clearly the workshops they have presented have been well received, probably because they have drawn on the expertise of in-house college lecturers and leaders. Additionally though, it was felt that workshops presented by the DHET should be attended or co-presented by officials from that body. This has numerous advantages, the most important of which is the fact that the DHET and the college would be on the same page. The chances of genuine interaction are increased, and mutual understanding is likely to grow.

The college leadership also needs to be aware of the pitfalls of growing heroic charismatic leadership. This study has pointed out some of the dangers inherent in this kind of leadership. In terms of leadership practice, the relative absence of distributed leadership is perhaps also due to this tendency. Whereas senior leadership is clearly succeeding in communicating and providing frequent feedback to other levels of leadership, there is no sign of actual distribution. I believe this to be closely linked to the fact that leadership is not part of the discourse.

The fact that so many internal policies have not been ratified by Council is of course problematic. Policy generally seems to be an area of vagueness and uncertainty. Given the prominence of policy in Council meetings (as reflected in minutes), staff members' confusion (some could not even recall whether new policies had been written), and the levels of anxiety among some (nervous that policy was not being adhered to, or that there were no official guidelines about policy implementation), it seems the college needs to workshop policy, policy formation and the role of policy.

6.5 Final thoughts

This study has looked at a successful college which has enjoyed a period of stability and growth. Looking at the dreams and visions of the senior leadership, it seems set to grow even more over the years to come, working towards its Vision 2030. I acknowledge that many

colleges are not enjoying these levels of stability, confidence and success. It is likely that less successful colleges are struggling with different problems.

Nevertheless, I trust that what this study has revealed will be of interest to all colleges, regardless of their current state. I hope what has been shown in terms of leadership thinking and practice will prove to be useful to everyone working in this crucial sector. There is no doubt that the economic future of South Africa rests heavily on the effectiveness of this sector, working side by side with universities to prepare a work force for the future.

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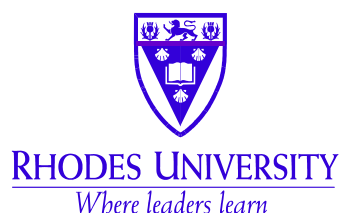
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter from supervisor



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Tel: +27 (0) 46 603 8383

25 May 2018

Ms L. Mbobo
Deputy Director-General: Corporate Services
Department of Higher Education and Training
Private Bag X174
Pretoria
0001

Dear Ms Mbobo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PORT ELIZABETH TVET COLLEGE

The purpose of this letter is to seek your permission for a student and ex-deputy principal of a TVET College, Ms Nonkonzo Chagi, to conduct her Master's research at the XXX TVET College. Ms Chagi is a registered Master's student in the Education Faculty of Rhodes University (student number 15C6867), and I write in my capacity as her supervisor.

Ms Chagi is particularly interested in the role of leadership teams in colleges, an interest I share. We are of the opinion that, despite policy and guidelines, little is known of what college

leadership actually entails, particularly in light of recent far-reaching developments, both structurally and in terms of curriculum. Her interest is therefore in developing a better understanding of how leadership is experienced and understood in the college system. She has chosen the XXX TVET College - all three campuses - chiefly because it is conveniently situated close to her home and will therefore be less costly, both in terms of time and money.

I am very supportive of this project because the college sector, despite being of crucial importance to the country's economic well-being is so under-researched, and I believe Ms Chagi to be very well placed to produce a valuable thesis. But she will need help, and I humbly request your permission for her to proceed. She is on the process of negotiating access with the principal, Mr XXX. I can assure you that her research will be governed by Rhodes University's strict ethical code, so that the identity of the institution and every person she deals with will be fully protected.

I thank you in anticipation for your support. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hennie van der Mescht', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

(Prof) Hennie van der Mescht (henniemescht@gmail.com)

(Supervisor)

083 445 7833

Appendix 2: Student letter to DHET

No 5 Katjiepiering Street
Strelitzia Park
Uitenhage
6229

The Department of Education

Steve Vukile Tshwete Building

Zwelitsha

5608

To: The Regional Director

I am a full-time student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, doing a research study towards a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Management. My research study is an exploration of leadership practices in an Eastern Cape TVET college. I plan to undertake the study with effect from the 1 May 2018 to December 2018.

The study aims at exploring leadership at one of the Eastern Cape TVET colleges. I believe that leadership of colleges has become increasingly challenging and complex, and I would like to shed some light on this complexity in an attempt to look for possible ways forward.

I undertake to protect the identity of both the participants and the college in line with the Rhodes University code of ethics.

I would need to be granted access to the staff and specified documents at the college, which I will arrange with the principal, once your permission has been granted.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Nonkonzo Chagi

(Student No 15C6867)

Appendix 3: Student letter to college

No 5 Katjiepiering Street
Strelitzia Park
Uitenhage
6229

[Address omitted]

To: The Principal: XXX College

I am a full-time student at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, doing a research study towards a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Management. My research study is an exploration of leadership practices in an Eastern Cape TVET college. I plan to undertake the study with effect from the 1 May 2018 to December 2018. I have selected your college to undertake the research, for reasons I will explain to you when we have our first meeting.

The study aims at exploring leadership at one of the Eastern Cape TVET colleges. I believe that leadership of colleges has become increasingly challenging and complex, and I would like to shed some light on this complexity in an attempt to look for possible ways forward.

I undertake to protect the identity of both the participants and the college in line with the Rhodes University code of ethics.

I would need to be granted access to the staff and specified documents at your college, and need to know whether you are happy with this. I have sought permission from the Director General, as well as the Regional Director. I also attach a copy of a letter from my supervisor, requesting permission and access.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Nonkonzo Chagi

(Student No 15C6867)

Appendix 4: Permission letter from the college



[CITY] TVET College

13 June 2018

To: Rhodes University Research Unit

Subject: Permission for Ms N Chagi to Conduct Research at PE TVET College

Port Elizabeth TVET college fully supports Ms N Chagi to conduct research at [City] TVET College.

Ms N Chagi 's research is to support the Department of Higher Education and Training in getting evidence in matters that are of crucial importance to enhance delivery. As management we hope that her research will have a positive impact and that it would add value to the institution.

Thank you.

(Signed) Acting Principal



Appendix 5: Student letter to participants

Dear XXX

As you are aware from my visit to the college in June 2018, I have embarked on a study of leadership in your college. The study requires me to gather data, through questionnaires and one-on-one interviews, from selected senior staff members of the college. I envisage the questionnaire to take about 20 minutes to complete. Interviews will last no longer than one hour and will be arranged with you individually at a time and place that suits you.

The purpose of this letter is two-fold: I would like your permission to include you in this study which you can grant by signing the statement at the foot of this page. Secondly, I need to inform you of ethical standards which govern this study. These are:

1. I will do my utmost to reflect accurately what I read and hear. To strengthen this claim I plan to let you check the thesis to ensure that I have reflected you and your views accurately.
2. I will use the data for this research only, and the data will be treated with complete confidentiality and respect.
3. I will not use your name in the study, nor the name of the college.
4. Having given permission you may nevertheless at any time withdraw from the study with no adverse consequences to yourself.
5. If you at any time feel the need to discuss ethical issues concerning this study with someone feel free to contact my supervisor, Prof Hennie van der Mescht (henniemescht@gmail.com)

If you agree, please sign and leave with college administration for me to collect:

I, _____, hereby agree to participate in Ms Nonkonzo Chagi's study, subject to the conditions listed on this page.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 6: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPAL AND OTHER MEMBERS OF COLLEGE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The purpose of this interview is to extract from principals and other senior staff of a TVET college their understanding of the challenges in leading the college, as well as their suggestions for possible solutions. Essentially, I designed the schedule to surface their understanding of leadership in the TVET college context.

1. How would you describe your leadership role in the college?
2. Did you receive any training for this position? Elaborate briefly.
3. Are these functions captured in documents, such as guidelines or policies? Or do you have to learn them as you go along?
4. Are you part of a leadership team in the college, or do you function individually?
5. What are the challenges you face in leading this college?
6. How have these challenges come about? Where do they originate?
7. Does the department offer any assistance in tackling these challenges? Give some examples.
8. Have you found any ways of dealing with these challenges without the department's help? Elaborate briefly.
9. How do you see the future of the TVET Colleges? What role could / should the colleges play in the education landscape of South Africa.
10. Do you think this college fulfils that role? Why, or why not?

Appendix 7: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about college leadership. The information will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only.

Section 1

GENERAL INFORMATION

(To be filled by all managers and council members)

PLEASE PUT A CROSS IN THE APPROPRIATE OPTION UNDER EACH COLUMN

Designation	Qualification	Experience in the college (years)	Race	Gender
Principal	Technical qualification	0-2	white	male
Deputy Principal	Junior degree	3-4	black	female

Campus Manager	Senior degree	5-7	Indian	
Council Member	Technical and professional qualifications and	8-10	coloured	
		10-15		

Section 2

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

PLEASE READ EACH OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW AND PLACE A CROSS IN THE RESPONSE YOU CONSIDER MOST APPROPRIATE

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
The principal and management have appropriate experience and qualifications to run the college					
There are clear communication channels which ensure effective management					
Everyone has access to policy documents outlining roles and responsibilities					
Everyone involved in management is afforded an opportunity to participate in decision making at the college					
Team work is part of the culture of this college					
The opinion of council and department is considered more important than that of the college management					
There is shared responsibility amongst all members of the staff when faced with challenges					
The roles and responsibility at the college are not clearly defined.					
Not everyone is given a chance to play a role in shaping the future of the college					
There are many leadership opportunities for staff members at the college					
The college has a clear vision for the future					
There is adequate strategic planning to ensure a bright future for the college					

SECTION 3

What do you see as the main challenges in leading and managing the college? Identify three challenges and explain each.

Thank you for assisting me in this way!