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ENACTING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION THROUGH SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Abstract

Promulgated by Nelson Mandela in December 1996, South Africa's post-Apartheid Constitution draws on the Bill of Rights to affirm the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. As an emerging democracy, South Africa further seeks to address issues of social justice and equality in education through the South African Schools Act of 1996. This Act sets out policies and practices intended to redress past injustices and support the rights of learners, educators and parents. Drawing on critical feminist theory, this study explored the experiences of female educational leaders in South Africa's disadvantaged rural school communities.

This qualitative research project adopted a case study research design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations. The aims of this paper are: (i) to investigate the principles of social justice and equity as expressed through spiritual leadership; and (ii) to interpret these principles in relation to education policies. Identifying connectedness and spirituality as prerequisites for spiritual leadership, the study found that spiritual leadership is a means through which social justice leadership can be enacted. While the South African Schools Act upholds the notion that public schools promote democracy through respect for all and a tolerance of diverse religious beliefs, this paper does not conflate spirituality with religion. It instead, explores alternative interpretations which explore spiritual leadership and restorative justice as vehicles through which equity and social justice can be understood and enacted.

Keywords: Social justice, equity, spiritual leadership, critical feminist research, restorative justice

1. INTRODUCTION

Rooted in racist ideologies, Apartheid was characterised by a deliberate social design which favoured white supremacy, segregation and inequality. Dvorin points out that “the theory of Apartheid requires the social, economic, and political segregation of persons on the grounds of race” (1951:32). Standing in stark contrast, however, South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 laid the foundation for a Constitution which privileged democratic values. Promulgated by Nelson Mandela, struggle icon and South Africa's first democratically elected president, the post- Apartheid Constitution draws on the Bill of Rights to advance the values of equality, human dignity and freedom. The Bill of Rights, as stated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, conceptualises *equality* as, “everyone [being regarded as] equal before the law and [has] the right to equal protection and benefit of the law”; *human dignity* as “inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected”; and *freedom* as a right to “security of the person, expression, association, privacy, religion, belief and opinion, and freedom from slavery, servitude and forced labour” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:5-7). South Africa's Constitution of 1996 therefore prompted the transitioning of South Africa to a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

Within the context of a constitutional democracy the principles of equality and social justice in education are represented through the South African Schools Act of 1996. Unlike the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which advocated the policy vision: “There is no place for [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of

labour ... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?" (de Wet & Wolhuter, 2009:363); the South African Schools Act sets out policies and practices intended to "redress past injustices on educational provision" (ibid). The Preamble to the South African Schools Act pronounces this intent as the advancement of the:

...democratic transformation of society, the combating of racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, a contribution to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, the protection and advancement of diverse cultures and languages, and the upholding of the rights of all learners, parents and educators (South African Schools Act, 1996:5).

The South African Schools Act provides for the right of learners to practise or observe religious actions in public schools. While this right reflects the tenet of freedom in South Africa's Constitution, the Act states that "religious observances may be conducted at a public school under rules issued by the governing body if such observances are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff is free and voluntary" (South African Schools Act, 1996:8). Although the Act promotes tolerance of religious beliefs through equitable respect, this paper does not conflate spirituality with religion. Instead, this paper sets out to investigate the principles of social justice and equity as expressed through spiritual leadership, and to interpret these principles in relation to education policies.

This paper explores spiritual leadership and restorative justice as vehicles through which equity and social justice can be understood and enacted.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: ENACTING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

This study drew on critical feminist theory to explore the lived educational leadership experiences of females in disadvantaged rural communities. Edwards and Perumal contend that a "feminist approach to educational leadership differs from mainstream educational leadership narratives in that it displaces a dichotomous interpretation of the ways in which females lead differently to men" (2015:7427). Critical feminist, bell hooks observes that feminists oppose all forms of oppression of women caused largely by living in predominantly patriarchal societies (1989).

Within mainstream leadership literature, issues of social justice and spiritual leadership are typically presented in isolation from each other. In contrast to mainstream leadership theories, however, Blackmore posits that "feminist and critical theory have provided alternative approaches to rethinking leadership" (2006:192). Challenging the epistemological assumptions of positivism, critical feminists focus on "issues of social justice, on power, language and culture, asking who benefits from particular policies, practices and arrangements, how and why; who are marginalised; and whose voice dominates?" (ibid.). The impact of colonialism and Apartheid, places issues of social justice firmly on South Africa's redress agenda. Although democracy was achieved in 1994, post-Apartheid South Africa remains an extremely dualistic society, characterised by high levels of inequality and poverty.

Spiritual leadership may be broadly interpreted in three categories. The first places an emphasis on *sovereignty*. Sanders posits that "spiritual leadership does not come as the result of theological training: It is about sovereignty, that is, enacting God's will and leading through His influence" (1994:22). In this interpretation, a spiritual leader submits to God's sovereignty and "influences others not by the power of his own personality alone but by the personally irradiated, interpenetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit" (Sanders, 1989:36).

The second interpretation conceives spiritual leadership as a *religious imperative*. Spiritual leadership is therefore conceived as being dogmatic and doctrinal. From a Christian perspective, spiritual leaders enact religious convictions to lead “people from where they are to where God wants them to be” (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001:20).

The third interpretation formulates spiritual leadership as non-doctrinal, non-dogmatic, and is not associated with a specific religious tradition. This interpretation suggests that spiritual leadership can be manifested in the organisational life of institutions. Spiritual leadership is therefore based on *spirituality*. Benefiel describes spirituality as a “human spirit fully engaged” (2005:9). She adds that “spirituality includes the intellectual, emotional, and relational depth of human character as well as the continuing capability and yearning for personal development and evolution” (ibid). Arguing against spiritual leadership as “slipping religion back into classrooms, district offices, or the room where the school board meets”, Thompson defines spiritual leadership as a “state of mind or consciousness that enables one to perceive deeper levels of existence, meaning, values, and purpose than can be perceived from a strictly materialistic vantage point” (2008:152).

Further contrasting mainstream leadership theory to feminist leadership, Blackmore points out that leadership for social justice and spiritual leadership are regarded as features of feminist leadership. In seeking to conceptualise feminist leadership, a qualifying distinction is drawn between a “feminine approach to leadership” and a “feminist approach to leadership” (2006:184). A feminine approach, on the one hand, suggests that female leaders display a “high propensity to exhibit interpersonal behaviours” (Powell, 2011:68). Kawatra and Krishan explain that “feminine leadership enhances people-orientation, collaboration and team orientation” (2004:2). On the other hand, however, Grogan and Shakeshaft describe a ‘feminist approach’ to leadership as the “preferred leadership strategies and styles” that “characterise a feminist approach to leadership” (2011:16). Together with relational leadership and leadership for learning, leadership for social justice and spiritual leadership are included among the characteristics of a feminist approach to educational leadership (ibid.).

Grogan and Shakeshaft point out that feminist leadership theories associate social justice with servant leadership (2011). Indeed, servant leadership “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first”, and to “make sure that other’s highest priority needs are being served” (Spears, 2010:11). However, while Reynolds contends that servant leadership has often been criticised for its “lack of a coherent conceptual framework” (2011:14), Blackaby and Blackaby explain that “servant leadership is the manifestation of spiritual leadership” and the “purpose of “spiritual leadership is to serve people so as to cultivate a relationship with God” (2001:85). Assertions regarding the association of leadership for social justice with servant leadership, and the claim that servant leadership is the manifestation of spiritual leadership, enable one, therefore, to draw inferences about social justice and spiritual leadership within the critical feminist discourse. Rejecting reductionist binaries as an explanation of educational leadership, critical feminists are thus more concerned with the inter-relatedness of the features of feminist leadership (Blackmore, 2013).

The literature provides examples of the enactment of social justice through spiritual leadership. In such instances female education leaders actively demonstrate spiritual leadership through care for pupils. In a study of female school leaders in urban school communities, Naidoo and Perumal argue that the participants enacted spiritual leadership through care and nurturance of learners (2014). They found that female principals provided toiletries for girls, and ensured that surplus food was provided to child-headed homes. These actions give expression to Grogan and Shakeshaft’s assertion that spiritual leadership is regarded as a means of “understanding connectedness to others and to the greater world” (2011:14).

In other studies of female leaders in disadvantaged urban contexts, Ginya and Perumal observe that when spirituality formed part of their leadership repository, educational leaders were calmer “during confrontational and emotional times” (2016:6). Furthermore, the “principals strongly believed that spirituality completes a leader through realising their values, principles, ethics and the determination of their sole purpose in their leadership role” (ibid). This view is corroborated by Silverman (2013), who argues that spirituality completes a leader. Drawing on Wigglesworth (2006), Ginya and Perumal contend that it is “imperative for school leaders to possess some form of spiritual intelligence” (2016:7). They explain that “spiritual intelligence refers to the ability to behave with compassion and wisdom while maintaining peace regardless of the circumstances” and that “spirit is the fuel that gives leadership energy to transcend against all odds” (ibid). These findings infer the notion that spirituality and religion are dissimilar constructs.

The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is an example of the South African government's legislative influence on issues of social justice through education policy. Rendall-Mkosi, Wenhold and Sibanda note that the “school nutrition programme originated from the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development in 1994 as a Presidential Project under the Department of Health” (2013:7). In 2004 the NSNP was transferred to the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and a 2013 report portrays the programme preparing a balanced cooked meal to nine million learners in nine provinces (ibid.:5). Being fully government funded with a clear policy framework, the NSNP addresses issues of social justice through nutrition and poverty alleviation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study about the experiences of female educational leadership employed a qualitative approach with case study research design. Yin contends that case study methods are used to “understand real life phenomena in depth”, and that such understanding is encompassed with “contextual conditions” (2009:85). Furthermore, this study adopted critical feminist research methodologies, which privilege women's voices, and critique gendered relations of power.

The schools in this study are located in disadvantaged rural contexts in South Africa. Allen defines “disadvantaged” as, “something which causes one to be in an unfavourable position”, and, “underprivileged socially” (2008:425). Located in rural settings, the schools are disadvantaged in that they are deprived of some basic necessities including, adequate housing and sanitation, access to adequate infrastructure, medical facilities and education (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014). In addition, a unique feature of the schools is that they were all founded by missionary organisations and form part of the Historical Schools Restoration Project (HSRP). The missionary organisations which founded the schools were those of a Christian evangelical persuasion. The impact of missionary zeal still permeates the culture of the schools. It is for this reason that most of the participants' responses reflect a Christian conception of religion.

Established in 2008, the HSRP seeks to address the physical and educational needs of schools which “contributed richly to the education of Black South Africans prior to the negative impact of Bantu Education” (Ndungane, 2008:8). In addition, the stated aim of the HSRP is “to revitalize the rich heritage of the historical schools and transform them into sustainable and inspirational African institutions of educational and cultural excellence” (ibid). Archbishop Ndungane, the Director of the HSRP, argues that the “hope for education in South Africa” is found in the “educational renewal projects that have and are occurring in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions” (Ndungane, 2008:11). The manifestation of this ‘hope’ is realised by the contribution of the HSRP to the secondary schools identified for renewal and through these endeavours to not only “abandon the colonial constraints that our history seems to have imposed on our educational thinking”, but to “lead the way for

real comprehensive educational transformation in our country [South Africa]" (ibid).

Table 1 provides a summary of the biographical details of the schools in this study. The names of the schools are represented as pseudonyms.

NAME	YEAR FOUNDED	FOUNDING MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION
Amanzi College	1846	American Board of Missionaries
Spring Valley College	1869	American Board of Missionaries
Hope Town School	1855	Methodist
Rolling Hills College	1586	St Matthew's Mission (Anglican)
Ubuntu College	1923	Benedictine (Catholic)

Table 1. Biographical details of schools in the study

Through purposive sampling thirteen female participants in disadvantaged, rural school communities (DRSCs) were included in this study. Although the participants were all women, diversity was achieved insofar as age, race and length of experience in school leadership positions. Of the participants, two were school principals and eleven held other positions of educational leadership. In-depth interviews, walking interviews, focus groups, dyads, observations and archival document analysis were used as the main instruments for data collection. The narratives in this paper, however, are drawn from five in-depth interviews and one walking interview, each approximately forty minutes in duration. The aim of the interviews was to explore the leadership experiences of female educational leaders in DRSCs. Each interview commenced with a brief introduction and overview of the aims of the study. In addition, every participant signed the letter of consent as required by the University of Johannesburg prior to the commencement of the interview. Furthermore, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg.

Table 2 represents selected autobiographical information and a professional profile of the participants whose narratives are reported in this paper. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities and the research sites.

NAME	SCHOOL	POSITION HELD	AGE	RACE
Jane	Spring Valley College	Principal	55-60	White
Mildred	Spring Valley College	Deputy Principal	40-45	Coloured
Alison	Ubuntu College	Principal	55-60	White
Thelma	Rolling Hills High	Deputy Principal	45-50	black
Mary	Rolling Hills High	Deputy Principal	40-45	Black
Thembi	Rolling Hills High	Head of Department	35-40	Black
Grace	Rolling Hills High	Head of Department	35-40	Black
Cindy	Hope Town School	Head of Department	35-40	Black

Table 2. Autobiographical information and professional profile of participants

Data were transcribed verbatim from voice recordings and analysed thematically through qualitative data analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA). Hesse-Biber contends that a "critical feminist approach positions the research process in time, place, culture and situation, and promotes the use of researchers' reflexivity and critical reflection" (2007:183). FCDA extends the function of CDA and views the use of language through a feminist lens. Lazar explains that FCDA brings together CDA and feminist thought with the specific aim of advancing the "rich and nuanced understanding of the complex workings of power and ideology" (2005:96). Moreover, FCDA is centred on how "gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and

in people's social and personal identities in text and talk”.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion in this section coheres around the themes of (i) expressing social justice through spiritual leadership; and (ii) spiritual leadership in relation to education policies.

4.1 Expressing social justice through spiritual leadership

This section commences with a conceptualisation of spiritual leadership in DRSCs. Connectedness and spiritual leadership as well as the notion that a spiritual way of being is a prerequisite for spiritual leadership are presented as necessary precursors for the interpretation of the enactment of social justice through spiritual leadership.

(i) Connectedness and spiritual leadership

Two participants drew attention of their connectedness to the school and the community.

Thembi commented as follows:

When I think about what attracted me to working here, I feel as if I am drawn to this school. I feel that I belong here and it belongs to me. I see part of my role, [a] big part, is to be a real leader that must also lead spiritually.

In this excerpt, Thembi expresses connectedness as a sense of belonging. She states, *“I feel that I belong here and it [the school] belongs to me.”* A sense of connectedness is positioned within the definition of spirituality. Solomon AND Hunter define spirituality as a way of being that provides a connection to the self and beyond (2002:38). It can be therefore deduced that Thembi has a spiritual connection to Rolling Hills High School.

Mary explains connectedness as a feeling. She stated:

There is a lot of spiritual significance to the place [Rolling Hills High School] itself. There is something about [Rolling Hills High School] that I cannot explain, there is something about this place. I can feel it! Maybe it might still be discovered. I am here because it is drawing me here; I can feel it.

Mary used the phrase *“I can feel it”* to describe her sense of connectedness to the school. She admits, however, that the feeling of connectedness is difficult to grasp and articulate. The phrase *“... that I cannot explain”* demonstrates the paradoxical definition of spirituality. Narrating the paradoxical nature of spirituality, Bolman and Deal propose that “spirituality is beyond us and yet is in everything we do. It is ordinary, yet it is extraordinary” (2001:44). Both Thembi's and Mary's descriptions illustrate a sense of connectedness. Whilst these findings indicate that the connectedness they experience is a form of spirituality, it does not necessarily follow that they are spiritual leaders. Moreover, a ‘spiritual way of being’ is not associated with a particular religious’ tradition. The data suggests, however, that a spiritual way of being is a prerequisite for the enactment of spiritual leadership. This assertion is endorsed by Smith, who contends that “spiritual leadership is a complex, almost mystical entity that initiates membership and belonging” (2011:10).

(ii) From spirituality to spiritual leadership

It has been established that a spiritual way of being is a prerequisite for spiritual leadership. Jane and Cindy describe themselves as spiritual leaders.

Jane commented:

I see my role first and foremost as the spiritual leader of the school. I feel a strong calling and Christian conviction for this. I feel as if God has called me to lead in this

way. I don't know how you can uphold the spiritual side of the school if you don't lead it.

Jane considers her leadership as synonymous with spiritual leadership. She adds that she feels called to be the spiritual leader on the basis of her Christian conviction. Jane stated "*I feel a strong calling and Christian conviction for this [leadership]*". Jane's explanation mirrors Wheatley's definition of spiritual leadership. She posits that a spiritual leader is one who reflects a "sense of calling" (2002:44). Jane's enactment of spiritual leadership is therefore borne out of a Christian conviction and a sense of calling.

Reflecting on Jane's leadership at Spring Valley College, Mildred commented:

Jane is one of the most humble people I know. She is not proud or self-centred. She often says that she will pray about something before making a decision. She really is deeply spiritual.

Mildred's observations endorse Jane's claim of spiritual leadership in two ways. Firstly, Mildred notes that Jane is humble. Sanders points out that spiritual leaders are not proud and egotistical (1989:185-186). Secondly, Jane is known to pray about decisions. Spiritual leadership enacted by seeking God's guidance is in keeping with Sanders' definition. He contends that spiritual leadership enacts "God's will and leading through His influence" (Sanders, 1994:22). Underpinned by Mildred's observations, and based on a Christian conception of religion, Jane's interpretation of spiritual leadership emphasises sovereignty. This interpretation is in line with Sanders who posits that "spiritual leadership does not come about as the result of theological training", but is rather related to the conceptualisation of God's sovereignty (1994:23).

Cindy presents another enactment of spiritual leadership.

I am a Christian and a spiritual person. I am answerable to God and I can say, yes, yes, I do what He asks me to do. I am also a leader and so being responsible for giving the leadership to things spiritual is important to me as well. I think both are, you know, like the same. I believe that God wants me in this place, you know, to lead in this way.

Cindy also regards herself as a spiritual leader. She declares herself as "*a Christian and a spiritual person*", adding that she is "*answerable to God*". Moreover, Cindy submits to the authority of God, she stated, "*I do what He [God] asks me to do*" and, "*I believe that God wants me in this place, you know, to lead the way*". Within the Christian religious faith tradition, spiritual leadership is interpreted as submitting to God's authority. This perspective presents spiritual leadership as a religious imperative. This assertion is corroborated by Blackaby and Blackaby who contend that that "spiritual leaders are accountable to God" (2001:21), and that a "spiritual leaders work from God's agenda" (2001:23).

Introducing a counter narrative, however, Alison's observations indicate that spiritual leadership is not always associated with educational leadership.

I believe in God, but we've got a chaplain from the monastery, he is deeply involved in the school, not in a pushy kind of way, he doesn't take over my role as the principal. He leads the religious part of our school life.

Whilst Jane and Cindy regarded themselves as spiritual leaders, Alison positions this role with the clergy. Alison stated, "*... we've got a chaplain from the monastery*", and "*He leads the religious part of our school life*". Alison's delegation of spiritual leadership to the chaplain is in opposition to Grogan and Shakeshaft's description of feminist leadership. They propose that spiritual leadership must be enacted and contend that it is a characteristic of feminist

leadership (2011:14). This finding represents the differing roles that educational leaders assume and the divergent interpretations of “spiritual” leadership.

The positioning of power in spiritual leadership is of interest to feminist researchers. It has been established that feminist leadership discourses reject power hierarchies that lead to unequal access to resources and marginalisation of people. Within the context of feminist spiritual leadership, a distinction between religion and spirituality is necessary. The hierarchical and patriarchal nature of traditional religious intuitions, such as those in missionary education, is rejected by feminists. In this study, however, the participants have demonstrated a reliance on God’s influence and the spiritual dimension of power. This interpretation reflects feminist spirituality, which is in stark contrast to the hierarchy within patriarchal traditional religions (Sturgeon, 2016:90). Extending this assertion, the data found that social justice is enacted through feminist spiritual leadership. This will be explored in greater detail in the following section.

(iii) Spiritual leadership as an enactment of social justice.

The participants in this study did not profess to be feminists *per se* and their narratives do not contain terminology typically associated with feminist discourses.

Drawing on critical discourse analysis processes, the participants’ expression of social justice was articulated through the term, to “*make a difference*”. Lyman, Strachan and Lazaridou observe that “making a difference is a commitment evident in social justice leaders” (2012:173). It is argued, therefore, that when participants refer to “*making a difference*”, they are embracing the “greatest challenge of feminist leadership”, namely a “commitment to social justice” (ibid). Commenting on their role as educational leaders, five participants made reference to “making a difference”. Below are the examples from participant interviews:

Thembi

I have always had a heart to make a difference. I feel that this must go further, I see part of my role ... a big part ...

Grace

Even the learners, the type of learners, they are the learners which make you willing and interested to see another day coming, going to the classes making a difference in their lives.

Thelma

We know all about the problems, as I said they are barriers. It is what we can do about them, you know, to really make a difference, that is the problem.

Mary

I am here because I feel like it is drawing me here and because teaching is my passion, and I love it. I am here to make a difference in learners’ lives. I can’t just do it for pay, I have to feel that I am making a difference. Despite the conditions that we are working under as educators, I feel that I can see where I am taking these learners. Things are happening, yes, they are!

Alison

But a definition of effective schools is that they address in their own small way, the inequalities. I like that! You know, I can say that apart from excellent results, whatever, you know, we are effective it is about making that significant and long lasting difference. My hope, my dream for the learners of Ubuntu College is that the future will give them fairness and that that will have an equal chance of success. It is the immediate bridge between existing kids and opportunities. I want our students to be massive movers towards social fairness. It not so much what we

do because it is a drop in the ocean, but if we can really mobilise kids, they can be in very senior positions.

In these excerpts, the participants narrate that *"making a difference"* is a significant part of their role as leaders. The sincere tone of their expressions suggests that their optimistic intent is to prepare learners for a future where the injustices of the past will have been eradicated. Alison stated, *"My hope, my dream for the learners of Ubuntu College is that the future will give them fairness and that that will have an equal chance of success."* This is a utopian view based on the assertion that quality education will provide future opportunities. The positive view to create something better in the future synonymous with feminist discourses. Ramazangolu and Holland point out that *"feminists tend to be relatively pessimistic in their analysis of the present, but ambitiously optimistic about future possibilities"* (2002:168).

In a similar explanation, Alison expands her interpretation of *"making a difference"* by adding, *"I want our students to be massive movers towards social fairness."* The term *"social fairness"* is synonymous with social justice. Desiring her students to be *"massive movers towards social fairness"*, indicates Alison's alignment with feminist leadership. Indeed, this assertion is corroborated by Strachan (1999), Wyn, Acker and Richards (2000), and Williamson and Hudson (2001) who concur that that female educational leaders were perceived as political, caring, moral and ethical as well as being committed to *"making a difference"* in the learner's lives.

It has been established that the term, *"making a difference"* is synonymous with leadership for social justice. In the analysis female leadership in DRSCs, the data suggests an association of spiritual leadership with social justice. Drawing leadership and *"making a difference"* together, Mary stated:

Making a difference in many lives is what inspires me as a leader. It is not just a question of the syllabus, but it is also about their souls. I feel that I am answering my spiritual calling by making a difference to the learners. There is so much care that that they need from this school. Our learners come from poor homes and they are looking for more – a place to be safe, not just physically, but emotionally also. Many of their homes are not good. No father around and mothers who work in the town. So these learners need to be noticed and for us to listen to them.

In this excerpt, Mary makes two references to *"making a difference"*. In addition, she points out that educational leadership is not only concerned with instructional leadership, [... *a question of the syllabus ...*] but spiritual leadership as well [... *about their souls*]. Spiritual leadership's association with *"making a difference"* is reflected in Fry's description. He observed that spiritual leadership creates a vision wherein leaders *"experience a sense of calling that their life has meaning and makes a difference"* (Fry, 2003:22). Drawing on this analysis, it is concluded, that *"making a difference"* or acts of social justice are enacted through spiritual leadership.

Furthermore, Mary privileges spiritual leadership's association to social justice by stating *"I am answering my spiritual calling by making a difference to the learners."* Mary expounds this statement by making reference to two non-doctrinal and non-dogmatic features of spiritual leadership. The first is her reference to the type of care learners in DRSCs require. She points out that it is not only physical care, but care that addresses emotional needs. It has been established that a *"spiritual way of being"* is a prerequisite for spiritual leadership and the emotional care to which Mary refers is in keeping with Benefiel's description of spirituality. He notes that *"spirituality includes the intellectual, emotional, and relational depth of human character"* (2005:9). It is argued therefore that empathy and a sincere concern for social poverty are characteristics of spiritual leadership. The second is her interpretation of the *"relational depth of human character"* (ibid.). Mary interprets spirituality as a recognition of the relational needs of learners and their desire to be treated with dignity through the

phrase, "... so these learners need to be noticed and for us to listen to them".

The spiritual leadership that Mary describes addresses "human character". Moreover, it is profoundly non-doctrinal and non-dogmatic, and is therefore not aligned with a specific religious tradition. Instead, spiritual leadership for Mary reflects Thompson's definition of spiritual leadership. He defines spiritual leadership as a "state of mind or consciousness that enables one to perceive deeper levels of existence" (2008:152). It is argued that Mary perceives these "deeper levels of existence" by addressing the emotional and relational needs of learners.

Drawing an association between spiritual leadership and social justice presents a research finding that responds to a silence in the literature regarding the enactment of spiritual leadership in DRSCs. Actions that address social justice issues are realised through the "intangible and mystical concept of spirituality, and the complex nature of leadership" (Smith, 2011:8). Therefore, it is argued that social justice is enacted through spiritual leadership when issues of social justice are addressed from a spiritual perspective

A further analysis highlights the interpretation of the school as the site for the enactment of social justice. The study found two interpretations: In the first instance enacting social justice was considered central to the preparation of learners for contribution to a just society. Alison's statement supports this assertion:

We say we are not producing employees; we are producing employers! We are not producing followers; we are producing leaders. They don't all rise to that level, but I think for them to think that way is a good start.

The phrases "*we are producing employers*" and "*we are producing leaders*" illustrate a future view of education. This approach to education indicates that the learners are being prepared to contribute to a future society. It is anticipated that their contribution in a future society will positively address social injustice. Their actions mirror Fraser's argument that social justice feminists empower ordinary citizens to "interpret their needs democratically via political deliberation and contestation" (2009:102). Existing alongside the first, the second interpretation considers the school as the site for social justice. Alison perceives the school as the site for the teaching and modelling of social justice. She stated:

It [social justice] starts here. They must experience fairness here – at school. I am very ambitious about that. I think that for the learner to achieve this, we as staff have to show the way. We have to also act in a just way – to prepare them. We talk about unfairness in society, we deal with racism. They know about the past in South Africa, about Apartheid and how people were discriminated against, and we work hard to prepare them for the future. It is more than just curriculum knowledge, it's about life! We work hard to teach the learners that they must be themselves. They need to be true to who they are, this is the [Ubuntu College] way. They are young black women and they must be proud of that.

This statement was made in 2014, twenty years into South Africa's democracy. It highlights the demand for the ongoing pursuit of justice in all areas of society. Teasley (2007) draws on Fraser who envisions social justice as *inter alia* the "reinforcement of cultural recognition, the equitable redistribution of social goods through the world and a translation system of justice" (2006:378). Contradicting the notion that social justice as a future ideal, Alison argued that schools must be the sites where social justice is experienced. She asserted that "*It [social justice] starts here. They must experience fairness here – at school.*" Furthermore, she proposes the notion that staff are required to model social justice. She stated, "*We have to also act in a just way*". This assertion suggests that the present lived experiences of learners

are an appropriate context for the development of a just society

5. Spiritual leadership in relation to education policies

The second aim of this paper is to interpret the principles of enacting social justice through spiritual leadership in relation to existing education policies. This analysis is presented through two themes: (i) The feeding scheme at Rolling Hills High School; and (ii) An interpretation of learner discipline and education policy.

(i) The feeding scheme at Rolling Hills High school

The feature of care was also addressed by a feeding scheme at Rolling Hills High School. Caring for the physical needs of the learners, Thelma described their actions by stating:

As you know [Rolling Hills] is in a deep rural area. Just look around you [Thelma points to mountains and scattered settlements]. Our learners come from far and many of them are from poor families, living with grandparents. Some of their parents are not here. We care for them by feeding them. They get a cooked meal everyday here. We usually have meat, vegetables and pap. Our feeding scheme is run by the church here; the school leadership and the church work well together. It is our way of showing that we care. If they don't eat, they won't learn anything.

Care and nurturance at Rolling Hills High are expressed through a daily contribution to the learner's nutritional needs. Thelma explained that *"We care for them by feeding them."* In this instance, care is practically demonstrated through the feeding scheme, which directly supports the educational process. Thelma observed that *"If they don't eat, they won't learn anything"*. This statement echoes Stillwaggon's assertion that "substantial literature supports the importance of good nutrition for learning" (2005:183).

Thelma pointed out that the feeding scheme at Rolling Hills High School was run by the church. As such it appears not to be supported by the NSNP. Rendall-Mkosi, Wenhold *et al.* explain that "all public schools are categorised on a national ranking mechanism from quintile 1-5, with quintile 1 being poorly resourced schools on poor communities" (2013:5). The NSNP provides daily meals for learners in quintile 1-3 school and while Rolling Hills is a quintile 2 school, Thelma did not provide an explanation as why they are excluded from the NSNP. It is argued, however, that the provision of a daily meals by female leaders demonstrates care and addresses social justice. It is therefore an enactment of spiritual leadership.

(ii) An interpretation of learner discipline and education policy.

Within the context of learner discipline, this study found the enactment of social justice through restorative justice. In line with Section 12 of the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 states that "everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way", the South African Schools Act prohibits disciplinary measures such as corporal punishment. The Act states that, "no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner" (South African Schools Act, 1996:16).

During the walking interview with Jane, we passed a classroom where a senior teacher was dealing with a discipline issue involving three learners. She explained:

What happens in this school, from a discipline perspective, is a move away from punishment in the old way. You know, punishment for a wrong thing done. We have been trying a new method, where learners seek to hear each other's point of view. The main purpose is to listen, to forgive and solve the problem. We are trying to restore relationships. It is very time consuming through, but I think it means that

we live out the Christian values in this school. I heard about it at a conference, and I have started implementing it. I have implemented it and I lead the process.

Researcher: What was the reason for this change in approach?

As you might know, this province of Kwa-Zulu Natal has been very violent in the past, especially before the first elections. The violence between communities seems to be better, but the violence within communities is very bad. There is lots of family violence and our learners see this, so they then think this is the only way to solve problems. We are trying to teach something different. It is actually completely opposite to what they have experienced.

Researcher: What would you consider as the key feature of this approach?

Well, it is about a positive outcome for all parties. They have to try and see the situation from the other person's view. It is also about making up and mending relationships. It means that people are accountable for their actions. They also have to think about what they have done and why they did it, also how they can do things differently next time. Some teachers have been trained, but it will take some time, that's for sure!

This approach represents spiritual leadership, and stresses that restorative justice is the vehicle through which it is manifested. This assertion is in line with Hadley's description. He notes that "restorative justice is at root a deeply spiritual process", and that "drawing on spiritual values, it responds to human needs holistically in order to restore the moral bond of community" (2006:174). Drawing further on this analysis, Jane associates restorative justice with spiritual leadership within a Christian conception of religion. She stated that, "... we are trying to restore relationships. It is very time consuming through, but I think it means that we live out the Christian values in this school ...".

Restorative justice seeks to reconcile aggrieved parties to each other through understanding, forgiveness and mutual respect (Maise, 2003). While the restorative justice described by Jane reflects Christian values (Jonah, n/d:2), it is argued that restorative justice is not exclusively associated with the principles of the Christian faith tradition. Indeed, restoration, reconciliation and forgiveness are also principles of the Islam perspective (Siddiqi, 2007). It is argued therefore that while restorative justice is an enactment of spiritual leadership, it is not exclusively associated with a particular religious perspective.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper explored the enactment of social justice through spiritual leadership. The data revealed that seven participants considered spirituality as a component of their leadership. Whilst it was established that a spiritual way of being is a prerequisite for spiritual leadership, the data presented differing interpretations of spiritual leadership. The analysis revealed that in some instances this interpretation was closely associated with sovereignty – in others spiritual leadership was motivated by a religious imperative – and in others the spiritual way of leading was non-doctrinal and non-dogmatic. Furthermore, it was found that social justice was enacted through spiritual leadership when social justice issues are addressed from a spiritual perspective. Moreover, it was argued that while spiritual leadership provided conditions conducive for the enactment of social justice, there were differing interpretations of the school as the site at which social justice was experienced. On the one hand, schools were perceived as preparation for a future contribution to a just society. On the other hand, some participants regarded the school as the site at which social justice should be experienced. In both interpretations, however, spiritual leadership catalysed the enactment of social justice. In relation to education policies, the study found that while feeding schemes directly address issues of social justice, the feeding scheme at Rolling Hills Hugh School was not supported by the NSNP. In addition, restorative justice is an alternative vehicle through which equity and social justice could be understood. It

was argued that this approach is not the preserve of a particular religious' tradition. Yet, restorative justice is a manifestation of spiritual leadership and is a vehicle through which social justice is enacted.

7. REFERENCES

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