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# **AN EXPLORATION OF MORAL LEADERSHIP**

**What are the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of  
principals who lead with moral purpose within their school  
community?**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
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## ABSTRACT

*Brundrett, Fitzgerald and Sommerfeldt (2006) argue that the role of a principal has been burdened by site based administrivia, and increasing accountability centred on teacher performance and student attainment. However, Notman (2012) has identified school principals who develop certain types of personal attributes, dispositions, and capacities to lead in a moral way. They also appear to have a broader view of education and society. This leads towards the notion of exploring principals' who lead with moral purpose in the context of their school community.*

*Literature suggests the best way to explore principals who lead with moral purpose is through the social constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology (Bear-Lehman, 2002). As a result, six New Zealand principals were identified and interviewed using a semi-structured interview process. The data from these interviews was then analysed using an interpretivist approach.*

*Findings from the research illustrated how principals who lead with moral purpose have a deep conviction towards valuing human relationships within their school community. Moral purpose influences a principal to be driven by a social justice belief that every person in a community is entitled to a meaningful education and reasonable life. This understanding is further shaped by an ethical belief that the moral purpose of education is to ensure that the rights and aspirations of every community member, starting with their students, is protected and enhanced.*

*This research has shown that principals who lead with moral purpose are more likely to be moral leaders, where their focus is on leading others in a moral way. They model and communicate ethical beliefs through their moral actions, which imbue a culture of high trust, collective responsibility and shared moral purpose. This has led to an authentic view of moral leadership which includes a moral leaders personal self-construct. Authentic moral principals have the capacity to critically self-reflect due to their developing ethical and moral intelligences.*

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### 1.1 Current school leadership context

New Zealand has a unique decentralised education system. Boards of Trustees govern schools, where school principals act as the Educational Chief Executive on the board. Theorists believe this has led to increasing bureaucratic demands on the expected role of New Zealand school principals (Bush, 2009; Notman, 2012). Fitzgerald, Youngs and Grootenboer (2003) suggest the reality of parents in governance roles has resulted in principals being delegated the overall responsibility and accountability of the board of trustees. For example, many parents are elected onto board of trustees with limited knowledge of the complexities associated with running a school. This point is acknowledged by Bush (2009) who states, “governments, parents and the wider public expect a great deal from their schools and most of these expectations are transmitted via the principals” (p. 376). Consequently, Brundrett et al. (2006) argue that the role of a principal has been burdened by site-based administrivia, and increasing accountability centred on teacher performance and student attainment.

However, Notman (2012) believes some New Zealand principals’ have also been influenced by the on-going educational reforms that have occurred since the introduction of a decentralised education system. This includes grappling with on-going societal reforms that impact on their ability to maintain a school’s vision focused on a community’s aspirations for their students. Through his research into New Zealand principals, he has identified an emerging role of principalship that involves ‘intrapersonal elements’ and personal qualities, where they can sustain success for students while also engaging “with educational, social, economic and political change” (p. 470).

Stringer (2009) reinforces Notman’s (2012) research by proposing to ‘deconstruct’ the current context of New Zealand principals. She states:

New Zealand schools operate within external and internal contexts influenced by society and a national education system. Macro cultural norms of accountability,

compliance and improvement and socio-economic location factors influence and continually shape what happens in schools. They determine what is value. Macro and micro values provide a framework within which schools must construct their vision. (p. 175)

The above statement leads to the following questions: what is the role of a school principal? How do school leaders ensure a school community remains morally committed towards their school vision while also “working within a national vision constitute” (Stringer, 2009, p. 176)? Furthermore, how do these leaders develop the capacity to cope with macro and micro influences in the context of their role as an educational leader? Notman (2012) suggests there is a “personal domain, within a framework of holistic leadership that may help us better understand the complex mosaic of school principalship” (p. 476). For example, some school principals possess or develop certain types of personal attributes, dispositions, and capacities to lead in a moral way. He suggests these leaders have a broader view of education and society. This leads towards the notion of uncovering moral principals’ social reality and moral purpose in the context of their leadership role.

## **1.2 Researcher orientation**

After seven years of principalship, one begins to develop the reflective craft to emerge from the swamp of managerial complexity and question the ‘truth’ about their leadership. A deeper awareness of the leadership philosophy that shapes daily decisions, from a moral perspective, allows a principal to stand back and consider the influence their role has in shaping the lives of today’s future citizens and the community. As a result of my experience as a principal and postgraduate student, I am searching for a more moral view of leadership.

Questions have often arisen from these reflective moments when I have viewed other principals in action or have been offered the opportunity to engage in dialogue with them. The recurring question from these moments seems to revolve around the core purpose of my role as a leader of my school and community? How is it possible for me to sustain a core purpose when the complexity of

educational change is so diverse and ever changing? As a result of this type of self-reflection, I begin my research with the hope that I can uncover the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who lead with moral purpose in their schools.

The importance of reflective practice is further enhanced with sound, theoretical research. A review of literature has identified a form of moral leadership with moral purpose that supports teachers, students, and parents to become internally motivated. These moral leaders help stakeholders to experience feelings and senses that enhance their well-being and a more connected community. As Starratt (2007) states, “they are searching and must search for the truth of who they are” (p. 167). Literature suggests that moral leadership with moral purpose creates a shared sense of community identity in which every member is committed to the common good (Bezzina, 2012; Davies & West-Burnham, 1997; Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006; Fullan, 2005, 2007, 2009; Furman, 2004; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1992).

### **1.3 Justification for the research**

Education research provides a lens through which to explore the social reality of principals with the aim of improving learning. The first reason for justifying my research is that education needs more quality research with the aim of improving the understanding of educational leadership. This research will highlight the real experiences of a small group of principals, which hopefully will add credibility and knowledge to the profession (Ball & Forzani, 2007; J. Gardner, 2011; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Siu, 2008; Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010).

Why is moral leadership worth researching? The future well-being of a complex, ever changing society is dependent upon a high quality education system that caters for the well-being of every individual. To achieve this requires a motivated, expert teaching force that is supported and guided through so much complexity. As Fullan (2003a) states, “the principals role is pivotal in this equation” (p. 5). To achieve a high quality teaching force requires school leaders who “are responsible

for their own survival and well being, and who can successfully integrate themselves within their school network” (Fink, 2005, p. 74). Robertson (2005) argues today’s school principals need to be able to cope with the complexity of their roles in an ever-changing context. They also need to adapt systems and practices to counter political and social influences, which hinder a school from remaining focused on its core business, improving learning opportunities.

Furthermore, West-Burnham (2008) argues for a more humanistic approach to thinking about the notions of school leadership. This involves four dimensions based on a model of personal efficacy, with a school leader’s moral purpose being one of these four interdependent themes. This type of leader is values driven and demonstrates a very clear ethical dimension to their leadership. They are hopeful leaders who “deliberately strive to turn hopefulness into reality” (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 113). This notion is also supported by L. Lambert (2006) and Law and Glover (2000).

The purpose of this research is an exploration of moral leadership, with the core question being:

What are the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who lead moral purpose within their school community?

It is hoped that this research will stimulate other principals to reflect on their own moral purpose. As this question is addressed through the undertaking of a thorough literature review in Chapter 2, other emerging themes may develop. Consequently, a research method, described in Chapter 3, will be selected based on the research question and emerging literature themes. As J. Gardner (2011) believes, it is essential that researchers present “simple, plausible propositions” in their findings to assist practitioners in the classroom (p. 557). This will be done in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings and link them to some aspects of the international literature considered in Chapter 2. The concluding chapter will describe how the research question was answered in relation to the findings, while also identifying limitations of the research and possible areas for future development.

**2.1 Introduction**

Freer and Barker (2008) argue that one of the core responsibilities of researchers is to synthesise information, communicate findings to followers while also identifying alternate practical courses of action that lead to further knowledge. France (2005) describes literature reviews as a form of theoretical writing used by researchers when conducting research. They either use the literature review as a stand-alone piece of research, or as part of the initial section of a piece of more in-depth research (such as a thesis). She adds, the introductory section of research “answers the question why the study should or needs to be conducted regarding research that has already gone before the current study. The review adds credibility to the study, and also validity of the research” (p. 30). As Mutch (2005) succinctly states, the main purpose for undertaking a literature review is “to provide a context and justification for the theoretical structure of the research” (p. 92). For the purposes of this research, a literature review will be undertaken to explore the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who appear to lead with moral purpose in their school community?

**Part One****2.2 Emerging themes: leadership with moral purpose**

At this stage, a consideration of relevant literature has led me to the following understanding of three core descriptions:

- Personal attributes: What are the values and ethical beliefs of principals who lead with moral purpose? How do they perceive their leadership as a way of influencing moral purpose within their school community?
- Personal dispositions: What motivates them to lead with moral purpose? What social, emotional, and spiritual characteristics do they demonstrate? How do these characteristics influence people within their school community?
- Personal Capacities: What do they do to cope with the complexity of school leadership? How do they remain focused on building an environment that is reflective and focused on self-improvement? How do

they integrate human uniqueness, while supporting and guiding a community towards a moral purpose?

The literature highlights a number of themes linked to principals who lead with moral purpose. These will be explored in the forthcoming sections.

### **2.2.1 Moral purpose**

Scholars describe a generic view of moral purpose, which is simply referred to as a school's goal. In this instance, the leader endeavours to motivate students, teachers and parents to create a shared sense of purpose towards achieving this goal or school vision. Motivation is also enhanced by the nature of the goal being focused on students and their learning. The success of this goal is also generally measured (De Pree, 1997; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010; Talbert-Johnson, 2006).

Fullan (2003b, 2009) describes moral purpose as a clear and intense focus on learning. Theorists also suggest leadership should be directly aimed at ensuring the gap between higher and lower performing students is reduced, where there is a constant emphasis on improving student achievement (Fullan et al., 2006; Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hopkins, 2011; Robertson, 2011). In order for this to occur, leadership should also prioritise the professional learning of teachers. The focus of professional learning should be on eliminating poor teacher performance, increasing teacher standards and raising the level of teacher pedagogy so as to improve the outcome of students' academic achievement and therefore a country's economic performance (Fullan, 2003b, 2009). As Fullan et al. (2006) state, the moral purpose of this leadership approach ensures the continuous best practice of teachers "is the core work in each and every classroom" (p. 92).

However, this interpretation of moral purpose only appears to provide a somewhat superficial view. Theorists argue there is a deeper driving force behind what they describe as the very heart of leadership with moral purpose. Fullan (2003b) states, "the very heart of moral purpose is the common good" (p. 3). For example, this has been described as making a difference to the lives of future citizens, who can

actively contribute to a morally based society (Fullan, 2003b; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Interestingly, Fullan illustrates an apparent contradiction from his earlier view of moral purpose in relation to the purpose of education. In contrast, other theorists offer a clear perspective on the educational experience that provides individuals with the opportunity to come into being or find their true self (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Starratt, 2007).

Literature points to the notion that moral leadership and moral purpose are intertwined. This creates a tension between a simplistic view of moral purpose, and a deeper ethical view, which can be interpreted within a wider range of social contexts. This point is illustrated when government efforts to reform schools are considered. Leaders are expected to focus on the basics of reading, writing and mathematics to support the future economic work force (Coleman, 2011; Day et al., 2001; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Furman, 2004; Riley, Selden, & Caldwell, 2004; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). However, Day et al. (2001) believe morally based leadership decisions should also “be dedicated to the welfare of staff and students with the latter at the centre” (p. 43).

Starratt (2007) argues that the moral purpose of schooling is overshadowed by learning the school curriculum. Learning the basics is seen as the end point of schooling. He states that what school leaders with moral purpose must do:

Is connect the learning agenda of the school to the central moral agenda of the learners during their 13 or more years in school, namely the agenda of finding and choosing and fashioning themselves as individuals and as a human community. (Starratt, 2007, p. 167)

This view of moral purpose does not ignore the basics or a leader’s responsibility to implement government policy. Rather, it involves leaders being meticulous about what basics students need to know while also clearly articulating and actively pursuing a deep moral purpose (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Fullan, 2005; Furman, 2004). However, non-explicit references

from the literature suggest that principals with a strong sense of moral purpose are more likely to question traditional forms of school based education. They are also more likely to be innovative in their leadership and the way they guide learning opportunities and strategies in their school.

### **2.2.2 Moral purpose and the community**

Reus-Smith (2001) believes moral purpose and the community have had long historical links. History has shown how agents (leaders) of the state have been driven by hegemonic beliefs. For example, Greek leaders believed in shaping the communal life of their citizens and Renaissance Italians believed in civic glory. Yet today, the rights of child and the community shape the purpose of education. This leads to an ethical leadership framework in which teacher commitment is cultivated by a clear moral purpose (Reus-Smit, 2001; Talbert-Johnson, 2006).

Sergiovanni (2001) supports this ethical view of leadership. The one-sided distribution of power associated within a school creates an ethical responsibility for leaders to ensure followers experience a sense of fulfilment as community members. Leadership with moral purpose supports teachers, students, and parents to become internally motivated through experiencing feelings and senses that enhance their well-being. As Starratt (2007) states, “they are searching and must search for the truth of who they are” (p. 167). The aim of leadership with moral purpose appears to create a shared sense of community identity in which every member is committed to the common good (Bezzina, 2012; Davies & West-Burnham, 1997; Day et al., 2001; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Fullan et al., 2006; Fullan, 2005, 2007, 2009; Furman, 2004; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Davies and West-Burnham (1997) believe leaders who are passionately driven by moral purpose understand communities are the driving force behind enhancing a better society. For that reason leaders strive to develop the moral competence of society’s citizens. They support community members in learning how to make ethical decisions, leading to morally conscious behaviour. This differs from the previously mentioned hegemonic beliefs because the community themes of social



justice, racial equity and learning for all are the driving force of a shared community vision, which is supported by many theorists (Bezzina, 2012; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day & Schmidt, 2007; Fullan, 2005; Furman, 2004; Riley et al., 2004; Starratt, 2007).

Bezzina (2012) suggests leaders who motivate and challenge stakeholders towards achieving a shared community vision, do so by using an authentic notion of learning. They engage community members in dialogue around central communal themes, such as the rights of citizens, equity and learning for all. These themes dominate the daily relationships and conscious thoughts and actions of parents, teachers and students. As a result of this leadership approach, the moral consciousness of the community becomes real. The ability of a community to achieve its shared goals is thus measured by the moral purpose of becoming a living democratic community (Bezzina, 2012; De Pree, 1997). Consequently, Collarbone and West-Burnham (2008) identify moral purpose within an authentic form of moral leadership. The moral dimension of this leadership approach can perhaps be summarised as:

- A passionate commitment to social justice, equity and inclusion.
- A focus on the entitlement of the individual.
- Openness and transparency in all working.
- Behaviours and strategies that are concrete expressions of the principles of *Every Child Matters*, well-being and community cohesion. (p .87)

### **2.2.3 Dispositions**

In order to identify the dispositions of principals who lead with moral purpose within their schools, a clear description needs to be established. Dispositions have been described as the deliberate conscious thinking of a person, which lead to a consistent pattern of intellectual behaviour (Katz, 1993; Ritchhart, 2001;

Sternberg, 2007; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008; Tishman, Jay, & Perkins, 1993).

Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) believe that dispositions are not a predetermined set of behaviours. This view is also supported by Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp (2007), who state dispositions are a “confusing muddle of values that are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values and might include a belief that ultimately influences behaviour” (p. 398). Tishman et al. (1993) add that these intellectual tendencies can produce both positive and negative behaviours.

Theorists have used many terms to describe the dispositions of a leader such as their character, traits, attitudes, personality and beliefs, to name a few (Burant et al., 2007; Damon, 2007; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). However, Wasonga and Murphy (2007) attempt to provide clarity to this concept. They believe the best way to describe leadership dispositions is by the way a leader positively influences people within their organisation. This ability is not based on intellectual intelligence, but rather on what Goleman (1998, as cited in Hackett & Hortman, 2008) would describe as a leader’s emotional intelligence. For example, such leaders exhibit wisdom and creative thinking, which promote the common good of all citizens (Sternberg, 2007).

In essence, theorists’ suggest leadership dispositions are at the core of a leader’s moral purpose. They are shaped by their personal narratives and evolve through their experiences within the community they lead and learn from. Leadership dispositions are at the heart of the values and beliefs. They shape their leadership style and the moral purpose that drives them. Literature suggests the intelligences of principals who lead with moral purpose have a significant influence on their leadership. This requires further exploration of literature, which will be addressed in part two of this chapter (Burant et al., 2007; Damon, 2007; Helm, 2010; Ritchhart, 2001; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008).

#### **2.2.4 Attributes**

Theorists argue that attributes are the qualities demonstrated by leaders. In essence, they are the outcome of a leader's dispositional thinking. For example, they have been described as the functional qualities a leader displays in their work environment. These include, integrity, courage, caring, a strong work ethic and creative problem solving (Hannah, Woolfolk, & Lord, 2009; Helm, 2007, 2010; Pisarski, Chang, Ashkanasy, & Zolin., 2011; Russell & Stone, 2002).

Theorists believe attributes displayed by moral leaders with a clear purpose, are both agentic and communal in nature. Leaders in such instances are conscious of gaining positive and authentic responses from followers in a non-threatening or non-judgemental way. They model the values and expectations set by the community, whilst supporting and caring for organisational members. This approach enhances the relationships within the organisation's culture, while also motivating members towards a shared purpose (Fullan et al., 2006; Fullan, 1997, 2001, 2008a; Leithwood, 2011; Schyns & Szesny, 2010).

#### **2.2.5 Capacity**

L. Lambert (2003) defines leadership capacity as “an organisational concept” (p. 4). This description emerges from the theory that individuals construct meaning within a social constructivist learning environment. The capacity to grow towards a shared purpose is stimulated by the social relationships and dynamic patterns within the organisation's ethos (Fullan, 2001; Hinkley, 2003; L. Lambert, 2003; Lovely, 2004; West-Burnham & Bowring-Carr, 2001). For example, leadership capacity is the daily routine of working as one. “You need to learn it by doing it and having mechanisms for getting at it on purpose” (Fullan, 2005, p. 69).

Various theorists explain that leaders who demonstrate a capacity to learn are aware that they need to continually evolve. They immerse themselves within the daily learning environment. These leaders see themselves as an equal learner, engaging in dialogue with students, teachers and parents. This reflective approach enables leaders to foster a deep connection between the complexity of leading, learning, and their moral purpose (Fullan, 2005; L. Lambert, 2003, 2009; Lovely, 2004; Milstein & Henry, 2008; West-Burnham & Bowring-Carr, 2001).

Leaders also develop the capacity of every stakeholder to apply this same reflective approach through their form of leadership. This enhances the democratic competence of parents, teachers and students (Hopkins, 2011). Leaders in such instances are critically aware of the need to develop formal and informal dialogue with stakeholders. For example, they support teachers to move away from the daily focus of learning to a broader, deeper description of learning. This type of leadership enhances human capital, where all members of the school community understand adaptive societal issues as they move towards a shared moral purpose. At this point literature has led to the notion that principals' moral purpose influences their form of moral leadership. This is explored further in part 2 of this chapter (Fullan, 2001; Robertson, 2011; Sergiovanni, 2001; Strike, 2007; West-Burnham & Bowring-Carr, 1999, 2001).

#### **2.2.6 Towards an authentic orientation**

At this point literature has suggested that leaders who lead with moral purpose lead with a moral form of leadership. Developing an inclusive, democratic community also shapes their moral purpose. However, their personal dispositions, attributes and capacity to lead in the above form are still unclear. Emerging themes need further exploration. These include the type of intelligences they nurture within an authentic view of themselves, which influences the followers they lead. Therefore, rather than attempt to describe dispositions, attributes and capacities as three separate traits of leadership, they will be grouped as one. This will allow an exploration of the literature as it explores emerging themes of leaders who lead with moral purpose.

### **Part Two**

#### **2.3 Leadership intelligences**

Scientists describe intelligence as the capability to problem solve or develop tools to achieve a specific goal. It is also something that is not fixed or beyond adaptation (West-Burnham & Bowring-Carr, 2001; Zohar & Marshall, 2004). The purpose of this section is to consider possible intelligences of principals who lead with moral purpose.

### **2.3.1 The intelligence quotient**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, human intelligence has been portrayed as an intelligence quotient (I.Q.). It has been the most widely researched intelligence. This has been attributed to the way it can be measured from a scientific perspective. This was later referred to as “rational, logical or linear intelligence” (Zohar & Marshall, 2004, p. 63). In its broadest sense, I.Q. has been depicted as the intellectual capacity of a person to think. This ability has been recognised as an important leadership quality (Northouse, 2006). Nevertheless, it has now been established that the intelligent quotient is not the only relevant form of intelligence, and it is most effective in leadership when combined with emotional intelligence (Fullan, 2001; Lucas & Claxton, 2010).

### **2.3.2 Emotional intelligence**

Emotional intelligence has broadly been described as the relationship between the affective and cognitive domains of the mind. It is the interaction between emotions and thinking. This leads to the notion that it is distinct from the intelligence quotient (Goleman, 1995; Northouse, 2006). Emotional intelligence is arguably an important factor in building social capital. This is where relationships bind communities together as people become more aware of how they relate to and affect others in social situations. As a result, they learn to respond or behave appropriately as they interact with other people (Hebert, 2011; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

The concept of emotional intelligence has evolved over the last century. Theorists such as Thorndike (1920) and Wechsler (1940, 1943) provided early work on this subject based on the theory of social intelligence. This work re-emerged with Gardner’s (1983) concept of multiple intelligences, and other theorists such as Salovey and Meyer’s (1990) notion of abilities, Goleman’s (1995) broader concept of emotional intelligence, and Bar-On’s (1997) emotional quotient (Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012). There has also been much conjecture about whether emotional intelligence is in fact just another term to describe personality (Couto, 2008). However, for the purposes of this literature review, rather than attempt to interpret the wide range of overlapping emotional intelligent models, a

clearer description of emotional intelligence will be uncovered in relation to leaders who lead with moral purpose (Barrett, 2011).

Mayer and Salovey (1993) characterise emotional intelligence as “a series of mental abilities” (p. 435). They believe in four classes of scientifically based ‘abilities’, which are integration, understanding, perception and management of emotions (Clarke & Howell, 2009; Mayer & Cobb, 2000). H. Gardner’s (1997) multiple intelligences include interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to appreciate how other people feel, while intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to reflect on one’s own thoughts, feelings and actions. This leads to a view of emotional intelligence that enables a person to have empathy towards others, while also being personally aware of their own emotions (Humphrey, 2002; L. Lambert, 2003; Lovely, 2004; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Goleman’s (1999) broader description of emotional intelligence is “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (p. 317). In other words, logical and emotional thinking of the brain go hand in hand. For example, working relationships, which encompass “most of what we do in life, is the essence of emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1998, p. 21). Emotional intelligence is therefore a competency that can be learnt rather than an inherent ability, which has been widely supported by theorists in the work of leadership and education (Bipath, 2008; Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, & Weissberg, 2006; Day, 2003; Duncan, 2002; Fullan, 2001; Goleman, 1998; Gray, 2002; Hawkey, 2006; Hebert, 2011; Labby et al., 2012; Lovely, 2004; MacGilchrist, 1997; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001; Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003).

Harris and Chapman (2002) identified effective leaders who led through their values and who had a strong moral purpose. They were dedicated and resilient leaders who could cope with the complexity of their roles. Hackman and Johnson (2004) support this view by stating that effective leaders were able to manage their emotions, thus supporting their own growth and that of their organisation. Leaders who are able to understand their emotional intelligence are more likely to

cope with the complexities of change. They are also able to lead others through the uncertain times and challenges by way of their moral purpose. This is particularly important in the context of influencing moral purpose across a community. Leaders who are morally committed towards their own learning and that of those they lead have been recognised for the way they positively influence followers in a moral way (Fullan, 2002a, 2008a; Stoll et al., 2003).

Hartle and Hobby (2003) believe emotional intelligence “goes one step further up the ladder of causality and shows how we can develop and extend our leadership styles” (p. 392). Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) also point to research that shows such leaders are able to develop their leadership and life competencies progressively over an extended period of time. They are able to change deeply ingrained habits by redirecting effort to their limbic or emotional section of the brain. Through concerted practice they are then able to create “new brain tissue as well as new neural connections and pathways”, which enables leaders to deal with the complexity of their roles (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 103). As Gray (2002) points out, leaders are able to meet the adaptive challenges they face because they can learn about themselves and others through their emotional intelligence.

Goleman (1999) identifies four distinguishable competencies. He and others suggest they are self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship management. These adaptive competencies are the core elements of an emotionally intelligent leader (Duncan, 2002; Gray, 2002; Northouse, 2006). Gray (2002) characterises self-awareness as a leader’s ability to understand their emotions. This is crucial to the success of leadership, particularly as they cultivate a shared purpose. Leaders need to be able to comprehend their own values as they work alongside others (Duncan, 2002). As Day (2003) and Hebert (2011) suggest, this enables a leader to understand their own emotions and respond to situations in a more authentic way. In other words, they can self-manage disruptive emotions while being “trustworthy, flexible and optimistic” (Gray, 2002, p. 5). For example, they build trust through non-judgemental behaviour. They often model to others that they admit mistakes, which enhances their capacity to learn (Harris & Chapman, 2002).

Leaders who have the competence to use their emotional intelligence are acutely aware of the how people feel and the importance relationships play in building a shared community purpose (Humphrey, 2002). Bipath (2008) notes how such leaders inspire others by fostering collaborative relationships within the school community. Essential to this collaboration is dialogue and sense making. For example, the leader critically evaluates individuals during social interactions. This allows the leader to then choose the most appropriate manner in which to approach the staff member when tough decisions arise. Consequently, there is less impact on the staff member's wellbeing. This creates a culture of high trust, which has also been supported by Barrett (2011), Duncan (2002), Fullan (2008a), Hackman and Johnson (2004), Hebert (2011), L. Lambert (2003) and Stoll et al. (2003).

As theorists identify, emotionally intelligent leaders cultivate positive community relationships. They do this because they open themselves to the positive and negative effects of change, in the belief that they will not only enhance their leadership but the lives of every community member (Cherniss et al., 2006; Day, 2003; Duncan, 2002; Fullan, 2008a; Gray, 2002; Northouse, 2006). In the opening paragraph of this section, Zohar and Marshall (2004) identified social capital as an essential outcome of emotional intelligence. Theorists through this section have illustrated that leaders who competently use their emotional intelligence are focused on improving the lives of community members. This belief comes from an unshakeable focus on their moral purpose and a leadership style, which is morally based (Bipath, 2008; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Lovely, 2004). As Brearley (2006) states, emotionally intelligent leaders strive to be the very best person and leader they can be. They turn “stumbling blocks that inhibit all our learning into stepping-stones” (p. 30).

### **2.3.3 Spiritual Intelligence**

Leadership with spiritual intelligence (S.Q.) is not necessarily connected to a religious belief or faith. However, spiritual intelligence is connected to a values-led leadership approach through spiritual, emotional and relationship competencies focused on the ethical well-being of an organisation and its



members (Howard, Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, & White, 2009; Mussig, 2003; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Spiritual intelligence has been associated within a holistic view of intellectual ability (I.Q.) and emotional intelligence (E.Q.). It has been described as the soul of these intelligences (Cowan, 2005; Gill, 2002; S. D. Wilson & Mujtaba, 2007; Wingrove & Rock, 2008; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Scholars have also viewed emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence as interconnected intelligences. E.Q. enables a leader to cope with complexity, where they can understand their own and other people's feelings. However, S.Q. allows the mind and body to reason whether they should be in this position in the first place. This reasoning occurs in relation to a broader view of themselves, the organisation and the future (Gill, 2002; Luckcock, 2008; Selman, Selman, Selman, & Selman, 2005; Wingrove & Rock, 2008).

Spiritual intelligence enables a leader to develop and sustain a deeper level of understanding towards achieving their moral purpose. As Wingrove and Rock state (2008), "spiritual intelligence takes us outside ourselves and makes us ask big questions such as "why am I here, or who am I as a leader" (p. 129)? This notion has also been supported by Hyde (2004), MacGilchrist (2003), and Zohar and Marshall (2004). In essence, spiritual intelligence is a form of abstract reasoning, which enables a leader to transform the lives of people within a school community (Emmons, 2000; Mayer, 2000).

"The pursuit of this inner dimension of our existence, through a wide variety of means and forms, can be viewed as the leverage point for developing our ability to lead the future" (Reams, 2010, p. 1092). The presence of spiritual intelligence allows a leader to "transform themselves and others to a higher order of thinking" (Howard et al., 2009, p. 60). This is based on the belief that people need to be awakened from their unconscious self and encompass their membership within the community. Leaders with such a view have developed the ability to unlock their own self-awareness, by integrating the intelligences, and aspiring to a higher

sense of community based on moral principles (Klenke, 2007; Selman et al., 2005; Zohar & Marshall, 2004)

Leaders demonstrating spiritual intelligence have the ability to energise and communicate this vision, while also having the capacity “to encourage people to stay for the long haul” (Mussig, 2003, p. 74). This is what Zohar and Marshall (2004) describe as the unconscious awakening of a shared meaning, which is usually dormant. At the heart of this awakening are the deep, interconnected relationships that enable an organisation to move towards a shared moral purpose (Howard et al., 2009; Mayer, 2000).

#### **2.3.4 Ethical intelligence**

Before exploring the idea of ethical intelligence, a generic view of ethics in education needs to be briefly investigated. Ethics in education has been described as the focus of exploring issues surrounding “equity, social justice, power and care” within the process of running a school (Starratt, 2007, p. 166). This is because ethical actions are cultivated on a daily basis as people interact together, within diverse social relationships. As a result of these social interactions, people make choices, both consciously and unconsciously. Ethical frameworks provide guidance towards what is perceived to be appropriate decision-making and behaviours by people within the organisation (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Starratt, 2007; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007).

Some theorists suggest that such idealistic ethical frameworks can actually lead to unethical decision-making and behaviours. These positions also do not take into consideration what motivates people. For example, leaders serving students in schools need to be able to uncover the moral reason for their roles, which leads to intrinsic, morally based leadership (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Starratt, 2007; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). Ciulla (2004, 2005) proposes that the relationship between ethics and morals is the heart of educational leadership. Furthermore, it magnifies the importance of people being members of a community, and the different roles people play in ensuring this community functions as one. This leads to the notion of leaders being ethically intelligent.

Maak and Pless (2006) describe ethical intelligence as the capacity to grapple with ethical dilemmas. Such leaders apply their ethical and emotional intelligence when making decisions. Sternberg (2010a) notes this as a leader's competence to use their intelligence to reason and problem solve issues, which end in ethical dilemmas. For this reason, ethical intelligence brings pupils' rights to the forefront of a community's way of being. As MacGilchrist (2003) states, "ethical intelligence incorporates the clear values and beliefs covered in a school's aims statement. It concerns the way a school conveys its moral purpose and principles such as justice, equity and inclusivity" (p. 424).

Maak and Pless (2006) believe ethical intelligence consists of three essential leadership competencies. They are "moral awareness, moral reflection and moral imagination" (p. 106). Firstly, morally conscious leaders encourage sincere feedback. They invite this type of dialogue from community members because they wish to better understand how they are perceived. This builds their moral awareness. Through this practical approach they also break down barriers between their own leadership style, and that of other relationships within the community. They develop community awareness of the values and beliefs, which guide ethical decision-making (Branson, 2007; M.E. Brown, 2007; Maak & Pless, 2006). For example, this practical process facilitates stakeholders understanding of the positive and negative forces, which lead to ethical or unethical actions (Lucas & Claxton, 2010; Sternberg, 2010a).

Moral reflection is a further competency displayed by leaders with ethical intelligence. Branson (2007) states that reflective practice is expected of moral leaders because it opens their inner world. This leads to their growth in becoming morally conscious. As a result, they are able to have greater autonomy over "personally achieving not only a more fully human life but also, a life that is more morally accountable" (p. 493). For example, they are able to critically evaluate themselves and the schools they lead, from a moral perspective. Reflection thus opens the door to moral reasoning (Branson, 2007; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless & Maak, 2008; Sternberg, 2010a). This point is exemplified when a leader promotes student voice, particularly when it involves students' learning. As a consequence,

a morally conscious leader usually reinforces the ethical concepts of justice and care (Langlois & Lapointe, 2007; MacGilchrist, 2003).

The third competency of ethical intelligence is what Maak and Pless (2006) describe as moral imagination. This is where the leader has the capacity to consider new ways of thinking, from a moral perspective. For example, the leader could consider decisions based on the best interests of students, which Stefkovich and Begley (2007) believe is “at the heart of the ethic of the education profession” (p. 212). Moral imagination enables a leader to address complex problems. Rather than considering what is right or wrong, they pose ethical questions, which leads to ethical reasoning (Glanz, 2006). Davies and West-Burnham (2003) describe this as one's moral competence, which they believe is the moral purpose of education. In other words, moral imagination builds ethical understanding within a school community, leading to moral behaviour.

Ethical intelligence highlights the notion of authentic leadership. Ethically intelligent leaders are able to use authentic processes to uncover greater meaning in their role and that of community members (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007). Consequently, the leader has the courage and commitment to truly understand leadership from a community perspective (Branson, 2007). It also enables community members to flourish within authentic relationships. As Starratt (2007) and Strike (2007) suggest, ethically intelligent leaders believe the moral purpose of education is to develop morally conscious communities with the support of a morally committed leader.

### **2.3.5 Leadership: motivation or attitude?**

At this point literature has questioned the place of motivation or attitude within a leader's intelligence, particularly when they lead with moral purpose. Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham (2001) and Mengel (2008) describe how classic motivation theory can be traced back to Maslow and Herzberg's work. Their theories were based on a hierarchical structure of human needs, where people go about gratifying themselves through distinctive patterns of behaviour. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) state how motivation forms part of how a person expresses

their psychological necessities. They also propose dividing motivation into three groups:

- Those that emphasise the exchange of rewards or punishment for compliance.
- Those that seek compliance by emphasising opportunities to experience satisfaction from the work itself.
- And those that are based on the idea that compliance results from moral judgement. (p. 312)

Mengel (2008) explains how leaders need to understand their own motivational facets, which then supports them to motivate followers. Duignan (2006) suggests every leadership decision involves motivating followers from an ethical perspective. He adds this ethical reality needs to be known to the follower, which enhances their intrinsic motivation. As Loehr and Schwartz (2003) state, “too often our motivation for a behaviour is expedient rather than value driven” (p. 143). The above description has emerged from Burns (1978) and Bass’s (1985) form of transformational leadership, which attempts to increase followers’ motivation through a sense of moral responsibility to the organisation’s core purpose. For example,

Human’s primary motive is their will to seems to be a word missing meaning that can be fulfilled by discovering and implementing meaningful options and actualising the corresponding values. These must be translated into goals and pursued through corresponding behaviour in order to find fulfilment of our primary motive rather than losing ourselves in secondary activities. (Mengel, 2008, p. 114)

Lapsley and Narvaez (2007) propose social development is formed by four interconnected processes. They are ethical sensitivity, ethical judgement, ethical action and a form of ethical motivation. They believe this view of motivation enhances a person’s self-concept. Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham (2001) challenge the concept of motivation as a form of leadership. They believe leaders

need to inspire followers with what they describe as a spiritual quality rather than motivate them. As they explain, “motivation is to management as inspiration is to leadership” (p. 110). Chapman and West-Burnham (2010) also state a meaningful life involves more than individual motivation, it is about having the right attitude as one uncovers the truth and purpose to life. This is because a strong sense of purpose becomes a more powerful and enduring source of energy when its source is positive and internally driven (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003). This leads to what Frankl suggests is a form of attitudinally based values that some leaders display (Covey, 2004).

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) describe an attitudinal element of leadership that involves distinctive feelings “or a predisposition toward or against something” (p. 50). Savoie (2009) suggests attitude is often an unnoticed leadership quality, which is difficult to quantify, measure or understand. Townsend (2011) explains how attitudinal leadership is not something that can be taught. Rather it is learnt through the commitment to a certain type of leadership behaviour. Theorists support his notion and suggest it also involves leaders demonstrating how they are committed to their core leadership purpose (Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Oliver, 1990).

L. Evans (2008) provides a useful description of attitudinal development:

The process whereby people’s attitudes to their work are modified, and functional development as the process whereby people’s performance is considered to be improved. I currently perceive attitudinal development as incorporating two constituent change features, or foci of change: *intellectual and motivation* and I currently perceive functional development as incorporating two constituent change features, or foci of change: *procedural and productive*. (p. 31)

Furthermore, when a person’s attitude and commitment is positive they are able to adapt to complex issues because they see them as positive challenges rather

than negative issues. This in turn sustains their leadership as they strive towards their moral purpose (L. Evans, 2000, 2003).

Theorists have identified the notion of positive attitudinal leadership in their research. Day (2004) identified a strong moral purpose and agency in headteachers. These leaders were inspired by their passion to achieve their moral purpose, which was evident in their “commitment, care, collaboration, achievement, trust, and in doing so displayed both courage and persistence” (p. 436). Notman and Henry (2011) recognised principals who were positive, committed and determined towards providing the best education for their students. Their energy also had a positive affect on teachers within their school. Day et al. (2001) also distinguished headteachers who were ‘ruthless’ in establishing high expectations. They applied a range of leadership strategies to achieve these expectations. However, student and teacher wellbeing were at the forefront of their leadership style.

Zohar and Marshall (2004) provide a different view of attitudinal leadership. They believe any motivational or attitudinal shift involves spiritual intelligence. This intelligence is not based on religion but rather on the deepest sense of moral purpose, which they suggest leads to a new authentic organisational leadership strategy. For example, leaders who display this attitude are able to remove their own ego when engaged in dialogue with followers. Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005) suggest further research is needed to identify this form of positive psychological capital of authentic leaders. Such leaders display personal qualities of ‘hope, resiliency, and optimism’, which have a positive affect on the people they lead and the continued development of their school community.

### **2.3.6 Resilient leaders**

Literature suggests resilient qualities may also form part of a moral leader’s intelligence. M.D. Lambert and M.E. Gardner (2002) describe resilience as the “capacity to bounce back regardless of difficult situations and relationships” (p. 200). Gu and Day (2007) believe the roots of resilience stem from research into how some children were able to cope with diverse and harsh environments. Milstein and Henry (2008) believe the notion of resilience has emerged in light of

the changing nature of communities. Traditional support mechanisms like the family and church have broken down, resulting in people finding it difficult to cope with stress. Consequently, people are unable to develop the skills or knowledge to cope with stressful change in their personal or work environments. Gu and Day (2007) suggest resilience is “a product of personal and professional dispositions and values” that is socially constructed (p. 1305).

Milstein and Henry (2008) explain how resilient people have the capacity to remove themselves from their internal world and the external environments they live within. They suggest various characteristics resilient people display. For example, self-service, humour, independence, a positive outlook to the future, a type of spiritual intelligence, self-worth and self-confidence are some of these characteristics. Gu and Day (2007) state moral leaders enhance their resilience in the context of their personal and professional lives. “In this developmental progression, their resilient qualities do not merely serve the development progression; indeed, at the heart of the process, they interact with negative influences and constraints” (p. 1304). Resilient leaders enhance their ability to cope with adversity within themselves and their environments. Consequently, they encompass “a sense of purpose” which “entails meaningful actions and participation” along an ever evolving continuum (Gu & Day, 2007, p. 1305).

A number of theorists have identified resilient leaders within the research they have conducted. Notman and Henry (2011) researched six principals who all displayed resilient behaviours based on Milstein and Henry’s (2008) characteristics mentioned in the previous section. They stated, “all of these leadership behaviours were underpinned by the principals’ personal and professional resilience, their core beliefs about teaching and learning, and their determination to make a difference in children’s lives” (p. 389). Day’s (2007) international perspective on leadership described how these principals were able to cope with complexity, while being open minded and flexible. He noted how their positive emotions fuelled their resilience. This was particularly evident when they were able to manage stress and issues while maintaining a commitment towards maintaining their moral purpose. Milstein and Henry (2008) add that the function of a school leader building moral purpose will include the elements of



resilience. This will not only be within their personal capacity as a leader but also as they develop a resilient community.

## **2.4 Leadership models**

It is important to consider the role of leadership models in relationship to the research question, but it is not the intention to offer an exhaustive list and analysis of all models. The traditional concept of leadership involves organisational members relinquishing power to a person who provides direction towards a common goal. From this perspective, school leaders provide followers with a sense of certainty about their work. They achieve this by closely managing and controlling the organisation (Hallinger, 2003; L. Smith & Riley, 2012). Mulford (2008) explains that various forms of adjectival leadership have since emerged from this perspective.

Mulford (2008) shapes a view of leadership where one size fits all. He describes this as adjectival leadership. Various forms of leadership have different adjectives added to the beginning of the word leader. As Harris, Moos, Robertson, and Spillane (2007) state, the dominant view of leadership remains the same. That is, a leader needs to be heroic, charismatic and direct in their approach to ensure organisations meet their goals. The next section will explore forms of leadership that principals utilise when leading with moral purpose.

### **2.4.1 Developing an understanding of leadership forms**

A traditional view of leadership dominated literature prior to the 1980's. Burns (1978) described this as 'transactional leadership', where the leader focused on achieving organisational outcomes or what they deemed as being right. Followers were subsequently motivated to achieve these outcomes through recognition and rewards from the leader (Fink, 2005; Leithwood, 1992). Some theorists argue that this model has also re-emerged in the form of instructional leadership because the leader appears to be still managing and controlling organisational members. Nonetheless, a contrasting and complimentary leadership model has since emerged which is referred to as 'transformational leadership' (Hallinger, 2003).

Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) proposed the ‘transformational leadership’ model (Fink, 2005). As Leithwood (1992) states, this model broadly focused on the achievement of a shared vision, the fostering of a collaborative organisational culture and the development of followers’ capacity to achieve this shared vision. Currie and Lockett (2007) believe transformational leadership comprises “charisma, inspiration, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation” which links to Leithwood’s (1992) description (p. 343). Additionally, this model creates the notion of followers being transformed into leaders, which is achieved through the collaborative desires of a committed community of learners (Avolio, W.L. Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Currie & Lockett, 2007). Gronn (2003) and Harris (2004) also promote distributed leadership as a further type of transformational leadership. In this situation the leader disperses power and authority across the organisation. In other words, expertise lies across the organisation rather than in one formal position of the leader.

The notion of servant and stewardship leadership raises a more authentic approach to the leader-follower relationship. The ‘servant leadership’ model, advocated by Greenleaf (2002), centres on leaders being conscientious towards their followers’ needs. Duignan and Bhindi (1997) describe this as a movement from using people to developing followers’ leadership ability. Block (1999) describes stewardship as the centralising of resources and power with the aim of supporting followers (L. Lambert, 2002). Theorists believe servant and stewardship leadership are interwoven within a type of authentic leadership. However, the nature of these relationships brings to light an authentic view of ethics and morals, particularly with leaders who lead with moral purpose (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

Transforming followers into leaders involves a deep sense of morality. This connects people together because they have a higher sense of purpose to their work, which supersedes any personal values they may have (Ciulla, 2012). As Zhu, Riggio, Avolio, and Sosik (2011) state, “high moral capacity enables leaders to view the world in a more comprehensive way and to deal with those difficult and intractable issues that have no clear resolution or short cut” (p. 151). They are also concerned for “followers’ needs, feelings and moral development” (Zhu et al., 2011, p. 152). This leads to the conception of an authentic view of ethical and

moral leadership, which needs to be explored in relation to leaders who lead with moral purpose within their organisations.

#### **2.4.2 Ethical leadership**

The word ethics originates from the Ancient Greek word *ethos*, which means character. Greeks believed *ethos* defined people as human beings (Tutar, Altınöz, & Çakıroğlu, 2011). In exploring ethical leadership, Begley (2010) explains that the contrasting descriptions of values, ethics and morals needs clarifying. He describes values as broad motivational characteristics, which are “conscious or unconscious influences on attitudes, actions and speech” (p. 42). Furthermore, Begley (2010) suggests ethics are a type of value, where normative behaviour is predefined, while morals are applied values in context. Tutar et al. (2011) distinguish ethics as a universal set of rules for people to follow, while morals is the process of carrying out of these rules. West-Burnham (2009) reaffirms these descriptions, while also coming to a more conclusive view of the difference between ethics and morals. He states, “ethics are a grand set of human behaviours” defined by a community, while morals refer to how individual community members actually carry out these values in an authentic way (p. 60).

Bezzina, Starratt and Burford (2009) state ethical leaders have a moral responsibility to bring a wider view of education to the attention of stakeholders. Starratt (2005) believes this moral responsibility includes making sense of what it means to be human, what it involves to be a citizen and public servant, while acting as an educator, an educational administrator and an educational leader. This view is supported by West-Burnham (2009) who states that leaders must be ethical because the very nature of education is rooted in ethical processes.

Ethical leadership has traditionally been viewed from a normative framework or ethical code, which predetermines expected behaviours. Leaders model ethical behaviours, while also communicating ethical and unethical conduct to followers. This approach is formed along the lines of transactional leadership, where the ethical framework becomes the moral authority to influence people (M. E. Brown, 2007; Ciulla, 2012). However, West-Burnham (2009) argues such ethical positions lead to confusion as people view these frameworks from an authoritative

perspective rather than through their moral values. As M.E. Brown (2007) states, “ethical leaders should be guided by their own inner compasses and must have the courage of their convictions”, as should the people they lead (p. 141). Theorists believe ethical leadership and ethical positions should be developed within the context of an organisation, such as a school community. This leads to the social constructivist view of learning, whereby stakeholders uncover their own meaning through the process of ethical reasoning and ethical awareness (Ciulla, 2012; M. Williams & Burden, 2000).

Numerous theorists have discussed ethical learning within the context of an organisation. Stouten, van Dijke and De Cremer (2012) believe leaders need to embrace integrity while assisting followers to understand what it means to be ethical. Sternberg (2010b) states that this should involve ethical reasoning. For example, the use of dialogue within a social constructivist paradigm encourages ethical reasoning and ethical awareness. Language then becomes the medium by which community members uncover a deeper awareness of education. This brings to light ethical concepts such as the rights and the best interests of students (Fulmer, 2004; Kihl, Leberman, & Schull, 2010; Stefkovich & Begley, 2007).

Furthermore, ethical leaders assist in nurturing a school community, which is “ethically competent and ethically sensitive” (Fulmer, 2004, p. 132). They model and communicate the ongoing development of ethical standards through the process of dialogue and critical self-reflection (M. E. Brown, 2007; Stouten et al., 2012; Walumbwa, Christensen, & Hailey, 2011). In other words, ethical leaders have the ability to communicate a deeper sense of moral values to follows because they have a finely tuned understanding of the ethical dynamics of education (Campbell, 1997).

An authentic view of ethical leadership begins to emerge from Campbell’s (1997) perspective. Academics argue that moral leaders are consciously aware of their own prejudices and biases, while exemplifying leadership within their organisations. They bring under control any self-interests towards improving their own status as the leader. This is because these leaders have a clearly defined moral compass (Banaji, Bazerman, & Chugh, 2003; Becker, 2009; M. E. Brown

& Treviño, 2006; Stouten et al., 2012; Winston, 2007). M.E. Brown and Treviño (2006) suggest social constructivism uncovers this type of ethical leadership. As a result, they “propose that highly conscientious individuals are more likely to be seen as ethical leaders than are those who are low in conscientiousness” (p. 603). This view is also supported by Ford and Lawler (2007) who believe leaders are aware how learning in context enhances their understanding of relationships within the organisation. As a result, leaders at this level of consciousness are more proactive than reactive. They lead with a moral consciousness, which is characterised by a deeply rooted purpose towards uncovering what it means to be human (Ciulla, 2012; Starratt, 2005). This leads to the notion of moral leadership.

### **2.4.3 Moral leadership**

As stated by West-Burnham (2009) earlier in this section, morals or morality involves the actual living out of what it means to be human within a community of human beings. He adds that moral leadership is “behaviour which is consistent with personal and organisational values which are in turn derived from a coherent ethical system” (p. 64). Additionally, they exemplify their leadership by limiting self-interest because they see leadership as a resource rather than status.

In the narrowest form, moral leadership begins with closing the gap of student achievement. This highlights the moral issue that students have the right to reach their potential. However, theorists suggest this view of moral leadership is the starting point towards becoming human, which is conveyed by a leader’s deeper sense of moral purpose (Fullan et al., 2006; Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hopkins, 2011; Robertson, 2011; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Moral leaders are acutely aware of this, as well as the limitations of human behaviour when it comes from a self-centred perspective. Moral leaders begin by focusing on their own values and ethics. This assists in their decision making when resolving ethical issues, which they communicate and model to followers (Becker, 2009; Begley, 2010; Currie & Lockett, 2007).

Marshall and Oliva (2006) believe the above description is a form of ‘moral transformative leadership’. They state that this form of leadership has three specific distinctions:

1. Leaders critically analyse the positive and negative effects of power within the educational institution.
2. Leaders deconstruct their work in order to reduce inequality in the organisation's culture.
3. Leaders believe that their school promotes academic learning as well as helping "to create activists to bring about the democratic reconstruction of society" (p.19).

In this form of leadership, ethical principles are transformed into moral actions through the social reality, relationships and subjective meaning that is unearthed from a shared moral purpose (Greenfield Jr, 2004; Harris, Day, & Hadfield, 2003; West-Burnham, 2009).

Moral leaders are aware of the need to foster context based values, which lead to morally based actions (Begley, 2010; Day et al., 2001). These types of leaders have been recognised as having the moral craft to manage evolving issues within their organisations, while maintaining "a highly contextualised and relational construct" (Day et al., 2001, p. 25). Sergiovanni (1994, 2001) states that morally based leaders enhance a school's capacity to build frameworks or a moral compass. They have a unique ability to construct collective moral responsibility and connections amongst organisational members. Schools characterised by this move from being an educational institute to a living community. For example, Sergiovanni (2001) believes this involves a moral awareness of what it means to be a school community:

1. Community helps satisfy the need that teachers, parents, and students have to be connected to each other and to the school;
2. Community helps everyone in the school to focus on the common good;
3. Community provides students with a safe harbour in a stormy sea - a place where they are accepted unconditionally;
4. Community supports learning; and

5. Community builds relationships and responsibilities. (p. 62)

Sergiovanni's (2001) description of an authentic school community highlights a leader who is focused on relationships within their community, while managing the complexity of leadership in today's schools. Day et al. (2001) have identified head teachers who lead in this way, which they note as a form of values-led contingency. Day (2000, 2004, 2005) believes values-led leaders understand the complexity of their roles. They have a holistic approach towards achieving their moral purpose and are known for their courage and tenacity. These authentic moral leaders actively nurture a community culture because they see themselves as agents of change, guiding teachers, parents and students towards a shared moral purpose (Day, 2004; Fullan, 2002b, 2003b, 2008a).

Moral leaders, based on the above description, have been noted as engaging in deep reflection about their own actions and beliefs. They constantly reflect on their moral purpose as leader and learner. As a result, they enhance their own self-awareness and knowledge (Branson, 2007; Greenfield Jr, 2004). For example, Frick (2009) noted in research that principals were able to tap into unique mental models based on the context of the ethical issues presented. These mental models were not based on normative ethical frameworks but rather on a notion of applied ethics in action. In other words, their moral leadership reflected the authentic concept of "what one is, as opposed to what one does. What one is flows directly from the values he or she possess" (Maguad & Krone, 2009, p. 210).

Enlow and Popa (2008) support 'what one is and what one does' as a concept of authentic moral leadership. They note these leaders have the ability to apply a complex notion of moral reasoning, which they describe as moral imagination. For example, these moral leaders have the capacity to envision a better human society. Theorists also describe this as a form of ethical intelligence (Glanz, 2006; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless & Maak, 2008; Sammons & Elliot, 2003). Furthermore, Dalton, Fawcett and West-Burnham (2001) propose that moral imagination enables a new concept of a school community to emerge. This is where the school becomes "a resource for the community on equal terms with its

statutory educational function” (p. 145). Werhane, Hartman, Moberg, Englehardt, Pritchard & Parmer (2011) support the notion of moral imagination. They describe it as leaders’ ability to make decisions by perceiving a combination of normative, social and relationship based values. This view is also supported by Maak and Pless (2006).

West Burnham (2009) summarises a view of authentic moral leadership by stating that it consists of five intersecting themes of leadership:

1. The embodiment of consistent leadership values (personal and organisation values).
2. Supporting teachers to become more professional as they pursue a clear purpose of education.
3. The fostering of social capital within a united community.
4. The culture of the school reinforces a shared moral purpose, and
5. Leadership is “deeply rooted in the ethics of education” (p. 66).

#### **2.4.4 Authentic leadership:**

The concept of authenticity originates from Ancient Greek philosophy. They believed in a higher level of self, which was defined by their core ethos (Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005). This concept has also been described as becoming free of any personal biases. In other words, authentic people have developed a mature view of themselves (Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, B.J. Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2007). Authentic leadership has been described by Begley (2001, 2006) as a leadership metaphor. It is the professional, ethical, and reflective approach of the leader that goes beyond previous conceptions of leadership models. It is an individualistic style of leadership that is inherent in each leader who is acutely aware of their true self. For example, they are free of their ego, highly attuned to their working environments and have developed personal moral standards (Walumbwa et al., 2011).

The notion of authentic leadership has also been portrayed as a multilevel leadership methodology, which differs from Burns (1978) view of transformational leadership. West Burnham (2009) describes it as a continuous journey towards “becoming totally human” (p. 68). This highlights the importance



of interconnected, meaningful leader-follower relationships. In other words, authentic leaders have a deep construct of morals and ethics where they support followers to develop their own understanding of what it means to be human (Begley, 2006; Duignan & Bhindi, 1997).

Theorists believe authentic leadership is rooted in the leader's self-construct as they become deeply aware of their own traits (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005; May, Chan, Hodges, & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2007, 2011). May et al. (2003) consider authentic leadership as the basis for each type of socially constructed form of leadership. Potter (1996) suggests that authentic leaders construct their own worlds as they immerse themselves within community relationships. This humanistic process to learning is widely supported by theorists as it enables leaders and followers to uncover their social reality (Ford & Lawler, 2007; Grint, 2005; Kihl et al., 2010; M. Williams & Burden, 2000). For example, Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005) state:

We believe the key distinction is that authentic leaders are anchored by their deep sense of self; they know where they stand on important issues, values and beliefs. With this base they stay on their course and convey to others, oftentimes through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values and ethics. (p. 329)

Authentic leaders' self-concept is based on a belief that they strive to be the very best person and leader they can (Branson, 2007). They achieve this through a range of 'basic component processes', such as self-regulation, self-awareness and moral role modelling. For example, critical self-reflection enables a leader to better understand themselves in relation to others, which "promotes veritable, sustainable performance" (Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005, p. 329). Walumbwa et al. (2011) state that self-awareness involves the leader understanding the impact they have on followers. For example, through dialectic relationships the leader learns to understand the impact they have on others and openly seeks feedback on their decisions and actions (Branson, 2007; Diddams & Chang, 2012; Notman &

Henry, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2011). West-Burnham (2009) believes self-awareness processes include engaging in meta-narratives, reflection-in-action, mentoring and networking to name a few. He adds that critical self-reflection enables an authentic leader to enable self-regulate themselves. As West-Burnham (2009) states,

Authenticity is thus a product of the capacity of an individual to explore what it means to be me *and* to recognise that becoming me is, in itself, a social process. It is through social relationships that the movement to authenticity is most powerfully expressed. (p. 116)

Duignan and Bhindi (1997) add that authentic leaders build trust with followers because they apply consistent moral values and communicate a clear moral purpose. They emphasise authentic relationships are also cultivated when the leader openly cares and trusts people. Such leaders demonstrate a genuine interest in enhancing followers' work through the modelling of their own performance, based on their character and moral values. They also strive to develop followers' self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience (Coleman, 2011; W. L. Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004).

Theorists also conclude that authentic leaders' self-concept evolves as they constantly attempt to grow and adapt through their experiences. Moral reasoning and critical reflection aids this authentic learning by the leader. This has been described as autobiographical or narrative mental models that lead to a form of moral intelligence (Hannah, Lester, & Vogelgesang, 2005; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Notman & Henry, 2011; Sparrowe, 2005). As Sparrowe (2005) states, through self-regulation leaders seek to ensure that their own words are spoken from the inner voice and that their deeds reflect inner purpose and values. In essence, this perspective illustrates a leader who is able to live by their values on a daily basis while clearly comprehending their moral purpose (Becker, 2009; May et al., 2003). This concept of authentic leadership entails a leader who has a deep sense of ethics and morality. They also uncover their own true sense of self, while developing the capacity of followers to foster a sense of what it means to become

a living community (Begley, 2006). As Komives and Dugan (2010) state, authentic leadership in conjunction with authentic relationships leads to a culture where the leader and followers hold each other in high regard.

## **Part Three**

### **2.5 Building moral purpose**

Previous literature suggests the development of moral purpose could be central to multiple forms of adjectival leadership. As a result, it could be argued that moral purpose undergirds most if not all types of adjectival forms of leadership. Komives and Dugan (2010) also imply that the development of moral purpose is a process that includes dialogue and self-reflection. These two processes enable a principal to develop a form of praxis, which ultimately begins to permeate the school and influence its culture. This section offers a brief summary of some aspects of the literature in these and other cognate areas relevant to this research.

#### **2.5.1 Dialogue**

Paulo Friere (n.d.) contends that education is fundamentally a dialogic process for the creation of shared meaning, which leads to action. He adds that dialogue is a co-operative process, involving the shared respect between participants (West-Burnham, 2003). Bojer, Roehl, Knuth and Magner (2008) describe the rationale behind dialogue as a way of developing awareness, problem-solving, and the creation of knowledge. They add that this process is fundamental to the work of leaders from an inner reflective perspective to towards their leadership development. Gergen (2001) also states that the dialogic process is the creating of meaning within a social context. This view is also supported by other theorists (Kvale, 1999; Stoll et al., 2003; West-Burnham, 2003).

Kvale (2006) describes the origins of dialogue from two ‘Ancient Greek’ perspectives. Platonic dialogue involves respondents’ views and counterviews, leading to each person developing their own understanding of what is ‘true’ knowledge. A Socratic method of dialogue involves debate and manipulation by respondents as they challenge each person’s perspective, which strengthens their own point of view. Bojer et al. (2008) note that Socratic dialogue supports the

inquirer into uncovering their own truth, which occurs through reflection. However, Kvale (1995) theorises a postmodern outlook on dialogue, which emphasises uncovering the social reality of humans within relationships and cultural contexts. As Kvale (1999) states, “the conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality has been replaced by a conception of the social construction of reality, where the focus is on the interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the social world” (p. 100).

Brinkman and Kvale (2005) describe narrative stories where participants discover what they term as moral reality. This practical view of morality uncovers truthfulness rather than an ethical or normative notion of an absolute truth. As Kvale (1995) explains, each individual's narrative story brings to light to their inner world. He adds, “Language constitutes reality, each language constructing specific aspects of reality in its own way” (p. 21). Gergen (2009) believes individuals are able to come to the truth of their own meaning through a distinct type of relationships. These relationships are reciprocal in nature, where there is equal commitment and from both participants to uncover their own reality (Bojer et al., 2008; L. Lambert, 2002; West-Burnham, 2009). Leithwood (2011) contends authentic school leaders who develop dialogue in this way are focused on building a sense of professionalism and profound learning within their organisation's culture. Theorists also believe that key to this occurring is their intense focus on a moral purpose that creates a sense of community (Day & Schmidt, 2007; Robertson, 2011; Stoll et al., 2003).

West Burnham (2009) suggests the above description aligns with transformational dialogue. He illustrates a form of dialogue advanced by leaders who value relationships, display integrity towards followers, are authentic in nature and effective towards the purpose of their organisation. Gergen (2001) describes transformational dialogue as a movement towards ‘second-order-morality’. He states that this type of morality is based on relational responsibility, where “meaning is created in action and regenerated (or not) within subsequent coordination” (p. 111). Day and Schmidt (2007) also believe leaders reinforce how they care for staff through the dialogic approach. For example, personal dialogue enables a leader to reflect on how their actions are impacting on

followers, while also interpreting followers' sense of reality. Stoll et al. (2003) also believe that a culture of dialogue "ultimately builds a community of learners, involving them deeply and democratically, and constantly reaching out and working beyond" the current school context (p. 142).

### **2.5.2 Self-reflection**

Dewey (1933) describes reflection as the action of carefully considering knowledge or beliefs within the construct of the mind. People further enhance their capacity to create new mental images by thinking about this active process (Jay & Johnson, 2002). Schon (1983) would explain that the above example is reflection-in-action as it focuses on the individual constructing new knowledge within a real life context. This differs from what he calls reflection-on-action, which is viewed within the constructionist paradigm (Akbari, 2007; West-Burnham, 2009). Grint (2005) supports the view that reflection lies within the social constructivist world because individuals make sense of their own social reality. In addition, Wilson (2008) promotes a third type of reflection known as reflecting on the future. This involves a person using their imagination about how the future might look. As Day (1993) states, reflection is the inquiry into learning about ourselves, which leads to the notion of self-reflection.

Branson (2009) describes 'self-reflection' as the creation of self-knowledge. He adds that leaders who have the capacity to reflect from within are more likely to achieve a deep sense of educational transformation. In essence, a leader's moral consciousness enhances their understanding of their moral purpose. Branson (2007) refers to this as 'self-reflection' because leaders have a moral viewpoint rather than reacting from self-interest. Maak and Pless (2006) believe self-reflection enables a leader to critically evaluate themselves and how followers feel by using what they phrase as ethical intelligence. This intelligence enhances moral awareness, moral reasoning and moral imagination as the leader engages in relationships within the organisation.

Day (2000) provides examples of principals who have engaged in self-reflection, where they exemplify a broader notion of their school community. They displayed the capacity to construct multiple perspectives from a consistent set of core moral

values. Day et al. (2001) also describe principals who act as gatekeepers by challenging difficult issues that arise, including ones involving themselves. Branson (2009) adds to this debate by stating that these authentic leaders demonstrate a clear moral purpose towards protecting students' learning environments. Furthermore, Notman and Henry (2011) state that "self-reflection was crucial to the success of the New Zealand principals" they researched (p. 386).

The journey towards authentic leadership involves core leadership processes such as self-awareness, self-regulation and moral values, which leads to an authentic view of themselves (Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005). As Sparrowe (2005) states, these processes involve the crafting of "a distinctive plot through which one's own craft takes shape" (p. 432). Crucial to the self-concept of an authentic leader is their ability to engage in critical self-reflection. Notman and Henry (2011) explain that this occurs because leaders are focused on their interpersonal understandings and their interpersonal actions, which leads them toward a human perspective of leadership.

### **2.5.3 Praxis**

K.M. Brown (2004) and Duignan (2006) believe the word 'praxis' originates from the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who described the meaning of praxis as a person who regularly evaluates their thoughts and actions in the context of life. From a leadership perspective, praxis involves the distinct knowledge and behaviour of a leader, who uses theory and reflection to consciously make applied decisions (Duignan, 2006). Palestini (2009) argues that literature shows "theory informs practice and practice informs theory" (p. 20). Fullan (2010) states, moral leaders attempt to solve learning issues in a natural way, where theory supports this process. For example, a basic assumption is that a leader's actions result in improved student outcomes is an illustration of theory informing practice (Dempster, Lovett, & Fluckiger, 2011).

D.R. Davis (1998) identifies an issue with the before mentioned description of praxis. He suggests some school leaders can misrepresent praxis by believing the current beliefs of teaching in their school adequately improves learning.

Wilkinson, Olin, Lund, Ahlberg and Nyvaller (2010) also explain that the current political climate is increasingly burdening principals to apply short term accountability measures rather than relying on ethical awareness and judgments. They argue for a more authentic application of praxis. Palestini (2009) suggests current research shows that forms of leadership are being applied in a far more adaptable and flexible way by some educational leaders. Consequently, K.M. Brown (2004) describes a form of transformational leadership theory which needs to be cultivated in future leaders. She states, “In an effort to develop the risk-taking, political, and human relations skills necessary to do this, leadership preparation programmes should expose future administrators to critical social theory and its influence on the purpose of schooling (p. 96).

Dempster (2001) proposes a form of transformational praxis that is related to a holistic view of professional development. He adds, the focus should be on empowering a community of learners. D.R. Davis (1998) believes transformational practice could be described as a revised form of praxis that focuses on “human engagement with the world that is thoughtful and not merely proven effective by educational research” (p. 9). Furthermore, Fullan (2010) identifies leaders who are able to use research to solve authentic problems by supporting teachers to consider ethical options. Together, they uncover methods to help unsuccessful children to achieve success with their learning. This leads to what Hansson (2002) would describe as ethical imagination through praxis. He believes collaboration through dialogue enables professionals to explore new ways of thinking from a moral perspective. Furman (2012) further advocates for a more humanistic form of praxis that involves leaders considering possibilities from a social justice outlook. Reflection and action in this form of leadership praxis is deeply engrained in the Freireian sense of reflection and action.

Freire (2000) states that an authentic view of praxis consists of critical reflection. This leads to a deeper sense of self-understanding after being engaged in dialogue within a community of moral learners. He declares dialogue with others “is a fundamental precondition for their humanization” (p. 137). Furthermore, “only in the encounter of the people with the revolutionary leaders—in their communion, in their praxis—can theory be built” (Freire, 2000, p. 181). Polizzi and Frick

(2012) declare reflective practices are a core element of a moral transformative learning experience that leads to moral practice and ethical and ideological beliefs. As Easley II (2008) adds, “moral leadership does not evolve from a policy or structural injunction. Rather, moral leadership is a way of interacting with others, a way of supporting teacher efficacy, and a way of fostering teacher retention” (p35). Frick (2009) supports the before-mentioned description of moral imagination. He states, “part of moral leadership is the very real intrapersonal grappling that occurs when normative rationality and technical rationality do not align” (p. 55).

Furman (2012) explains that praxis from a moral leadership perspective involves different dimensions of critical self-reflection and the resulting moral behaviour. An intrapersonal form of praxis is where the leader looks deeply into their own world, where they reflect on their leadership actions. For example, they achieve this by journaling their ongoing reflections. On the other hand, interpersonal praxis involves the leader building authentic trusting relationships with community members. They use self-reflection and self-knowledge to interact in an authentic way with followers (Furman, 2012). Black and Murtadha (2007) acknowledge this form of moral leadership as an ethical and moral craft. It draws from “conceptual and abstract knowledges, engages in ongoing critical-reflective inquiry and is practiced” (p. 10). Duignan (1988) describes this as theory-in-action, which authentic moral leaders use to direct their reflection in action.

Kemmis (2008) advocates a form of praxis that is embedded within the social environment of a school organisation, is structured and committed to authentic relationships that will lead towards a truly democratic community. He adds:

Educational praxis is action that is consciously directed not only by the intention or purpose (telos) of aiming towards the good for students and the good for humankind; educational praxis is action consciously directed towards forming good individuals and good societies. Education consists in the process of formation – educational praxis is



doing the forming. Praxis is the action not the intention. (p. 20)

#### **2.5.4 School culture**

Den Hartog and Dickson (2012) describe culture as a shared set of values that a community embraces. They refer to community from either a macro or micro outlook. Ayman and Adams (2012) state that there are two types of cultures within an organisation, and that they are ‘visible and invisible indices’. For example, visible indices refer to the visual differences between organisations, while invisible indices refer to the social norms and values reflected by people’s actions within their organisation.

The notion of school culture has been described as the main focus of school leaders. This is because school culture represents the ‘ethos’ or character of the school (Tutar et al., 2011; West-Burnham & Bowring-Carr, 2001). Sergiovanni (2006) supports the idea that character defines a school culture. He believes school character is less neutral than school culture because it implies how a school is perceived from a moral and ethical perspective. Furthermore, by defining the school’s character, stakeholders have a clear understanding of their shared moral purpose. However, Stoll et al. (2003) provide a cautionary note. They explain that each school organisation experiences authentic contexts, which include competing cultures. Therefore, how the leader transmits “the culture in the thinking, feeling and behaviour” of teachers, parents and students is crucial (Den Hartog & Dickson, 2012, p. 422).

Theorists have questioned the type of educational leadership that has been developed in current school cultures. Milstein and Henry (2008) question the policies, procedures and structures of schools that appear to stifle individuality. Duignan (2006) proclaims school principals have a real challenge in engaging staff in building a shared culture based on dialogue. Du Quesnay (2003) also questions whether school leaders have in fact become preoccupied with administration and management tasks, while being focused on short term learning goals. This has led to leaders losing sight of their core leadership role. Consequently, West-Burnham and Bowring-Carr (1999) advocate for an authentic

view of leadership, where leaders build trust through relationships. Other theorists advocate for leaders to enhance the capacity of teachers to remain focused on their core moral purpose (Fullan, 2007; L. Lambert, 2009; Leithwood, 2011; Robertson, 2011). As Day and Schmidt (2007) state from their research of head teachers:

The prime focus of these head teachers was to be their relationship with others. There seemed to be an importance placed on building and nurturing a school's culture that demonstrated what the people in the school cared about: cooperation, teamwork, trust and respect. (p. 73)

Day and Schmidt (2007) add that the principles upon which a shared culture was developed included a very clear moral purpose and an authentic form of leadership.

Fullan (2008b) believes when judgement is removed from leadership, change is enhanced from a moral position. West-Burnham and Bowring-Carr (1999) state the distribution of leadership further demonstrates a leader who builds capacity and culture through their trust, values and shared moral purpose. L. Lambert (2009) states “reciprocity enables learning and leading within patterns of relationships in which individuals are mutually committed” (p. 9). The leader enhances relationships within the culture of the organisation by demonstrating trust in stakeholders (Day & Schmidt, 2007). They also build follower trust through ensuring a safe learning environment for students. This is because a positive climate enhances the social cohesion for learning (Sammons & Elliot, 2003). Bryk and Schneider (2003) explain that relational trust guides members of an organisation towards achieving a shared moral purpose. They state, “all members remain dependent on others to achieve desired outcomes and feel empowered by their efforts” (p. 2).

West-Burnham (2009) refers to the above description as a form of culture developed by moral leaders, which he simply defines as “the way we do things

around her” (p. 65). He adds that leaders who develop a school culture from this perspective are focused on reinforcing the symbolic values demonstrated by community members. This reinforces Sergiovanni’s (2001, 2006) description of school character, where moral leaders are committed towards developing the social capital of their community. They enhance the capacity of community members to become consciously aware of their moral commitment to each other as they build a shared community culture (Lovely, 2004). As Hopkins (2011) implies, this enables stakeholders to reflect on their actions in achieving a shared moral purpose.

This literature review has highlighted aspects of current theory that comment on the nature, development and philosophy of moral purpose per se, and its place in leadership and leadership development. For example, literature has:

1. Made conceptual lists.
2. Identified and linked elements of, and contributors to, the developing of moral purpose.

This now leads to the next chapter, which will focus on using research to uncover principals who lead with moral purpose within their school community.

**3.1 Introduction: the complexities of the notion(s) of research**

The notion of research is complex. Over time, many people from different perspectives have used research to seek answers to the truth. Research has also provided people with a way of interpreting and understanding the complex world we live in. Furthermore, researchers have inquired into why a particular event occurs. This is known as the ‘nature of the phenomena’, which can be grouped into three themes; experience, reasoning and research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Mutch, 2005).

The idea of seeking the truth began through the Orthodox Church, which overtook lay people’s personal experiences as the gatekeeper of all knowledge. However, this was superseded by natural science. This was based on a systematic approach, logical thinking and complete detachment from what was being observed. Nevertheless, research provided scientists with a way of moving forward from solely using deductive and inductive reasoning. Research offered scientists a systematic and controlled process, which was validated through observation (empirical data), and was open to peer scrutiny. The nomothetic scientific approach was developed, which is the basis of the current positivist research paradigm (Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Cohen et al., 2011; Doucet, Letourneau, & Stoppard, 2010; Mutch, 2005).

Increasingly, research has been used to find answers to improve the quality of life for people in today’s society. This is because the world has, and continues, to rapidly change. Education and research are seen as a way in which solutions can be found to address issues surrounding the “environment, poverty, social justice and the rise of polarized societies” (Hartas, 2010, p. 14).

**3.2 Paradigms**

In order to explore school leadership in today’s context, the researcher has given consideration to what theoretical paradigm is most applicable. This is an important leadership and theoretical question, which needs to be explored for the purposes of this research. For example, in order for the social reality of school

principals who lead with moral purpose to be uncovered, the researcher must ensure the most appropriate ‘lens’ is used to create new or reaffirm current theoretical knowledge. (Cohen et al., 2011).

### **3.2.1 Constructivism**

Constructivism is viewed as the theory that explores the nature of knowledge. In its broadest sense, this form of learning focuses on the learner actively uncovering new forms of cognitive knowledge through their experiences. Meaning is developed from mental images that the learner creates, leading to new forms of knowledge and understanding (Cobb, 2011; Glanz, 2006; Perkins, 1999; Quay, 2003; Sizemore & Marcum, 2008).

Meyer (2009) challenges the assumption that constructivism leads to new understandings. This is because learning is only concerned with the intelligent quotient (I.Q.). Quay (2003) also questions the depth of meaning developed from learning, where the process is purely focused on the individual in isolation from other people. This leads to Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism.

### **3.2.2 Social Constructivism**

Social constructivists believe individuals need social contexts to construct new meaning. This is because cognitive and social processes extend across the world of individuals as they engage in meaningful conversations with others. As a result, learners create new knowledge based on these social interactions (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000; Isbell, 2011; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Light, 2011).

Social constructivism has been a popular learning theory embraced by schools and school leaders. This has been illustrated by staff professional development sessions that encourage teachers to engage in conversations, coaching, and observations that extend their pedagogical thinking and instructional teaching. Through these processes the leader also challenges teachers’ basic pedagogical assumptions (Kaser & Halbert, 2009; L. Lambert, 2009). As a result, individuals construct new knowledge within this environment about how to improve their teaching (Liu & Matthews, 2005). This is because “the brain’s capacity to find

patterns and make sense of the world is liberated within such relationships that encourage care and equitable engagement” (L. Lambert, 2009, p. 11).

The reciprocal nature of these types of relationships encourages cognitive sense making for individuals, whilst they evolve within a shared learning community. Furthermore, the leader promotes leadership and facilitates ongoing, purposeful social interactions amongst staff. Theorists believe this encourages a form of shared moral purpose to be developed as individuals explore their own values. (L. Lambert, 2009; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2006). As Glanz (2006) states, “learning becomes a self-regulated process wherein the individual resolves cognitive conflicts while engaged in concrete experiences, intellectual discourse, and cultural reflection” (p. 66).

However, the issue of dualism arises within the social constructivist learning model. It is as though the objective and subjective world live side by side rather than as one. This view leads to the following question: what knowledge is being socially constructed (Keaton & Bodie, 2011; Liu & Matthews, 2005; Meyer, 2009; Young & Collin, 2004)? These theorists have also questioned the quality of social interactions in regard to what is actually being learnt. For example, cognitive learning appears to be using the social situation to extend the mind rather than constructing a more holistic understanding from the experience. As Perkins (1999) states, “why don’t you tell me what you want me to know instead of making a big secret of it”, is not always an unreasonable question” (p. 8).

### **3.2.3 Social Constructionism**

The social constructionist perspective also falls within the generic constructivist learning model (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructionists believe that social reality is constructed within the conversations and interactions of people. These deliberate and actively engaged social processes create sense making for the social group, which continually evolves (Cunliffe, 2008; Rudes & Guterman, 2007; R. Williams & Beyers, 2001; Young & Collin, 2004). As Gergen (2011a) so eloquently states, “the focus moves from the dancers to the dance” (p. 212).

Young and Collins (2004) believe the social process of people interacting together sustains and broadens the group's understanding. This view challenges the individualistic assumptions of learning centred around the creation of an individual's intellectual knowledge. Instead, social constructionists consider the social situation or context in which language, gestures, history and culture creates new meaning. They believe the social world creates humans and humans create social reality (Cunliffe, 2008; Quay, 2003; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2009).

Social constructionists emphasise the essential interrelated connection between people learning through language as opposed to creating individual mental models (Rudes & Guterman, 2007; Young & Collin, 2004). For example, social constructionists claim learning should be focused on what is real rather than what can be described (R. Williams & Beyers, 2001). The reflective and reflexive social learning processes are shaped by dialogue that occurs within the group (Gergen, 1999). Cunliffe (2008) describes this as relational social constructionism. Learners see "selves-in-relation-to-others. We are who we are because everything we say, think, and do is interwoven with particular and generalised others" (p. 129).

Nonetheless, social constructionism does not attempt to answer the truth as to the individual's meaning within their world. Instead it seeks to create critical discussion between learners about the knowledge that was socially constructed together (Gergen, 1999, 2006, 2009, 2011a; Tooms et al., 2009; R. Williams & Beyers, 2001). This leads to questions about whether social constructionism can support a person to develop ethical and moral reasoning. Gergen (2006, 2011b) proposes ethical dialogue, which focuses on differences between learners, can develop and sustain ethical sense making. The praxis of socially constructing meaning can lead the learner to question these differences through reflective dialogue.

#### **3.2.4 Leadership and moral purpose**

At this point, research literature has implied the most appropriate 'lens' to explore principals' current social reality is the social constructivist paradigm. This is because the inner worlds of principals may be uncovered with the particular focus

on revealing the moral truth behind their leadership. This suggests tentative theorising of current leadership practice involves a level of moral leadership, which is based on a form of moral purpose (Liu & Matthews, 2005; Meyer, 2009).

### **3.3 An overview of educational research**

Vanderline and van Braak (2010) state that the purpose of educational research is “the production of knowledge and improvement of the educational practice” (p. 300). Ball and Forzani (2007) extend this idea further by stating educational research is an “inquiry into phenomena related to education” (p. 521). It becomes quite clear that educational research provides a lens through which the social reality of principals, teachers, and students can be observed in order to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and learning (Ball & Forzani, 2007; J. Gardner, 2011; Lobo, 2006; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Siu, 2008).

Ball and Forzani (2007) believe educational research is complex due to the nature of learning within a school. It involves a dynamic learning context in which there are multiple interactions between the principal, teachers, parents and students. To understand the social reality that occurs, researchers need to apply flexible methodology as they conduct their research. This assists them as they interact with participants in understanding their social phenomena (Burns, 2000; Hanzel, 2010; Irwin, 2009; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Mutch, 2005). The selection of an appropriate paradigm is crucial when we consider the purpose of this research is to uncover the personal attributes, dispositions, and capacities of principals who lead with moral purpose within their school community.

#### **3.3.1 Selecting a paradigm**

Researchers use a paradigm to shape their research around ontological, epistemological and methodology assumptions (Doucet et al., 2010; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Shank & Villella, 2004, 2004). Paradigms in educational research are complex and confusing. Two competing paradigms have dominated educational research; the positivist paradigm and the interpretivist paradigm (while there is also a third known as the critical theory paradigm). When considering which paradigm best suits the proposed research question, one needs



to explore the notion of educational research from both perspectives (Burns, 2000).

### **3.3.2 Paradigms: two competing views**

Cohen et al. (2011) believe the positivist paradigm is based on the understanding that:

- Experiences can be determined by causes that can be scientifically understood.
- Empirical or observed evidence supports the hypothesis or theory, which is being researched.
- Based on the scientific principle of ‘parsimony’, which means data is collected in the most economical way, any phenomenon uncovered leads to simple rather than complex theory.
- Findings are based on generalised explanations of the phenomena.

Burns (2000) adds to this description by stating, “truth within the paradigm tends to be fixed and a singular view of reality”. He adds, “positivism incorporates methods and principles of natural science for the study of human behaviour”, which are based on true facts (p. 4).

Positivist research aims to explain a particular observation, such as human behaviour, which can be measured and proven through quantitative research. The causal nature of reality can also be analysed based on numerical data. Positivist research continues to dominate political thinking because objectivity, reliability, and statistical data provide hard, empirical evidence to change what principals and teachers do to improve student outcomes. For example, evidenced-based research provides technical solutions, which have historically been seen as credible, trustworthy and based on fact (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Burns, 2000; J. Evans & Benefield, 2001; J. Gardner, 2011; Hartas, 2010; J. K. Smith & Gallagher, 2008).

The positivist paradigm seeks “hard, objective, and tangible” knowledge from researchers rather than “personal, subjective and unique” knowledge in order to describe the social behaviour of people. When the original research question is

considered the positivist paradigm does not help a researcher to understand the social reality of how learning is constructed by principals in their school setting. In order to understand multiple realities of principals the researcher needs to reject natural science (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6). Consequently, the interpretivist paradigm is based on understanding the social reality of participants in their natural setting. The interpretivist paradigm is best suited to the research question because it focuses on the outcome of principals' constructing learning within their schools (Burns, 2000; Doucet et al., 2010; Hanzel, 2010; Irwin, 2009; Morgan, 2007; Shank & Vilella, 2004).

Interpretivists aim to create knowledge by understanding and reconstructing participants' inner worlds. They inquire into the phenomenon and all the complexity that occurs within it. They believe that knowledge emerges from the interconnectedness of people and their contexts. Insights are gained when the subjective multi-perspective reality is explored, leading to new insights into pedagogies. For example, collaboration with a researcher allows participants to engage in natural discourse. This enhances their understanding of how learning is being constructed (Berliner, 2002; Burns, 2000; Donmoyer, 2006; Hartas, 2010; Irwin, 2009; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998).

Interpretivists generally use qualitative research methodologies because they provide various tools to uncover the inner worlds of participants who are being researched. Qualitative research provides rich narrative data, which leads to the creation of new knowledge. This is based on inductive logic because theory evolves from the data. Researchers are able to ask how and why the complex social phenomena occur, leading to the formation of hypotheses at the conclusion of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Mutch, 2005; Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010). In addition, constructivism is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Ponterotto (2005) states, "constructivists-interpretivists advocate a transactional and subjectivist stance that maintains that reality is socially constructed and, therefore, the dynamic interaction between the researcher and participant is central to capturing and describing the lived experience of the participant" (p. 131).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) support the above view. They state, from an epistemological perspective, “the investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (p. 111). This leads to methodology based on hermeneutical and dialectical beliefs, because “these varying constructions are interpreted using conventional hermeneutical techniques, and are compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). For example, Kvale (1999) describes the use of conversation through dialogue as a means of uncovering the participants' social reality. As a result, interviewing methods can be used to socially construct the reality of participants, “where the focus is on the interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of” their social world (p. 100).

### **3.4 The research design**

Theorists believe a number of questions need to be explored when designing research. These include identifying the specific purpose of the research, what questions the research will focus on and what will be the main methodology (Cohen et al., 2011; Mutch, 2005). Blumer (1980) believes researchers need to consider the theoretical position and methods that best suits uncovering the research question when designing their research. He states, “a perspective and method for studying a problem always go hand in hand because a perspective always implies a corresponding method and a method always implies a corresponding perspective” (Athens, 2010, pp. 88–89). Theorists further support this view by stating that the theoretical and philosophical paradigms “provide the foundations of assumptions and beliefs that researchers use to direct their studies” (Burian, Rogerson, & Maffei III, 2010, p. 45).

At this stage, literature has led to the decision that this research will be located within a constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology. This decision is supported by Bear-Lehman (2002), who states that qualitative methodology and the constructivist paradigm are explicitly intertwined. The constructivist paradigm attempts to “understand the complex nature of people in their social-cultural context and to describe the meaning they associate with their experiences and

actions”, while “qualitative research methodology serve as the cornerstone of research” (p. 85).

### **3.5 The research question**

The first stage of designing this research involves the formulation of a research question. Mutch (2005) states it is essential that the research question is not too broad or narrow, while researchers also need to understand how it determines the type of methodology to be used. Cohen et al. (2011) add that qualitative researchers need to be flexible when applying their research question. Furthermore, the design often evolves through the research because data leads to theory (Mutch, 2005).

The focus question for this research is: “What are the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who lead with moral purpose within their school community?” This question has two components: firstly it involves uncovering the personal qualities these principals display in their work as leaders, which is based on a form of moral purpose. Secondly, it seeks to uncover the way these principals perceive themselves in relation to others as they lead with moral purpose within their school community (Mutch, 2005).

### **3.6 Research methods**

The next stage in the research design involves determining the most appropriate method to gather data. Mutch (2005) states, qualitative methods “gather descriptive accounts” of participants' social reality (p. 19). Cohen et al. (2011) suggest qualitative methods allow participants' voices to be heard in their natural setting. Morrell and Carroll (2010) describe qualitative methodology as “research which is more interested in the why’s and how’s of the what, often including beliefs and opinions of individuals” (p. 8).

When comparing the two major research paradigms, Irwin (2009) explains how quantitative research measures causal patterns rather than knowledge created by participants through socialisation. On the other hand, qualitative methodology assists the researcher in understanding how cultural capital is developed. Hanzel (2010) supports this view by stating quantitative methodology only rely on human

behaviour that can be measured, while qualitative methodologies rely on the acting out of human beings within social contexts. For the purposes of this research, qualitative methodology provides the most appropriate methods for uncovering the socially constructed realities of principals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Mutch (2005) describes the most common qualitative methodologies as surveys, experiments, case studies and ethnography. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest the three most common types of qualitative methods used by researchers are observations, surveys and interviews. They support the previously mentioned view that although quantitative researchers use these methods, there is a distinction between how quantitative and qualitative data is gathered. However, a number of restrictions determine which qualitative method best suits the research question. The purpose of this research is to highlight the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who lead with moral purpose within their school community, with the aim that other principals will use this research to reflect on their own moral purpose and leadership practice. However, due to restrictions of the scale of this study, time, geographical location and recruiting of appropriate principals, the scope of an in-depth study approach is limited (Cohen et al., 2000, 2011).

### **3.6.1 Interviews: a brief generic description of the method**

Qualitative researchers use interviews to understand a participant's world at a deeper level. Researchers achieve this by continually probing their thinking with searching questions. They peel back the layers of meaning by assisting participants to better understand their inner voice within a natural social setting. In other words, interviews can be described as a tool, which can assist researchers to capture the authentically lived experiences of interviewees (Cohen et al., 2011; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Dilley, 2000; James, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2010; Quinn, 2010; Scheibelhofer, 2008).

The choice of interview type ultimately depends on the purpose of the research. This includes gathering data to directly answer the research question, testing an idea or supporting other methods such as surveys and/or observations. This is known as a mixed method approach, which is the preferred process for ethnographic researchers. Interview types include informal conversations, standardised open-ended interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and story telling (Bishop, 1997; Cohen et al., 2000; P. Davis, 2007; Morrell & Carroll, 2010; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010; Turner, 2010; Walford, 2007).

Key aspects of an interview involve the researcher following a flexible process of researching and analysing the interview topic, designing questions and interview techniques based on ethical considerations, establishing a sample group to interview, interviewing participants, gathering data and analysing findings. It should also be noted that building trust, rapport and respect is an essential part of the interview process. This is because, in order for the researcher to enter the participants' world, a close, trusting relationship needs to be established in the first instance (Cameron, 2005; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Dilley, 2000; Kvale, 2006; Miltiades, 2008; Rabionet, 2011).

### **3.6.2 The semi-structured interview**

J. Gardner (2011) believes it is essential that researchers present "simple, plausible propositions" in their findings to assist practitioners in the classroom (p. 557). Scholars suggest the semi-structured qualitative interview does provide an effective tool to reduce the gap between theory and practice (Ball & Forzani, 2007; Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; J. Gardner, 2011).

The literature has led to the position that the semi-structured interview is the most appropriate qualitative method. It is proposed that the researcher will conduct semi-structured interviews with principals to ascertain their knowledge of how they lead with moral purpose within their school community. Pre-established questions will be developed, based on the literature view. During the interview, the researcher will also be able to further probe the thinking and understanding of participants as they answer each question. This approach is based on the interpretivist view that learning is collaborative. The natural discourse that occurs

in the interview also leads to a conscious awareness by the participant, which creates meaning. For example, the principal may develop a deeper level of conceptualised understanding about what underpins their leadership style and approach to leading with moral purpose within their school community (Bishop, 1997; Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003; Quinn, 2010; Siu, 2008; Trent et al., 1998; Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2010).

### **3.6.3 Analysing data using an ‘interpretive framework’**

As referred to earlier in this chapter, interpretivist qualitative researchers attempt to unravel the complex nature of participants’ lived experiences by interpreting their stories through a subjective lens (Hartley, 2010; Zhang & Brundrett, 2011). This point is illustrated by Leong, Wright, Vetere and Howard (2010) who state, “in other words, the means to access the rich and embodied nature of experience is through qualitative methods carried out ‘in the field’, as opposed to the laboratory or design workshop” (p. 3). Consequently, as noted previously in this chapter, the semi-structured interview will be used to gather data on participants’ lived experiences in the natural setting of their work place.

Lincoln and Lynham (2011) describe the unique process of “deriving good quality theory from interpretative work” (p. 15). They believe interpretative inquiry “recognises that human contexts are often complex, unstable and extremely messy. Context, therefore, is a significant, indeed critical, consideration not only in the choice of theory building methodologies but also in the judgement of ‘goodness’ in such theory” (Lincoln & Lynham, 2011, p. 17). Cohen et al. (2011) further support the previous notion by stating the validity of theory derived from interpretative frameworks is unique when compared to positivists’ methodologies. Researchers capture the truth and meaning to participants’ lived experiences in the context of their world. Hartley (2010) attempts to capture the essence of an interpretative framework by describing interpretivism under two categories:

1. Understanding meanings:
  - Conceptual: Concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, and with conceptual

clarification with regard to leaders, leading and leadership.

- Descriptive: Concerned with providing a factual report, often in some detail, of one or more aspects of, or factors relating to leaders, leading and leadership.

2. Understanding experiences:

- Humanistic: Concerned with gathering and theorizing from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and those who are led.
- Aesthetic: Concerned with theorizing from ideas on aspects of beauty or ugliness from nature or the arts in order to better appreciate leading and leadership. (p. 275)

#### **3.6.4 Interpreting the data**

In order to interpret data from the semi-structured interview process, the researcher will use an interpretative framework. Personal stories shared by participants will be analysed in an attempt to perceive and interpret their understanding of how they lead with moral purpose. In other words, the researcher will attempt to use the data to enter the inner world of participants' thoughts and understanding of how moral purpose influences their leadership. As Voros (2005) suggests, interpreting participants' mental models represents an even deeper level of insight into their consciousness.

#### **3.6.5 Coding and reporting the data**

Coding will be used to label key parts of the narrative text to assist the researcher in interpreting the data. This systematic process will enable the researcher to identify related themes by using symbols to code key elements of the interview. The advantage with this approach is that the researcher has considerable flexibility in what codes are used. However, the researcher will also be mindful of over coding transcripts, which may lead to meaning being lost in relation to the research question. Overall, the use of coding information into categories will



enable the researcher to identify trends and apply an interpretative framework to summarise key findings from the interview.

### **3.7 Research ethics**

Lincoln and Cannella (2008) describe how the origins of ethical research only emerged after the Nuremberg Trials in which the horrors of the Nazi experiments become publically known. They add that before the introduction of formal ethical guidelines and requirements, scientists used their personal intuition to guide their ethical conduct. Stutchbury and Fox (2009) explain how the ethical behaviour of researchers entails respecting participants' rights and guaranteeing the integrity of the research. They state it is important any decisions made by the researcher "have a defensible moral basis and that the process of making those decisions is itself transparent" (p. 489). For example, the researcher needs to apply moral reasoning as they construct their research with participants. This will ensure the essence of each participant's natural story will be retained (Lincoln & Cannella, 2008; Stutchbury & Fox, 2009).

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) characterise the distinction between procedural ethics and ethics in practice. Procedural ethics involves a researcher gaining permission from a University Research Ethics Committee. This ensures an ethical research process has been scrutinised based on the University's standards, before the researcher begins their research. In the case of this research, the 'Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations Guidelines' have been followed from The Waikato of University (2008), which included obtaining ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee before starting this research.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describe ethics in practice as an ongoing process whereby the researcher is constantly mindful of their actions, including what they do and how they think during their research. Stutchbury and Fox (2009) refer to reflexive ethics as a type of micro ethics. Researchers need to be aware of their conduct when they are gaining participants' informed consent, during data gathering methods such as interviews and during the transcribing of data (Cotton, Stokes, & Cotton, 2010; Lincoln & Cannella, 2008; Sikes & Piper, 2010). For example, Shaw (2008) explains how ethical issues arise as the participant shares

their story with the researcher. Researchers become actively involved in the participant's story as they seek the truth, they must ensure that the participant's, rather than the researcher's voice emerges from the dialogue. The forthcoming sections will outline ethics in practice, which will be used during this research.

### **3.7.1 Procedure for recruiting participants**

Cohen et al. (2011) believe the validity of any research is based on the appropriateness of the methodology and instrument to gather data, as well as sampling the most appropriate participants. Sampling involves the researcher carefully considering the most appropriate way to select participants based on the research question. Researchers need to carefully consider five key points when determining the sampling strategy. This includes:

1. "The sample size;
2. the representativeness and parameters of the sample;
3. access to the field;
4. the sampling strategy to be used;
5. the kind of research that is being undertaken (e.g. quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods)" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 143).

Purposive sampling will be used to select participants. This method allows for the specific selection of school leaders who lead with a high level of moral purpose. School principals will be identified based on their reputation of effectively leading with moral purpose within their school community. The names of principals will be sourced through:

- The University of Waikato, Educational Leadership Centre.
- Other appropriate New Zealand educational agencies.

A list of principals will be created, from which six principals will be selected after consultation with my supervisor. They will then be contacted via phone, Skype or email. The purpose of this initial contact will be to establish rapport with the principals and provide a brief overview of the research project. Principals

interested in being part of this research will then be sent a formal letter of consent to participate in this research (Cohen et al., 2011).

### **3.7.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent is crucial. Participants who indicate they would like to participate in this research, will be fully briefed about their rights. This enables them to understand clearly what they will be consenting to, avoiding any confusion or potential future harm to them or their schools. Participants will also be sent a letter outlining the research process (Mutch, 2005). The notion of informed consent will also be continued throughout the interview and the subsequent transcript phase, where the researcher constantly reflects on their own ethical conduct (L. Smith, 2008).

### **3.7.3 Confidentiality**

Every endeavour will be made to ensure principals' identity, and that of their schools remains confidential throughout the entire research project. This will be conveyed to participants during the initial consent, interview and transcript phase of the research process. Participants will also be informed that only the research supervisor and researcher have access to the interview transcript. For example, pseudonyms will be used in the actual report instead of a principal's name (Bell, 2010; Masson, 2004).

### **3.7.4 Cultural and social considerations**

Before, during and after interviewing participants, the researcher will sustain awareness of any social or cultural misunderstandings that may occur during the interview. The researcher will seek to clarify any misunderstandings about moral leadership related to the participant's cultural and/or social beliefs. This will demonstrate that the researcher is being reflexive and sensitive to issues of personal, cultural and social bias. For example, researchers can be seen as gatekeepers, distorting the true meaning of participants' views from a cultural perspective (Miltiades, 2008).

### **3.7.5 Final consent: the interview transcript**

Principals who consent to be involved in this research will have the right to withdraw at any stage before they give their consent for the interview transcript to be used. Once consent has been given to use the transcript, participants may not withdraw these data from my research. As noted previously, each narrative transcript will be analysed into pre-established and emerging themes based on the research question. During this process, the researcher will be consciously aware of revisiting each interview in the context it occurred (Cohen et al., 2011; Quinn, 2010).

## **3.8 The validation and creation of new knowledge**

The validation and creation of new knowledge is superior when the researcher needs to consider what factors may influence principals' thinking based on the questions being asked. For example, creating a natural, trusting environment will encourage the principal to be as open as possible during the semi-structured interview. This can be achieved when the researcher builds positive rapport with principals during the initial consent phase and pre-interview meeting (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Miltiades, 2008; Schulman-Green, McCorkle, & Bradley, 2009).

To validate the data in this research, the researcher will ensure participants understand the questions and process during the semi-structured interviews. He will also seek to further probe participants' thinking in order to clarify their understanding during the interviews. In addition to this, the researcher will send a transcript of the interview to participants for them to verify. These approaches will enhance the rigour of the research by ensuring the integrity of the data, while the researcher demonstrates ethical reflexivity (Cameron, 2005; P. Davis, 2007; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Miltiades, 2008; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010; Scheibelhofer, 2008; Walford, 2007; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008).

### **3.8.1 What counts as evidence in research**

Educational research requires all researchers to achieve the highest quality in their work, which supports the education community. This is particularly pertinent in today's political and high stakes environment (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003;

Burns, 2000; J. Evans & Benefield, 2001; J. Gardner, 2011; Hartas, 2010; J. K. Smith & Gallagher, 2008). However, to complete the process of conducting educational research does not warrant automatic acceptance of the findings. The key condition is whether the research can be defined as being rigorous. Therefore, the question needs to be asked, how can evidence from the proposed research question and methodology be scrutinised to ensure the findings presented are in fact valid (Capraro & Thompson, 2008; J. K. Smith & Gallagher, 2008)?

Having explored literature relevant to the study and committed myself to using a qualitative approach through the semi-structured interview method, I undertook my research. The next chapter reports on the findings from these interviews.

### 4.1 Introduction

The semi-structured interview process offers a unique setting for principals to engage in dialogue and self-reflection. As they answer open-ended questions, the richness and depth of their leadership and moral purpose emerges from the stories they share with the interviewer. As a result of this process, there is a sense that principals and the interviewer uncover a deeper level of shared understanding about the themes and sub-themes that emerge from the discussion. Therefore, it is essential that these findings be characterised by the natural discourse that occurred in each interview. The researcher has extensively used the thoughts and direct quotations of principals so their stories are presented in the way they naturally occurred. This acknowledges the principals as individuals and professionals and permits an authentic reporting of their views and understandings. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms or they have been referred to as participants, leaders or principals in the findings.

“It is important to acknowledge that the gaze of the researcher and demands of academic scholarship inevitably mean that these stories have been subjected to analysis” by the researcher (Morrison, 2006, p. 64). Having used a semi structured interview technique, the organisation and analyse of the data led to the emergence of a number of core themes. They were:

1. Principals’ have a contextualised understanding of the term moral purpose.
2. Principals’ understanding of moral purpose influences their leadership.
3. Principals building moral purpose in the context of their schools.
4. Moral principals’ who lead with moral purpose display various intelligences that assist them to cope and adapt in their demanding roles.

### 4.2 Principals’ understanding of the term moral purpose

**Finding 1:** Leading with moral purpose requires principals’ to develop and be guided by their values.

Question one explored participants’ understanding of the term moral purpose. This concept appeared initially to challenge their thinking, which was highlighted

by each participant commenting or implying how they had to think deeply about the term ‘moral purpose’. As they began articulating their thoughts, ‘values guiding one’s actions’ became a recurring sub-theme throughout the dialogue. Values such as honesty, integrity, respecting people for who they are, and treating people fairly were repeated by all the participants when discussing the term moral purpose. For example, David stated, “As leaders we’ve got to have that moral purpose, that integrity, that honesty”. Carl believed, “if you do something with moral purpose, it’s those values that you stand by and the greatest of them all is integrity”.

Every participant described moral purpose as being the way a leader treats other people in the community. David concluded moral purpose related to the way a person interacts with other people, where they were guided by their values. Andy supported this view and added that moral purpose is “what you do, what you say, how you act, what is behind what you do, what you say, and how you say it”. Bruce suggested these authentic actions occurred because leaders engaged with their “head and heart”. They lead with moral purpose because “they have a sort of missionary zeal” where they wanted “to be the best person” they can be. Andy’s comment reinforced this assumption when he said, “as a leader, it is how you treat people”. For example, Anne summarised this notion when she articulated her moral purpose. She said, “it is about really really valuing all the dimensions of a person!” Adding to this point, four participants also inferred that this sense of ‘missionary zeal’ involved authentic actions of standing up for what is right. They all suggested leaders who lead with moral purpose are authentic in their actions because they want to assist people in being able to have a meaningful life.

<p><b>Finding 2:</b> Principals’ understanding of moral purpose is grounded in a social justice perspective where every person in a community has the right to a reasonable education and life.</p>
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The emergence of the idea that moral purpose involves standing up for ‘what is right or just’ provoked interesting responses from all of the participants. Their deeper understanding of moral purpose was based on beliefs that had developed through their life experiences. Each participant articulated particular views, which

focused on ‘what is right or just’ to them. For example, Carl shared how as part of his moral purpose he clashed with racism. David inferred his moral purpose was based on a sense of justice in the way he believes people should be treated as human beings. He added, “If I don’t act with moral purpose then it’s a fraudulent belief. Moral purpose comes back to that ethical behaviour that I think we should be exhibiting”. Participants suggested this led to a form of moral behaviour or moral learning, which Bruce acknowledges was like a “ripple” effect across different communities.

The data suggests the roots of participants’ moral purpose appear to originate from a social justice perspective, in which each individual in society has the right to equal opportunities and a sense of personal fulfilment. Bruce and Bridget conveyed this. They both recognised themselves as socialists where their cause was to make other people’s lives better. Bruce stated, “What spins your wheels really, that’s a really hard thing to define. I guess I’m a socialist at heart, I want to make a difference in people’s lives”. Bridget’s social justice belief was based on a person’s right to receive quality education, regardless of their social status. She added, “It is also about caring for the fact that as humanity people have a right to a reasonable life where there is not an excessive gap between the wealthy and poor like today”. She believes the role of a community is to look after every citizen within it.

Social justice appeared to influence participants’ moral purpose and their leadership. While Bruce and Bridget stated their social justice belief explicitly, other participants also inferred this through the comments highlighted by the previous statements. The data also highlighted a trend in the way life experiences had shaped participants personal understanding of what moral purpose meant to them. The next section will explore this sub-theme under the broad theme of what influences a principal’s moral purpose.



#### 4.2.1 Factors influencing principals' moral purpose

**Finding 3:** A range of life experiences, including their parents, faith, community events and educational experiences shape the origins of a principal's personal understanding of what moral purpose means to them.

The opening interview question asked participants to share their understanding of what moral purpose meant to them. This question, and subsidiary questions, elicited how life experiences had shaped each leaders understanding of the term moral purpose. Every participant had a different story to share about the origins of their understandings, which were grouped into four sub-themes: parents, faith, education and community events.

Andy, Bridget, Anne and Bruce's understanding of moral purpose was influenced from their early up bringing. The values that were modelled by their parents suggest this is the origin of their values. Bruce can distinctly remember his father's last words before passing away:

What I've tried to do with you kids is to leave the notion that if at the end of the day you can say, 'I've made another's life better', you've had a bloody good day', and that resonates with me.

Anne and Bridget both remembered how their mother and father role modelled distinctive strengths that influenced their own beliefs and life views. These included having high expectations, being supportive, caring for people and valuing relationships.

Anne and Bridget also felt that their faith influenced how they treated people through the values they demonstrated. Both indicated they were not overly religious, yet their experiences of being part of a connected community who valued human relationships resonated with them today. Anne said in discussing her faith, "I often do not articulate it, but I know I do live a strong faith". As Bridget stated, "For me, justice is affected by the kind of upbringing I had which was a very strong social justice upbringing". Bridget described how she is trying

to replicate the school community she grew up in where everyone “cared more about each other and looked after each other. I suppose that is what probably drives me quite a lot”.

A community event appeared to influence the origin of Carl’s moral purpose. He was involved in organising protests against the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour to New Zealand. Carl was opposed to racism and protested against the inequalities of black South Africans. However, another Maori activist challenged him to consider the oppression of Maori people in his own country. Carl described this as a turning point in his life. This “awakening” guides his current moral purpose as leader of his school “in terms of what is right and treating people with integrity and especially clashing with racism”.

Andy’s early rural life experience and subsequent educational experiences embodied the origins of his moral purpose. He identified there was discrimination between rural communities due to the perception farmers had the money and valued education, while factory working families did not. During his early schooling years, he also felt he was discriminated against by his teachers. He said, “I was never seen, none of my teachers saw me having any future”. He actually gave an example of a former principal who he remembered had ridiculed students. Years later, Andy confronted this retired principal and told him how his actions shaped his belief today. “I told him he had strongly influenced me in the way I am as principal today, both in the way I treat the students and teachers and also how teachers treat the students”. As a consequence of his negative schooling experience, Andy’s moral purpose is embodied in the belief “people can be successful if someone believes in them!” The next section will explore how moral purpose influences each principal’s leadership.

### **4.3 Leadership and moral purpose**

<p><b>Finding 4:</b> Making a difference to students and their learning drives principals who lead with moral purpose. They are deeply conscious of the rights of students and they see themselves as the overriding advocate for all students.</p>
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Each participant articulated that at the very heart of their moral purpose was making a difference for students and their learning. Rather than focus on a narrow academic view of learning, they shared a broader conception that shaped their leadership. Trends from comments inferred a belief that their role was to ensure the development of well-rounded human beings who have an important place as future citizens in society. For example, Andy described how a recent visitor to the school said, “I don’t know what you are doing here, but this would be one of the best schools I’ve come to. I don’t know what you are doing but you are doing it right”. To Andy, this was more important than academic learning because it illustrated his school were developing quality human beings.

All the participants stated they were driven by what was best for their students. This influenced their leadership approach. As Bridget commented, “well what drives everything for me are our girls”. Bruce also made a similar comment, “but the driver for me is the kids, what are the kids needs?” Making a difference to students and her team drove Anne. She stated, “I don’t just come to work to fill up the time and then go home. I really believe that my purpose here is to make a difference”. Andy made a short statement, which illustrated he is driven by his moral purpose, his students. He stated, I am focused on ensuring “every student can get the best deal they can get!” Carl summarised the moral leadership of all the participants by passionately describing the attitude needed by his teachers; “If you turn up, how dare you not give 100% to the kids education!”

<p><b>Finding 5:</b> Principals who lead with moral purpose have a broader conception of students’ rights, which is focused on the belief every student should receive a fair and just education.</p>
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In discussing the rights and aspirations of their students, leaders conveyed a sense that they were the final advocates for every student in their school. It was evident from their moral purpose they often had to make difficult decisions, which impacted on teachers, parents, and/or students. However, they had the courage to make these decisions because of their moral belief that they had students’ best interests at the very core of their decision-making. Bridget demonstrated this by the way she put students interests ahead of staff members. Her message to staff

was always the same, “As principal I am driven by what is best for students and their interests”. Andy continually reminded staff of their professional responsibility towards students. He frequently challenged teachers by reminding them they have 384 half days to maximise students learning. He repeatedly asks his teachers to consider whether they would like their child in their own classroom. Andy believes that teachers have “got one chance to make a difference for that student!”

Carl shared two instances where he had the courage to make “tough calls” based on his moral purpose. The first instance involved “ripping into staff” because they had become too loose where he felt standards were slipping which was affecting the school’s culture and thus students’ learning. The second instance involved reprimanding his very best students for letting down the whole school through their actions, which in his mind had reflected on the integrity of every student in the school. David, in commenting on classroom placements and his school’s vision, believed he has to have moral purpose when making difficult decisions because he is the final arbiter on what is “good for the kids?” While discussing values, David also stated, “Sometimes you have to be prepared to make the hard decisions because the hard decisions might be the moral decision to make”.

The above examples illustrate a pattern where participants could articulate in depth their understanding of their moral purpose, which influences their leadership. Consequently, the following statement may best summarise participants’ shared belief:

‘Each student has the right to a just and fair education, where they are respected as human beings’.

Further trends throughout the data support the essence of this statement. For example, David believed his credibility and integrity was the key to his leadership. He is conscious of treating students as real people who have equal rights within their school community. He also stated that ethical leadership involved not having power over students. Andy’s leadership was influenced by what is important to students. His leadership emphasised valuing students as

people who have individual aspirations, and how essential it is for teachers to instil moral learning in their students. Carl demonstrated a belief in providing a culture of respect and integrity, where he led others through his actions. He stated, “For young men who are incapable of thinking of consequences and thinking beyond them and are very impulsive, to grow men of integrity I think is absolutely essential”. Therefore, he implied, he had to model integrity based on his view of how a good man acts. He was not only the final advocate for students but also the one role model they could consistently rely on. David added to Carl’s statement by suggesting that children need to learn there is a greater responsibility to the community. They need to have modelled for them what it means to be a citizen. However, to achieve this involves understanding the “fragility” of children as young citizens who need support and understanding in their development as people.

<p><b>Finding 6:</b> Principals in this research were driven by ensuring ‘student voice’ is central to their decisions and the future direction of their school community.</p>
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One of the most significant patterns to emerge from the data involved ‘student voice’. Each participant shared or implied the view that in order to lead with moral purpose they had to listen to the views and aspirations of their students. Student voice had to drive the direction of their school community. Andy shared that his biggest frustration was the fact that so many students go through their education unnoticed. He said it was imperative that he sees the world through the eyes of his students. He also reinforced this view when he is engaged with his staff. Anne implied this view when considering students driving the school web page. Bridget stated, “Student voice is critical in all of what we are doing”. Through her interview she shared various examples where senior leaders had taken on board feedback from students, both positive and negative. Carl shared an example of a student who had decided to change gender in a single gender school. Carl’s subsequent actions demonstrated his moral purpose in supporting this students right to be an individual, which he protected.

The previous examples from participants demonstrate the importance of principals creating a school community culture that is focused on ‘what is best for students’.

The emerging theme of ‘what values do these leaders demonstrate in creating a culture where they lead with moral purpose’ is a confirmation that values appear to shape the moral purpose of participants’ leadership. This will now be considered in the forthcoming section.

#### 4.3.1 Values

**Finding 7:** A range of values guide the daily actions of principals who lead with moral purpose. These values are intertwined within their belief system, which contributes to their understanding of moral purpose.

Data illustrated that each participant continually made reference to several values, which guided their leadership. This was a recurring trend through each semi-structured interview. Some examples of the values described in the context of their leadership included:

- Being loyal
- Being fair
- Treating people with respect
- Caring for others
- Acting with integrity
- Being honest
- Displaying courage to do the ‘right thing’
- Being reflective

Integrity was the value that recurred the most in participants’ stories. Integrity highlighted leadership traits such as being transparent, being consistent and basing decisions around moral purpose. Although integrity was the most frequently stated value in the data, patterns illustrated by what participants said showed that values could not be compared in isolation. As Bruce stated, “they meld, they are entwined. Those are my personal values (points to the school values chart on his office wall), they are no different from the ones that the school has got... honesty, integrity etc”. Carl also described the essence of his leadership was based around many “value laden things”. He added, “there is nothing religious in it, it’s just purely moral”. What was clear from the data was that these values underpinned each leader’s decision-making.

The data pattern demonstrated the interconnected relationship between the values participants' modelled and their moral purpose. For example, Bridget valued honesty the most and could not fathom why a person would be dishonest in the context of teaching students. She also stated, "Probably the one thing that affects me the most is if I was accused of being dishonest at any stage, that really throws me". Carl described how 'integrity' and 'respect' are part of the professional ethos expected of teachers, which he modelled. David implied his leadership credibility was underpinned by modelling and living society's values.

The data indicated that participants' values underpinned their daily leadership actions. Data illustrated that participants frequently modelled and reinforced their values through the relationships they had developed with students, teachers, parents and board of trustee members. In subsequent sections, the themes of relationships and ethical frameworks will become obvious based on the findings.

#### **4.3.2 Community**

**Finding 8:** Principals who lead with moral purpose display a broader sense of what a school community means. They see their school as the centre of their local community.

The notion of a school as a community created dialogue amongst participants, which was evident through the interview process. All the participants inferred that their school community included teachers, support staff, parents and students. There were specific instances where participants referred directly to the notion of a school community. For example, Bruce described how he works really hard "ensuring staff work as a community", where there is a shared understanding of why they are there. He added, "A sense of community involves clarity of purpose. I mean you can use the metaphoric paddling in a waka - if everybody's not paddling in unison then we're not heading in the right direction. Is that moral purpose?" David noted how there are often "unwritten contracts with the community" (referring to parents) on such topics as homework. While Anne explained how creating a sense of community involved ensuring parent fundraising groups, the board of trustees and a team of teachers were all focused on making a difference to students and their learning. An emerging pattern of

participants understanding of school community was best summarised by Bruce who (in discussing the historical meaning of schools and the change in meaning today) stated, “once industrial schools came in there was a sort of demarcation between community and the school, you came into the school and suddenly it was like a principality. In my view schools and community are the same”.

Further questioning of the data uncovered a deeper sense of participants’ conceptual understanding of their school being the centre of their community. Bruce identified the break down of the traditional nuclear family as one reason why there was more focus on schools being the centre of his community, while Bridget believed it was linked to less people being part of a church community. Carl stated schools should be better than society. He explained that his moral purpose is linked with the belief that schools “should be better than the society in which it is placed or else what is a school for, and I think that is the essence of our education system”. This point was further supported by David who shared his belief that “schools are a microcosm of the community” where students learn to develop the skills needed to survive in a society. All the participants’ echoed David’s view, where they believed a school’s moral purpose involves supporting students to learn to become a future member of society.

<b>Finding 9:</b> Principals who lead with moral purpose lead in a moral way.
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Participants often described themselves as working with a range of people outside the context of their school. For example, David believed moral purpose involved being honest with other principals when one of his staff applied for a job at their school. He felt morally obliged to make his peer aware of any performance issues. Andy frequently mentioned his involvement in higher-level leadership roles. However, his comments suggested he was morally committed to his school community. Carl and Bridget also made reference to external agencies when they had staff issues. Although they acted in a moral way, the focus was still on their immediate school community. Only Bruce articulated a deeper sense his leadership and moral purpose was connected to a broader notion of society.

Bruce directly described how as a moral leader he works with a range of people from many different communities. He also stated:



In various contexts you have a moral purpose at the local level, a school level, which is a community and then a much wider level in terms of the community you live in.

Thinking of some of the issues of the day and then trying to work through what does that mean at a localised level, what does that mean at a regional level?

School community is like ripples in a pond, and I touched on it before, there is my immediate community. They are a subset of another community. Do I act differently in one community, I really do not think I do.

In the above examples, David and Bruce appeared to convey a broader understanding of community, in which their moral leadership and moral purpose were consistent across communities. They displayed a deep moral conviction of the interconnected relationship between the communities they led and the moral influence they had as a leader.

The next section will contemplate the emerging theme of ethical frameworks in relation to leaders who lead with moral purpose, which was identified earlier in these findings.

#### **4.3.3 Ethical leadership**

**Finding 10:** Principals who lead with moral purpose base their decision-making on an ethical frameworks. This ethical framework consists of acting in a professional manner, such as ensuring teachers are responsible for their well being so they can provide the very best for their students.

The notion of values guiding the daily actions of principals was highlighted throughout the data. This was best summarised by David's statement in describing his understanding of the term moral purpose. He stated, "but it gets back to that

integrity and honesty and that ethical behaviour that I think we should be exhibiting”. This trend suggests that a deeper level of ethical decision-making exists within the intelligence of these principals. Two stories shared by David and Bruce involved their commenting on how the electronic age affects the well-being of their staff because they can be available 24/7 via text, phone or email. They both had to raise this issue with staff about when is it appropriate to contact another staff member outside normal working hours.

Furthermore, David explained how you sometimes have to “jettison” things that impact on staff performance. “Quite often there is no planned obsolescence of something else. Without that planned obsolescence all you are doing is increasing the demand/workload on the teacher and there is a point where the demand can become unsustainable”. He added,

There has to be holiday time. You have to be firm about that and so we were talking about that as moral purpose. As a leader you need to decide what you plan to jettison in return for the things you want to do because I believe that is being moral”. You need to make sure that what you expected is sustainable, manageable and has a purpose that contributes to learning.

Bruce also described a similar view to David as he explained the “paradox” in today’s complicated age. He stated:

Again I think of the disposition of not having a ‘one size fits all scenario’ for our communities, as our politicians would suggest you have, and being able to problem solve. I think Viviane Robinson talks about human capability and weaving through the five dimensions. I think it is applicable to life, it is not just teaching, life is actually complex.

Bruce also suggested teachers want simplicity yet they need to take responsibility for their well-being. He explained they needed to be at their best when at work, while allowing time outside work to “refill their emotional reservoir”. He often articulated this point to his staff by telling them that they needed to be “able to give to other people from that reservoir”. Thus his decision-making involved challenging staff to take better responsibility for their well being outside of work hours, so they were at their best for students. These descriptions suggest both participants rely on an ethical framework for their decision-making because of how they consider the rights of students in the first instance. This framework is also partly based on what it means to be professional, where students’ learning is their moral purpose.

<p><b>Finding 11:</b> Principals who lead with moral purpose make ethical decisions based on what is best for their community and the broader ideals of a just society.</p>
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Analysis of data also uncovered examples of participants’ ethical positions, where they identified barriers to education. These barriers included government demands narrowing learning and making education a product for the betterment of the economy. Andy, Bridget and Bruce all described in different ways how they believed that the government was actually causing harm to student learning and students’ well-being.

For example, Bridget had recently challenged the Ministry of Education around their future direction in student attainment, which she described as “a persuasive view” of education. She explained to them, “Where has presence and engagement gone for each learner”? From her perspective, the Ministry’s narrow view of learning did not relate to her school community’s broad vision for learning and the outcomes they hoped for each student. Bridget believed she had to “think in terms of looking at ethical positions” when deciding what is best for her school community. This links strongly to her moral purpose of creating a community where every student can excel as individuals rather than “creating clones”, which she suggested is the outcome of the Ministry’s narrow view of education.

Furthermore she stated, “I think as principal there are real challenges for us ethically at the moment”. For example, student voice is critical in her school community. Recently, five students did a presentation where they articulated the school’s vision. Such an example demonstrated to Bridget that her decisions must be based on what is fair and right for her students rather than the Ministry of Education.

Andy expressed similar views in relation to his ethical decision-making. At various times through his interview, Andy showed how he kept his school community focused on their vision rather than government initiatives. In commenting on his decision-making around the implementation of National Standards, Andy demonstrated a deep level of reflective thinking when weighing up the outcomes of what direction he would take. In another instance Andy explained that every decision he makes is through students’ eyes. He is mindful of students “realising their goals and ambitions and talents and skills of the world?” He added,

Whenever new things come in, as you know in education,  
I always fall back on – do I believe what they are doing –  
and if I do not then I rarely go there. I maintain what I  
believe to be correct and that is not in arrogant way, but in  
a moral sense.

Andy’s statement appears to highlight how principals’ (who lead with moral purpose) ethical perspectives can lead to a fundamental tension between what is morally right for students and Ministry of Education’s expectations. This tension will be discussed further in the next section.

Bruce expressed similar views around the narrow centred approach of government education policy. He described how not all students were succeeding in the current educational system because successive governments were failing to hear what students really wanted from their education. As he stated, “what is good for some is bad for others and is that what the national education system is about, where we put in barriers to exclude, if you like, a segment of our population?” In

discussing ethical and moral perspectives that influence his leadership, Bruce stated:

An ethical leader is a blend of an egoistic-altruistic and has a strong values base in my view and they do not do the popular thing no matter how pressured it is; I will not do the popular thing; I will do the ethical thing or the right thing.

All of the above descriptions suggest these principals were influenced by ethical frameworks consisting of being professional as an educator, and a broader notion of education. This now leads to the third section of these findings, where actual examples of participants' leading with moral purpose will be illustrated.

#### **4.4 School context**

**Findings 12:** Although distributed leadership resonates with principals who lead with moral purpose, they utilise a range of leadership forms. These forms are dependent upon the context in which the principal is leading.

During the semi-structured interview participants were asked, "How does your understanding of moral purpose influence your leadership?" Two of the participants answered this question directly by stating that they believed in distributed leadership. Bridget described how distributed leadership is "highly effective as a way of getting an ethos imbued in the school", while David explained how his school "believe in distributed leadership". Carl also described his style of leadership as delegated distributive leadership. He shared, "my strengths lie in the public arena and rousing the troops, where my weakness is covered by delegated responsibilities".

The notion of distributed leadership was either directly stated or inferred by all the participants through their explanation of how they develop leadership within their organisations. Participants made reference to distributed leadership within various forms of groups they were engaged with. They included senior leadership teams (such as an Assistant Principal and Deputy Principal), vertical groups of teachers

from different year groups or departments, and teams of teachers working collaboratively.

At the surface level, distributed leadership and moral purpose appeared to be connected by the vision of the school. Participants used their school's vision as the initial means for getting people together. For example, Anne stated how re-doing the school vision "re-energised" staff. Bridget reiterated the above point by explaining how it is essential staff see her as "believing in the direction [we] are going". She also explained her belief that moral purpose and vision are connected to student voice. Further stories shared by participants illustrated a deeper conceptual link between their leadership and their moral purpose. They described how their leadership included cultivating a collaborative community by guiding staff in different contexts.

<p><b>Finding 13:</b> Principals who lead with moral purpose develop collaborative, morally conscious environments.</p>
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Andy frequently described how he cultivated a collaborative culture by focusing on developing team leaders within his school. He stated, "I tend to build capability through these teams rather than go through the whole staff". He added, "team leaders are the ones, because if they do not continue to promote what the school stands for, in terms of both programme and values, then you can fall down". Anne described "building a team and getting the best out of the team, and making sure as a leader I'm working with staff and developing them so they can be the best they can be".

Bruce, in discussing his leadership team (who he stated worked collaboratively and co-constructively), shared how he attempted to take his "senior leaders off the dance floor and up onto the balcony". He described this as the engagement of "head and heart", which leads to "reflective actions" by his senior leaders. David added to this notion by describing how distributed leadership and moral purpose moulded together. He shared how he directly supported staff to develop what could be perceived as a form of moral consciousness. This was based on the belief that every staff member was a leader and role model within their school

community. Through effective and ongoing communication, staff were engaged in dialogue that made them more aware of their moral actions.

Data suggests this was underpinned by a culture of effective relationships. Relationships, which were previously noted early in these findings, will be acknowledged in section 4.4.2. However, the next section will focus on exploring principals' form of leadership as they lead with moral purpose.

#### 4.4.1 Forms of leadership

**Finding 14:** Moral leadership is inseparable from a leader's moral purpose. Other forms of leadership are also present. However this is dependent on the context in which leadership is occurring.

Although participants stated or implied their leadership style focused on distributed leadership, patterns suggest this was not the only form of leadership approach inherently shared in their stories. Traditional forms of authoritative leadership were also present. They described situations where staff had let them down in the way they behaved. Language used by some of the participants in their responses suggested they were unequivocal in dealing with people who acted in a way that was below their high expectations. For example, Bruce stated, "I spend many hours working with people to make them feel valued and at times kick their arse, it's not about stroking egos". Carl explained a situation where he had a personal grievance taken against him by a staff member. He shared how he was annoyed that the person could not have "dealt with it man to man". Andy felt teachers do not understand the wonderful lifestyle they have. As professionals there are certain things they have no choice over. So at times when people complain about their workload he thinks, "oh toughen up" or he tells them in a subtle way to, "just get on with it". Consequently, the data implied that no matter what form of adjectival leadership was present, underpinning all the various forms was moral leadership.

Data also illustrated how contexts were important to participants. David even quoted Leithwood in describing how effective leaders are exquisitely sensitive to context. For example, all the participants shared similar stories where they placed high expectations on staff performance and were not afraid to make unpopular

decisions or confront staff that had let them and the school down. To participants, their moral purpose guided their actions.

Some of the examples that support the above actions include:

David supported a parent with her son's behaviour at home. He listened and provided guidance without providing a solution for the parent's home problem. He also accepted criticism from a fixed term teacher who had missed out on a permanent position. He took the time to listen to the person's concerns and explain the employment decision was based on what was best for the school. He shared from this experience, "now I might not have won any friends about that, but to me it was a moral decision".

Bridget described how she often initiates contact with employment agencies to mediate possible employment issues when "I've mucked it up". She has the moral courage to accept she made a mistake.

Anne shared a story where she listened to a parent who had a major concern because of the change in teachers in her child's classroom. However, the parent went away feeling valued because Anne listened to her. This was in spite of the fact Anne could not reveal the real reasons for the staff changes due to ethical issues of protecting the teacher's privacy. In another example, she also guided teachers to think ethically about their comments when discussing students inappropriately in the staffroom. As she stated, "I would always make sure I treat staff with dignity and with natural justice". Anne consistently illustrated through her stories the ability to listen and empathise with people, where she could remove her own personal judgement.

This data illustrates a consistent theme that can be emphatically acknowledged; moral leadership is inseparable from a leader's moral purpose. Participants' comments also reinforce how a broader ethical framework exists within their emotional intelligence, which might be best summarised by Carl's statement:



Because human beings, being who they are, are going to let you down. One of the things I've learned is no matter what you do for somebody, they'll always forget and some of the people that I've helped the most are my biggest critics.

The essence of this statement and similar stories shared by the participants suggests they understand the frailties of human nature yet they continue to strive towards a better society. Their moral leadership leads to further sub-themes such as form of moral intelligence, sustainability and critical self-reflection displayed by these principals, which will be explored in section 4.5. However, the next section will identify relationships within a form of moral leadership and moral purpose.

#### **4.4.2 A culture based on relationships**

**Finding 15:** Moral leaders create and sustain a school culture by the way they model human relationships. This reinforces a culture based on trust, shared responsibility and the notion of a more humane society.

At the surface level, these leaders directly responded to the idea that they sustain positive relationships within their school community. Carl initially recognised praise, celebrating each student's birthday and humour as important elements in building positive relationships. Bruce described how relationships are the fourth 'R' (reading, writing, arithmetic and relationships) and that "relationships underpin everything" in the day-to-day context of his school. Anne explained how professional relationships help push staff "out of their comfort zones". She does this by listening, being conscious of how staff are coping with their work and building relationships based on trust.

In discussing relationships, Andy immediately began sharing an incident, which inadvertently involved him. A junior teacher openly questioned his decision in front of other more senior teachers. After accepting her point of view, Andy left the room. At that point, the senior teachers took exception to how the junior teacher had spoken to Andy. They all reiterated that Andy will always give a

simple answer to any question and they all completely trust his leadership decisions because they are always in the best interests of the students and what the school stands for. Andy shared how this example showed how staff felt respected by him. “She was put in her place by the moral values of others, the school values came through because they were upheld”. He further added how developing a culture of high trust was significant in his leadership, which takes time.

Andy’s story provided further evidence that participants acted as moral leaders where their actions were guided by their moral purpose. Each principal modelled effective communication, where the influence lay in what the school stood for or the schools moral purpose. For example, David commented on the importance of a culture where people felt valued and heard. Andy described a culture where “the value system overrides the way we do things here”. He added, “because at the end of the day that is what we stand for”. Carl, in explaining how he is creating a school culture that is better than society, calls this an enculturation process. He suggested respect between people, property and the environment is moral leadership, which has greater meaning than academic learning. He added how this is connected to his school’s moral purpose as they try to “develop and nurture really good men”.

The previous descriptions tend to reinforce the idea that leaders, who act in a moral way, reinforce the culture of the school community. The next set of data focuses on the sub-themes of intelligences, self-reflection and sustainability.

#### **4.5 Coping and adapting in a demanding role**

<p><b>Finding 16:</b> Moral principals who lead with moral purpose are morally conscious of their actions. They develop this awareness through their emotional intelligence, critical self-reflection and by engaging in theory on their leadership practice.</p>
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As expressed in previous sections of these findings, participants seemed be able to articulate a level of reflection where they could evaluate their own actions from a moral perspective. Patterns showed in the data that this included participants’ ability to critically self-reflect on their moral leadership. Each participant either

echoed stories or articulated their thoughts, which illustrated what could be termed ‘moral self-reflection’.

Andy explained how he “reflects enormously on what people say” as he balances the working relationships of his staff. Anne shared a similar story where she stated, “I’m very reflective, I’m actually hard on myself”. She added, “I just naturally replay things in my mind, how it could have been done better, how could I have done it better”. At times, other participants articulated ‘moral self-reflection’ after answering a question. They acknowledged something new had been unearthed from their reflection. For example, after “ripping into staff” Carl reflected on the outcome of his actions. He explained, “So the moral dilemma is that good people felt undermined, that morale went down, all those kinds of consequences, and just so like the moral dilemma you weigh it up”. Bridget frequently stopped herself during a story she was sharing and asked herself, “so am I being just?” In explaining why she keeps revisiting her mistakes Bridget stated, “because you’ve got to live with yourself. If you’re being honest—you can’t just expect others to demonstrate honesty. As a leader you have to model honesty in the first instance”.

These examples illustrate the depth of participants’ moral consciousness as they self-reflect. However, each participant also acknowledged the importance of reading literature to support his or her leadership. This was evident in the data through the stories they shared within their own school culture and what they did personally. In answering the question, ‘what keeps you in perspective that you’re leading ethically’, Bruce replied that his thirst to know what he does not know. Throughout his interview he frequently made reference to literature and authors based on his leadership approach. As he stated,

Life is an iterative process, if you are continually learning and refocusing (but sometimes we do not, we replicate the past; we are good at doing that), I think all of that growth is influenced by a variety of factors, but there is a disposition to want to grow.

Similar comments were also made by the other participants, where they agreed how important reading is as they reflect on their moral leadership.

Furthermore, the data concerning emotional intelligence implied that E.Q. played an important part in their leadership. Anne provided some examples where emotional intelligence had influenced her decision-making. However she stated, “I actually don’t know a lot about emotional intelligence”. Bridget adopted a similar view by describing how she believes emotional intelligence is important yet she has never fully grasped it.

David, Bruce, Andy, and Carl all echoed the view that emotional intelligence was essential in their leadership. They each shared their understanding and stories, which supported this view. David said, “being in touch with yourself, with your emotions, your own beliefs is really really important”. Carl described how his own emotional intelligence was high yet he sometimes found it difficult to read social situations with staff. Andy shared a similar view where he stated his emotional intelligence was his strength but staff sometimes took advantage of him. He also believed staff cannot be taught emotional intelligence. He suggested, “you can make them aware but you can’t make them drink—if that makes sense”. Bruce articulated a deep understanding of his emotional intelligence. He stated, “you can’t have emotional intelligence without intra-and interpersonal intelligence and I think its intra first, at peace with self, reflective, resilient, and empathetic”. He also added all these things underpin emotional intelligence. David, Carl, Bruce and Andy’s comments supported the above view that emotional intelligence and resilience are integrated within moral leaders who lead with moral purpose.

#### **4.5.1 Resilience and attitude sustains moral leadership**

<p><b>Finding 17:</b> Principals who lead with moral purpose display greater resilience, which is energised through their moral leadership actions.</p>
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David, Bruce, Carl and Andy all displayed patterns of resilience. They each were passionate yet also displayed varying degrees of calmness, which were reflected in the comments they made. Carl described how his moral purpose is linked to his

leadership by the way he focuses on human relationships. Other managerial tasks are delegated to other senior leadership team members. He added, stress does not affect his mind or his ability to sleep. David explained how he has always been fairly calm and consistent in his actions. However, in 1996 he made a conscious decision to be more reflective in his leadership. He described how engaging in higher level literature enabled him to stay calm when he makes a difficult decision. He stated, “sub-consciously you are starting to link the theory that you know exists there and you are linking it and using it”. He added that the theory becomes part of his daily actions.

To further determine the extent that participants’ leadership was more moral in nature the interviewer also asked each participant whether attitude or motivation shaped his or her leadership. In sharing his view, David believed it was motivation. However, he also added “leading with moral purpose is making a positive difference for the whole person’s place in our society”. This suggests attitude drives him. Bridget thought it was impossible to separate motivation and attitude. She felt attitude drives people and to her this involved doing what is important for her students. Bruce was of the same opinion when describing motivation and attitude. He stated, “I don’t think they’re distinct, I don’t think they are discrete; I think your motivation and your attitude are inextricably linked”. Nonetheless, attitude seemed to shape his final statement. He implied leadership is co-constructed where “to do that you’ve actually got to be informed and resilient and all those things we have talked about (moral purpose). I frequently ask my staff the question what is it that you would die for?” Andy reinforced attitude over motivation in describing his moral leadership. He was focused on supporting his staff and students be to the best people they possible could be.

#### **4.4 Summary**

As a researcher, I have attempted to understand the influence moral purpose has on principals. Evidence throughout the findings has shown how these principals are moral leaders who are driven by their moral purpose. However, a broader form of moral leadership has also become apparent. Moral principals who lead through their moral purpose appear to rely on a range of attributes, dispositions

and capacities, which were influenced by the context they lead in. It is also clear from these findings that they are continuously engaging in meaningful human relationships as they cultivate a community who are endeavouring to model a more humane, flourishing society.

**5.1 Introduction**

West-Burnham (2009) suggests moral principals support teachers, students, and parents to become committed towards achieving a shared moral purpose. They guide followers towards experiencing positive feelings and a sense that enhances followers' well-being. Scholars suggest these leaders influence followers to uncover a deeper level of meaning to their life, as a person and citizen in society, through a shared moral purpose (Day, 2004; Fullan, 2002b, 2008b).

In the current educational context there is a real challenge for New Zealand school principals to lead in a moral way in their school community because internal and external factors may in fact conflict with their moral purpose. The question then is how can principals lead with moral purpose in such challenging times (Sergiovanni, 1992)?

**5.2 Mirroring the literature**

Qualitative research opens the door to the natural world of participants. This enables a researcher to identify themes and explore possible threads that occur when interpreting the data. Consequently, an emerging understanding and interpretation of participants' social reality leads to tentative theorising being developed in relation to the original research question (Mutch, 2005). Scholars have described theory as interrelated group of concepts, descriptions and suggestions that enable a researcher to uncover the lived experiences of participants. In order to explore moral leadership and how principals lead with moral purpose, tentative theorising from the initial findings must be critically evaluated from a theoretical framework. Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that this framework should include, descriptive validity, interpretive validity and theoretical validity. The researcher has used an interpretive framework, as discussed in chapter three.

**5.3 Moral purpose**

A broad description of moral purpose was developed from the stories participants shared. Participants' views of moral purpose appeared to be influenced by

personal and professional values that guided their actions and was largely congruent with various descriptions from the literature. They displayed a sense of what Bruce described as “missionary zeal” in respecting and valuing people. West-Burnham’s (2009) description of authentic moral leadership aligns with participants’ understanding of moral purpose as does an early theme that was identified in chapter 2 (see p. 8). For example, participants’ overarching focus was not only on academic performance of their students but on how they modelled and communicated effective relationships within their school community. This assertion was supported by what Bruce, Bridget and Andy actually stated. They objected to a linear view of learning held by the government’s economic agenda and the Ministry of Education, where the needs of the economy were placed over the rights of students.

### **5.3.1 Principals’ contextualised understanding**

The previous finding challenges a number of theorists’ perceptions of moral purpose. Fullan (2009), Fullan et al. (2006), Hopkins (2011) and Robertson (2011) believe moral purpose starts with leaders focusing on improving teacher performance and reducing the gap between students achievement. This includes monitoring and improving teacher performance in the classroom. However, these findings suggest the basis of each participant’s moral purpose is inextricably linked to how they relate to, and treat people. Their leadership actions appeared to be authentic because they believed every person in their community has the right to be treated in a respectful way. Therefore, the assumption can be made from this pattern that these leaders tried to be the best leader they could be, which was illustrated by how they valued people. This leads to the notion that participants’ moral purpose is largely shaped by social justice themes. Day et al. (2001), Fullan (2003a) and Hargreaves and Fink (2006) convey a similar view in their research (Fullan’s apparent contradiction is addressed in the literature review; see p.7.).

### **5.3.2 Social justice**

Social justice emerged as a primary determinant, and continuing influence on participants’ evolving moral purpose. Although social justice influenced participants’ moral purpose to varying degrees, they all shared a belief that each person within a community deserves the right to experience a meaningful life.



Consequently, a broader notion of moral purpose becomes apparent from the findings, where individuals have the right to explore their personal trajectories at an individual level and as a member of a community. This is congruent with the writing of Starratt (2007).

This implies that leaders who lead with moral purpose have a vision of a connected, humane community. Bezzina (2012), Collarbone and West-Burnham (2008) and De Pree (1997) all reinforce the finding that participants appeared committed to societal themes of social justice, equity and inclusion for all community members, whilst cultivating the moral awareness of each citizen. This concept has also been advanced by Davies and West-Burnham (1997) who believe leaders who lead with this form of moral purpose shape the moral consciousness of citizens for the greater good of society.

### **5.3.3 Life experiences also shape a principal's moral purpose**

Findings illustrated that life experiences shaped participants' fundamental values and beliefs, which in turn influenced, in a powerful way, the development of their moral purpose. These life experiences were varied, and included the influence of their parents and faith in shaping their beliefs, a community event that challenged racism and early educational experiences where a participant felt a sense of social injustice.

This finding implies that participants have developed a deeper sense of meaning to their leadership as a consequence of these life experiences. They understand that their role is centred on making a difference to students' lives (in the first instance) and the greater good of the community (Fullan, 2003a; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This concept emphasises the notion that moral and ethical leadership are inseparably linked to moral purpose. Sergiovanni (2001) and Starratt (2007) both support the view that moral purpose is underpinned by a form of ethical leadership. Similarly, Davies and West-Burnham (1997) view moral purpose within a form of authentic moral leadership. Both of these positions will be considered in the remaining sections.

## **5.4 Leadership and moral purpose**

While this section appears similar to the first section, the findings suggest it should be addressed as a discrete entity. Participants conveyed a number of instances in their stories where moral purpose influenced their leadership. This suggests that moral purpose and a principals' leadership are interwoven, which will now be explored.

### **5.4.1 Moral purpose influences their leadership**

A broader notion of 'what is just or right' influenced participants' understanding of their moral purpose. The findings highlighted how 'student's rights' influenced each participant's moral behaviour. Participants appeared to view their leadership as the protector of this right, which shaped their leadership actions. This point was most evident by Bridget's statement that "every person in society has the right to receive a reasonable education", and Carl who stated, "Students deserve the best deal they can get". This aligns with Reus-Smit (2001) and Talbert-Johnson (2006) who reinforce that the rights of students shape the purpose of education in today's society.

Participants demonstrated a number of examples where they illustrated that their moral purpose was shaped by students' rights. This included:

- Having high expectations of teachers to give their very best to students as professionals.
- Having high expectations of students where they were expected to act in a way that reflected the culture of the school.
- Communicating with parents 'what was best for students', which in some cases superseded individual parental demands.
- Making ethical decisions about what learning was best for their students rather than a narrowly focused view of student achievement, which they believed was held by the government and Ministry of Education.

In addition to the above points, participants were particularly aware of the vulnerability of students, the power adults had over them, and ensuring they were treated equitably. They demonstrated an ethical awareness, which reinforced their moral purpose from a social justice perspective. The data suggests quite clearly

that ethical decision-making based on students' rights influenced participants' leadership and understanding of their moral purpose. For example, at the very heart of participants' moral purpose was how 'student voice' influenced their ethical decision-making. Student voice proactively drove the direction of their schools' vision; student voice also acted as a 'touchstone' that enabled participants to stay connected to their moral purpose (Ciulla, 2012; Starratt, 2005).

Furthermore, participants' moral purpose was illustrated by how they viewed education from a broader, moral perspective. This statement has been further supported by Bezzina et al. (2009), and M.E. Brown (2007). Participants' stories also imply that they enhanced their ethical awareness through daily interactions with people. They appeared to develop an ethical awareness in the context of their leadership role. This led to a form of ethical leadership that shaped participants' moral purpose, where there appeared to be a reciprocal influence between moral purpose, ethics and values. Ciulla (2012), Bezzina et al. (2009), M.E. Brown (2007), M. Williams and Burden (2000) reinforce this statement.

In addition to the previous viewpoint, theory also supports the data that a form of ethical leadership and intelligence influences principals' understanding of moral purpose. Findings illustrate that participants' ethical understanding did not emerge from an authoritarian set of rules that guided their conduct. Instead, it was linked by what some scholars refer to as a leader's inner compass or moral purpose (M. E. Brown, 2007; Ciulla, 2012; M. Williams & Burden, 2000). This point was demonstrated by a number of responses, typified by Bruce:

We have ethics don't we, I mean you have ethics, the union has ethics, at the end of the day—when did I last read the NZEI's ethics---I can't remember, it's not what guides me. I think what guides most people is that sense of the right thing.

#### **5.4.2 Values influence a principal's moral purpose**

Data illustrated how values were interwoven in participants' leadership style, while also reinforcing their moral purpose. Values are clearly a substantial element in the emergence of a moral purpose, which in turn influences their leadership style. Participants all modelled moral values through the daily relationships they had with students, teachers and parents. Day (2000, 2004, 2005) supports this finding by stating how values-led leaders perceive themselves as role models, guiding followers to act in a moral way. This view is also supported by how participants appeared to focus on their own values in the first instance. Consequently, their capacity to problem solve in emerging relationship issues was enhanced (Becker, 2009; Currie & Lockett, 2007). For example, Carl stipulated how the essence of every leadership decision he makes is based on the values he believes in, with a particular focus on integrity. David also explained how being a good leader, especially in a large school, involved "being in tune and in touch with teachers all the time". He further shared that staff need to see him "having an interest in what they are doing" both personally and professionally. David's statement illustrated how he embodied personal and professional values, which is supported by West-Burnham's (2009) description of authentic moral leadership.

It can be inferred from the above findings that participants demonstrated a values-led leadership approach within the context of their school community. Day et al. (2001) and Begley (2010) describe these principals as moral leaders. This further supports the perspective that principals who lead with moral purpose possibly have a self-construct grounded in moral and ethical leadership. For example, participants displayed leadership actions that were consistent with their personal and professional values. Evidence also suggested that they demonstrated a more profound commitment to moral leadership, which is supported by a consistent ethical belief system (West-Burnham, 2009).

#### **5.4.3 A broader understanding of community**

Participants' reflections on community showed a deeper conceptualisation of how moral purpose influenced their leadership. They believed that schools are the centre of a community and in some ways the cradle of society's future. Scholars support this view, particularly Davies and West-Burnham (1997) who recognise

that leaders who are driven by a form of moral purpose have a deeper understanding of community. Participants also shared through their stories examples of where they saw their community as the driving force behind creating a common good for all citizens. For example, participants not only identified the reasons why schools are a “microcosm” or the “essence of society”, they also articulated a view that they are the change agents who bring different groups of people together in their school community.

Based on this, it could be argued that ethical principles shaped the moral actions of participants. Stories shared further supported this claim. Participants’ were driven by moral purpose. They understood that the essence of education fosters the future of society. Sergiovanni (1994, 2001) further substantiates this perspective. Participants’ leadership was grounded in moral leadership because they influenced stakeholders’ moral awareness of what it means to be an authentic, living community. Further interpretation of the data revealed participants’ worked with a range of groups within their school community, such as students, teachers, parents and board of trustee members. They shared in-depth examples of leading these groups with moral purpose and a commitment towards valuing people as human beings. Through their interactions with stakeholders they also demonstrated moral leadership by the way they were particularly committed to student and staff welfare. This further reinforces how participants’ moral purpose influenced their leadership actions, which Day (2001) supports in his findings.

However, it should be noted that although participants’ recognised the importance of working with external groups, their moral purpose was focused on the groups within their school community. Only Bruce and David made explicit reference to his moral purpose remaining constant across external groups, which was at the same level of commitment as his school community. This poses a fundamental issue with participants’ understanding of moral purpose. Social justice, students’ rights and equity require leaders who are committed to the greater good of society. Principals need to model moral purpose in every leadership moment, including interactions with people from outside their own school community. This is an important area for future development in most of the participants.

#### **5.4.4 Ethical frameworks**

The data implied participants had developed an internalised ethical framework from which they could enhance teachers' moral awareness. This was illustrated by how participants focused teachers on comprehending a deeper appreciation of the role they had as a professional educator. For example, participants supported staff to explore how they could take better care of their own well-being outside school hours. The basis of this ethical thinking was that teachers had a moral obligation to be at their best for students (Stouten et al., 2012).

Central to the above view was that student rights and student voice needed to be heard in the first instance, as they made ethical decisions that impacted on students learning. This also illustrated how these principals' ethical decision-making fell back on their moral purpose. This example shows how leaders enhance followers' moral learning in the context of daily relationships. They utilised ethical processes to enhance followers' ethical reasoning, which in turn influenced their moral behaviour. Stouten et al. (2012) reinforces this point as a form of ethical learning.

Furthermore, participants articulated in their responses instances when they were fundamentally at odds with Ministry of Education and government expectations of what was best for students. This characterises a fundamental tension between principals having to make a moral choice between two perceived 'rights'. Nonetheless, participants displayed ethical reasoning by making decisions based on what was best for their students and community. They illustrated a broader perspective of learning where they valued people as human beings. Participants were also prepared to challenge government policy that did not align with the broader ideals of society (Ciulla, 2012; Starratt, 2005). Consequently, the findings support the notion that participants demonstrated what Campbell (1997) describes as a deep understanding of the ethical dynamics of education. They applied ethical imagination, which allowed them to consider ethical decisions from a moral perspective as they attempted to serve the best interests of their students and school community. Such a view has been supported by Begley and Stefkovich (2007), Ciulla (2012) and Starratt (2007) in their description of ethical leaders.

#### **5.4.5 Ethical leadership and moral purpose**

An interpretation of the data suggested varying degrees of ethical intelligence led participants' to consider their 'prejudices and biases'. Each participant shared examples throughout their stories where they had deeply reflected on their own leadership actions. As a consequence, participants' displayed a level of moral consciousness through their self-reflection. This appeared as a form of ethical intelligence, where they had the capacity and flexibility to consider deeply rooted social dilemmas on a daily basis. The findings suggest that the very essence of ethical leadership involves a form of ethical intelligence. Maak and Pless (2006), MacGilchrist (2003) and Sternberg (2010a) support this finding.

Findings also suggest participants' ethical awareness was enhanced as they engaged with colleagues. This appeared to raise their ethical reasoning or ability to address ethical dilemmas. For example, Carl shared the consequences of his actions in "ripping into staff" after standards had slipped. His moral dilemma in taking this approach meant that he had to work at building back trust "with good people who felt undermined" by his actions. Bridget's approach was to consider whether she was being 'just' in her leadership decisions or actions. Adding to this description of ethical leadership was the fact that participants' displayed varying degrees of ethical intelligence in their stories. This suggests that a form of ethical intelligence is developing or emergent, which M.E. Brown (2007), Ciulla (2012) and M. Williams and Burden (2000) and have recognised in a form of ethical leadership.

Previous data leads to speculation that participants' ethical intelligence included a form of moral reflection and moral awareness. Examination of the findings identified a number of instances where participants' acknowledged their own actions from a moral viewpoint. They also shared insights into how they would approach similar situations in the future. As a result of their moral actions, participants' ethical intelligence seemed to cultivate a greater sense of community cohesion through their ability to apply moral awareness, moral reflection and moral imagination. They achieved this by engaging in a process of dialogue with community stakeholders. As a consequence of their ethical intelligence, participants modelled and communicated moral values, which appeared to

enhance school community cohesion. Branson (2007), M.E. Brown (2007) and Maak and Pless (2006) support this view of ethically intelligent leaders.

Participants' responses further illustrated how a level of moral awareness and moral reasoning contributed to their understanding of the relationship between ethics, morals, and moral purpose. As a result of their moral actions, their leadership influenced the school culture. Consequently, there appeared a closer connection between their leadership, moral purpose and the culture they were trying to cultivate. This appeared to be based on shared trust, responsibility and expectations of how people acted. As leaders, they considered themselves as role models for others to follow. This demonstrated what scholars have described as a form of ethical intelligence in combination with moral leadership (M. E. Brown, 2007b; Ciulla, 2012; M. Williams & Burden, 2000).

In addition, although participants were not afraid to lead in an authoritative way, they shared other examples where their leadership accepted criticism, they were prepared to be a follower, they supported people to find solutions to their issues and empathised with people. These leaders, at varying degrees, also had the capacity to be self-critical of themselves. They achieved this through their ability to engage in deep reflection about their actions while displaying different levels of personal resilience. For example, participants displayed a form of moral leadership by the way they built a culture of communal values and trust based on their moral purpose (Collarbone & West-Burnham, 2008). They also influenced authentic relationships due to their ethical intelligence, which led to moral actions (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Branson, 2007; Maak & Pless, 2006; Starratt, 2007; Strike, 2007). This foreshadows the next section, which will focus on moral leadership.

### **5.5 Moral leadership and moral purpose**

The examination of findings highlighted an apparent interconnected relationship between participants' moral leadership and their moral purpose. Findings, supported by Day and Schmidt (2007), demonstrate how participants enhanced relationships with staff by providing them with greater purpose to their work. Data also demonstrated in a tangible way that staff felt their leader trusted them.



This helped to build a community of professionals who acted with integrity. Participants also established a shared sense of ownership, commitment and trust, which has been characterised by scholars as a form of moral leadership (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Sammons & Elliot, 2003).

The above statements indicated that participants empowered staff through their leadership. Their aim appeared to be to create a collaborative culture where staff took responsibility for their actions in a morally conscious way. They also indicated an individual's moral compass was enhanced through their modelling and supporting staff to self-reflect at a deeper level. This was evident in the examples they shared. This points toward a style of leadership based on relationships, which was conveyed by participants in how they acted in a moral way. Nevertheless, there were also times when participants had to be more direct with their leadership. As a result, patterns emerged from the data that implied other traditional forms of leadership were also prevalent within their leadership style.

The moral actions shared in participants' stories reinforce what West-Burnham (2009) refers to as the symbolic values demonstrated by community stakeholders or "the way we do things around here" (p. 65). For example, in describing how his leadership influenced followers, Andy stated how a sense of shared moral purpose was the "value system" or "what we stand for" within his school community's culture. This reiterates scholars' arguments that when a leader focuses on developing the moral awareness of followers, shared commitment towards achieving a community's moral purpose is enhanced (Hopkins, 2011; Lovely, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2001, 2006).

West-Burnham's (2009) authentic view of moral leadership, described previously, gains further substance from these findings. Participants consistently demonstrated through their stories the embodiment of personal and professional values. They supported staff to become more ethically aware of their actions as a professional, where students' rights were at the forefront of a shared moral purpose. Although participants did at times display more traditional forms of

authoritative leadership (when stakeholders acted in a way that was contrary to the values of the school community), their actions were always based on their moral purpose. This reinforces the idea that moral leadership in this form is context bound within the social processes in which they occur. As a result, moral leaders learn to uncover a deeper sense of self while also guiding stakeholders in a similar direction (West-Burnham, 2009).

### **5.5.1 Relationships**

In discussing how moral purpose influences their leadership, participants developed teachers' independence and created leadership opportunities for them. Essential to this form of distributed leadership was the recurring theme that they modelled positive human relationships as they cultivated a community ethos based on trust, shared responsibility, and compassion. For example, as participants demonstrated through their stories, distributed leadership empowered staff to have greater purpose to their leadership role in the school. David stated how his school's professional learning focused on all the staff being recognised as leaders, the importance of them acting with integrity and how their shared ethos was underpinned by effective communication. Andy described his predominant focus was on developing the leadership capacity of his senior leadership team. He felt he owed it to students to develop future leaders, which he recognised by how he had influenced many teachers to become principals. West-Burnham and Bowring-Carr (1999) support this finding because participants distributed leadership enhanced stakeholders' capacity to act in a moral. They recognised their role also includes developing future leaders for the betterment of students and society.

This perspective supports the view that participants' leadership was grounded in a form of moral leadership. They articulated moral leadership themes such as treating people with respect, considering what is just and right, and being aware of how their actions affected followers'. Although participants demonstrated different forms of leadership they were bound by what West-Burnham (2009) refers to as an authentic view of moral leadership. Furthermore, this point is highlighted by how participants exhibited their leadership traits. They focused on relationships and a broader notion of moral purpose. This further reinforces an

authentic view of moral leadership and the connection between moral purpose and the previously discussed ethical leadership.

### **5.5.2 An authentic view**

At the core of participants' leadership was the belief that students should be provided the best possible education. They demonstrated through their stories moral leadership that enhanced their school community's ethos. For example, recurring themes from participants' stories included valuing students as human beings, ensuring their voices are being heard, and being conscious of the power adults have over students. This example further reinforces Collarbone and West-Burnham's (2008) description of a form of moral leadership. Participants also demonstrated a profound awareness of the influence they had as a leader. They were also extremely aware of how their leadership actions modelled their moral purpose. Becker (2009), Begley (2010) and Currie and Lockett's (2007) theories support this concept. Participants' leadership appeared to characterise how they focused on their own values and ethics in the first instance.

Participants' moral actions also appeared to guide followers into comprehending greater meaning to their life as an individual and a citizen. They enhanced a collaborative culture and the moral leadership capabilities of their staff. This further illustrates how participants have developed a deeper conceptualisation of their leadership, which was demonstrated by the way their ethical principles led to moral actions. Marshall and Olivia's (2006) and West-Burnham's (2009) description of moral leadership was also echoed by participants' moral leadership. This highlights themes such as participants:

- Embodying personal and professional values.
- Seeing their role as guiding followers.
- Focusing on developing social capital across the school community.

### **5.5.3 An interconnected relationship**

The idea that moral leaders act as moral agents within their own school community emerges from participants' stories. This view is underpinned by how they perceived their moral purpose as being to assist followers in the development of a better society. Participants illustrated the importance of building relationships

through issues that arose on a daily basis. They guided stakeholders to consider moral outcomes centred on what was best for students and the community. Additionally, participants reinforced the concept noted earlier that authentic moral leaders have an appreciation of how ethics and morals shape an individual. Begley (2006) and Duignan and Bhindi (1997) have theorised moral leadership from this perspective. For example, David supported a parent who was having emotional issues at home. Rather than rescue her, he offered advice without taking responsibility for her issues. Furthermore, all the participants shared examples where they placed what was best for students and the community ahead of parental or individual staff opinions (Begley, 2010; Day et al., 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Adding to the concept of moral leadership was an indication that participants demonstrated a form of abstract reasoning. This involved guiding stakeholders towards a shared moral purpose, which is recognised by Emmons (2000) and Meyer (2009) as a form of spiritual intelligence. Participants also seemed to view themselves as moral agents who positively influenced staff, parents and board of trustee members to be morally committed to the schools vision. Day (2004) and Fullan (2002b, 2003a, 2008b) describe this as authentic moral leadership. This leads to a tentative assumption that moral leadership in this form also includes a form of spiritual intelligence. Participants appeared to be consciously aware of a deeper conception of themselves in relation to their community and the future. Leaders who display this form of intelligence are able to awaken people within their community to understand a broader notion of community, which is based on relationships and a shared moral purpose (Emmons, 2000; Hyde, 2004; MacGilchrist, 2003; Mayer, 2000; Wingrove & Rock, 2008; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Data was initially inconclusive in establishing whether a sense of spiritual intelligence was embedded within the self-construct of participants. Although there was an emerging sense that participants considered the school community as a resource for society, it was not articulated. For example, Andy, Bridget, David and Carl believed their leadership influenced stakeholders' understanding that their school was better than society. Yet, they did not consider their school as a

resource to other communities in society. This poses a speculative question that is outside the scope of this study; should principals consider their school as a resource for other communities?

Further speculation of whether spiritual intelligence existed within each participant's self-construct required further examination of the findings. Anne conveyed an understanding of how her leadership assisted stakeholders to be committed towards a shared vision, but she did not indicate that this included a broader notion of society. However, Bruce articulated a broader vision for society. He expressed what could be described as a form of spiritual intelligence or moral imagination (which is aligned with ethical intelligence), where his leadership enhanced a more connected society across many communities. Maak and Pless (2006) and Pless and Maak (2008) reinforce this example of spiritual intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence also appeared to be closely linked to a moral leader's self-perception of themselves in relation to others. This was because most of the participants displayed a form of optimism and resilience in describing the future hopes for their community. For example, Bruce identified a spirit within his leadership that was deeply connected to his moral purpose. His concern was for the wellbeing of others within and across all communities, which he was driven towards achieving. A form of spiritual intelligence conveyed by Bruce implied that he kept followers committed for the long hall. Mussig (2003) has described this as a leader who can energise and communicate their vision as a form of spiritual intelligence. Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005) and Zohar and Marshall (2004) also link spiritual intelligence with attitudinal leadership, which will be discussed in section 5.6.4.

Findings are congruent with theory and imply that a moral leader's self-construct includes an emerging form of spiritual intelligence. This further advocates for the possible theory of an authentic form of moral leadership, which is grounded in a leader's moral purpose (Howard et al., 2009; Mayer, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

## **5.6 Authentic leadership**

Although they utilised various forms of leadership, which were context dependent, participants' leadership decisions were rooted in their own moral purpose. Begley (2006), Duignan and Bhindi (1997) and West-Burnham (2009) reinforce this position as moral leadership. Furthermore, participants appeared to demonstrate an ability to see themselves in relation to others. Through their self-construct they appeared to be consciously aware of the relationships they had with followers. Moral purpose also guided their moral standards, which they had developed over time (Walumbwa et al., 2011). For example, participants shared numerous stories where they listened to staff feedback on decisions they had made. As a result of teacher feedback, they reflected from a moral point and reconsidered future decisions. On the other hand, participants also challenged unjust actions that undermined the values of the school community. Maak and Pless (2006) would refer to this example as a form of moral imagination, while Branson (2007) describes this as a form of moral reflection.

### **5.6.1 Authentic moral leadership**

An authentic view of moral leadership adds weight to the previous assumption supported by West-Burnham (2009). Participants appeared to see themselves on a journey towards becoming a better human being. Nonetheless, further analysis of the findings suggested a deeper personal form of moral leadership was influenced by their moral purpose. For example, participants implied that they endeavoured to be the very best leader they could be. They stayed focused based on principles, values and ethics they believed in, which they demonstrated through actions and words. Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005) and Branson (2007) believed this to be a form of authentic leadership. Theory appears to highlight a form of authentic moral leadership involves a leader's self-construct or how they perceived their leadership in relationship to others. A moral leaders self-construct will now be explored in sections 5.6.2 to 5.6.4.

### **5.6.2 Self-construct**

Evidence illustrated participants' emotional intelligence contributed to their self-construct. They were able to evaluate their actions critically in relation to enhancing working relationships with staff. Participants also reflected from a

moral perspective, where they were critical of themselves if they, as Bridget stated, “stuffed up”. This was interpreted as a form of moral consciousness that enhanced participants’ self-reflection. Goleman (1998), Goleman et al. (2002), Gray (2002) and Hartle and Hobby (2003) support this finding.

All the participants agreed that educational literature enhanced their ability to reflect and act from a moral perspective. They had, as Bruce stated, “a thirst for knowledge”. This was illustrated by participants’ sharing comments of reflective reading and the systems that promoted deep reflection within their school cultures. Furthermore, participants used reflective practice to enhance their leadership role. They displayed the capacity to use self-reflection to create new knowledge, which led to a deeper sense of moral purpose (Branson, 2009; Grint, 2005).

Two participants shared a deeper conceptualisation of how self-reflection enhanced their moral leadership. Bruce and David often linked their actions to theory they had encountered. David specifically stated how the combination of his emotional intelligence and resilience were characterised by his calm leadership style. He believed this was due to theory supporting his leadership practice. This finding reinforces the interconnected relationship between a participants’ critical self-reflection and an evolving form of emotional intelligence. They appeared to reflect on their own moral actions as they interacted with followers in the context of the school setting. Day (2003) and Herbert’s (2011) research reinforces this finding.

Additionally, David suggested theory reinforced his moral leadership in the context of the school setting. He could directly link his leadership experiences with theory as he reflected, which also reinforced his level of resilience. In this instance, David appeared to display a type of moral awareness where he was aware of his moral actions. He demonstrated an ability to self-regulate his emotions based on the moral values he believed in. Data also suggested that reflection became perhaps slightly easier but more important to these moral principals. For example, as David became more reflective it appeared he was energised by his moral purpose. His positive emotions fuelled his commitment

towards achieving his moral purpose (Milstein & Henry, 2008). Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005), Notman and Henry (2011) and Sparrowe (2005) support David's statement.

### **5.6.3 Emotional intelligence and resilience**

Themes uncovered from the data, as shared in the previous section, suggested participants displayed emotional intelligence. Their level of E.Q. contributed to their moral leadership and moral purpose. Yet participants' responses suggested that they were at difference levels in their understanding and application of emotional intelligence, which appeared to affect each participant's level of resilience. For example, Anne and Bridget stated how they did not know a lot about emotional intelligence, while they felt relationship issues contributed to their workload. On the other hand, Andy, Bruce, Carl and David articulated a greater understanding of emotional intelligence and how it influenced their leadership. They also appeared to be more resilient in coping with relationship issues that arose within their school community. This poses an interesting distinction between genders. Both female participants appeared to be less resilient than the four male participants, which contradicts current theory. However, this could be attributed to the small sample size.

Data suggests there is an interconnected relationship between emotional intelligence, moral leadership and resilience. Participants' E.Q. appeared to enhance their ability to self-reflect, which then lead to moral leadership actions. They also appeared to be energised by this process. This points towards an authentic view of a moral leadership (Brearley, 2006). For example, participants appeared to strive towards being the best person they could be in the context of their leadership role. They also had an unshakeable belief in their moral purpose. Bipath (2008), Harris and Chapman (2002) and Lovely (2004) have described leadership in this form as authentic moral leadership. Furthermore, participants' level of emotional intelligence and resilience were at different levels along what could be depicted as an emotional intelligence continuum. Their sense of resilience appeared to also be enhanced the further they moved along this evolving continuum. Day (2007) and Gu and Day (2007) support this finding, which was illustrated by David's calm demeanour. For example, David's sense of



calmness illustrated how he could remove himself from his own internal world. He displayed a level of emotional intelligence that enabled him to comprehend the complexity of his leadership in relation to his moral purpose. However, findings also identified attitude within each participant's self-construct that further enhanced their ability to stay focused on achieving their moral purpose. They appeared to display a type of attitudinal quality to their leadership (Avolio & W.L. Gardner, 2005). Therefore, there appears to be an interconnected relationship between resilience and attitudinal leadership qualities of moral leaders who lead with moral purpose.

#### **5.6.4 Motivation or attitude?**

Participants' stories lead to the notion that they demonstrated a level of moral consciousness in their leadership. Their descriptions also emphatically confirmed they are more altruistic (moral) in their leadership approach. What also emerged from these and other responses was that their moral purpose shaped their attitude, which then influenced their moral leadership actions. At the heart of participants' attitudinal form of leadership was a tenacious sense of purpose, which positively influenced the leader to be internally driven and committed towards a core purpose. This characterised many of the participants' stories. Social justice, student rights, and the aim of creating a more humane society were all powerful 'drivers' from their moral purpose, which influenced their moral leadership. Day (2004), Day et al. (2001) and Notman and Henry's (2011) research supports this claim.

Furthermore, participants' attitudinal leadership style appeared to demonstrate they were committed to their moral purpose. They sought greater meaning to their leadership role, while enhancing followers' understanding of their role as citizens. Participants also displayed moral purpose where they removed any sense of egotistic motivation, which Bruce directly described in his leadership self-construct. Avolio and W.L. Gardner (2005), West-Burnham (2009) and Zohar and Marshall (2004) support this statement. As a result, it can be suggested that attitudinal leadership sits within an authentic moral leaders self-construct.

## **5.7 Silences**

Rigorous exploration of the data improves the validity of any findings presented by the researcher. Throughout this discussion, the researcher has revealed participants social reality in relation to their moral purpose and moral leadership. However, research also requires critical evaluation of the silences. Silences occur when theory has been identified in the literature review but does not appear through the findings. An interpretation of the findings enabled the researcher to uncover an authentic view of a moral leaders' self-construct, which was rooted in theory and supported by the findings of this research. Consequently, there appeared to be no notable silences in the data when compared with the literature that was reviewed.

## **CHAPTER 6                      CONCLUSION**

### **6.1      Introduction**

The undertaking of this research has had a significance influence on my own understanding of moral purpose. I have gained a far deeper insight into the moral purpose that shapes other school principals who lead their community in a moral way. In this concluding chapter, I will describe how I have fulfilled the aim of my research. I will also acknowledge the limitations of this study and next steps, where research on the topic of ‘principals leading with moral purpose’ can add further knowledge to the field of educational leadership in New Zealand.

### **6.2      Outcomes and possible future actions**

The aim of this research was to explore moral leadership, where the research question focused on the question:

What are the personal attributes, dispositions and capacities of principals who lead with moral purpose within their schools?

This research has illustrated how principals who lead with moral purpose have a deep conviction towards valuing human relationships within their school community. They model and communicate their personal and professional values through the daily interactions they have with people within their community.

The research has shown that moral purpose influences a principal to be driven by a social justice belief that every person in a community is entitled to a meaningful education and reasonable life. This understanding is further shaped by an ethical belief that the moral purpose of education is to ensure the rights and aspirations of every community member, especially their students, is protected and enhanced. Moral principals ultimately believe this will enhance the wellbeing of a more humane society.

The research has clearly shown that principals who lead with moral purpose are more likely to be moral leaders. This appears to be because moral leaders value

relationships. They model and communicate ethical beliefs through their moral actions, which imbue a culture of high trust, collective responsibility and shared moral purpose. This has led to an authentic view of moral leadership that is influenced by their moral purpose.

Furthermore, a moral leader's self-construct has also been identified as within a form of authentic moral leadership, which enhances their ability to lead in a moral way. Authentic moral principals have the capacity to reflect in a critical way due to their developing ethical and moral intelligences. Their moral leadership actions were based on how they perceived themselves and how they saw themselves in relation to others. Participants in this research were able to apply moral reasoning and moral imagination focused on a more humane society. In addition, the combination of self-reflection, theory and attitudinal leadership significantly contributed to the development of their personal self-construct. As a result, findings illustrated how a moral leaders' self-construct enhances their resilience, where their moral purpose energises them.

It was also tentatively suggested in this research that an area for future development is where principals who lead with moral purpose apply the same level of moral purpose to external communities, as they do to their own school community. The findings also noted that principals could benefit from further engagement with the literature to develop their theoretical understanding of the important processes of building moral purpose within their school communities, such as dialogue and praxis.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

Results from the research provided insightful information for the field of educational leadership. The semi-structured interview process highlighted this as participants intuitively shared stories of how they led with moral purpose. However, the size of this study dictated that only six principals participated from a pool of over a few thousand current primary and secondary principals in New Zealand. While the study contributes to the field, there is highly limited scope for any extrapolation or generalisations from the findings. As Cohen et al. (2011) noted early in the methodology chapter, sample size is one of five key strategies

facing researchers when they begin identifying potential participants for their research.

In the case of this research, the limitations of the study can be attributed to a number of key factors. For example:

- The sample size was small in nature.
- Participants were only interviewed on one occasion.
- The geographical location of the participants was focused on the western region of the North Island.
- All the participants were experienced principals as opposed to interviewing less experienced principals.
- No participants were Maori.
- There were no overseas trained principals in the sample.

#### **6.4 Areas for further research**

The study has demonstrated opportunities for further research.

The sample could be extended substantially to include multiple ethnicities. This may influence the findings. Similarly, the sample could be extended so a stratified sample that includes various categories or levels of participant experience. I suggest that the small differences noted between genders in this study could be more significant in a larger study that compares perspectives of male and female participants.

As New Zealand begins to draw on a more global pool of professional educators, extending this research to principals who received their initial teacher education in different countries might well highlight further differences.

#### **6.5 Final comment**

Principals in New Zealand are increasingly facing higher expectations and complexities in their role as the educational leader of their community. They are expected to lead their school community', while also being faced with additional administtrivia and managerial responsibilities. However, participants in this research have illustrated how moral purpose can enable principals to overcome

these issues. In essence, moral purpose provided greater meaning to participants' leadership role as they came into being leaders with moral purpose.

As Carl stated in answering the question 'how does your understanding of moral purpose influence your leadership':

"I think it is probably the key to leadership and my credibility as a leader".

## **APPENDIX A      Interview questions**

1. What do you understand by the term ‘moral purpose’?
2. How does your understanding of moral purpose influence your leadership?
  - a. How do ethical and moral perspectives influence your leadership and moral purpose?
  - b. What values underpin your (moral) leadership?
3. What is your moral purpose as the leader in your school community?
  - a. What activities or occurrences in your school make you aware that you are acting with moral purpose? Give examples.
  - b. During these times/episodes, what do you perceive to be your strengths that you bring to the context?
4. The literature tells us that relationships are important in developing a pervasive (pervading/widespread) sense of moral purpose. How do you develop and sustain positive relationships within your school?
5. What is the place of emotional intelligence in leading with moral purpose?
6. How do you cope with the complexities of your role? How do you continue to adapt and grow as a person and leader?
7. When you consider the future and the vision you have for your school community, what keeps ‘you’ hopeful, resilient and optimistic about achieving your moral purpose?

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