Life-giving Headteachership in Lusaka Province:

Navigating the liminality of post-colonial schooling.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree

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By

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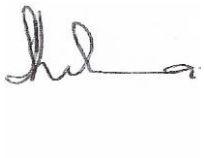
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.



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20th January 2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my children, Kanazhi, Milembo, Womba, Kyashi and Kyeya, for being a great source of inspiration, love, affection, encouragement and prayers to achieve this great undertaking.

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ABSTRACT

This study was an exploratory appreciative inquiry into what school headteachers in primary schools in Lusaka province considered *life-giving* in leading schools and how this informed the way they engaged in leadership. The lack of required qualifications for school headteachers and a gap in the literature about the nature of leadership that gives *life* to headteachership in post-colonial Zambian schools formed the rationale for the study. Consequently, the research presented contextual *life-giving* stories of headteachership in selected primary schools in Lusaka province.

The inquiry uncovered how headteachership was embedded *in-between* spaces of ambiguity or puzzlement of a nation that is in a transitional phase of the post-colonial era, and the findings show that the participants considered *life-giving* leadership practices were associated with *being with* the parents, the community, the teachers and the students. Within each of these themes, authentic leadership presented as *remapping of culture* in a post-colonial era, *boundary marking, re-marking* and *collapsing, navigating* and *embracing sensitivities* in school leadership.

The study suggests it is in the *with-ness* that boundary marking, re-marking and collapsing enables preservation of what is valued, and access is created where barriers and bridges are built to connect people in relational processes that offer potential for refreshing ways of engagement in school leadership.

Therefore, this study recommends that the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) takes proactive steps to establish a headteachers' qualification that will incorporate these school leadership practices that are contextual, collaborative, inclusive and *life-giving*. At the same time, the study recommends the Ministry should endeavour to establish formalised

internal structures exclusively for aspiring and serving headteachers so they can implement on-going contextual, inclusive and collaborative professional learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

He who asks questions, cannot avoid the answers (Western African Proverb).

INTRODUCTION

Some scholars argue leadership "is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning" (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3). Many scholars believe leadership is at the core of shaping the organisation goals, and motivating and influencing the actions of others in order to see the wished for changes (Cuban, 1988). Bush and Oduro (2006) have contended that "leaders are made not born" (p. 356) and, while leadership formation is an ongoing process, it is important that aspiring and developing leaders have opportunities to *learn how*. The impact of context and culture on school leadership cannot be over-emphasised (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011; McCray & Beachum, 2011; Wanasika, Howell, Littrell, & Dorfman, 2011) and, therefore, it plays a vital role in establishing a formation platform for education leaders. Confirming this view, Bush and Jackson (2002) recognised that the complexity and diversity that "arises from the very different political, social and professional contexts, … have led to provision [of a school leaders' formation platform] being tailored to the particular requirements of each society" (p. 427).

Given the absence of a leadership formation platform and the background and context of schools in Lusaka province, in this thesis an appreciative exploration of how the experiences of headteachers in primary schools have informed their leadership has been pursued, with the hope of getting insights for the establishment of a school leadership formation platform. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to give the background and context of education provision in schools in Lusaka province and Zambia in general, followed by the impetus for the study. Then the rationale for *life-giving* headteachership and the need for a platform for its formation in Lusaka province are discussed, preceded by the purpose and research questions, significance and organisation of the study.

Background to the study

Zambia is a landlocked country located in central-southern Africa, covering a total area of 752,618 square kilometers and endowed with abundant water sources, arable land, a wide variety of wildlife and various mineral deposits (World Atlas, 2020). It is surrounded by eight countries, namely Malawi, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. According to Zambia Statistics Agency (2020) in 2016 the total population stood at 16,591,390 people living in the country's ten provinces, which are further divided into 110 districts.

Each province has an administrative center in its capital district. According to Zambia Statistics Agency (2020), about 58.62% of the total population lives in rural districts of the country. The majority of these people are informally employed in peasant farming, bee keeping or fishing. Urban districts are concentrated on the Copperbelt province where a lot of copper mining activities are carried out. Copper mining and exports of its raw form have been the major economical driver for the country since pre-colonial times Zambia Statistics Agency (2020) This labour intensive activity is responsible for the dense populations found on the Copperbelt, second only to its capital province.

Lusaka is the smallest province in terms of total area coverage, but the most populated, and is the hub of most economic activities for the country. It is made up of the capital city of the country, two urban districts and four rural districts. As a former British colony, Zambia attained its independence in 1964 after being ruled by the British government since 1924. The British took over from the British South Africa Company (BSA) that had earlier signed a concession with Chief Lewanika of the Lozi Speaking people in the 1890s (Kelly, 1999). Colonialism opened doors to a *western* form of education introduced by various interest groups, with the Christian missionaries among the most prominent (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). This *western* type of education was alien to the indigenous Zambians, who had all along enjoyed an indigenous education system. The Zambian indigenous education, like other African indigenous education, was a "wholistic, lifelong and utilitarian type" (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003, p. 145) taught by the tribal groups and passed on from generation to generation. The teaching methods varied from oral instruction to apprenticeship, taking the form of play, song, dance, narration and mentorship. The goal guiding this form of education was for survival and continuity of

community life. The teaching role was an informal rotational activity among the community members determined by what had to be learnt. Both young and old took part in teaching, as learning was inter-twined with everyday living (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003; Kelly, 1999).

While the Zambian indigenous education was mostly informal, the colonial *western* education was formal, with literacy, arithmetic and Bible knowledge as the major subjects. Viewed from the perspectives of postcolonialism, the aim of colonial western education was to produce locals who would be of service to the colonisers' agenda, and central to its objectives was the diminishing or relegation of the original knowledge and culture of the colonised (Bush, 2007). Mosweunyane (2013) stated the purpose of colonial education "in both enslavement and colonialisation of Africa [was] to dehumanise the enslaved and the colonised by denying their history and denigrating their achievements and capacities" (p. 54). Therefore, after attaining independence, and with five decades of post-independence, the Zambian education system has undergone several reforms and continues to be formal and *western* in many respects. This is symbolic of contexts that are transitional and full of uncertainty, ambiguity, fluidity and potential for change that Bhabha (2012) denoted as *liminal*. Thus, the uniqueness of this post-colonial context present in Lusaka province school spaces requires a certain type of education leadership to achieve the goals of education for the communities served, hence the rationale for this study.

Lusaka Provincial Education Office, the organisation I work in as an education officer coordinating provision of in-service training for teachers and school leaders, has a mandate to coordinate and administer education in the province on behalf of the Ministry of General Education (MoGE). Its functions are further decentralised to its seven District Education Boards that in turn oversee the provision of education in primary schools in the districts and the sixty-six Secondary School Education Boards. Lusaka has in excess of 940 schools of which 813 are primary schools (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). The management agencies are government (268 primary, 56 secondary), communities (331 primary, 4 secondary), private (184 primary, 60 secondary) and religious organisations (30 primary, 7 secondary). In the 2015 census, there was a total 401,098 students in primary schools as against 118,215 in secondary schools (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). In the

same year, there were 11, 440 teachers teaching in primary schools and 3,580 in secondary schools (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020).

The Zambian education system is divided into four distinct levels with a 4:3:2:3 system representing: Lower primary (grades 1 to 4); Upper primary (grades 5 to 7); Junior secondary (grades 8 & 9); Senior secondary (grades 10 to 12) respectively. Students are expected to exhibit a minimum level of competence through public examinations in order to proceed from primary level to junior secondary and from junior to senior secondary level. Learners who fail to meet the minimum competencies either repeat the grade or drop out of school.

Teacher education for pre-service teachers is another mandate for MoGE, and this is provided by both public and private Colleges of Education offering a-three-year Teaching Diploma programme, with a few accredited to offer degree programmes in selected subject areas. The public and numerous private universities offer bachelor's and master's degree programmes in education for school leavers training to be teachers and for in-service teachers wishing to upgrade their qualifications from diploma to degree.

Efforts by the Ministry to have established school leadership preparation programmes in the past suffered many setbacks. Consequently, most school leaders in both primary and secondary schools have no school leadership qualification but are appointed to positions of leadership based on their performances as school teachers. And it is therefore not surprising that most school leaders in our schools are faced with difficulties in fulfilling their roles.

Without underrating the effort by MoGE to establish a national leadership formation qualification, the rate at which decisions are made in this bureaucratic organisation is not favourable to addressing the immediate need for effective school leadership in the schools. The progress to date is slow. School leadership is complex and demanding and there is no preparation for it. Therefore, not only is it technically difficult, it is personally demanding and possibly draining. Hence, an alternative that is largely self-sustaining and contributes to a sense of life in the work would be a helpful initiative. Thus, this study explores what *life-giving* headteachership in Lusaka province is and the need to *create* a school leadership

formation platform that mirrors it, while being accessible to all incumbent and aspiring headteachers.

Impetus for the study

Below is a summary of the impetus for the study, based on lessons and reflections drawn from my personal and professional life experiences. The full accounts can be accessed in Appendix I.

Why focus on headteachership and its formation in Lusaka Province?

Through the process of reflexive writing about my childhood experiences of leadership, growing up during the post-independence years and my current work experience as a coordinator of professional development for school teachers and headteachers in Lusaka province, what brought me to the study were some aspects of me that have affected my views, my values and my impetus to *explore life-giving* leadership practices through the lens of appreciative inquiry (AI) to inform professional development for school leaders. These aspects include my strong sense of social justice as portrayed in the collectiveness of my family background where all were cared for. The sense of the wholeness was reflected in the shared responsibility in everyday life and an established sense of the duality of the interchange between an individual and the community. I believe that leadership is the courage to carry the vulnerable members along leaving no one behind. My mother's model of leadership, which was outside the norm, taught me that leadership is also the courage to be different without losing the sense of togetherness. The presence of a *process* or a *ritual* for the traditional leadership formation I was brought up in provides a sense of doing leadership within a defined *space* or structure embedded within a warm culture that allows for reflection and retrospection for individual and group successes. Additionally, leadership is about possessing *nous* for the role and having a sense of social learning.

Shaping the inquiry

It is evident that efforts by MoGE to establish an education leadership qualification have not been successful in the past, however, the need for a sustainable education leadership formation platform continues to remain urgent. Scholars have undisputedly urged the need for education leadership formation opportunities for effective school leadership that impacts school and learner performance (Bush, 2009; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Mathibe, 2007).

It is also evident that a few school leaders, through personal efforts and resources, have acquired a qualification in education leadership and management from local and international universities. Others still were recipients of the discontinued attempts by MoGE to provide school leadership formation opportunities within the framework of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). However, many school leaders leading schools in the province today remain with no qualification in education leadership. The situation is compounded by a general lack of well-coordinated institutionalised opportunities for CPD in school leadership formation. While recognizing the limited resources the government has available to spend on social services such as education, sustainable ways to bridge this gap in school leadership formation in Lusaka are critical to improved learner performance. This study is an attempt to *appreciatively* explore current leadership practices among school leaders in sampled Lusaka primary schools using strength-based AI to uncover *life-giving* leadership practices, discover what *drives* school leaders to engage in these practices, and find out how they *continue* to ensure these practices are advanced in the futures of doing their leadership. Indeed, the study may help in the construct of a leadership formation platform for school leaders by providing valuable information and ideas that could constitute the school leadership formation programme.

There is an abundance of literature on what constitutes effective professional development practices and strategies for school leaders. However, most of it is based on contexts and cultures that are unique to the scholars' study locations. Leadership being contextual and cultural (Grace, 2005; Gronn & Ribbins, 1996), and the unavailability of literature based on the Zambian context, highlights a major gap. The gap is wider when the focus is shifted to strength-based approaches to leadership formation. The policy guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1996) on school leadership emphasise a managerial approach, synonymous with bureaucratic organisations. For this reason, a study into *life-giving* leadership practices of school leaders in Lusaka province, using the appreciative inquiry interview approach, is an opportunity to uncover the people-centred, authentic, strength-based, contextual and cultural leadership practices that could inform a sustainable leadership formation strategy for school leaders in Lusaka Province.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to *appreciatively* explore leadership practices in selected primary schools in Lusaka province, and to *uncover* and *harness* contextualised, cultural and sustainable leadership practices that are *life-giving* (Giles & Kung, 2010) to the schools and that could inform leadership formation strategies in Lusaka province schools. It was also an attempt to highlight alternative ways of thinking about and implementing school leadership and its formation in post-colonial *liminal spaces* in schools in Lusaka province. Backed by the findings, it provides the opportunity to imagine and propose a leadership formation platform informed by an appreciative exploration within the context and culture of practice.

The objective was to arrive at exemplary leadership practices that are sustainable, contextual and *life giving* to inform leadership formation platforms and offer alternatives to the current situation that is only guided by an emphasised managerial and standardised regime in Lusaka province. The key questions to guide the study were:

- What experiences do school leaders in primary schools in Lusaka consider *life-giving* in their leadership roles in their schools?
- How have these experiences informed their way of doing leadership in their schools?
- What is the nature of educational leadership in post-colonial Lusaka?

Significance of the study

The initial focus of this study was a focus on school leadership formation opportunities inspired by the desire to provide appointees and those in school leadership roles with a *less* daunting experience of *doing* leadership in schools (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004). However, after the analysis of the data collected, there was an emergence of the resounding themes of *boundary marking, re-marking and collapsing; navigating and remapping culture in post-colonial spaces; and embracing sensitivities in headteachership* that shifted the focus to deeply understanding these *life-giving* leadership practices in Lusaka province schools currently characterised by post-colonial *liminal spaces.* Thus, choosing an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) interview process was, firstly, premised on offering a *life-centric* lens to explore, uncover and harness school leadership focused on the well-being of the people, and both contextual and sustainable. By purposeful analysis of data collected from

the interviews, contextual, sustainable and *life-giving* leadership practices that could inform or comprise the curriculum of the *imagined* leadership formation platform for school leaders in Lusaka, would be identified.

Secondly, AI is noted for leaving participants feeling good and encouraged because it is rooted in the *best* experiences of the school leader *stalked* from the past (Giles & Kung, 2010). The participants in this study were expected to be left with good feelings after the interviews and at the same time to get a feel for the imagined leadership formation programme.

Thirdly, this strength-based interview technique is not just a tool for collecting data from the participants, but it also offers them a *therapeutic* experience as it leaves the participants with feelings of renewed hope from reflections on past successes. It was indeed hoped the constructs made from this *therapeutic* encounter would form the building blocks of a hoped-for school leadership formation platform.

Fourthly, it was hoped that the MoGE would consider incorporating the findings and recommendations to inform the national policy on CPD for school leaders, as the gap in leadership preparation and opportunities for CPD is not limited to Lusaka province.

Fifthly, it was hoped that further research into *particular* contexts of educational provision in Zambia may open up opportunities to inform strength-based leadership formation opportunities (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003)

Finally, this study was an opportunity to add to the body of literature on appreciative inquiry approaches to school leadership in post-colonial *liminal spaces*.

Organisation of the study

The thesis is organised in six chapters. Chapter one introduces the rationale for the study and the motivation to carry out the research. It also outlines the background and context of the inquiry. Chapter two presents the literature review of information on effective school leadership, appreciative inquiry in school leadership and the nature of leadership in post-colonial liminal spaces. School leadership formation trends in some western countries are also explored in this chapter. Chapter three outlines the details of the methodology of the study, with Chapter four describing the results of the data analysis. Chapter five is the

discussion of the results, the emergent themes within the data and the related literature. Chapter six is dedicated to the conclusion, limitations and recommendations of the study based on the findings and the aims of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

...but victory comes through the counsel of many (Proverbs 11 v 14).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature related to school leadership and its formation. Given the context, methodological perspective and constraints of a Master's dissertation, I have focused on relational perspectives of leadership and social change. The relational lens provides a consistent framing of the work as a whole. Literature on school leadership formation in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada and the state of literature frameworks of school leadership in the Zambian context are explored in this chapter. Further, literature on social constructionism and appreciative approaches to school leadership and its formation is also reviewed, preceded by literature on postcolonial school contexts and their liminality, hybridity and boundary environments and followed by an overview of the context of Lusaka province, before closing the chapter with a summary.

Current systems of Education Leadership and Management in some Countries

Three decades ago, the interests embedded in how power is exercised in a network (Gunter, 2011) led to school leadership and management becoming a major education concern and therefore to the birth of education leadership regimes globally. In the United Kingdom (UK), school principals are required to have a National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) or Headship (NPQH) (Bush & Jackson, 2002). Being a mandatory requirement for all principals, it is intended to provide appropriate and sufficient preparation for the position of school principal. In Canada's Ontario province, the Principals' Qualification Programme (PQP) (Bush & Jackson, 2002), a product of federal legislation, similarly has a common curriculum to provide foundation leadership preparation for principals and for on-going professional learning. However, Bush (1998) has highlighted the limitation of these leadership qualification programmes in

failing to provide a clear distinction between leadership and management, leading to an unbalanced emphasis on management with leadership being embedded in the context. Additionally, he has contended the basis of *best practice* of the PQP lies *outside* the education context where principals are expected to carry on the work of leading. In Australia, the Australian Professional Standards for Principals and the Leadership Profiles provide the framework for leadership requirements and professional practices for incumbent and aspiring school principals (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). This leadership qualification is another example of the leadership formation programmes whose underpinnings lie in **design-leadership,** i. e. prescribing what constitutes leadership regardless of context (Gronn, 2003). While these frameworks are designed to support educational leaders, the theory of social constructionism shows leadership and its formation to be more contextual and relational than can be described in a *set of decontextualised profiles*.

Whereas international approaches to leadership development have resulted in lists of characteristics that principals must attain, these frameworks have been found wanting because they do not embrace the complexities of culture and context. Approaches that treat context and culture as elemental to leadership have been embraced in this literature review and necessarily require an insiders' perspective using a relational lens. This kind of research has been undertaken in other contexts but not within Zambia.

School Leadership, Its Formation and Social Change

Mainly driven by the priority for effective school leadership, leadership in schools has been a highly debated topic among scholars. Research has established that effective school leadership is important for successful schooling (Bush, 2009; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). Considering leadership as "a social influence process, whereby intentional influence is exerted by a person [or persons] over other people to structure activities and relationships in a group or organisation" (Bush, 2008, p. 3), highlights how leadership is embedded in relational processes rather than being dependent on individual capabilities. There is growing support for leadership that engages people in the emerging values and rapidly shifting work environments, such as found in the booklet; ***Collaborating for Change*** by D. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999). Such leadership is said to promote warm, inclusive and sustainable work relations that

invigorate life in organisations, including schools, suggesting that leadership itself has multiple contributors and is, in fact, a social achievement (Lewis & Van Tiem, 2004). Reinforcing this view, Cuban (1988) described leadership as those people who shape goals, motivation and actions of others while initiating change towards their shared goals, thereby reinforcing leadership as inspiring people towards a shared learning culture that is informed by shared values and shared behaviours (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; Schein, 1998). Promoting this kind of *life-giving* leadership in schools makes it imperative that the preparation of potential school leaders is informed by similar practices.

A further focus on school leadership illuminates its complexity, escalated by its contextual and cultural roots. In their cross-national study, Bredeson et al. (2011) concluded that the work practices of school principals were influenced by contextual variations. Their view was earlier reflected by Schatzki (2002) when he claimed that the character and transformation of social life (i.e. social interactions including school leadership) are rooted in the site where it occurs. Therefore, the site-context could be envisioned as "a mesh of orders [people or things] and practices" (p. xi) and hence would greatly vary from place to place and indeed from school to school. On the other hand, Dimmock and Walker (2005) contended it is imperative to include societal culture lenses when analysing educational leadership because of the unique understandings within cultures. These cultural perspectives are present in all aspects of life including schools. Consequently, it becomes vital to explore and interpret school leadership in a given society or community from within its own cultural perspective, which has led to the purpose of this study. After all, scholars contend that when the organisational culture is aligned with the personal values of the people in the organisation, people tend to fit in more easily and their *growth* in the organisation is heightened (Giles & Kung, 2010).

Formation is synonymous with change-making, and therefore social change is a *cultural* process (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000). Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) further asserted that school culture reflects the national culture, thus deepening our understanding of social change. In the study of how the Thai culture is reflected in leadership at school level, the findings of Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) revealed change takes place in a *compliancy* mode and is a matter of *adoption*. It was further asserted this social change is facilitated by a *high power distance* in the organisation relationships (Dimmock & Walker,

2005), which is characteristic of hierarchical and bureaucratic systems of governance where instructions or orders from *above* are simply handed down. However, high collectivity, low individualism and interdependence characteristics tie the Thai communities closely together; success in that context is viewed from the perspective of group effort rather than individual intelligence and effort (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000). The Zambian education system mirrors some of the cultural context features of Thai's social change with its bureaucratic system but graced with the collectiveness of the Zambian culture.

The compiled notes by Kelly (1999), in his book ***The Origins and Developments of Education in Zambia from Pre-Colonial Time to 1996: A Book of Notes and Readings,*** paint the Zambian education system as being guided by a standardised uniform curriculum that is "enforced by a revered examination system…which expects everyone to move at the same pace, within the normal class size and the pupil-teacher ratio… that are cracking and crumbling down" (p. 144) due to the stress of serving increasingly very diverse student bodies compared with the original relatively smaller homogeneous group the colonial educational curriculum was designed for. Kelly (1999) concluded his resolutions for change to the educational system by highlighting the need for whole system re-orientation, as opposed to addressing fragmented aspects of the system that only support social stratification and individualism, and the need to involve the community, among other recommendations. The attempts towards reformation of the education system had study teams presenting findings that reinforced the fact that the Zambian education was closed and excluded the involvement of the community while being largely imitative at the expense of depriving it-self of the Zambian cultural form (Kelly, 1999). And yet, a closer examination of the original African perspective on the freedom of individuals and, ultimately, the goals of indigenous education, recognised the uniqueness of an individual as far as personality and talent are concerned, "however, there's a strong tendency to situate a person's freedom and personality within the overall social, cultural and historical context of the community or society"(Kelly, 1999, p. 17). Subsequently, given this context, it becomes interesting to explore what insights can be drawn for the nature of leadership formation that would be *life-centric, culturally* and *contextually* appropriate to the Zambian context.

Consequently, school leadership being a relational process qualifies the inter-personal interactions between people as an opportunity for social change. Education leaders affect and influence others through "theories of their actions" (Budge, 2006, p. 2) that are shaped among other things by "history,…relationships…[and] our surroundings" (Gallagher, 1993, p. 12). Therefore, *life-giving* leadership relations that promote social change, collaborate with others (Hallinger & Heck, 2011), share a *sense of place* and a deep understanding of context (Bauch, 2001), create environments where learning flourishes (Mulford, 2003) and facilitate *life-giving* dialogue for improvement, nurture warm organisation culture and good feelings (Jansen, Conner, & Cammock, 2010). Additionally, these leadership relations are flexible in innovation and improvement initiatives (Jansen et al., 2010) and distribute leadership amongst the community (Dimmock & Walker, 2005), reinforcing the view that "…impediments to effective school leadership [come from] trying to carry the burden alone" (Hallinger, 2003).

Schooling in a post-colonial context.

As documented in Chapter one, colonialism introduced western education in Zambia and this has continued to be the type of education provided in the post-colonial era. Due to the fluidity and ambivalence of the culture and context that communities that were formerly colonialised present, there continue to be varied views constructed by scholars around the subject of post-coloniality (Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007). Post-colonial environments, therefore, consist of people who have undergone the subjugation and domination of colonialisation and are in the process of establishing meaning for their lives after colonialisation. The post-colonial places also continue to be spaces "in which a postcolonial country is unable to deal with the economic domination that continues after the country gained independence" (Ndille, 2018; Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007, p. 1173), hence a continuation of the old (colonial) practices. Therefore, *life-giving* school leadership in schools found in postcolonial environments focuses on including and strengthening "the voice of people [the parents and the community] who are not in power [and are] ever in danger of extinction or of cooptation" (p. 1173) because the bureaucratic structures of the western form of education are constantly limiting them. Reflective of the post-colonial views and understandings, the school leadership navigation involves promoting "a negotiating space for equity [while prioritising the administration of] equality and justice

to people" (p. 1175). Such unique school leadership skills require school leadership formation to be informed by and to mirror the values and culture of the community.

As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, Van Gennep (1909, in Chakraborty (2016)) introduced the idea of *liminality* in his work, ***Les Rites de Passage (The Rites of Passage).*** He described some life events characterised by rituals such as marriages, puberty and births as happening in **three stages:** the **middle stage** identified as the transition stage characterised by seclusion and separation, referred to as the *liminal*; the **pre-transitional** stage such as before puberty or marriage as the *pre-liminal*; and the **post-transition** stage after the puberty or marriage rituals as the *post-liminal* (Chakraborty, 2016). The term *liminality* originates from the Latin word that means *threshold* that "marks the place, line or border where a passage [or transition] can be made from one space to another " (Chakraborty, 2016, p. 145). Bhabha's work (1994 in Chakraborty (2016)) on the nature of a post-colonial world presented the importance of the border locations or *liminal spaces*, also referred to as "*in-between spaces* characterised by indeterminacy, ambiguity, *hybridity,* potential for subversion and change" (Chakraborty, 2016, p. 145). These spaces of hybridity are a consistent feature of a world characterized by mixing of cultural perspectives. Conroy (2004) viewed the location of schools, between the traffic of innocence and experience, and between childhood and adulthood, as sites of *rites of passage*, and *liminal spaces* where uncertainty, *hybridity* and cultural action occur. He further suggested that for schools to be truly authentic, the parents should have a free choice in the education of their children. The schools, therefore, require leadership that is not restrained by the choking hands of neo-liberalistic tendencies of accountability and standardisation (Kelly, 1999), but leadership that promotes authentic relations by enabling access (*collapsing boundaries*) for others (parents, students, and teachers) into the leading of schools while working with parents to preserve and determine (*boundary marking and re-marking*) the education they deem suitable for their children (Ndille, 2018). With this picture of the leadership required to bring life to schools in post-colonial spaces, it becomes interesting to take a microscopic view of the context of the Zambian schools and, in particular, Lusaka schools.

The Context of Lusaka Schools in the post-colonial era

The post-colonial environment in Lusaka communities has found its way into schools, making their environment more complex. The competitive and limiting nature of the Zambian education system, which is still based on colonial tenets, continues to exclude some members of the communities from participating in education. Apart from the education structure being hierarchical and eliminating some learners through examinations at grades 7 and 9, the challenges of long distances between school and home for some learners, especially those in peri-urban and rural areas, early marriages for girls and teen age pregnancies have continued to disadvantage some learners from continuing with schooling (Kelly, 1999). More children are further excluded due to poverty that affects close to one third of the population, and three quarters of those are situated in the rural areas (World Bank, 2019). The situation is further compounded by low-employment, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and drunkenness among adults and youth which has led to increased numbers of orphans and destitute children in the communities and in schools (Kelly, 1999). This situation in schools has rendered school leadership very demanding and requiring a grasp of the context. This way of leading schools promotes new opportunities for collaborative school leadership, reinforcing epistemological understandings that reality is a socially bound phenomenon as explained in the following section.

Social Constructionist Approaches to School Leadership Formation

Social constructionism focuses on culture and context in understanding the occurrences in society such as the construction of knowledge (Burr, 2006) . The assumptions made in this approach are that reality, knowledge and learning are all products of human interaction with others and the environment. Burr (2006) described the human interactions or processes as the "goings-on" (p. 4) between people as they go about their everyday business. These social processes involve communication between individuals, and the meanings emerge through the explorations of the individuals within the social processes (Bell & Palmer, 2015). From this perspective, by focusing on social and interpersonal interactions, we can understand the reality and meanings of leadership and its formation. One approach that is used to explore and investigate social processes based on social constructionism is appreciative inquiry.

Why an Appreciative Inquiry approach to School Leadership?

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a strength-based approach that "seeks to locate, highlight and illuminate the *life-giving* forces on an organisation's existence"(D. Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. xi). It focuses on sustaining the human social processes and practices that optimize productivity on a continuous basis. It has a synergizing effect that results in impressive personal and collective commitment to the organisation. The renewed drive at all levels of the organisation makes room for even better personal and organisation outcomes. Indeed, its focus is on the sources of success and not failure.

Accounting for the transformative and positive impact of AI in organisations, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) shared that AI "gives people the experience of personal and collective power… [leaving them] permanently transformed" (p.266). Its application in investigating human behaviour or organisations has a liberating effect as it "creates a self-perpetuating momentum for positive change" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 267). Furthermore, this positive characteristic of AI propels growth in the desired direction.

Giles and Kung (2010) added that AI shows "*life-giving* experiences …stalked from the past" (p. 309) that have rejuvenating and therapeutic effects on individuals. AI allows individuals to uncover the positive past and explore ways of reliving the experience in the future. With its principles focused on positivity and collaboration, AI offers a way of effecting *life-giving* and sustainable professional development for school leaders. Imagining a leadership formation platform for Lusaka school leaders, an AI approach to constructing leadership formation opportunities presents a favourable, sustainable, contextual and cultural way of learning to practice *life-giving* school leadership.

With all the positivity surrounding AI, it has its limitations. Lewis and Van Tiem (2004) acknowledged AI lacks clarity on power issues in an organisation. They also alluded to AI's vagueness on the need to learn from both the positive and the negative. Additionally, they claimed there was obscurity on how successful implementation and accompanying difficulties are handled. However, the benefits of the application of AI provide a "stimulating and useful addition to the range of approaches that can be used in research and development work" (Reed, Pearson, Douglas, Swinburne, & Wilding, 2002), including in school leadership development.

Summary of the chapter

In conclusion, leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon whose meaning is constructed by the goings-on between people as a result of their interactions and that is influenced by context and culture. While appreciating the contributions AI has made in many fields of study including education leadership, most of the literature and research is based on Western and some Asian countries with very little on the African context, let alone the Zambian context. Given the colonial history and the complexities that surround post-colonial spaces, the Zambian school environments present unique environments that require leadership that responds to the desires and concerns of the communities the schools serve. Additionally, as major contributors to national development, schools are entrusted with the role of supplying graduates with appropriate skills and competences so that they can meaningfully participate in national and global development, yet the schools are faced with limited resources and the absence of a school leadership qualification programme, emphasizing the *liminality* of their context.

With AI placed at the centre of this search for *life-giving* headteachership and an education leadership formation that mirrors this headteachership, the opportunity to attempt to create a sustainable, contextual, cultural, holistic and *life-giving* approach to professional development for Lusaka province and indeed Zambia is established. Moreover, the on-going tension between the western form of education that Zambia has continued to embrace in the school system as a remnant of British colonialization, and the traditional system of education that continues to be intertwined in the day-to-day lives of the Zambian people, needs to be harmonised for the attainment of desired transformations in school leadership.

CHAPTER THREE

We should talk while we are still alive (Western African proverb).

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach and the methodological decisions that were made in the processes of this study. The main focus of the research was to appreciatively explore the Lusaka headteachers' stories about *life-giving* headteachership in the post-colonial spaces of their schools guided by the following research questions that in turn informed the interview questions:

- What experiences do school leaders in primary schools in Lusaka consider *life-giving* in their leadership roles in their schools?
- How have these experiences informed their way of doing leadership in their schools?
- What is the nature of educational leadership in post-colonial Lusaka province?

The chapter also includes the description of the nature of the research design, the context of the research site for deeper insights, and the details of participants' selection. Next, the method employed is explained, followed by the data collection and analysis procedures. It is then concluded with a discussion on the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations that were relevant to the study.

Research Design

The nature of this study was an appreciative exploration of the participants' experiences that were *life-giving* in leading schools within the post-colonial spaces of their schools, which suggested that a qualitative research design offered the appropriate framework to carry out the inquiry (Creswell, 2002). Punch and Oancea (2014) reinforced this decision

indicating that qualitative research provides the ideal method of understanding social life, the meanings that people construct about it, and how they choose to behave within it in the natural setting. Subsequently, the significance of taking into account the context, in collecting more **naturally** occurring data (Boaduo, 2011), was apparent; for good qualitative reports, the researcher "provides a considerable description of the setting... transporting the reader to a research site" (p. 247). Following the general description of a research design logic of epistemology, methodology and methods (Galbin, 2014), this study was embedded in social constructionism and employed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the form of the AI interview to collect the participants' stories.

Social constructionists seek understandings of the reality that consists of meanings constructed through the relationships between humans (Burr, 2006). Thus, through the interviews I conducted with the headteachers and through the stories they shared about the best of *what has been*, *what it is* and *what drives* it (D. Cooperrider et al., 2008) in headteachership in Lusaka province, the opportunity to construct *new* meanings of *life-giving* school leadership was created.

To a constructionist, knowledge is also "historically and culturally specific" (Burr, 2006, p. 20). Given that schools in Lusaka province are situated in a post-colonial space, whose complexity is characterised by uncertainty, hybridity, suppression and opportunity for change, the understanding of *life-giving* school leadership would be relative to its historical and cultural context. Thus, this environment, also described as *liminal spaces* where cultural action occurs (Chakraborty, 2016), could have influenced and could have been influenced by the school leadership. The researcher, therefore, supposed the nature of leadership engagement that *brings life* to schools was specific to the participants' context. Consequently, an inquiry into the insiders' perspectives of what they understood to be *life-giving* in leading schools might provide insights into cultural specific meanings of *life-giving* headteachership (Chunoo & Callahan, 2017) at particular sites (schools) and at particular times.

Additionally, Hosking and Pluut (2010) proposed "a view of research as [an] ongoing processes of (re)constructing self (perhaps as a researcher), other (perhaps as the researched) and relationships" (p. 62). In this sense, the study opened up space for reflection on how the participants and the researcher were undergoing construction or

becoming (Hosking & Pluut, 2010). It should also be noted that construction was applicable to all research processes including report writing, research procedures and the presentation.

As a researcher, I found myself listening to the data rather than adhering to the initial planned research focus, as there were some features of the data that unexpectedly resounded strongly and, thus, deserved to be attended to in order to get deep insights about the nature of school leadership in Lusaka province schools, consequently shifting the research focus in some way. The constant tension of balancing attention paid to the features that echoed strongly and those that were seemingly mute in the data, became an important part of my personal formation journey by continually challenging my assumptions and biases, leaving me more open minded. The process of writing has also been an on-going process of *becoming* that has been building my research skills. Accordingly, I also recognise and declare that my interests, as a researcher who is deeply situated within the participants' organisation with a role of coordinating professional development, have positively situated me within the study. Supported by what Hosking and Pluut (2010) concluded, participation in reflexive social inquiry "(re)constructs peoples' lives in some degree… [therefore] construct[s] researchers as co-practitioners and practitioners as co-researchers" (p. 67). The participants in the inquiry "drew upon the *forms of life* in which they participate", hence this study drew from, as well as could have contributed to, their daily lives (Hosking & Pluut, 2010, p. 68).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

AI is said to be a collaborative inquiry "for what is best in people, their organizations, and the world around them" (D. Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 5). As a research approach, it searches for and highlights what is *life-giving* to people and their organisations at the peak of their capability and effectiveness (D. L. Cooperrider, Peter Jr, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000). Hence, the use of the appreciative interview for this study was a purposeful choice to start from a point of what was working from the perspective of the headteachers, with a view to yielding "a more nuanced understanding of… the experiences" (Michael, 2005, p. 223) of the participants that could ultimately inform the construction of the hoped for future.

The generative ability of the AI promotes the articulation of possibilities for the future (Giles & Kung, 2010). It aims to "generate new knowledge that expands the 'realm of the possible' and helps members of an organisation envision a collectively desired future" (Michael, 2005, p. 223). During the interview process, the participants had to recollect their own uplifting, positive experiences in leading schools. Consequently, they were inspired by the positive feelings evoked by their discovery and expressed the desire to adopt the appreciative approach to their leadership practices in the schools. Hence, in doing so, the participants might benefit from the re-energising effect of considering their cherished moments and experiences from the past and present, with a possibility of using them to co-construct a better future with others in the school.

Before the actual interview commenced, the researcher established a good rapport with the participants by engaging them in a relaxing conversation so that they could relax and open up about their experiences. This is a significant process in setting the stage for AI as "AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential" (D. Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 5). Through the dialogical engagement, a social world was constructed between the researcher and the participants that permitted a deeper relational process that presented as a mutual, warm, respectful relationship embedded in deep trust (Goleman, 1998). AI creates a platform for people to share their stories freely, leaving them with feelings of accomplishment and wholeness (Lewis & Van Tiem, 2004). Consequently, the research set out to discover what was working, was authentic and brought life to the work of the participants in their schools and how it could be advanced into the future through the creation of a headteachers' formation platform.

The Context of the Zambian Education System at Primary School Level

The Zambian primary schools' management team is made up of the headteacher (principal), the deputy headteacher and a team of 2-5 senior teachers depending on the size of the school determined by the number of streams per grade level. For urban schools with adequate staff, the headteacher and the deputy do not usually take up teaching duties which their counter parts in rural areas have to do because they are usually understaffed. The senior teachers continue with their teaching role while they also supervise and give professional support to a team of teachers assigned to them. The school

management is further assisted by additional teachers responsible for other roles such as sports, school gardens and student leaders, to name a few.

The recommended student teacher ratio by the MoGE is 50:1 in primary schools but it is common to find higher ratios in most urban schools, while in the rural areas the ratio is usually far below the recommended ratio due to factors described in detail in the previous chapter. Most urban schools have double sessions for most grade levels, i. e some pupils report in the morning and finish at midday in time for another group of learners to start their session. In such schools some teachers handle double sessions to ensure all the classes have lessons. This has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning since the teachers are often overworked and have limited time to plan for the lessons adequately.

Professional development for teachers is institutionalised and teachers are assigned to small Teacher Groups (TGs) of up to twelve members. The TGs meet every fortnight for school based professional development activities. Each team has a team leader who is assigned by the school administration or is democratically voted into the position by other members. Whichever the case, the position is often rotational for the purpose of sharing leadership opportunities. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are required to be part of the TG's but are not compelled to attend every meeting. There is no specific professional development framework for education leaders apart from the education management programmes offered by universities, which are not mandatory for all school leaders. The Department for Education standards of the MoGE emphasize school management as fulfilling the laid-out standards rather than providing leadership formation opportunities.

Participants

In the construct of the research site (Punch & Oancea, 2014), written permission was sought from the Provincial Education Officer (PEO) (Appendix II) to conduct the study in the schools in Lusaka province. The consent forms (Appendix III) and the information sheets (i. e details about the study [Appendix IV] for potential participants) were also sent to the PEO, who enclosed them in the written invitation from his office to potential participants who met the set criteria. The eight respondents who expressed interest in the study were five females and three males from two urban districts and one rural district.

They directly contacted the researcher by phone. Seven schools were mixed gender government schools and one was a girls' grant-aided school. In qualitative research, there should be an intense or prolonged contact with the field of research (Punch & Oancea, 2014) in order to have information-rich sources that offer enriched reservoirs of the sought-after information about the research. Thus, the eight headteachers had at least five years' experience in the role of headteacher of a primary school. One of the participants served as a pilot for the study, while the remaining seven participants, four females and three males, comprised the study sample.

Research Method

Punch and Oancea (2014) contended that "methods… follow from questions" (p. 7), thus to understand the *life-giving* school headteachership in Lusaka province, purposeful sampling was utilized (Creswell, 2002). The criteria set in line with the aims of the study were that the participants were to be headteachers who had served in the position of headteacher for at least five or more years at government or grant-aided primary schools situated in any of three identified districts, i. e. Lusaka, Chilanga and Chongwe districts. The criterion for the type of schools was arrived at based on the fact that government and grant-aided schools are widely spread across the province, regardless of the location or the economic factors of the community. It is also worthwhile to note that these are schools more likely to have learners drawn from communities that consist of the large percentage of the population that face financial difficulties due to poverty related factors, a common feature of post-colonial spaces. The choice of the three districts was for the ease of the researcher getting to the research sites to collect the data. The five or more years' experience criterion was to increase the likelihood of the participant having a depth of experience to draw on, with a stronger sense of the role of heading a government or grant-aided primary school.

The approval to carry out this study was granted by the PEO. Additionally, the PEO sent out written invitations to twenty potential participants who met the research criteria. Participation was voluntary, with the interested headteachers contacting the researcher directly by phone. Punch and Oancea (2014) cautioned, "[t]he data collection methods and sampling strategy need to be consistent with the research purposes and questions" (p. 7). Therefore, the sample size was limited to seven participants on the premise that "the

standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are 'information rich'" (Creswell, 2002, p. 206) rather than focusing on the number. Furthermore, the time constraint for collecting data from the research sites, and the size of a Masters' thesis, reinforced the appropriateness of the sample size.

To collect the data, the researcher had to travel back to her country, Zambia, during the university break for a fixed period of five weeks. Therefore, all the participants who expressed interest were given the choice to pick the most suitable time for the interview within the period that the researcher was in Lusaka province. The researcher contacted the participants a few days before the scheduled interview to inquire about their willingness to be involved in the study and to confirm their availability as scheduled.

While the sampling strategy did not allow the researcher to directly ensure gender representation was balanced, five female and three male headteachers expressed interest to participate in the study. Each participant was required to indicate their willingness to voluntarily participate after carefully reading the information sheet and the consent form. This informed consent was ensured by giving participants time to read and sign the forms before the interview.

Data Collection Instrument: Appreciative Interview Guide and Piloting

Backed by the strength-based approach of AI, the comprehensive appreciative interview guide was the main data collection instrument. The interview guide was instrumental at all stages of the interview. Before the interview, the correspondence with the PEO to gain access to the site (Punch & Oancea, 2014) and to contact the would-be interviewees, was kept clear and focused, informed by the interview guide.

The interview guide was pre-prepared with a series of semi-structured questions, comprising the research questions as key interview questions, and some follow-up questions for further probing of the participants when required. The use of open-ended interview questions helped the participants to have increased flexibility in the responses they provided, with the possibility of providing further reasons (Creswell, 2002).

In order to enhance the quality of the data collected in an interview, Punch and Oancea (2014) suggested advance clarity on what achievements are hoped for; and a plan of how this may be successful. In this study, the first interview was scheduled as a pilot and it was

useful for checking the relevance, accessibility and answerability of the interview questions (Creswell, 2002). This was useful in refining the introduction, questions and conclusion of the interview guide (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

During interviews, the interview guide helped to maintain the focus on the topics of discussion. The interview process was also scaffolded with prompts that stirred the participants' stories about their experiences; making and collecting field notes; and reflecting and recording. It is these processes that informed the refining of the interview questions after the pilot to clarify the research terms; the appropriateness of language and questions; the efficiency of the audio recorder and the quality of the general processes of the interview.

After the interview, the interview guide formed part of the contextualising process during data analysis and interpretation of the findings (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The semi-structured questions incorporating the six aspects[1] recommended by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), were carefully developed to probe and prompt the headteachers' best and most life-giving experiences, as in Appendix V. The core questions invited the participants to relive their past and present uplifting experiences through their stories and encouraged them to reflect on their strengths and inspirations to advance these experiences into their future.

Data Collection Procedures

The choice of appreciative semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for this study allowed the participants to share information in greater depth and with greater flexibility, while the interviewer's focus of discussion was kept on the topic with the opportunity to collect additional information (Kothari, 2004). Creswell (2002) asserted that open-ended questions give participants the freedom to voice their experiences without restraint. In addition, all the interviews were audio recorded. Backed by the adopted social constructionist approach, the *social reality* of the headteachers in a primary school situated in a post-colonial environment is unique and real only to the individuals situated in that space. Thus, the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2002) was used for the understanding

[1] Six of these conditions: 1. Freedom to be known in relationship. 2. Freedom to be heard. 3. Freedom to dream in community. 4. Freedom to choose to contribute. 5. Freedom to act with support. 6. Freedom to be positive.

of *constructed realities* according to the participants **(**Blaikie, 2000**)**. Additionally, treating each headteacher as an individual case study in a particular context created a platform for presenting rich data of the lived experiences (Kothari, 2004).

The one-to-one interviews with the seven headteachers were conducted over a period of three weeks in December 2018 based on the mutually agreed time between the researcher and the participants. The venues for the interviews were the Teachers' Resource Centers situated near the participants' schools for convenience and confidentiality purposes. The interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The recordings were then used for post interview analysis and verbatim transcription. All names of the interviewees and schools were pseudonymised and a name convention was applied.

Data Analysis

Punch and Oancea (2014) suggested that, there being no one perfect approach to explore and analyse qualitative data, a variety of approaches can be deployed as they relate to the complexity and richness of data. However, analysing qualitative data requires understanding of how to make sense of data collected in order to find solutions to the research questions. Creswell (2002) claimed there are several steps to analysing data including "preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings" (p. 236). Consequently, in this study, the recordings were transcribed and sent to the participants for reviewing. Then the researcher engaged in the process of reading and re-reading the reviewed scripts to get a sense of the headteachers' leadership, their experiences, inspirations and strengths. Consequently, the emergent themes were identified, with the researcher constantly checking that their focus remained open to experiences situated in context, time and place as shared by participants and not on looking for answers to the research questions.

Positionality

As the researcher , I was positioned as a "primary research instrument" (Budge, 2006, p. 3) when collecting and analyzing data. My upbringing in Zambia, my twenty-five years'

working experience in MoGE with the first fifteen years as a teacher and the rest as a coordinator of in-service training for teachers and school leaders, and my general lived experiences that give me an in-depth *sense of place*, have an impact on the way I view the world and the assumptions I make regarding school leadership formation. My early years as a student in a public school gave me firsthand experience of the education system and the school leadership from the perspective of the learner. As a teacher and a coordinator of in-service professional development, I have extensive contextual experience of the leadership formation environment in the Zambian education system and am familiar with the difficulties of school leadership in such environments. All these experiences positioned me as an *outsider* with an *insider* perspective, hence enhancing the internal validity of the study (Loh, 2013). Keeping a reflexive journal through the process of this inquiry helped me to clarify my biases and enhanced the neutrality or confirmability of the study (Budge, 2006). The journal helped me wrestle with and track the changes in my thinking, perceptions and assumptions.

Robustness of the Study

Scholars want their findings to meet the criteria by which they can be acknowledged as making a significant "contribution to the development of knowledge in a discipline and be accepted to be of worth" (Loh, 2013, p. 4). However, the debate on the rigour of qualitative research continues to go on. For this reason, some researchers suggest that validity of qualitative research could be constructed through credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. In this study I used a Lincoln and Guba (1985) framework to enhance the validity of my study. The framework encompassing four criteria, as outlined in the following sections, was used as a guide to field activities and to check and ascertain adherence to proposed procedures in the study.

Credibility

Also referred to as "internal validity" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290), credibility refers to the "[establishment of] whether or not the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' views"(Anney, 2014). Therefore, in this research, rigour was ensured by the "prolonged and varied field experience" (Anney, 2014) of the researcher, i. e. my work experience within the field of education leadership. Additionally, "members checking"

(Anney, 2014), which is the process by which the final report or specific descriptions or themes are taken back to the participants to accord them the chance to contextualise or give an alternative interpretation while providing the researcher the opportunity to extend and elaborate their analysis, was also employed. This was done by phoning the participants or physically meeting them to confirm the findings and clarify their descriptions.

Dependability

Also referred to as the reliability of the study, dependability involves the ability of the study to produce the same or equivalent findings when repeated in the same or similar situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reliability of this study was enhanced by carrying out audit trailing, i.e. tracking and recording all decisions impacting the study for internal and external analysis of data. In addition, the on-going relational process of informal and formal inquiry audits between myself and my supervisor at Flinders University, further strengthened the dependability of this study.

Transferability

In qualitative research, the extent to which a study's findings are transferable is left to the reader. To aid in increasing the reader's ability to assess the transferability of this study, rich narratives of the participants from their lived experiences and detailed descriptions of the context and settings of the research site have been provided.

Confirmability

Confirmability denotes the degree to which the research results are determined by the participants and the context of the study and are not based on the assumptions, interests or biases of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to the researcher being up front and open about their biases and intentions in Chapter one and providing clear details of how the data were collected, analysed and interpreted, this study's confirmability was strengthened by being supervised, thereby providing another researcher to review the participants' responses.

Ethical Consideration

Being aware of the ethical implications of the research process (Creswell, 2002) this study involved obtaining ethics approval from Flinders University Research Ethics Committee (Appendix VI). During the interviews, informed consent was sought from the participants prior to the interview.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had limitations generated by the sampling strategy that was based on of the position of headteachership in a primary public school in Lusaka province. Additionally, the study was further restricted to participants who had five or more years work experience as headteachers, with no regard to their background, the geographical location of their school or their professional qualification. Being an exploratory study, characterised by in-depth scrutiny of the topic and the context, was equally limiting to the eventual generalisation of the findings. The time restrictions of my study programme limited the study to seven participants. Further, the data collected from a one-time forty-five minutes to an hour interview was potentially a limitation.

Summary of the chapter

The chapter outlined the research design; the social constructionist theoretical framework of the study; the research methodology, methods of data collection and their justification; and the data analysis details. Details of participants' selection and considerations related to ethics and the robustness of the study were described in this chapter also. The researcher's positionality was also included. The next chapter is an account of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together (African proverb).

THE UNFOLDING STORIES: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This study was an appreciative exploration of the school leading practices that headteachers in selected primary schools in Lusaka province deemed *life-giving*. This appreciative inquiry can be conceptualised as setting the participants onto an adventure:

> Even in the first [lines of a stanza]
>
> One senses exciting [melodious tones] in our language
>
> Sweet melodies of accounts of *life-giving* school leading stories
>
> Singing hope and dreams for the future. [added] (D. Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999)

The overarching theme of *being with* is an orchestrated *symphony* comprising four major overlapping sub-themes unfolding as ensuing melodies. These sub-themes are: being together *with* parents, *with* the community, *with* staff and *with* students. Within each of these, the themes entailed leading through liminal space, remapping culture in a post colonisation era, boundary marking, remarking and collapsing, navigating and embracing sensitivities in school leadership.

Being Together: A symphony of life-giving practices of school leadership

The participants' narratives of *life-giving* school leadership practices are presented metaphorically as a *symphony of collectivity*. Thus, just as a symphony orchestra has musical *lifts* of the various constituent instruments, where at one point it may be the wind instruments and at another strings, at another moment still some silence, without any sort

of ranking among them except being played according to the composition piece, so is the relationship between the ensuing sub-themes of this study.

Life-giving experiences: being together *with* parents

Life-giving leading experiences were associated with the nature of engagement between the school and the parents, in addition to deep contextual knowledge school leaders had of the families and communities. Mr. Jani Moyo, the headteacher of Chowe Primary school, shared that, to improve the learning environment of the sole public school surrounded by many villages situated in a rural district of Lusaka province, his hope was to work with the parents. Most families in these villages are poor and their livelihoods are dependent on agricultural produce as a source of food and income, though profit from sales is meagre and hardly meets the needs of the families. It is not unfamiliar to see women, often assisted by their primary school aged children, selling some roasted peanuts and cassava by the roadside or near an open-air market or tavern in this community, especially late in the evening. Though not much income comes from the sales, their passionate desire to send their children to school has kept them at their stalls year after year.

> When I came to Chowe Primary School, there were two challenges: there was a challenge of classroom accommodation and also there was a challenge of noise pollution just around the school and also people and animals just passing through school when lessons were going on. And these were disturbing the learners. So, the first meeting that we had with the parents, the first Annual General Meeting, we said these children are not learning … what shall we do? What is the way forward? Let's prioritize so that we help the children to learn. So, we picked on the issue of putting up a wall fence around the school. So, we agreed that the parents were to contribute, that was a K60 (AUD $7) per child so that idea was strongly welcomed by the parents… When those monies came in, within a year we were able to put up a wall fence round the school. It was so motivating for me because people stopped trespassing through the school premises which was a disturbance to the learners. The children were now enclosed and they were not able to move out of the school anyhow. They now had time to sit round the trees to do their studies. So that one was so motivating for me. (HTCHP p. 3).

The parents' willingness to contribute their hard-earned money to construct a wall is a representation of the value the community has invested in the education. Each parent had to pay AUD $7; for families that are struggling to meet the basic needs of life, it is a sign of

how huge a sacrifice the parents were prepared to make to a future they hoped for their children. *Consequently, the shared boundary between the school and the community was a symbol of a mutually allowed separation, in order to protect and preserve what the community cared about.* It clarified that the community cared about their children learning in an environment where they were not constantly disturbed by animals running into their classroom, or the noise of people passing through their school. The parents cared about the quality of relationships and engagement that the students would develop in this secluded place. Further, it addressed the insecurity that accompanies situations where students would just wander off from school anytime. *Being together with parents in this instance, meant the community contributing to enabling the boundary between the school and community in order to protect and enhance what was most cherished for them.* Thus, it is within this co-created space that Mr. Jani once again turned to the parents for answers to the challenge of swelling numbers of students resulting in extreme over enrolment:

> The 'access' policy is now superseding this one where you have to regulate [the enrolment]. Meaning that every child that comes into school has to be given a school place. So, our classes rose up as high as 135 [students] in one class. In some classes you'd find 140. So, again we sat down with the parents and we resolved that a small contribution should be made. That was done, all the processes and formalities done at the end of 2 years on the line, we built 2 classroom blocks that reduced the congestion in our classes and to me that was motivating because the numbers reduced a bit so that was so motivating to me (HTCHP p. 4).

The parents' willingness to contribute funds to the construction of more classrooms for the students, despite their poor financial capacity, was symbolic of the unrelenting support by parents to be *with* the leadership, *with* the school and *with* each other. Mr. Jani understood that education is always a community endeavour and he was able to draw on that sense of community to assist with the challenges he faced.

Another participant, Sr Theresa Bwalya, a Catholic nun heading a girls' school with families that are equally low-income earners, shared her happiness as she reflected on how *being with parents* triggers a wave of generosity. Even families that had barely a thing found something to contribute to the school in the spirit of togetherness:

> So, now what they agreed was, much as we know that some, like from the shanty compound, you'll find that one parent maybe has 5-6 children. So, those we said we bear with those who cannot afford. "Tell us right now that I can manage this." So, even there it was not like maybe compulsory or what. So, they said that at least if you can say those of us who have more than 2, 3 [children who are students at the school] maybe we just pay as a household, maybe K30 (AUD $3.50) or so. Then those who can afford, you can even pay more than whatever you have. So, that's what they did, and I was surprised, even those who were saying "no, us we are poor, we can't". But they managed to bring at least something. Others were saying "no, can we buy something for the teachers? can we do this?" And I said, "something that we can benefit as a school… [Therefore], others brought cups [and] because we had nothing, at least we benefited, I was very happy because that was very helpful. (HTSTP p.6).

In this excerpt, being *with parents* meant nurturing equity in the way contributions from parents towards the school projects were defined and executed. Sr Bwalya knew that letting parents know that the contributions towards school were not compulsory was a great way to open access for individual parents to locate their position and voice in the school improvement. *The headteacher removed the barrier of compulsory and mandatory contributions from parents thus remapping the economic relationship between school and home*. Therefore, being *with parents* also meant greater access to choose and an equitable contribution by individuals, symbolizing an economy where the value of work, income and contribution became a shared lens responsive to the task at hand. *Indeed, there is a definite blurring of the separation between public and private boundaries in the way parents work to raise the funds to contribute to the school rehabilitation projects and how the school leaders use the funds to achieve the planned projects*.

The data also points to parents as the legitimate co validators of an effective school. Mr. Sango Libuku expressed his *satisfaction* as he reflected on this effect:

> If you can get feedback from the parents that we are happy with what you are doing, then it gives you a lot of satisfaction and it keeps you working. Recently I had a parent who came to look for a school place, so this parent says, "I'm moving this child from a school within the same zone as Libbs". So, my concern was, ah but this child is already within easy reach of home. What is the use of moving the child? So, as she explained, according to her, when she compared the work of the one at Libbs and the one from the other school,

> she was convinced that the one at Libbs was learning better…Yes and so that gives you a lot of motivation and it keeps you thinking about what else you can do. Yes, to be able to perform the way we are expected to perform. (HTLI p. 7-8)

The perceived value of education took on a new meaning for parents at Libbs School. The quality of education being accessed, a symbol of the permission the community felt to define the kind of education they deemed suitable for their children, was new territory for the parents. There was a clear shift in the power structures in the validation of the quality of education, from being a preserve of the education executives and school leaders, towards a shared concern with the parents and the community.

In b*eing together with parents,* the data pointed further to a wider access the parents attained to the inner chambers of the classroom and the curriculum. Ms. Sombo Kaulu at Kassie School, described the joy and excitement she felt:

> The revised curriculum was piloted [at my school]. So, we started there with the teachers, explaining to the teachers the importance and then we said let's start. Let's see if it's going to yield results. And when we moved into that direction using Chinyanja, which was the local language, we saw children breaking through. So that was very exciting. And then seeing the teachers starting [to accept]. Slowly, seeing the parents, because we had to invite the parents to come on board, to come and see, cause parents wanted to remove their children. "You're teaching them local language." But we brought them on board. We said, "Come and learn with your children and see how the children are learning." So, seeing parents getting involved, excited, the children were reading. So, that was a joyous moment for me (HTSS p 3).

This excerpt sheds some light on the tension and complexity that exist in communities that had previously endured the oppression of colonialisation. The colonialisation of Zambia by the British left layers of its effects that manifest in various subtle ways. English largely remains the medium of instruction in Zambian schools to date. *The attempt by the government to recapture and progressively restore some of the lost culture, and advantage the learning of young students by maintaining the use of some of what they bring with them into the school environment, including the use of the local language, was met with a hard resistance by many in education, including teachers and parents. Head teachers find themselves leading this cultural restoration at the local community level.* The extent of the access gaining, bridge building and the diminishing of boundaries between the school and the parents, shifted

assumptions held by parents about the school. Sr Bwalya experienced the uplifting moments from the vulnerability and openness parents began to show:

> When we had a meeting with the parents, there are a lot of things that we discussed about the performance of the children, absenteeism, and parents were happy to say, "for us, we're looking forward to a time when we will be called at this school so that we interact with the teachers and then the performance of the children." And then we even told, I even told the parents that, "you are free, if you are not happy with performance of your child. You are free to come confront [talk to] the teachers. You can even sit in the classroom where the teacher is teaching and then, if you have questions, you ask". So, they didn't know, and they were happy to say, "Ah! For us, we were afraid that maybe we are not allowed. And then we were saying 'what type of a school is this?'" cause, they have children in other schools. So, maybe they were called for PTA [Parents Teachers Association meetings] in these other schools, but at our school, there was nothing. So, that was very encouraging (HTSTP p.4).

Sr Bwalya's invitation to the parents to enter the school, including access into the classrooms, was a major lift of that restriction felt by the parents. It is also clear that the restrictions parents experienced were in their minds but, by *being with them,* the school leader was able to demolish the apparent boundaries by extending an open invitation to the parents. Sr Bwalya, being a Catholic nun, has a symbolic religious clothing called a habit which itself symbolises a boundary. In the Zambian culture today, most religions are remnants of the colonialising era, which continue to thrive among many communities with reverent practices including compliance without question. Thus, it is clear the parents had not questioned the restricted access to the school, with Sr Bwalya's habit as a constant reminder to the community. However, Sr Bwalya extended an invitation to allow them access to the classes and teachers, therefore demolishing the perceived boundary that separated the parents from the school.

Some participants shared about a boost of their motivation when *being with parents*; the parents' engagement grew to very deep levels, progressively rendering the distinction between private and public goods elusive:

> We are working on the grounds because we are thinking of upgrading from a primary to a secondary school. So again, that came from the parents, because when the results are out, most of our children, as I have already explained that most of them come from the shanty

> compound, and then some secondary schools where they are posted, maybe they have to board maybe twice to reach town then, from town maybe to Kabs. So, you find that they cannot manage. So, they said, "why can't we just upgrade our school and then we keep our own children from grade 1 up to grade 12?". So, that's what we agreed said. Now the way it is we can't say we upgrade tomorrow, we get to grade 10. There are a few things that we have to do. So, we agreed to come up with a 1 by 3 classroom [block] and then to work on the grounds. So, what I said before we come up with the 1 by 3, let us work on the ground because when it is like this—rainy season, we have the flood. It is water logged. So, now we are working on the same and they agreed, those who can put pavers said. "for me I'll come and I'll just offer labor, you won't pay, I'll just offer my services". Others "will contribute so much". Others will put this one so that we buy if it is blocks or paving stones, so that we change the face of the school and then from there, that's when we'll come up with the idea of getting the grade 10 class (HTSTP p7).

Once again, in the data presented, the divide between the private and public became so thin a film, it was difficult to tell one from the other. The personal commitments and contributions to the school projects became part of what families and the community did without having to think about it. This kind of relationship was legitimised by *being with parents.* Additionally, Mr. Jani added another source of encouragement in the *being with parents* when:

> [Some parents] confess that we have tried to take these children to private schools, [but] nothing was happening, so we thought in government [schools] there isn't much that is happening. But we are surprised that my child is now able to read after bringing this child here… even the behaviour for this child has changed [for better] (HTCHP p.9).

This excerpt introduced another form of boundary that existed between the parents and school, when picking schools for their children with a choice between private and public schools. This is the boundary that existed in terms of how the community viewed the quality of education in a public school in preference to that perceived to be found in a private school. The parent gained access to the school leadership and shared his experience about enrollment of his children in both private and public schools. The boundary was demolished when the parent had access to the school leadership that led to access to an education that provided the transformation they wished for their children.

To summarise the findings of the subtheme of *being together with parents,* the data illuminated significant leadership practices, experiences, processes, relationships, episodes and social dynamics that contributed to life giving experiences in primary schools situated in various locations. On the other hand, there was a highlight of the theme of *boundary marking, re-marking* and *collapsing* as a contribution to a renewed sense of life. Finally, Mr. Chileshe Mwamba's acknowledgement that "parents are the owners of the school … consult them regularly…and together, … make decisions that are beneficial to the school" (HTCP p. 10) and Sr Bwalya's further contention "…without their[parents] support again, you cannot work because they can even turn against you" seal the significance of *being with parents* in bringing life to school leadership.

Life-giving experiences: being together *with* community

The community here refers to the broader community of which the school is a part (i.e. a collection of villages in the same area or a suburb). Ms. Sombo Kaulu described how she involved the community when faced with concerns, and their subsequent reaction to issues that involved both the community and the school:

> When we had, you know Kamena is prone to cholera, so we worked with the community, with the other stakeholders, just through partnership and collaboration, to do the drainage system for the school and the other things. After seeing what we are doing, some parents will just come, [and offer] "no, me I'm going to buy you a bucket, me I'll buy you this", just like that. Cause when you tell them, we want so much [money], they'll think it's a lot of money… but when we involve them, we do something [and] maybe [ask them] "how do you look at this?" … [they say] "no, this is looking nice". "Uh no, we would have gone a step forward but we don't have [funds]" … [They then offer] "no, we're going to do this. Me I'll do this, me I'll do this." That's how we've collaborated with them. (HTSS p. 13-14).

This was symbolic of the culture of the community that regarded all members as one community irrespective of the role they played, therefore illuminating a community that disregarded boundaries for the preservation of what is valuable to all. This nurturing was also demonstrated when the community needed the use of the school facilities:

> We have a hall…. So, the community around sometimes would come approach the school, "we want to use the hall for this and that", and then they'd even donate... "No, we have seen ... there are no bulbs, there's this and that as a community we have organized

> ourselves because this is part of… the school is in our community, so we are part and parcel of the [school]" … As a community, they also appreciate what we are doing and they're part of the school and they are ready to help. (HTSTP p. 15-16).

It's clear also that *with community,* there was a continuation of the *removal of boundaries* that fostered a deeper sense of value the community had for the school. Irrespective of whether one had a child or no child enrolled at the school, there was a clear reciprocal value of the relationship between the school and the community. Additionally, there was also an indication in the data of the further access the broader community had to the operations of the school, as shared by Mr. Chileshe:

> We do get a lot of feedback from members of the community in general. They could be parents, they could just be people that are interested in the welfare of the school, and so from time to time we do have a parent coming, like I still remember when I just came to this school, I was twice visited by one parent who was very concerned about the fact that there had not been an Annual General Meeting for some years. And so, I did assure him that once I'm settled, we'll put that in place and we did that, which was very good because it shows even the community at large is interested in the wellbeing of the school. This feedback that comes from the members of the public could be both observations on things that you're doing well and also on things where you're not doing well. So, whether the feedback is pointing to some negatives or strengths you still make use of that. So, when you receive such feedback from the community, you share with the rest of the management staff and the teachers so that you know how best you can make use of that. You may have a parent saying "oh I've been checking my child's book; the teacher doesn't mark" or others may come and say "oh I've even seen your date stamp and signature in my child's book. It gives us a lot of hope as parents see that even the head teacher checks the pupil's books". So, those are some of the things that give us encouragement. (HTLI p. 15).

The parent from the community approaching the school leader and demanding a meeting between the school and parents is a sign of the freedom the community had to running of the school. Mr. Chileshe's acknowledgement of the importance of feedback symbolised a collective way of leading schools where power is distributed among all stake holders. Additionally, accepting feedback on both the positive and negative things that the community observes symbolised open and accepting leadership that embraced critique from the community as a factor that contributed to the shifts in school leadership.

To summarise, in *being with community,* it was clearly evident when the community is granted access to school physically and relationally, they in turn relate with the school in ways that portray the value they attach to the school by contributing financially, materially, socially and in the governance of the school, which the participants described as *life-giving*. Further, collapsing boundaries that hinder thriving relationships between the school and the community allowed for new possibilities in leading schools.

Life-giving experiences: being together *with* staff

The participants shared unique yet profound experiences in their engagement with teachers, other staff in school, and with the supervisors from different levels of the Ministry that they considered *life-giving*.

Mr. Sango Libuku, reflecting on his first experiences as a school headteacher at Chibbs school in Kay suburb, attributed some *life-giving* experiences to collaborative decision making with staff at the school:

> One of the first experiences that I can recall that gave me a lot of motivation as a leader in the school, is when I was heading Chibbs Primary School, that was the first school that I headed. When I got to that school and just went round to see how the things go, how the arrangement was and such, the first thing that struck me was the state of the toilets… None of the toilets were flushing and so I wondered how that school was still operating, so I was told "no we are waiting for grant from the Ministry of Education from headquarters". Then okay because I have been teaching, already I'd been at different levels, so I knew that waiting for a grant from the Ministry of Education, yes a commitment could be there, they might not have the funds so I engaged my management staff and convinced them that we just needed to explore and find a way of resolving this problem as we are waiting for that grant that may come from headquarters. So, they bought into that, we put resources together. It was not a school with a lot of resources… we worked on the toilets, all the toilets for both boys and girls started flushing (HTLI p.3).

Mr Libuku's deep contextual knowledge of how things worked in the Ministry gave him insights to seek other ways for difficult situations in the school. In this case, collaborating with staff led to enabling change in the school, therefore fostering a culture of collectiveness that rekindled life in a school. He further highlighted how shared

responsibility with staff and valuing contributions by all staff in a school were key when he moved to another school that was unpopular due to its location:

> Then I moved from Chibbs to Merry Primary School. Merry Primary School is right in Merry compound, also those areas where people may not want to live. Actually, when I told my staff that I had been transferred, first they thought I was joking because they expected me to be sad. So, one of them said, "Sir, do you even know where you're going? It is a shanty compound". I said, "If people live there, I'll work there also". So, I went to that school. I looked at the school, you know, and it is one of those schools where people didn't want. There were learners, I'm not saying there were no learners, but it's one of the schools that people would look down upon, and think there is nothing that can come out of that. So there, I engaged my staff, we worked together. Before long, we started getting, you know the comments that are telling you you're moving in the right direction so "if you were thinking of giving up, don't give up because we are seeing what you are doing." (HTLI p. 4)

By embracing value for humanity and demonstrating compassion, sacrifice and acceptance of the school, in spite of its poor image in the eyes of teachers and the community, Mr Libuku was courageous and determined to serve and work with the staff at that school, leading to the restoration of life and value of the school among the community. The essence of his leadership was the well-being of others in the school in particular, and in the wider community. His empathy and distributed leadership with the staff did not only create a bridge for the wider community to regain value in the school, it had an internal enhanced impact on the teachers' perception of the quality of education they contributed to providing:

> One day, one of my teachers came to ask for a school place in grade 4; her son had been at a private school from grade 1. So, I gave her the place. Within that term she came back to tell me, "Oh sir, I'm very grateful, I wish I had brought my child to start grade 1 just from here. My child has made so much improvement in the one term he has been here." You know many parents tend to think private schools teach better than government schools but, it's not always like that. So there my emphasis to my staff was, "we're in Merry but let us work in such a way that we start drawing learners from Kay." (HTLI p.4)

Kay is a suburb where the rich and some middle-income earners normally reside. It is therefore expected that such parents have the money to take children to schools where

they are assured of a quality education. Therefore, Mr. Libuku used the reference of drawing learners from Kay metaphorically, to symbolise the quality of education the teachers should aspire to provide whilst working at Merry School. The teachers and their school leaders were able to co-create an education quality they were able to value and trust to help the learners, including their own children, access the future they hoped for.

It was *with staff* that the data unearthed the teachers' deep love and commitment to their role that; an act of collaborative sacrifice of personal finances by the teachers towards rehabilitation works at the school. Sr Bwalya, the Catholic nun, narrated:

> …I said, "Teachers this is our school and then, being our school, we are also parents for this school... So, on our part as teachers, what are we going to do? cause when we look at this block, the glass panes are shattered. [There are no] handles for the doors. And… This is our second home? So, we should, the way we maintain our homes, this what we are going to do". We pick on… "the classroom, actually". And that's when they said, "Sister, instead of us painting one classroom, we'll just put it open"… So, we had to put those small, small monies and then we managed to paint and fixed the windows [of] the whole block (HTSTP p4-5).

The aspirations of teachers to have a better learning environment for their learners while setting an example for the parents, cast light upon the possibility of diminishing the separation between the teachers' perspective of viewing the school as simply a place to work and earn an income and that of the school as part of their community whose wellbeing was equally their responsibility.

Mr Libuku described the fulfillment he experienced when he spent time helping the teachers to plan lessons and giving feedback after observing lessons:

> At the time I got to that school, I realized that even the issue of lesson preparation which was one thing which was being emphasized a lot at that time especially, was not getting enough attention. We have made a lot of progress now, I'm sure even the other schools. So, we started working on that, bringing the teaching staff to a point where they appreciate why they need to plan their lessons, you know all that makes a good teacher. At the end of the first term, that's 2017, I challenged my staff, those who believed they had done their work very well and could present their schemes and lesson plans for grading so that we could pick the best teacher at least in terms of preparation. No one wanted to bring their

> teaching file. I think I just got about 7, so I knew that maybe we still needed to build confidence. So, at the end of term 2, I gave them the same challenge, the response was overwhelming, and it was not just that someone has good lessons but delivering something else. Because I do a lot of monitoring myself, where you sit in the classroom, you see the teacher teaching, you get the files and exercise books for the children. And the teachers started saying, "you know, sir, you have done a lot of work". I remember one saying, "for me sir, I would go for the whole year with one lesson plan, but now I can even give you my teaching file at any time." So, those are experiences that I cherish. (HTLI p. 7)

The teachers failing to submit their teaching files for evaluation was symbolic of obstacles that contributed to low quality of work achievements, which could be overcome when the school leaders *worked together with staff* to find solutions. This growing professionalism was further highlighted in the teachers' preference to upgrade primary school teaching qualifications as a result of the school leader's mentorship that assured teachers their profession was an asset to the community, as shared by Ms. Kaulu:

> Teachers sometimes in the primary school they would… when they're upgrading, they'd want to go for secondary. They want to do away with the primary but then when you talk to them through the teacher group meetings, we go through all those experiences, seeing them starting to appreciate the primary education, that was also one of the joyous moments for me. When a teacher could appreciate the primary education, to say this is actually the foundation, without it, I think even the nation can be doomed because there's no way out a child will just start school in grade 8 or in grade 10, they'll have to start [from grade one] … So just assuring the teachers that actually, you are counted, you are the developers of the nation because without you we will not have whatever we're talking about. I think that was also one of the joyous moments that I had (HTSS p 3).

Ms. Kaulu's engagement of her staff in reflecting on the experiences that were valuable to them in their teaching role as a team, ignited ideas and reasons why the teachers chose to continue teaching in the primary sector of education while upgrading their qualifications. This highlighted the practice of intuitive appreciative leadership practice as *life-giving* in leading schools. *Additionally, the data highlights the strength of helping teachers to understand the link between their role and the national goals and development.*

There was also a unique form of collectivity with parents that was shared by Mr. Mwamba:

> At Kamba in Merry, uh, I found a similar situation [teaching and learning were almost nonexistent] but with the support of the Provincial Education Office and DEBS office, uh, I started with the new crop of teachers. I had asked the PEO to transfer the old teachers, which was done and I only found 5 old teachers and then received teachers from the other provinces who were coming into the district. So, at the time we started we were just 14 but after 3, 4 months we were almost 40 and in 6 weeks we transformed the school in that teachers were teaching effectively, and the message went in the community. When I arrived, there was an average of 19 pupils in a class but by the time we were winding up the year, we had an average of 50 pupils per class. Why? Because when parents in the community got to know that there was real teaching going on, they brought back the pupils they transferred to other schools in big numbers. Some families were bringing about 5, 6 at one time. Yeah, so…… and then, the school was known for exam malpractices. We transformed it to no exam malpractice in the time I was there and that also put the school on the district calendar in terms of performances. (HTCP p. 3)

This story shows the enabling of a state of dispersing; disintegration of one group at the onset of building another. While the resulting collectiveness of the new team bore valuable results that were uplifting to the participant, there was a significant unique action of disintegrating of the original team with the support of the supervising authorities that is symbolic of the allowed demolition. This permitted disintegration of a team signifies instances when some obstacles to effective leadership, such as deeply entrenched examination malpractices, would require a complete overhaul in order to build a new more effective team that could serve communities in ways that met their expectations.

To summarise, *being together with staff* was a clearly identified source of *life-giving* experiences in leading schools as described above. These experiences involved teachers' and staff's exceptional sacrifice of personal resources to contribute to what was valuable – the school, pedagogical leadership by school leaders that was collaborative to improve professionalism among teachers, shared leadership practices that bred trust among school leaders and staff, and co-created spaces for attention on the individuality of staff to enhance the quality of the collectiveness.

Life-giving experiences: being together *with* students

Mr. Libuku, the participant that referred to a time when he collaborated with staff to source funds to renovate the students' toilets, described how he was further uplifted by the students' responses towards the renovated toilets:

> … the learners were saying "don't stop what you're doing". They gave me a very positive feedback. I also identified one senior teacher who was very good at landscaping. I grow plants myself, so, I worked very well with her. The front of the school was looking very beautiful but the back it was as if you're at a different school. So, I said I wanted the back to be just like the way the front was. The learners appreciated this too and at break you'd find them seated there. The school changed and that became a good motivation to the learners. (HTLI p. 3).

Mr. Libuku was motivated to go further to ensure the students had a better learning environment when the students expressed their gratitude and joy for the increased access to improved facilities. The voice of the students about issues that affected them and their verbalised approval highlighted a not so often considered source of joy for school leaders. In the Zambian tradition often parents and senior members of the family make decisions for their children and they are often not consulted. Therefore, this is often replicated in the schools and often students are not earnestly engaged in the processes of decision making. In this excerpt, Mr. Libuku's attempt to engage the students by taking into account their views on the issues that affected them, symbolised the boundaries that often exist between the students and the school leadership. Re-marking this boundary and allowing authentic engagement with the students made new *life-giving* leading experiences possible.

Another source of *life-giving* experiences was in data that pointed to the feedback the school leaders received on the impact of their students' excellence in academic performance and behaviour that determined their selection into grade 10 by high schools, as narrated by Sr Bwalya:

> Because of the good results that children get … [At] grade 9 [level], we had 98% pass, and … because of their [good] behavior and the morals, you find that these other secondary schools are actually fighting for our children to go to grade 10 at their school because, … [our] girls are well behaved… so, there's that good reputation of the school. Wherever they

> go, they'll even say, "oh! These[girls] are from this school". … this is something which will make you proud! (HTSTP p. 7-8).

All participants echoed Sr Bwalya's assertion that the students' results are a source of pride for the school and especially for school leaders. The high schools' scramble for the girls from Sr Bwalya's school drew attention to a fulfilling school-leading practice that revolves around inspiring excellence in academic performance and behaviour of the students. Further, this symbolises a school that is delivering upon the hopes and wishes of the parents and community.

The data further also highlights the *life-giving* experiences that inclusion of vulnerable students by co-supporting efforts of the school leaders with the teachers could enable in leading schools with children with disabilities:

> I'm not trained in special needs… So, I decided [to] start learning with them ... in the process just because of my presence being there… I discovered that the children with special needs became motivated in coming to school ... what I discovered was at the end of the day they became very close to me and wanted to be involved in every activity. At one time there were some doctors that came … they started addressing the other able-bodied children, those that are okay, but they didn't have a program for the deaf children because amongst them, there was no one to interpret the program [into sign language]… So, after they were done… [and] wanted to leave, the children who are deaf [came] to my office because we had developed that relationship. They complained "but what about us? Why have we been left out? We saw our friends cheering and laughing…" Then I realized that … they need also to be considered. We made an arrangement for those people to attend to them [too]. So, one lesson that I learnt was that when these children are brought close, they tend to open up and they're able to learn (HTCHP p.5).

This excerpt exposes the barrier that school leaders without any training in special education feel when dealing with students with special education needs. In Zambia, most school leaders do not have any qualifications in Special Education, even though the policy direction on increasing access and inclusion to education for children with disabilities has led to many schools setting up special education units (annexes). Therefore, the courage and decision by Mr Moyo to be a regular participant in the class of students with special education needs and to learn with them, led to the demolition of the barrier, creating access for these students to have the joy to attend classes regularly and to communicate

their needs to the school leader, highlighting the contextual possibilities of inclusion that could be unlocked for improved interaction and that are uplifting for the students and the school leader. Consequently, the teacher who taught these students also felt supported, diminishing the loneliness that teachers teaching special education in such schools experience. Additionally, the initial exclusion of students with disabilities from the health programme facilitated by doctors for the other students, is another example of the boundaries that exist within school that continue to exclude these students.

In summary, *life-giving* experiences in *being with students* were associated with school leaders' engagement with students whenever the students' accomplishments brought home good tidings associated with academic excellence and good behaviour, and improved students' interaction with other students and staff through improved access to student voice and meaningful interaction with vulnerable students. These experiences shared by the participants shone light on contextual possibilities school leaders explored and that resulted in uplifting moments shared with students and the community at large.

Conclusion of Chapter four

The chapter was the analysis of data that was collected in the study. It was an in-depth analysis of data about the leadership practices the participants considered *life-giving*, while seeking to understand the sources of inspiration, strength and opportunities to lead with and advance the *life-giving* leadership practices. The data disclosed that the participants considered *life-giving* leadership practices were associated with *being with* the parents, the community, the teachers and the students. Within each of these themes, leading through *liminal space* entailed *life-giving* headteachership presented as *remapping of culture* in a post-colonial era, *boundary marking, re-marking* and *collapsing, navigating* and *embracing sensitivities* in school leadership

CHAPTER FIVE

Twende babili, te mwenso (Zambian Proverb).
(Let's walk the two of us. It is not cowardice.)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion arising from "[stepping] back and [forming] some larger meaning[s] about the phenomenon based on personal views [and/or] comparisons with past studies" (Creswell, 2002, p. 257; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The *life-giving* gems within the head teachers' leadership experiences lodged at their various sites, have revealed *liminal* spaces that allow for the production of new meanings (Chakraborty, 2016). This chapter offers insights into the kind of person one would need to be to lead schools in this way, and in the process, reflects on the assertion by Christie (2010) that "school leadership practices take locally specific forms…embedded in broader social relationships and cultural understandings" (p. 695-6).

Therefore, in this chapter I discuss the overarching theme of *being with* and the relational processes as narrated by the participants in the study and arrive at three themes that I have concluded contributed to the experience of rejuvenating school leadership, namely: 1) *navigating and remapping of culture in a post colonisation era; 2) boundary marking, re-marking and collapsing;* and 3) *embracing contextual sensitivities in school leadership*. I further consolidate the inspiration and opportunities contributing to *life-giving* school leadership experiences and its advancement, before closing the chapter with a summary.

Post colonialisation: Navigating and remapping culture

One uplifting characteristic of leading schools is the opportunity for headteachers to spur students, staff and parents towards the embracement of the hybridity of cultures and practices that lead to the desired transformations in schools. The environment of the post-colonial epoch can be well understood from the description provided by Bhabha (2012):

> There is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, *fort/ da*, hither and thither, back and forth" (p.2).

This description gives us a sense of a transitional space, best defined as an *in-between*, *betwixt* or *liminal space* (Bhabha, 2012; Chakraborty, 2016; Conroy & de Ruyter, 2009). It is these characteristics that give it the potential for cultural re-defining, a place for intersubjectivity and collective connectedness, and community values negotiation which the participants strategically navigate to lead the teachers and parents towards the acceptance of the revised curriculum, as in the story of Ms. Kaulu's school and the introduction of teaching in the local language:

> So, we started there with the teachers, explaining to the teachers the importance and then we said let's start…we saw children breaking through…And then seeing the teachers starting [to accept]. Slowly, seeing the parents, because we had to invite the parents to come on board, to come and see… cause parents wanted to remove their children. So, seeing parents getting involved, excited, the children were reading (HTSS p 3).

This finding is closely related to Van Gennep (1909), the anthropologist's work in *Les Rites de Passage* (*The Rites of Passage*) in Chakraborty (2016). These rites of passage are rituals that mark the transition or passage from one stage of life to another such as at birth, puberty or marriage. Van Gennep proposed that a single rite happened in three stages in the following order: separation, transition and incorporation. He described the middle part, the transition (liminal period), as the threshold or the in-between location of cultural action in which meaning is produced. It is a stage where things are not as they are in what is normally perceived as normal. In the rites of passage of puberty for instance, during the separation period, the initiates, i.e. those undergoing the rituals, are not considered as children any more and neither are they considered as adults till they have successfully undergone the rituals. Taking the school environment in post-colonial Zambia as a liminal space, characterised by a mixture of cultures, indeterminacy and potential for change, this is the space the headteachers, as the elders that lead in the rites of passage, navigate to spur the school community towards their shared goals and simultaneously remap the culture for the entire community. Additionally, the liminal spaces, when viewed as

threshold, evoke ideas of choice and decision making which may be hampered or successful (Conroy, 2004), with "potential for subversion and change"(Chakraborty, 2016, p. 145).

Consequently, the story about the participant who piloted the revised curriculum which was initially resisted by the teachers and the parents because they did not want their children to be taught in the local language, is a transformational journey that the school and the parents went through to accept the revision in the curriculum. The history of colonialism, and its subjugation effect on the original culture and knowledge of those colonised, led to a post-colonial period that was full of "indeterminacy and ambiguity" (Caron, 2006). According to Lawson and Silver (1973) in Mignolo (2007), the African languages during the colonial era became irrelevant in education, while the use of the colonisers' language became the accepted medium for teaching. Admittedly, there is bountiful evidence of the colonial matrix of power, that included the "control of subjectivity and knowledge" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 156). However, refreshingly, there are some scholars who "argue for an *other thought* to avoid the modern trap of putting everything in one temporal line, in one highway that is already being patrolled and guarded by gate-keepers making sure that *other thoughts* do not cross the borders" (p. 156). Hence, the headteacher's decision to work with teachers and the parents till they were able to accept the change in the curriculum signifies an example of the leadership of a collective decision-making process that was flattened and re-energizing for all, as the *other thought* (Bredeson et al., 2011; Gronn & Ribbins, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 2011).

Life-giving School Leadership as Boundary Marking, Re-marking and Collapsing.

It was observed also that *life-giving* school leadership happened whenever the participants acted in collaboration with other people to enable new possibilities, new accessibilities and new ways of doing things in the school by preserving or protecting through boundary marking and re-marking or removing barriers to authentic engagements with the community. This finding resonates with Heidegger's contention in Parfitt (2017) of the *authenticity of being* entailing the relatedness that is contained in "care for others and concern for one's projects"(p.532). The data exhibited school leadership situated in the

wider school context with its complexities, i. e. *liminal spaces*, that gravitated towards participation by all as the re-energising change (Chakraborty, 2016; Galbin, 2014).

Boundary Marking and Re-marking

Another notable characteristic that was associated with *life-giving* leadership experience was the act of boundary marking and re-marking. There are instances that physical and symbolic boundaries are constructed to secure what is valuable. Similarly, in this study, whenever the participants with the parents, community, staff or students constructed or re-marked boundaries, the intention was to protect or preserve what they valued (i. e. the education of the children). They described this boundary marking as motivating and re-energising. This is what Mr. Jani related to when the school worked with parents to build a wall fence around the school:

> …the first meeting that we had with the parents, the Annual General Meeting …we said these children are not learning… what shall we do? … So, we picked on the issue of putting up a wall fence around the school. So, we agreed that the parents were to contribute … that idea was strongly welcomed by the parents. … we were able to put up a wall fence round the school. It was so motivating for me because people stopped trespassing through the school premises which was a disturbance to the learners… They now had time to sit round the trees to do their studies (HTCHP p. 3).

Schools are among a few institutions that almost every person in a community has meaningful interaction with (Collins & Coleman, 2008). While most children will spend a portion of their days' time at the school, parents and other community members will have diverse planned activities around the school including cultural ceremonies, religious gatherings, political rallies and community meetings among others that will be situated at the school. With this significant position the school holds in the community, acting collectively to "isolate and segregate children from the wider social and spatial contexts, in order that they might be simultaneously protected from, and prepared for, adult life" (Collins & Coleman, 2008, p. 283) was a joint effort towards enabling a new learning environment. By collectively allowing the seclusion of the students, the "poiesis" (Parfitt, 2017, p. 537) of a *liminal space* was purposefully enabled for new ways of engaging students, new dimensions of relating with the community to achieve their dreams and, ultimately, for fresh ways for the headteachers to lead in schools in ways that led the

whole community towards their desired "new horizons" (Bhabha, 2012, p. x). Consequently, this was a collective choice to subvert the unproductive intrusion by the community whilst fortifying the co-created sacred space that was refreshing.

A further focus on the possibilities the school offers, as space within a collectively constructed boundary, is the emergence of a group of *new* individuals with a *new* culture and *new* social identity. The students and staff that occupy the school space bring into it their different ethnicities, religions, social and political backgrounds, and through the social interactions, the individuals that emerge have a *new* culture, a *hybrid* of the original cultures (Houlette et al., 2004). Hence, with the role to *poeisis* socially appropriate values and knowledge within this co-created *sacred* space, the school is a means of transmission of the valued culture of the community, though Collins and Coleman (2008) warn of the possible tension between the traditional values and the values embedded in the school curriculum that may not holistically reflect the community values. As an attempt to address this anticipated conflict, this study highlights distributed school leadership with the community as a way to navigate this possible tension.

There is also *life-giving* leadership in embracing the implied influence that students have on shaping education within the school space. One participant's story about his interaction with students with special education needs highlighted the potential to attain inclusive schooling through contextualised participatory leadership practices:

> I'm not trained in special needs… So, I decided maybe let me go and just start learning with them [students]…one time there were some doctors that came into school, those that were doing [some] practicals… addressing the other able-bodied children, those that are okay, but they didn't have a program for the deaf children…[the students with hearing impairment] came to the office to come and complain "but what about us? Why have we been left out?" ... We made an arrangement for those people to come the following day and also attend to them. So, one lesson that I learnt was that when these children are brought close, they tend to open up and they're able to learn [added] (HTCHP p.5).

By embracing the students with hearing impairments, the headteacher with the students repositioned the boundary between them, forging renewed and refreshing ways of engagement. Consistent with this assertion is the recognition made by Collins and Coleman (2008) on the agency young people have in environments mostly controlled by

adults. Since adult understandings and practices "relating to physical, intellectual and emotional competencies are reproduced within schools" (p. 285), expediently, in highly interactive, informal school environments where the headteachers regularly sit with students, research records an awareness of a strong sense of self-esteem among students (Bredeson et al., 2011). Therefore, what is shown in the context of this study is that refreshing headteachership sometimes means identifying which boundaries within the school need to be re-marked or repositioned in order to increase opportunities for new possibilities and acting accordingly.

Collapsing and blurring of boundaries

Demolition and blurring of boundaries that prevent genuine partnership between the school and the community are necessary to allow for new dimensions and possibilities to achieve the shared educational goals. The participants' stories of inviting parents to participate in making decisions to improve the learning environment in schools through their voluntary and non-compulsory contributions of labour or finances, brought a new dimension to school leadership. These demolitions of boundaries opened the way for parents to have a voice in defining the kind of education they deemed suitable for their children, reflecting a leadership practice that is emancipatory and empowering for the community (Parfitt, 2017). Though schools are situated as bureaucratic organisations characterised by high power distances (Brown, 2014), the participants' narratives indicated a gravitation towards a choice of participatory leadership in their schools that enabled other rejuvenating possibilities. This finding is further echoed by the Heideggerian notion of the way of "being-in-the-world" (Parfitt, 2017, p. 529).

Further, the argument put by Bauch (2001) that parent–school–community partnerships are based on relationships that exhibit mutual care and trust while providing a platform for the community to have their say in the decisions, is reflected in this finding. The parents' access in school was extended to the classroom where dialogue with the teachers over the academic performance of their children was enabled. This level of engagement with the parents offered a new way of collaborating, while highlighting the possibility about the appropriacy and scale to which community can have input to the making of the curriculum and classroom content (Collins, 2006).

Additionally, when the school leadership acted to collapse the boundaries between the community and the school, it influenced a change in the socio-economics of the community that reinvigorated the work of leading schools. In this study, the parents worked hard to earn an income and willingly contributed their money towards the school renovation works because people were confident "the way out of the village economy was through western education" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 55). Taylor and Yu (2009), in agreement with this assertion, suggested that parents have undoubted hope in the opportunity education presents for their children to escape the disadvantage of their background and poverty; consequently, Sr Bwalya's assertion was that the parent-school partnership in her school reflected this dimension of school leadership:

> Some [parents] like from the shanty compound, you'll find that one parent maybe has 5-6 children. So, those we said we bear with those who cannot afford. "Tell us right now that I can manage this". So, even there it was not like maybe compulsory or what… Others were saying "no, can we buy something for the teachers? can we do this? And I said, "something that we can benefit as a school… [Therefore], others brought cups (HTSTP p.6).

Sr Bwalya's "attention to the persistent inequality and immiseration produced by… unequal and uneven development" (Bhabha, 2012, p. xiv) of post-colonial Zambia evoked images of other ways of reclaiming equality and well-being that were refreshing to the headteacher. To offer a more comprehensive description of this finding, Bhabha (2012) offered the following explanation:

> We revise our sense of symbolic citizenship, our myths of belonging, by identifying ourselves with the 'starting-points' of other national and international histories and geographies. It is by placing [one]self at the intersections (and in the interstices) of these narratives that [one] emphasises the importance of historical and cultural re-visioning: the process of being subjected to, or the subject of, a particular history 'of one's own' – a local history – leaves the poet 'unsatisfied' and anxious about who she is, or what her community can be, in the larger flow of a transnational history (p. xx).

When culture is understood from its origins, a way is paved for "turn[ing] the abjection of modern history into the productive and creative history of the minority [the poor] … to introduce the act of poesis into [their] imagined life" (Bhabha, 2012, p. xx) of well-being. This study shows how collaboration between the school and the parents remapped the

boundaries to include everyone in the poiesis of the desired change for the students and community.

Research reinforces that headteachers lead successfully by strategic influence on "teaching and learning through both face-to-face relationships and by structuring the way that teachers do their work" (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2007, pp. 9-10). Additionally, the human resource frame of education leadership of Bolman and Deal (1991) promotes a focus on meeting human needs for organisations to function better. It further opens access to leadership that is relational, and facilitates opportunities for people in the organisation to grow professionally, reinforcing Ms. Kaulu's argument:

> Through the teacher group meetings, we go through all those experiences, seeing them [teachers] starting to appreciate the primary education… is actually the foundation, without it, I think even the nation can be doomed… assuring the teachers that actually, you are counted, you are the developers of the nation (HTSS p 3).

Another important characteristic of *life-giving* leadership is the significance of prompt changes that foster new opportunities and relationships while simultaneously countering severed relationships within the school that hinder authentic engagement with the students and their parents. When Mr. Mwamba was transferred to head Kamba school, he in collaboration with the provincial and district education offices, dispersed most teachers to other schools and rebuilt a new team of staff from a handful that remained in order to uproot examination malpractices and promote teaching and learning. Some scholars favour knowledge as having historical and cultural influences, therefore being deeply embedded in community practices (Burr, 2006). Hence to restore life in this school, the headteacher considered working together with the supervising teams to effect the change that rekindled life in a school suffocated by examination malpractices and mass exodus of the students. Care should be taken when considering such actions to avoid repercussions such as loss of vital tacit knowledge and organisation memory (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995; Choo & Bontis, 2002).

Embracing contextual sensitivities in headteachership

In response to the research question on how the experiences they found *life-giving* informed the way they did leadership in schools, the participants' stories were focused on

their incredible sensitivities as they relationally led schools. Uhl-Bien (2006) defined relational leadership as social processes with people and organisations that are in continuing multiple construction of *made in* the process, which leads us to view relational leadership as social influence through which change is produced. This change includes shifts in attitudes, values and behaviours. This is what was evidenced when Mr. Chileshe described "humility as leadership style of embracing everyone", and in Ms. Kipilipili's pronouncement:

> I normally embrace teachers so that they can do their work nicely. I feel putting up threats to them will not help them as they go into their classes, they'll offload their anger to the learners. So, I just try to make them feel happy. Make the environment conducive for them to teach well (HTSP p.3).

This finding is also consistent with argument by Parfitt (2017) about the most relevant mode of *being-in-the-world* as the choice to develop concern for the things we care about and that includes caring for others. He further describes this way of being as *authentic*, as taking control of one's life, and, quoting Heidegger (1966), as a "'revealing of Being'" (p. 530). The participants' concern for the wellbeing of others determined the way to achieve change in school was by employing their sensitivities. This is opposed to a human existence labelled by Parfitt (2017) as not engaging fully with the implications of being but rather simply drifting through life inauthentically, and as a concealment of being that is characteristic of a bureaucratic organisation. He lamented what he termed *enframing* i. e embracing a perception of people *in-the-world* in terms of their potential as human capital or standing reserves, which was the initial role of western formal education during the colonial times in Zambia. There is a significant resemblance between Ms. Kipilipili's abandonment of *harsh treatment of teachers* and opting to *make everyone happy*, with the Heideggerian meaning of being as "an issue of concern for [humankind]" (Parfitt, 2017, p. 531) which he described as an "emphasis on care, inclusive care for others [as] an aspect of authentic being". This was the essence of the participants'' leadership in schools to "bring forth or poiesis" (p. 532), the collective changes they wished for their schools.

The nature of *life-giving* school leadership in Lusaka province that the study illuminates causes us to reflect on what scholars suggest as principalship in the western contexts. While the school leadership in the two systems recognises the importance of the

professional growth of the teachers to foster relational processes as an authentic way of leading in schools, they depart in terms of the subjectivities that drive their agencies. The school principalship in the western education systems is situated in a predesign role that is "embodied in the standards to which aspiring and practising leaders are expected to conform and it places the judgement about the conformity of practice in the hands of auditing and inspectorial agents accredited by the standardiser, typically a state agency" (Gronn, 2003, p. 284). Leadership in such regimes is shaped and defined by such terms as *quality management systems, competency-based, capacity building,* and *capabilities* that stifle and conceal the way of being in leadership with no regard to the context of the school (Gronn, 2003; Meng, 2009). The essence of these principals' leadership in the schools is not about *attending to the concerns of others,* but about what Ball (2003) refers to as the culture of "performativity" (p. 15).

Summary of the chapter

This chapter was a presentation of the discussion of the findings. From the themes and subthemes that were developed from the data analysis, three broad themes that became prominent from the participants' stories were extracted. By delving deeper into the meanings of what *life-giving* leadership experiences were to the participants, the revelation indicated that they were embedded in *being together with* the parents, community, staff or students. It was further revealed that they manifested in *post-colonialism: navigating and remapping culture*, *boundary marking, re-marking or collapsing* and *embracing sensitivities in headteachership*. The participants understood that in navigating the present post-colonial space that schools in Lusaka province were situated in, characterised with fluid identities, indeterminacy, hybridity and ambiguity, collective action was key to achieving the changes that were desired in the schools. It was in the *with-ness* that boundary marking, re-marking and collapsing enabled preservation of what was valued, and access was created where barriers and bridges were built to connect people in relational processes that offered potential for refreshing ways of engagement in school leadership. This spurred the participants to work *with* teachers to grow their professionalism and *to involve* parents in the academic affairs of their children as ways to lead schools in an authentic and re-energising manner. By focusing on what mattered to self and others, the participants

embraced empathy for others to co-create working environments that were inclusive, reinvigorating and empowering for all.

CHAPTER SIX

The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind the past… but in the** fin de siècle **… in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce [the] complex (Bhabha, 2012).

RECAP, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study was an exploratory appreciative inquiry into what school headteachers in primary schools in Lusaka province considered *life-giving* in leading schools and how this informed the way they engaged in leadership. In this chapter I recap the inquiry's purpose and methodology and the findings. Then the recommendations for practice, implications for future research, personal reflections and the conclusion are presented.

Recap of the study

This study was inspired by the lack of qualifications required for people to become headteachers in Lusaka province and the need to provide them with a well-defined sustainable Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) platform that would facilitate a less daunting school leadership experience for novice and veteran headteachers. However, the findings in the data necessitated a shift in the focus of the inquiry towards gaining a deeper understanding of what it means to lead schools within the complexities of the postcolonial era of Lusaka province. Scholarship on what constitutes effective school leadership is abundant. However, literature on effective school leadership based in the context of my study could not be found. This made it imperative to carry out this study to arrive at *life-giving*, contextual and culturally situated leadership practices that could inform a sustainable leadership formation strategy for school leaders in Lusaka Province.

Leadership is contextual and cultural (Grace, 2005; Gronn & Ribbins, 1996) and is therefore a socially constructed phenomenon that is constituted by relational processes. For this reason, the qualitative research design provided the most appropriate method to conduct

the inquiry. The use of appreciative inquiry was a purposeful choice to start from the point of view of what was *life-giving* in leadership from the perspective of the headteachers in Lusaka province. The seven participants in the study were headteachers in primary schools in Lusaka province with five or more years of experience leading primary schools, making them *rich data sources* that provided bountiful lived experiences of what was *life-giving* in the school leadership. The data were collected using in-depth, semi-structured questions in the individual appreciative interviews.

The data were analysed using systematic analysis to "elicit meaningful interpretations" (Boaduo, 2011, p. 144) of the participants' narratives of *life-giving* school leadership experiences, and the advancement and sustainability of this nature of leadership. The data analysis was done by open coding through repeated reading of the transcripts, note making and highlighting portions of responses. Then coding and generation of sub-themes followed which led to formulation of meaningful concepts and, finally, grouping of codes and sub-themes into themes. The final stage of data analysis was the interpretation and validation of the sub-themes and themes which was facilitated by the participants and my supervisor.

Overview of the findings

The participants' stories of *life-giving* school leadership experiences culminated in distinct relational processes that happened in a *being-together-with* and that I grouped in three themes, i. e. *post-colonialism: navigating and remapping culture; boundary marking, re-marking or collapsing*; and *embracing sensitivities in headteachership.*

The theme on *post-colonialism: navigating and remapping culture* revealed participatory, refreshing and authentic ways of leading others through a cultural shift that had a restorative and transforming impact on the participants. The participants' narratives indicated that awareness of the context of the community that was characterised by uncertainty, fluidity of identity and hybridity of a post-colonial era, then gravitated towards *life-giving* leadership that was strategic, empathetic, collaborative, and to a gradual process of change towards the desired goals. It is in such contexts, also described as the *in-between or liminal spaces,* that the participants found the opportunity to spur others towards the embracement of the hybridity of cultures and practices that led to the

desired transformations in schools. This theme was also reflective of the participants' conscious awareness of the role of leading others towards what was important and *life-giving* in navigating the context of the community in which the school was situated. This portrayal of school leadership separates it from much of the copious contemporary literature on school leadership based in western contexts as described in works of Giles and Kung (2010).

Under the theme of *boundary marking, re-marking or collapsing*, there was the revelation of *life-giving* school leadership experiences whenever the participants engaged *with* others (parents, community, students or staff) to enable the development of a shared boundary to preserve what was important to the community or whenever they acted to re-mark or collapse boundaries to allow access that was regenerative.

The participants shared stories of their individual experiences when, acting with others, boundary marking had a preserving, protecting and restoring impact on the education of the students. This joint action was an opportunity for new ways of engaging students, fresh ways of engaging with the community and new dimensions of leading schools. By secluding the students, possibilities for forging a new social identity for individual students and ultimately for the community were set free. They also recognised the opportunity for the emergence of new valuing and knowing among members of the school.

This theme also reflected uplifting and re-energising school leadership by *collapsing boundaries* when access was enabled for others to contribute to leading through voluntary and non-compulsory contributions towards improving the school environment, for collective decision making and for entry into the classroom, to mention a few. The theme reflected the conscious permission the school leaders enabled for parents to have a voice in defining the education suitable for their children. Their awareness of the inequalities and immiserations in the community led to leadership that fostered equity in the contributions the parents made to the schools and a refreshed sense of belonging for all members of the community. Participants' stories of co-generated healing and restoration of severed relations with the community through joint removal of obstacles to authentic engagement were deemed *life-giving*. Additionally, the socio-economics of the community were equally transformed.

As for the theme on *embracing the sensitivities in headteachership,* it was demonstrated in the participants' stories that strategic, patient and compassionate concern for others was re-energizing. It was their understanding that change in culture and values was a gradual process that required collective effort. The participants had an understanding that partnership between the school and the parents and the community, based on mutual care and trust, was renewing and life-sustaining. Therefore, their responses indicated the value of embracing everyone and of ensuring they had a voice in the running of the school to achieve the shared goals of the school. This theme reflected that authentic leadership focuses on humanity, i. e. concern for what is important to others and self. The responses of the participants also alluded to humility and ensuring happiness for all as revealing, emancipating and regenerating leadership.

Recommendations for the Advancement of *life-giving* school leadership

A concern I brought to this study was the desire to develop understandings of *life-giving* school leadership in Lusaka province in a complex post-colonial context. The effort by the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) to establish the headteachers' qualification is evident in the policies and the history of attempts, as documented in Chapter one, however, headteachership remains without a qualification and there is no established school leadership continuing professional learning platform. As noted in the findings and discussion of this study, *life-giving* school leadership was embedded in *being together with* the parents, community, staff and students. It was also revealed that *life-giving leadership* manifested itself in *post-colonialism: navigating and remapping culture*, *boundary marking, re-marking or collapsing* and *embracing sensitivities in headteachership*. A scrutiny of the policies and standards guidelines for education provision in Zambia revealed a gap related to the findings of this study. This anomaly is attributed to the bureaucratic nature of the education provision that is standards and accountability driven, with little or no focus on the well-being of its people.

To increase the opportunities for novice and veteran headteachers of schools to learn these *life-giving* practices of leading schools in Lusaka province in particular and Zambia in general, **I suggest that MoGE take proactive steps to establish the headteachers' qualification that will incorporate these school leadership practices that are contextual, collaborative, inclusive and *life-giving***. This requires that the curriculum of the

qualification be a product of an authentic consultative process in which the headteachers' voices are extensively explored to co-create a document that incorporates the interests of the broader community.

Establishing a qualification may be a long-term goal to achieve. Therefore, **I suggest that developing strategies to establish formalised structures within MoGE and implementing on-going contextual, inclusive and collaborative professional learning, exclusively for aspiring and serving headteachers** would be an effective way to start the formation of school leadership as portrayed in this study.

While the responsibility to provide policy guidance on education provision in the schools lies with the MoGE headquarters, the provinces and districts offices have the role of coordinating education provision in the schools and ensuring standards are maintained. For the officers from these offices to lead the headteachers in providing the education that considers the concerns of the students and their communities, there is need for them to have deep understandings of the nature of school leadership. **Therefore, I recommend that the Ministry strategises so that all the officers coordinating the provision of education and ensuring standards are maintained in schools attain deeper understandings of the school leadership this study suggests**. This is where the opening lies for increasing the opportunities to *poeitic* headteachership that are embedded in *being together* while *navigating and remapping culture in a post-colonial liminal space*, *boundary marking, re-marking or collapsing* and *embracing sensitivities in headteachership*.

Implications for future research

From the methodological perspective, it would be beneficial to explore in similar research all the four phases of the AI cycle, i. e. the *dream*, the *design,* and the *destiny* phases in addition to the *discovery* phase that was incorporated in this study. This would promote further understanding of *what might be* in headteachership situated within the complexities of a post-colonial space; indeed, what possibilities co-creation of the headteachers' continuing professional learning platform might present for the Lusaka province schools.

An expansion and replication of this study with more participants drawn from headteachers, teachers, parents and students would provide researchers with more nuanced understandings of the navigation involved in headteachership in this post-

colonial context. Additionally, an ethnographic study that allows the researcher to access richer, deeper, historical sources of data from a group of people who have shared values and beliefs, might be appropriate for the study when escalated to a comparison between pre-colonial and colonial school leadership practices in Lusaka province. Conversely, research focused on a comparison of school leadership practices with other post-colonial contexts particularly on the continent of Africa would be worthwhile in providing wider perspectives to the study.

Limitations of the study

The study was a significant snippet of how headteachers actually lead schools towards the achievement of shared goals in the post-colonial school environments. That stated, there are some limitations to the study to be noted. This was a narrative study to access rich deep understandings of the headteachers' experiences from seven sampled participants with five or more years of experience leading in primary schools in Lusaka province. Therefore, this study does not intend to generalize the findings to the Zambian teachers as a whole. Further, the sampled headteachers were not drawn from all the seven districts in Lusaka province but only from three. Additionally, the participants' ages and levels of professional qualification were not taken into consideration and, therefore, this was a limitation to the study.

Potential contributions to practice

One contribution that this study makes to the limited research on school leadership in post-colonial contexts is by appreciatively exploring experiences and practices primary school headteachers' deemed *life-giving* in their leadership. Copious research based on western contexts promote standard-based (Meng, 2009) and designer-leadership regardless of contexts in which schools are situated (Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015). However, research work, such as that by Schatzki (2002), tied social life and hence leadership to context, hence, this study illuminates questions that leaders across Zambia might ask themselves as part of their explorations of their practice. These relate to both the *life-giving* practices as well as through navigating the liminal spaces before them. The purposeful choice to use AI was an enlightenment as to what was important to the participants in their school leadership, therefore adding to the general

understandings about the nature of school leadership in post-colonial spaces and offering other perspectives of being in leadership.

To **policy makers** in the Ministry, this research could inform policy direction on the preparation of aspiring headteachers and the establishment of continuing professional learning platforms for the serving headteachers in the country while reinforcing a focus towards school leadership that is collective, inclusive, contextual and sustainable.

This research offers **practitioners** access to information about ways of navigating leadership in schools situated in the post-colonial era towards what is important to the students and their communities. It also highlights ways of leading that are authentically engaging and emancipating for all.

The **educational system** stands to benefit from the findings in this study, as understandings about what matters to the beneficiaries of the education will be deepened and other possibilities of leading schools towards the fulfillment of the shared goals will be illuminated.

Reflections

Being **an insider to the data site** holding a senior position in the Ministry meant being in a supervisor–subordinate relationship with the participants in a way that is characteristic of a bureaucratic organisation. As such, in my researcher role, this was a possible barrier to eliciting authentic information from the participants, but the reflective and *life-centric* lens of AI gave the participants freedom to share their stories in a relaxed interview environment. At the end of the interview, they shared positive post interview feelings. Some of the participants expressed joyful surprise at the amount of *life-giving* experiences they were able to *re-live* from their past which gave them a great sense of accomplishment. This left me thinking about how I, as a coordinator of professional learning, could support the headteachers to experience this more often. In line with the Re-integration Action Plan (RAP) implementation for the Australia Awards Scholarship that has sponsored this Master's degree, a video recording of the interviews of the headteachers' stories of *life-giving* experiences in their leadership is one way I aspire to initiate the creation of this platform on my return to Zambia.

From **a professional perspective**, this study was inspired by a lack of a Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) platform for headteachers, dedicated to their development as school leaders. With the opportunity arising from my role at Lusaka PEO, and the chance to pursue my current studies in education leadership and management, the conviction to carry out this research to inform the creation of a CPL platform for headteachers was irresistible. My expectations before carrying out this research were to develop a programme package that could prescribe a number of steps that every headteacher in Lusaka province would have to complete to become an effective school leader. My assumptions were based on the design of professional development that my Ministry was offering to teachers and on what most literature on school leadership offered. However, the findings illuminated headteachers achieved shared goals in *being together with* the parents, community, teachers and students, which is a unique practice in a bureaucratic organisation. They also navigated the complexities of the post-colonial environment of their school by navigating towards what was important to others as they simultaneously fulfilled the demands of the system they served in. In the process, in *being together with others*, they remapped the culture of the school, marked, re-marked, and collapsed boundaries to authentically engage others in their leadership with considerable sensitivities. Therefore, I am of the view that the kind of headteachership formation platform that would be relevant for schools in Lusaka province and indeed in Zambia, would be one focused on being together with others to meet the shared goals in schools.

From **a personal perspective**, filled with the uncertainties of a teaching-career-long-physical-scientific background, I embarked on this qualitative research journey. The entire research process was daunting: from the overwhelming data analysis to long hours of report writing in solitude. But, pleasantly, the experience of realising the plenteous benefits retrospectively have made all the pain and sacrifice worthwhile. The changes I have noticed in myself could not have happened sooner had I not dared to take the step of walking the qualitative research highway. Not only has my professional perspective on effective school leadership changed towards a more contextual, cultural and collaborative focus, there have been significant shifts in my personal beliefs and perspectives towards what being authentic implies, professionally, spiritually and socially.

Summary

The findings in this study have exposed *life-giving* school leadership in Lusaka province as embedded *in being together with* others and gravitating towards *navigating the post-colonial complex* school environments through *remapping culture, marking, re-marking and collapsing boundaries and embracing contextual sensitivities*. At the core of this leadership is the authentic way of being together with others in leadership while caring and having concern for humanity.

Having established that to effectively and strategically shift the headteachers' leadership in Zambian schools towards the leadership the study promotes, the policy makers and the practitioners in MoGE need to focus and attend to incorporating these aspects in the preparation of headteachers while reinforcing the establishment of their CPL platform.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: My Leadership Inspiration Stories

28th August, 2018…

At the confluence of parental and educational leadership roles

About four decades ago, among the Kaonde people of Northwestern Province of Zambia, the term 'orphans' existed only as a remembrance of the deceased parents. The strong extended family linkages ensured all children, orphaned or not, were brought up in a home with parental guidance until they were married off or, usually for boys, were old enough to fend for themselves. However, the last two to three decades have seen this safe haven gradually collapsing, with a number of orphaned children being not so fortunate to have supportive relatives to provide a home, let alone educational support. Many factors can be attributed to the erosion of the once-upon-a-time solid family structure, among them the infiltration of western culture of nuclear family ideals and the increasing difficulties associated with the rising cost of living for most Zambian families.

Having been born almost five decades ago gives me ample experience of the two cultures. Most of my childhood, I grew up with my single mother, who had eleventh year high school education and some book-keeping knowledge. This enabled her to get a clerical job in the public sector in one of the major cities in Zambia. This made her the most educated person in her family at the time and a major bread winner. Although our home was a two-bedroomed house, there were always three to four relatives, apart from our nuclear family of a mother and five children, living with us as they waited for my mother to find them a

job or to get them provisions to take back to the village. These relatives were usually orphans or from very poor households. Thus, even though the general Kaonde leadership culture was predominantly male dominated, my mother's role in ensuring many of her relations, mostly men, got employment in the city earned her a respected position in the family. Her education status was an added factor to the status quo.

I cannot describe my childhood as having been provided with all my basic needs, but my mother ensured my siblings and I received good education that she could possibly afford. Attending primary education at a public school located in the city gave us access to a better learning environment than the public schools based in the suburbs where we lived. My high school education was at a government supported mission school for girls in my district. It had a high reputation for good results in public examinations at both junior and senior secondary school leaving examinations. Armed with a good school certificate, I was offered a place at one of the nation's public universities but unfortunately, I was unable to take up the offer. Instead, I opted to do some clerical work in a computer department of the city council for two years to help boost my family income before taking up a secondary science teaching diploma and later a bachelor's degree in the same field under the sponsorship of the government.

In the year I took up a teaching job at a public secondary school in one of the major cities on the Copperbelt Province, my parental role had already started. I got married just after completing my diploma programme. My husband's father died three years earlier survived by a wife that had no formal education nor employment and 8 children. Being the eldest child with a stable source of income, it was my husband's cultural obligation to take up the responsibility of providing shelter and education support for his four younger siblings that were still in school. Therefore, these became our dependents from the first

day of our marriage till their education was done and they were able to fend for themselves. Over my twenty-five years of marriage, my husband and I have taken in more than twenty relatives, usually orphans, providing for their education till they are able to stand on their own.

My ability to do this can be traced to the leadership role modelled by my mother throughout my upbringing. I learnt very early that I should always be ready to help others in need, providing them with opportunities to lead a better life. My teaching profession strengthened my capacity to do so. Giving them an opportunity to get formal education proved to be more effective in getting them on a path to a better life. Looking back, I see myself at the confluence of a culture that extends parenting beyond one's immediate family and the education leadership role of actively providing education opportunities for all members of the community, privileged or vulnerable.

20th August, 2018…

Appreciative Evening Family Fire Talks

I was hastily finishing off my day's chores in the kitchen. The smell of roasting corn from outside was exciting my taste buds. The noise coming from the gathering members of my family around the evening fire was increasing rapidly. I needed to rush if I was to secure a comfortable 'stool' and position around the fire. 'Stools' took all forms of objects found in the surroundings of the family house. They included low stools made from animal skin fitted on a wooden frame, large empty plastic water containers, metal basins for laundry, mortars used to pound grains and vegetables, large stones and bricks. Anything that could be improvised as a stool was used.

When I finally left the kitchen to join the meeting, almost everyone was settled, the pot of roasted corn was doing its rounds among the family members. As I sat down, my grandfather, popularly called 'Nkambo' - a term for grandfather in my tribe Kaonde - cleared his throat noisily, a signal to starting the evening talks. The buzzing voices all came to a stop and all eyes were directed towards Nkambo's seating position. His usual way of starting the talks was by asking whether everyone was present. 'Everyone' included my grandfather and my step grandmother, my great grandmother (grand fathers' mother), grandfather's young brother, my mother and her sister, my three young uncles and two aunties born to my step grandmother, my two siblings and three cousins including me. At the time, we found ourselves members of this extended family because my mother was unable to find suitable affordable accommodation for us. She had applied for a house from the local authorities with long waiting lists that took 1 to 2 years for one's turn to be considered.

Upon affirmation that all were present, Nkambo asked us to sing some hymns from the Kaonde Christian hymn book, followed by reading a bible passage which family members took turns to read. Nkambo took keen interest in listening to the reading by each family member, correcting mispronunciations and later taking time to explain the meaning of unknown terms with the patience of a parent. After the devotion- always handled by Nkambo unless he was away or too ill to handle the devotion- he invited everyone to share their day's personal experiences.

Family members took turns to share something that worked well for them. It was time to celebrate personal victories for family members such as: good performance in a test or class exercise, recognition or promotion at work for older members and many other good pieces of news that all family members needed to know. This was usually followed by

ululation by the female members of the family. It was also time to share sad news, a challenging issue, or a grievance against any member. Nkambo would normally ask family members to suggest how the shared challenges could be overcome before he gave his suggestion which was usually the final word on the topic. The elders had the final say in the Kaonde tradition. It was considered disrespectful for anyone else to say more after the head of the family had spoken unless permitted to do so by the head of the family. Personal grievances were treated in similar manner, members gave their suggestions and Nkambo concluded the discussion. However, if the issue was grave, Nkambo would call up a meeting for the older members only to resolve the issue.

The final part of the evening was the most exciting for me. It was time for riddles and folktales. As children we competed at giving correct meanings to the riddles posed by the older family members. Then two to three folk tales would be told before we could disperse to bed. The stories ranged from bravery stories to sorrow filled stories, with others portraying community life on love, kindness, marriage, discipline, leadership among others. These oral stories always carried a moral lesson.

This period of my upbringing comprises an important part of my leadership formation. The consistence of family dialogue kept the large family together and deepened our interpersonal relations. Nkambo's leadership was collaborative and appreciative in many respects: shared experiences, celebration of individual and collaborative efforts and victories, and shared organic strategies of conflict resolution and problem solving. Culturally, my grandfather's leadership position and its hierarchical characteristics could be seen in maintaining leading of all the family meetings and having the final say over all family matters. The stories and riddles passed on a lot about the culture of my tribe to us the younger generation.

4th August, 2018….

Appreciative undertones: The Lubinga school story

After driving through the long elephant grass of the subtropical landscapes of Lumwana district of North-western province of Zambia, along a narrow winding gravel road, the corrugated iron roofs of the school buildings soon became visible. The blue and white paint on the school walls appeared to have survived a good count of rain seasons but the surrounding green scenery daubed by some tropical fruit trees give it a promising of life. As our Landcruiser parked under the shades of the mango trees with fruit laden branches, a smartly dressed gentleman walked towards us with a broad smile. He introduced himself as the headteacher of Lubinga primary school and led us to his office.

As we walked towards his office, I couldn't resist asking him how the school had managed to have so many ripe mangoes and yet they had pupils around. It is common in Zambia for communities to waste unripe fruits growing in public places. In schools the pupils would be the major culprits. The headteacher confessed that they experienced a similar situation until the school staff agreed to share the story behind the fruit trees around the school with every pupil that joins the school and why each one of them was a caretaker of the fruit until it was ready to be picked. Through this story sharing they had worked out a way of sharing the fruit among all the school members when it was ready. Listening to that simple yet profound story of transformation, I imagined how much we could achieve if we could adapt this way of doing things to a number of issues in our schools.

When we were all seated, our team leader introduced our four-member-team comprising officials from the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) and a USAID partner

organisation called Read To Succeed (RTS). I was the only member from MoGE while the rest were RTS officials. RTS had worked with MoGE for four years piloting the Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) in local language, a component of the Revised Zambian School Curriculum. MoGE had introduced the local language as the medium of instruction from preschool to grade four and the teaching of English to be introduced as a subject from grade two as a strategy to improve literacy levels among primary learners. This visit to Lubinga school was part of the final evaluation of the PLP project. For me, however, it was more than a project evaluation. It was also an opportunity to explore and understand the leadership practices at Lubinga that were the talk of the province.

The walls of the headteacher's office captivated my eyes. The walls were "talking". A glance at my data collection instrument for the headteacher interview confirmed I had most of the responses right there on the walls. I felt like I didn't even need to interview the headteacher. This level of organisation and display of information was so impressive. When I finally turned my focus back to the rest of the group, the headteacher was explaining how the school had prepared for this visit. All the interviewees had arrived in the school before we got there. We were overjoyed by this unique culture at this rural school, not witnessed in the previous three schools we had visited earlier in the week. It meant we could start our tasks immediately. We had psychologically prepared to wait for more than an hour to start as had been the trend in the previous three schools. The excuse had been some interviewees had not yet arrived or the school team was still getting ready for the evaluation. However, Lubinga school gave us a pleasant surprise by being ready for the interview well ahead of time. Asked how they managed that, the school team (the headteacher and staff) had been discussing how they could always be better ready for visitors to their school regularly.

I chose to observe a literary lesson in a grade one class as my first task. As I walked into the classroom, the happy, shiny eyed boys and girls greeted me in English. A few giggled shyly as I returned the greeting. I chose to sit at the back of the classroom where I could easily observe all the activities in the class almost inconspicuously. As the teacher was attending to his pupils that needed a pencil or book, my eyes slowly swept over the classroom walls. What I saw in that classroom was a product of hours of commitment, creativity, and a passion for one's work. There were different pieces of handwritten work and drawings for all the learning areas done by the teacher and a few were pupils' work. What a marvel they were.

The one-hour literacy lesson itself was expertly conducted filled with different learner activities and it was evident the pupils were all actively engaged. The small heads, some covered with short African curled hair while others had differently styled plaits, noisily worked on their group tasks. The enthusiasm to answer questions posed by their teacher was awesome. A look at the reading levels chart at the backwall of the classroom, portrayed most pupils as fluent readers, consistent with the sampled reading I observed as the lesson progressed. As I took in this whole experience, questions were forming at the back of my mind:

How has this rural school with limited resources managed to have such a rich learning environment? What has made this young teacher to be so committed to his work when other novice teachers fail to stay on even for six months? What was his strategy to having most of his pupils reading and writing at their grade level even though he had very few reading books for his pupils? I resolved to get the answers before leaving Lubinga.

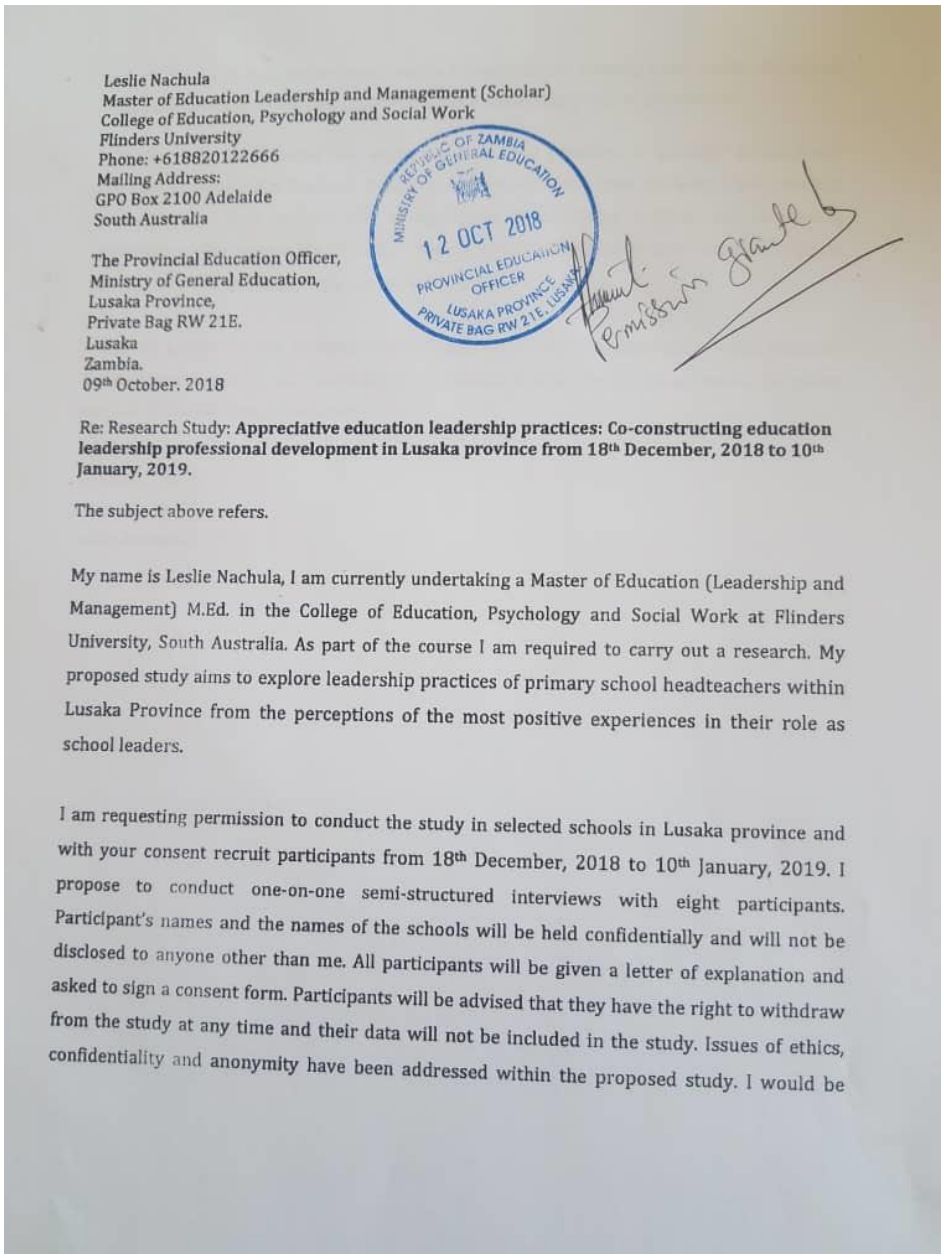
The interview with the headteacher at Lubinga was the shortest I had in this tour of duty. The few questions I asked him had to do with his lived experiences at Lubinga because answers to statistical questions were already provided on his office walls. His stories about the successes were attributed to team work between his office and the teachers, parents and the school and school staff and the pupils. He likened the prevailing working relations to family. As a family, they cared for each other in times of joy and sorrow. They strived to keep the dialogue flame glowing as key to effective communication, problem solving, conflict resolution and a channel for the birth of new ideas. Additionally, trusting teachers with different responsibilities created opportunities for all to practice leadership.

The strong community engagement is another success the headteacher said was born out of dialogue with parents coupled with the evident commitment of the teachers and pupils.

The wrap up of our mission at Lubinga was a focus group meeting with all the interviewees and the interviewers. This was an opportunity to consolidate our findings and to experience a school team dialogue. Indeed, it was my opportunity to get answers to the lingering questions about my experience with the grade one teacher. The grade one teacher and his colleague teaching grade two took centre stage in the discussions. They shared stories of the support they received from their school leaders in providing what they needed for lesson preparation. They spoke of the joint budgeting of the 'small' irregular school grant that was mostly spent on teaching and learning materials to support learning. They also shared how professional support is assured through weekly school-based professional meetings where the headteacher is always present and an active participant. They concluded their stories by openly appreciating their school leaders' support in their personal matters too.

As, we drove back to Solwezi, the provincial capital, in late afternoon, after being treated to the traditional meal of Nshima (a hardened porridge made from maize flour) with chicken (a symbol of respect/honour) and local vegetables, we were a satisfied and content lot, both workwise and stomach wise. However, my thoughts remained focused on that Lubinga grade one teacher and his headteacher. I was pondering on how Lusaka province could have more of their kind.

APPENDIX II: Provincial Education Officer Approval



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GPO Box 2100 Adelaide
South Australia

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION
12 OCT 2018
PROVINCIAL EDUCATION OFFICER
LUSAKA PROVINCE
PRIVATE BAG RW 21E, LUSAKA

The Provincial Education Officer,
Ministry of General Education,
Lusaka Province,
Private Bag RW 21E.
Lusaka
Zambia.
09th October. 2018

Re: Research Study: **Appreciative education leadership practices: Co-constructing education leadership professional development in Lusaka province from 18th December, 2018 to 10th January, 2019.**

The subject above refers.

My name is Leslie Nachula, I am currently undertaking a Master of Education (Leadership and Management) M.Ed. in the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work at Flinders University, South Australia. As part of the course I am required to carry out a research. My proposed study aims to explore leadership practices of primary school headteachers within Lusaka Province from the perceptions of the most positive experiences in their role as school leaders.

I am requesting permission to conduct the study in selected schools in Lusaka province and with your consent recruit participants from 18th December, 2018 to 10th January, 2019. I propose to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Participant's names and the names of the schools will be held confidentially and will not be disclosed to anyone other than me. All participants will be given a letter of explanation and asked to sign a consent form. Participants will be advised that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and their data will not be included in the study. Issues of ethics, confidentiality and anonymity have been addressed within the proposed study. I would be

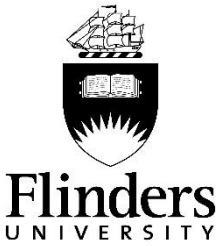
grateful if I could conduct the interviews in a conference or meeting room within the school where the participants will feel comfortable and confidentiality can be maintained.

It is this researcher's belief that exploring leadership practices of primary school head teachers within Lusaka Province from the perceptions of the most positive experiences in their role as school leaders will be significant in providing insights and increasing opportunities for leadership formation that is contextual, positive and sustainable while contributing to the literature on appreciative inquiry.

I will be guided by my research supervisor(s) from Flinders University South Australia throughout the study. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me on the phone number or the address given above.

Yours sincerely,
Leslie Nachula.

APPENDIX III: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

(Interview)

Appreciative education leadership practices: Co-constructing education leadership professional development in Lusaka province

I ….....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the …… for the research project with the title listed above.

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:

    - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
    - Participation is entirely voluntary and I am free to withdraw from the project at any time; and can decline to answer particular questions.
    - While the information gained in this study will be confidential and published as explained, on the basis that the interview will be undertaken in my place of employment, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
    - Whether or I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my current employment
    - I may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

6. I understand that only the researchers on this project will have access to my research data and raw results; unless I explicitly provide consent for it to be shared with other parties

Participant's name…….....

Participant's signature……Date……...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name…….....

Researcher's signature……....Date…….

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Item 8 as appropriate.

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my interview participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature……Date……...

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number **8209**). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project please contact the Executive Officer on (08) 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au*

APPENDIX IV: Information Sheet for Interviewees

INFORMATION SHEET

(for *interview*')

Title: ***Appreciative education leadership practices: Co-constructing education leadership professional development in Lusaka province***

Researcher(s)

Ms Leslie Nachula
College of Education, Psychology & Social Work
Flinders University
Tel: +61 8 8201 2266

Supervisor(s)

Dr Michael Bell
College of Education, Psychology & Social Work
Flinders University
Tel: +61 8 8201 2266

Description of the study

This study is part of the project title 'Appreciative education leadership practices: Co-constructing education leadership professional development in Lusaka province.' This project will investigate positive experiences and what enables and supports the formation of headteachers in the leadership role in schools. This project is supported by Flinders University, College of Education, Psychology & Social Work.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore appreciative leadership practices in selected primary schools in Lusaka province, uncover and 'harness' contextualised, cultural and sustainable leadership practices that are "giving life" to the schools that would inform leadership formation strategies in Lusaka province schools. It is also an attempt to highlight alternative ways of thinking about and implementing school leadership formation. The objective is to arrive at exemplary

leadership practices that are sustainable, contextual and “life giving” to inform leadership formation platforms and offer alternatives or additions to the current leadership formation offerings in Lusaka province.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview with a researcher who will ask you a few questions regarding your best experiences as headteacher while doing leadership within a school. Participation is entirely voluntary. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with reviewing the results. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and stored as a computer file and will only be destroyed if the transcript is checked by the participant.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

The sharing of your experiences will probably leave you happier and encouraged in your school leadership. It is possible the discussion will be an opportunity to think about other ideas and positive ways of doing leadership

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We do not need your name and you will be anonymous. Any identifying information will be removed, and your comments will not be linked directly to you. All information and results obtained in this study will be stored in a secure way, with access restricted to relevant researchers.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

The researcher anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. If you have any concerns regarding anticipated or actual risks or discomforts, please raise them with the researcher.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is voluntary. You may answer ‘no comment’ or refuse to answer any questions, and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form and send it back to me at the address stated on the envelope.

How will I receive feedback?

On project completion, outcomes of the project will be given to you by the investigator if you wish to have them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number: **8209**).*

For more information regarding ethical approval of the project only, the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on (08) 8201 3116, by fax on (08) 8201 2035, or by email to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

APPENDIX V: Interview Guide

This guide consists of questions that will guide the interview. The questions do not necessarily have to be asked systematically or completely. The responses of the participant will also guide the questions.

Introductory texts

I would like to thank you for accepting to share your experiences and perceptions of doing leadership in your school with me. I am excited about this research and am greatly honored to be interacting with you. We shall discuss your experiences as the headteacher of this school and explore the moments you deem as the best and the most positive doing leadership. We shall further, explore and examine how these experiences have informed the way you do leadership in your school. Furthermore, we shall explore what opportunities you draw on to advance these positive experiences. It is my hope that these discussions will uplift your spirit and encourage you in your role as headteacher. Your stories will inform the policy makers of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for school leaders at all levels of the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) and the researchers. I will ask you several questions that will help us explore and examine your experiences. Feel free to stop me at any time as we work together.

Stage Setting Questions

1. How long have you been in the position of headteacher?

2. What does it feel like being a headteacher of a public primary school?

Core Interview Questions: one-on-one Interviews

1. Identify the times when you had the most positive and best experiences as a headteacher in a public primary school.
    a. Describe the experience. What was it like?
    b. Who was involved?
    c. Why do think this situation possible?
2. How have these experiences influenced the way you do leadership in the school?
    a. Where does the inspiration to do leadership in this way come from?

b. What strengths do you draw on – within yourself, your teachers and other staff, parents and community?

3. What opportunities do you draw on to advance these positive experiences?

Concluding Questions

1. How was this interviewing experience?

2. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

APPENDIX VI: Ethics Approval

Dear Leslie,

The Deputy Chair of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. Your ethics approval notice can be found below.

APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**8209**
Project Title:	Appreciative education leadership practices: Co-constructing education leadership professional development in Lusaka province
Principal Researcher:	Ms Leslie Nachula
Email:	nach0006@flinders.edu.au

Approval Date:	13 December 2018	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**30 November 2020**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.