Original Research Article

The Role of Rural Educational Leadership in Influencing Societal Behaviour: A Case Study of Goromonzi District: The Community's Perceptive

E. Mafigu[1]* & A.C. Ncube[2]
[12] *Zimbabwe Open University, Harare, Zimbabwe*
Corresponding Author: E. Mafigu, E-mail: enomafigu@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study establishes the role of rural educational leadership in influencing societal behaviour, focusing Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe. It was positioned alongside the behavioural theories and the African unhu/ubuntu philosophy, informed by a qualitative case study. It made use of interviews, focus group discussions and observations in the generation of data from a purposive sample of three rural secondary schools. The rural context has its own set of unique community identifiers, making rural schools remarkably different from those found in the urban centres. The rural community is experiencing an influx of urban migration and as a result, the disturbance of an ideal rural setting is posing a challenge to the educational leadership in impacting the societal behaviour in the way it ought to be. The behavioural patterns displayed by Goromonzi community compel one to take a closer look at the current rural educational leadership in an effort to assess possible catalysts of such behavioural trends. Moreover, the educational leadership in the rural community is often characterised by lack of understanding of the rural communities' traditional beliefs and practices, giving rise to contradictions with what the educational leadership intends to promote and encourage at times. On the other hand, there is also the general notion that most rural communities are uneducated and this could be a hindrance in their attitude towards educational leadership and educational activities. Consequently, a cultural shift and contextual adaptation of distinctive attitudes and behaviours that enhance positive behaviour transformation becomes imperative. Above it all, studying rural behavioural trends as a response to educational leadership was a paradoxical journey. The study thus, concludes that while literature points out that leadership has a direct influence of the behaviour of its community, this cannot go far unless the educational leadership deliberately aligns its own behaviour with the dictates of unhu/ubuntu philosophy which has a place in the African rural context.

Introduction

This study is a theoretically-led conceptual investigation of the critical role of rural educational leadership in influencing societal behaviour in Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe. It addresses the research gap in the existing relationship between the educational leadership on one hand and specifically the rural community on the other hand. The study synthesises a range of separate and related models in an effort to construct an analytical and conceptual framework for understanding emerging forms of behavioural trends and attitudes educational leadership is confronted with in the rural communities in which they operate.

The term educational leadership is consistently used throughout the study to designate all forms of personnel available at educational institutions. It encompasses every staff member; ranging from classroom practitioners, subject specialists, as well as deputies and school heads; whose leadership is felt and emulated by those they relate with directly or indirectly, at varying times and levels.

Rural educational leadership in Zimbabwe (and Africa, in general) extends back to the pre-independence colonial era, where its effects on society could be felt one way or the other (Shizha and Kariwo, 2012). Preston et al, (2013) argue that rural societies exhibit one of the clearest and most direct responses to educational leadership. However, over the years, educators and policymakers have paid scant attention to rural educational leadership; and in particular, its influence on societal behaviour. Only a few argue that only in the countryside could life take on a truly human meaning; a life in which the best qualities of humankind could flourish. As a result, the contribution on social behaviour of schools incorporated in such settings cannot be totally ignored as far as rural educational leadership is concerned.

However, schools in the rural areas can be very difficult places to lead. Despite the general notion that rural communities are harmonious places, they are in reality spaces often fragmented along class lines, with political factions promoting competing values and interest regarding the purpose of schooling. McHenry-Sorber (2014) in her article *"The Power of Competing Narratives: A New Interpretation of Rural School-Community Relations"* painfully illustrates the ways in which opposing groups consolidate political power around competing narratives in the community. Here it is clearly illustrated how dominating forces at play would attempt to outplay others in an effort to influence decision-making processes; and ultimately societal behaviours. This leads one to reflect on the historical impact that rural educational leadership has on rural communities. Corbett (2014) addresses how the concept of community has been central to the discourse of rural education for generations and at the same time, how community has been and continues to be a deeply problematic concept.

It is therefore, beyond reasonable doubt that rural educational leadership is valuable when looking for causes or triggers of particular patterns of societal behaviour. In Zimbabwe, the immediate reaction that the society gives in response to the prevailing educational leadership is quite remarkable. Of particular case here is Goromonzi District in Mashonaland East Province. The behavioural patterns displayed by this community compel one to take a closer look at the current rural educational leadership in an effort to assess possible catalysts of such behavioural trends. One cannot avoid noticing that the Goromonzi rural community seems to be at loggerheads with most educational leaders of the schools in their community.

Consequently, rural educational leadership becomes a crucial topic which is worth investigating. The value, intellectual contribution and new message of this study is providing a thought framework of the overarching role of educational leadership in influencing community behaviour in a rural context from a new perspective based on a case study.

Literature Review

In Zimbabwe, not much research has been carried out on rural educational leadership and its impact on societal behaviour. However, research reveals that leadership plays an important role in the effective running of educational institutions Salfi (2014),. Boateng (2012) contends that effective leadership is an asset to any organisation. Thus, educational leadership is the most important element in the successful running of an institution (Dinham, 2005, Townsend, 2007). However, Hallinger and Heck (1998) argue that the leadership style of an *educational leader* is also an equally important factor in the effectiveness of educational institutions. This is supported by Eyal and Roth (2011) as they further point out that leadership style plays a significant role in teacher motivation and student achievement. However, it is critical for the educational leader to adopt an appropriate leadership style to ensure effectiveness of the educational institution. As alluded to before, Bass (1999) and Leithwood et. al. (2014) maintains that much study on *rural* educational leadership and its impact on the effectiveness of educational institutions and societal behaviour have been done mainly in developed countries.

According to Boateng (2012), the concept of leadership carries many different connotations such as power, authority, management, administration and supervision. Northouse (2001) defined leadership as a process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Thus, it can be seen that leadership is virtually the use of power and/ authority to influence the thoughts and actions of other people. Therefore, leaders are able to direct, guide, influence or control the thoughts, feelings and actions or behaviour of individuals to achieve organisational goals. In the context of educational leadership, a leader can influence groups such as teachers, students, community and even policy makers towards achievement of institutional goals.

As put forward by Leithwood and Jutzi (1999), leadership style is a set of leadership activities that influences subordinates or individuals to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, the leadership style of an educational leader plays an important role in influencing societal behaviour. Zvobgo (1997), Muchumu and Kaitila (2014) point out that one of the key factors influencing *educational institutions'* effectiveness is the nature and quality of the leadership style and administration provided by the *educational leader* (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996). Hence, leadership style is a critical factor in influencing behavioural trends in any community a leader finds himself / herself in.

The Unhu/Ubuntu concept, as commonly represented by communal relations, communal ideals and human excellence forms part of the knowledge and wisdom of how African communities and families should live and exist along each other in harmony. The philosophy represents the worldviews of indigenous black populations of Sub-Saharan Africa, transmitted from generation to generation through observation, experience, language and art. The widely acknowledged maxims: 'I am because we are, and a person is a person through other persons;' indicate that relations are a crucial ingredient for human excellence. This suggests that, as people we "develop personhood or humanness through other persons," which means that they must "prize communal and harmonious relationships with others" (Metz, 2015). In this optic, educational leadership plays a critical role to create the relational conditions that enable the community to realise the need to behave in a manner that portrays their personhood. Therefore, there is no doubt that Unhu/Ubuntu African philosophy informs ideal community behaviour shaping practices in African context. Unfortunately, modern day practices seem not to fully acknowledge and embrace the potential of Unhu/Ubuntu to inform perspectives, concepts and models. As put forward by Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011), practitioners across the board tend to be inclined towards Western models and theories. Such perspectives and approaches fail to match the aspirations and ideals of the African communities, within which educational leadership is practiced and community behaviours modelled.

In the recent literature of leadership (that is over the last 80 years or so), the researchers identified four main 'generations' of theories that guided the study. These are: Trait Theories, Behavioural Theories, Contingency Theories, and Transformational Theories.

Trait Theories
Stogdill (1948) and Mann (1959) set out the general qualities or *traits* they believed should be present in exceptional individuals. In their early trait research, they reported that many studies identified personality characteristics that appear to differentiate leaders from followers. It therefore follows that, within some educational leaders, there are some inherent characteristics that are present in them that make them influence societal behaviour in either a positive or negative manner. Behavioural Theories These focus at what leaders do: how they behave; especially towards followers. Blake and Mouton (1964; 1978) grouped together different patterns of behaviour and labelled them as styles. The four main styles that emerged were; concern for task, concern for people, directive leadership and participative leadership. A school head that is task-oriented is likely to have a different influence on society from the one that is people-oriented. The same applies with the one whose inclination is directive, against the participative leader. These four behaviours would impact societal behaviour differently.

Contingency (Situational) Theories
These look at the context in which leadership is exercised and the idea that what is needed changes from situation to situation; the central idea being that effective leadership depends on a mix of factors. One major proponent of such is Fiedler (1967) who argued that effectiveness depends on two interacting factors: leadership style and the degree to which the situation gives the leader control and influence. An effective educational leader would then assess the situation presented before him then decide on the appropriate course of action be taken. This would also call for a particular response from his followers and the general society. However, it does not necessarily follow that the same course of action would be appropriate in the future, given that circumstances are constantly changing.

Transformational Theories
Burns (1977) argued that it was possible to distinguish between transactional and transforming leaders. The former, 'approach their followers with an eye to trading one thing for another (1977: 4), while the latter are visionary leaders who seek to appeal to their followers 'better nature and move them toward higher and more universal needs and purposes' (Barnett, 2001). In other words, the leader is seen as a change agent. It is possible to have an educational leader who strives to lead the community towards a particular desired goal. This can be done after needs assessment, then deliberately adopt a particular set of behaviours that influence the desired responses from the community.

Unhu/Ubuntu Theories

The pre-modern Africa was characterised by an enduring moral fibre which sustained traditional societies, with the thrust of unhu/ubuntu being the main force behind this cultural moral presentation. This entailed an African communitarian way of life which can be easily summed up by the popular aphorism, "a person is a person through relationships with other people". Therefore, in African traditional societies an individual was defined according to the environing community. Such should still hold if the effects of today's educational leadership are to be traced through the rural community behaviour. Thus, immorality by an individual was a disgrace to the whole community. On the other hand, the success of a community member was a community's success. This was so because any behavioural pattern was supposed to be a reflection of the community's values. Although not much formalised, traditional education had the main aim of producing people who were acceptable in that particular community. Unhu/Ubuntu was not necessarily confined to individual communities as the values could be exhibited beyond the bounce of these communities.

While reviewing the available literature, it became obvious that a limited number of these studies focus on how school leaders directly impact on community behavioural trends in unique geographical contexts – namely, in rural schools. In the context of rural educational leadership, this demands for a differentiated attention since there seems to be insufficient research on this specialized focus.

Methodology

The dynamic nature of the study called for the adoption of a qualitative case study. This was extremely useful in understanding the portrayed behavioural trends in an in-depth way. Thus, the qualitative methodology was seen as most appropriate because apart from having a natural setting, societal behavioural trends use interactive and humanistic method and are fundamentally interpretive. Below is the examination of the specific methodology, philosophy, paradigm and method that underpinned this research study.

The study utilised the qualitative research methodology. The choice for this methodology was mainly guided by the fact that societal behavioural trends are generally qualitative rather than quantitative. Thus, few participants provided the empirical platform in descriptive words and thereby providing depth to the analysis, as well as giving multiple perspectives of the study (Stake, 1995). As a result, the researchers deemed it fit to make use of subjective modelling as a tool to express any responses to the behavioural trends of the Goromonzi rural society in response to the operations of their educational leadership.

Since there was no pre-determined hypothesis, no treatment, and no restrictions on the end product; there was also no manipulation of any variables or administration of treatment in this research study. Instead, the researchers observed, intuited, and sensed what was occurring in their natural rural settings. There was prolonged engagement (two months at each of the three sites, making a combined period of six months) with the participants and this allowed the researchers to distinguish what people do to what they say they (Hughes, 1997). This also provided the researchers the opportunity to observe activities not based on one-time events, but on how parties conduct their everyday life in the natural settings. Meaning was also read through the 'word' and thus, there was thick description of data. By using qualitative research, this research focused on context as it was important in understanding the social world around the interaction between the educational leadership and the rural community in Goromonzi district. Thus, the meanings that were derived from the study of behavioural patterns Goromonzi rural community were informed by the social context in which they occurred.

The nature of the study qualified the research into the phenomenology philosophy; also known as non-positivism, which is a variation of interpretivism. This was a valuable philosophy for exploring the experiences of the rural communities in Goromonzi district in response to the how the educational leadership presents themselves to them. This philosophy also accorded the researchers a better understanding of meanings attached by both parties in interpreting their various forms of behaviours. It also contributed immensely to the development of new insights and explanations to the status quo.

In an effort to recognise the importance of the researchers' perspective and the interpretative nature of social reality, the study was conducted from a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm. Thus, according to Cantrell (1993), the study sought the subjective views of individuals. This was the main thrust of the study. It aimed at viewing the narratives of the key informants against the context in which it was set and the subjective viewpoints thereof. Due to the fact that the leading theoretical framework was the behavioural African unhu/ubuntu, this made the interpretive framework most appropriate for the study. This enabled the study to explore and unearth the participants' perceptions and narratives in the context of their

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indigenous/cultural environments and through the lens of their cultural norms, customs, beliefs and values. However, the researchers had to be careful and sensitive to what the participants felt and narrated as this was crucial to them, to their 'working theories' and to their understanding and attributions of meanings. It is for this reason that the researchers went at great length to constantly be cautious of their own cultural biases, 'local knowledge' and conceptual structures. This was guided by Patton's (2002) assertion that continual self-reflection and reflexivity on the analytical process and the obligation to observe one's own processes helped in the illumination and reformulation of data.

The case study of one district in Mashonaland East Province was seen as enabling this study to probe deeply and analyse intensively the phenomena that led to the existence of disharmony between the rural educational leadership and its community. It also allowed the researchers to probe beneath the surface of the experiences of educational leaders and community (Best and Kahn, 1993). The purpose of such observation, according to Cohen and Manion (1994), is to probe deeply and analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the situation in other rural settings in Zimbabwe.

The researchers discovered this case study to be a great source of ideas in terms of studying the pattern of behaviours in the chosen area. The researcher was able to zero in on the role of rural educational leadership in influencing societal behaviour. This enabled the researchers to gain insight and knowledge on the factors contributing to the existence of an inharmonious relationship between the educational leaders in Goromonzi district and the community. This gives a platform for applying results of the research to the rest of the Zimbabwean rural settings. This has undoubtedly increased the knowledge base, not only to the researcher but other interested stakeholders. It came out to be a very good method for studying this rare phenomenon that exists in Goromonzi district. It also gave the researcher the opportunity to scrutinise some of the current theoretical assumptions pertaining to leadership. By so doing, a platform for innovation and improvement was also realized.

Data Generation Methods
The primary data generation methods used in this study were interviewing, observation and focus group discussion. These methods provided insights into what was taking place in the dynamics of rural educational leadership in influencing the societal behavioural trends observed in Goromonzi district through detailed descriptions, direct quotations, and excerpts or passages from written documents.

Interviewing
The research tool chosen for this work was in-depth interviews. The direct face-to-face were used in an attempt to obtain reliable and valid measures in the form of verbal responses from one or more participants (Mattison and Pistrang, 2000). Opinion/community leaders in the three research sites were specifically selected for face-to-face interviews. This enabled the construction of a rich description of the varied and multi-dimensional world of the interviewees (Shapira, Arar and Azaiza, 2010). This also gave the researchers the liberty to seek understanding from the participants in some areas that required further explanations, through the process of probing. Patton cited in Hoijer (2008) identifies three types of probes. These are detail-oriented probes, elaboration probes and clarification probes. The researchers used the key technique of probing when he conducted interviews for this study. Detailed probes were used to get more about the issues being discussed through follow up questions. Elaboration probes were used to encourage the participants to tell more about the issues that were being discussed and exposed. Clarification probes were used whenever the researcher was not sure of what the interviewee was trying to put across. As plainly put forward by Stake (2005), through this key technique of probing, the researcher attained a rich and broad understanding of the studied phenomenon.

Focus Group Discussions
The study also made use the focus group discussions in gathering the views of the participants. This technique was used as complementary to the observation and interviews. It assisted the researchers to obtain comprehensive and in-depth perspectives from the key informants. According to Fern (2001), focus group discussions enrich the researcher's preliminary insights into the research area and the problem thus, enabling more effective data generation.

Observation
Participant observation was also utilised as a means of collecting information from Goromonzi rural communities that were under study. This allowed the researchers to give a description in words, the behaviour of the participants under observation. Being individuals outside the system, the researchers were non-participant observers. Focus was on the language, interaction

patterns, communication, voice intonations and critical incidents among other things. Great effort was made to observe life as it was and reported accordingly. The process of observation was made on all participants across the board. Apart from observing participants during interviews and focus group discussions, they are also observed as the researcher studied their normal interaction patterns. At the time of observation, no judgments or inferences were made as these were taken care of at the data analysing stage.

Results and Discussion

This section presents findings of the study as informed by interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Data were collected and generated in at least three separate visits to the schools that lasted for about three months. Thus, the insights afforded by this process of data generation are limited: the observation data are based upon few incidents taken on particular visits, and should not be taken as indications of typical school business. Opinion/community leaders, as well as learners were the key informants in each of the three schools that participated in this study. The schools were also located in three different wards of Goromonzi Rural District Council. Amongst the opinion/community leaders that were interviewed were the following: the village headmen, church leaders, counsellors (current and former), former MPs, former school heads, SDC representatives, local business people and students. The majority of questions in the interview instrument were aimed at gaining an understanding of the key informants' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and experiences related to the role of rural educational leadership in influencing societal behaviour in the district under study.

The findings of this study are based on the three (3) leading research questions which guided the study. The questions unearthed the dominant and unheard voices in response to rural educational leadership in Goromonzi District. The findings of this study revealed are thus revealed in the following scenarios.

1. **Why is there disharmony between the rural community and the educational leadership of the schools in their community?**

Conflicting Values and Beliefs

The participants expressed concepts in their narrations that reflect conflicting values and beliefs. Such is also the result of individuals' backgrounds which shape people's values and belief systems. It was revealed in this study that with the ever-changing environment that we operate in, a number of issues keep emerging. Sadly, a number of things that keep changing are received and perceived differently by different groups of people. It is in the interpretation and implementation of what various groups of people believe in, that creates challenges. The following statements illustrate this:

Student 12 from school Z bemoaned that:

> *There is a group of teachers that still believes that students must be beaten and be punished. This is an old and out dated way of dealing with issues.*

This was supported by Student 5 from school Y:

> *How do you expect someone from this place to beat me when my own parents do not do that at home? I see it as lack of respect.*

Student 3 from school Y concurs that:

> *Even the government is against some of the practices that we experience in this school. They are just inhumane and against human rights.*

These types of diverging values and beliefs create a fertile ground for disharmony. The educational leadership, at its discretion, may employ various ways and means to deal with matters at its hand; particularly those that have to do with discipline. On the other hand, the students in this aspect are of the view that *other* methods should be resorted to. However, there hasn't been any clear specification on the *other* methods to be used. The students resist or resent being chastised as a means of administering punishment. The subject is still controversial and quite topical in the school system. This is due to the fact that people in the same community holds different views of what they perceive and belief as the correct position. Those that subscribe to it believe that this most effective way of instilling discipline, while those that are against it base their argument on the fact that it's a violation of human rights. Thus, the values and beliefs of these two parties about how certain matters must be handled are totally parallel. In some instances, things have gone so bad that some students engage members of the community to administer 'justice' to members of the educational leadership they feel would not have treated them fairly in the

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name of instilling discipline. As a result, they mobilise groups of people to beat up their teachers at other social activities. Related to this are the following extracts from the interviews:

Opinion Leader 3:

> *The concept of unhu is no longer upheld in our community. Gone are the days where we would put our heads together to come up with amicable solutions to deal with issues of bad behaviour. Everybody does what is right in his/her own eyes.*

Such is the scenario between the educational leadership and the community. Western values and norms have crept into the social dynamics so much that it becomes a challenge for the two parties to see eye-to-eye on same issues presented before them. Some excerpts indicate that the community fights with the educational leaders even on dressing issues. The argument is that some members of staff, especially female, bring along modern type of dressing which is totally unacceptable in the rural community. Amongst them are clothes said to be too revealing as well as putting on of trousers, which some members of the community frown at. On the hand, the teaching staff claims to be catching up on modern trends. Moreover, some are said to be required to dress in certain manner particularly those in charge of sporting activates. Here the parties seem to be coming from different belief systems. That is inevitably contributing to conflict. As put forward by Nziramasanga (1999), the advent of political societies (when central governments emerged) and general cultural pluralism brought with it adverse effects on African morality. The community group ethic which subjected all every member of the society to some form of discipline from any person who cared has since declined. There is therefore, that need cultivate methods that promote a society with citizens who respect their fellows, tolerate people of diverse cultures and individuals who work towards common objectives for the betterment of the society.

Trust

People's levels of trust are displayed by the kind of behaviour towards each other. Trust becomes the driving force behind a particular set of behaviour. People value trust more than anything, especially where issue of finances and other resources are concerned. Behaviours such as resentment, rejection and resistance were mentioned as an illustration of eroded trust. According to Anderson's (2006) assertions, trust which is said to affect human relation processes must be evident in all their dealings because this is a strong foundation upon which meaningful relations are made. It is one of the major determinants when it comes to behaviours that are invited from those we deal with on a daily basis. In support of this assertion, the following was extracted from the interviews:

Opinion Leader 4:

> *Both personal and institutional reputation can be built on trust and respect. The best personnel are attracted to a school with a reputation based on these. The community and all other stakeholders are drawn to such a school with a good reputation even for the same which is seen in its output. At the moment some schools are found wanting due to the fact that some of their products leave a lot to be desired.*

Trust forms part of the conditions for a harmonious relationship. However, the rural community has lost faith and trust in the school leadership along the way, yet this is a crucial part of one of the conditions fostering meaningful harmony between the two parties in as far as influencing societal behaviour is concerned. Therefore, as a matter of fact, relationship building must be based on trust in order to sustain the so much desired harmony. Navarro (2017) points out that trust is the key to social harmony. He argued that no one can succeed in relationships or in business without this vital key.

Doubting the entire system

As unearthed by this study, there are some sectors of the community which have their own doubts about the entire education system. All this emanate from the fact that trust, which is the foundation of harmony in community relationship has been compromised. This is also as a result of the trust base that would have been eroded in the first place. They do not believe in the abilities and capabilities of the educational leaders in their community. A considerable portion of the participants in this study expressed that some members of the community have a general resentment towards the current educational leaders for various reasons. In support of this assertion, the following was extracted from the interviews:

Opinion Leader 3 concurs with this:

> *The most problematic group of parents are the young ones. They look down upon the fellows of their age group who are now running the affairs of the school. They don't believe in their leadership, especially if they happen to be women.*

Opinion Leader 4:

> *The strange thing is that those people who once passed through these schools are now giving us problems. Every time a meeting is called, they are the first ones to oppose everything, creating commotion in the process.*

The underlying problem here is that there are some community members who totally doubt that the school leadership can deliver. Such attitudes have proved to have damaging effects. Allen, et al (2008) concur that such negative attitudes have a negative impact on social relations. However, their assertion does not address the effects of doubting in relation to creating disharmony between or amongst parties as revealed by this study. This study also unearthed that these members also experience adaptation crisis in an attempt to embrace the type of the leadership in these schools. In this regard, some appear to be battling with the reality on the ground due to the fact that what they are presented with as school leadership is not what they would have expected. It has been pointed out that:

Opinion Leader 3:

> *Some of us cannot swallow the fact that the current school leadership was deployed by a relevant government ministry. It seems they are affected by the realisation that these are their age mates or even younger. Thus, the issue might not necessarily be of doubting the leadership abilities but that of finding it hard to subscribe to the leadership you do not approve of.*

Therefore, some enrol their children at school with the attitude that they can simply outdo the school leadership because they are young or of the weaker sex. Unfortunately, they also plant the seed of discord among other community members. As a result, some school leaders respond by adopting a defensive stance, in an effort to stand their ground whenever they feel like their leadership is being deliberately undermined; a situation that will not improve matters in any way.

Suppressed Voices
An interesting finding from the participants is that some believe that there are suppressed voices that adversely affect the harmony between the school leadership and the community. The opinions appeared to be too loud to ignore. These are viewed to act as inhibitors harmony. They have been labelled silent assassins of harmony. Their direct effect is the loss of motivation to create, improve and sustain any form of harmony. In support of this, the participants had this to say:

Opinion Leader 4:

> *What can you do and achieve with a person who do not want to talk to you? You can never know what they are thinking about any subject. They always keep you in the dark and guessing.*

Opinion Leader 3:

I don't know if it's about people's nature or what. We have those people who keep their thoughts to themselves. One thing I know for sure is whenever people bottle up their thoughts and feeling, the situation is unhealthy.

Some revelations were that there are community members who opt not to register their complaints, views or concerns about how the schools are run, but instead adopt a wait-and-see stance. These neither contribute anything on every possible platform made available. It is either the fear of reprisal or victimisation of their children by the school leadership that such individuals adopt such an approach. Therefore, they voice their concerns through their actions – they let their behaviours speak for them, in a negative form though. Given this kind of a scenario, it is left for one to deduce and interpret the kind or nature of the relationship that exists between the school leadership and the rural community. Whichever direction the suppressed voices are coming from, their effect cannot be ignored, especially when their contribution is argued to be having a negative toll on the school leadership / community relations.

Failure to Deliver

Throughout the participants' narratives, there were indications that the participants placed a high value on performance based on what would have agreed upon or generally accepted as the norm. In particular, the participants echoed that in many instances the parties will be at loggerheads with each other due to failure by either party to deliver on their promises and on what they are expected. What was bemoaned as a contributing failure on the part of the community was the inability to pay school fees or agreed levies on time so that schools can also operate effectively. There seem to be neglect on the part of some parents when it comes to the fulfilment of their financial obligations. The following are excerpts to that effect:

Student 7 from school X:

> *Most of us come from backgrounds where our parents are struggling to send us to school. When we come here, more than half the times we are on our own. Most teachers don't even attend lessons. Our basic needs are neglected yet we are supposed to be at the centre of everything.*

Student 3 from school Z:

> *No one cares for anyone here. As students we are left to fend for ourselves. Our parents are not happy, the community is not happy – in fact, everyone is not happy about what is happening here.*

In addition, the participants also indicated that there is no commitment from the teachers. They claimed that it seems the school systems are the ones promoting this, since it appears that there is no proper follow up from the higher authority. This excerpt captures the mood:

Student 2 from school Y:

> *There is need for change in the attitude of the teachers towards their work. Commitment on their part will change everything. The fact that we come to school on a daily basis is an indication that are committed to learning. But you now see that these people don't even attend to us, and in some cases, they will not be anywhere near the school.*

The sentiments here are that there is need for attitude change on the part of the entire school system. Whenever issues of friction arise between the school and the community, there is something that the community would have picked that would not be in order. It is now during the processes of trying to correct whatever anomalies that would have arose that acrimony is created. This issue was captured in the following excerpts:

Student 6 from school Y:

> *No one just wakes up and decide to attack the school from nowhere.*

> *As students we simply report the ills we observe from the school to our parents, who in turn approach the school for clarification. Depending on the approaches used to resolve the matter; that's when problems are created.*

Opinion Leader 3:

> *Students' needs are not being prioritised at all, yet schools exist for us. This is what angers most parents.*

It is evident here that the need to deliver as per societal expectations is at the core of the schools' existence. When this aspect is deemed to be lacking, it is widely seen as a catalyst for the propagation of disharmony. The participants in this study are of the view that side-lining this critical stakeholders' expectation is in most instances the genesis of whatever problems that exist between the schools and the community, as declared by some key informants that 'No one just wakes up and decide to attack the school from nowhere'. Following this line of thinking, whenever the schools deliver in whatever form according to stakeholders' expectations, even beyond expectations, harmony is likely to prevail. On the other hand, when things fall short of expectations, this leads to dissatisfaction and ultimately, the community's response to this will be negative.

The participants also claimed that in some instances, anonymous letters were written to both the school authorities and the responsible authorities. They claimed nothing has been done in addressing their plight. A follow up to these claims revealed that at one school, the ministry have written to the school authority demanding some explanations to such allegations. This corroborated with some participants' narratives. During the period of the study, a team of representatives from the provincial offices was also dispatched to the same school for further investigations into some of the allegations raised by some concerned

participants and members of the community. This was a clear instance of the extent of disharmony that existed between the community and the school in question.

2. **To what extent does rural educational leadership affect the behaviour of the community in which they operate?**

Empowerment
The extent to which the school leadership affects the community goes beyond classroom achievement that is measured by examination results. It has more to do with empowerment that is evidenced outside the physical boundaries of the school. Some points to note here are as follows:

Opinion Leader 5:

> *Most of our children in this community were next to nothing in terms of standing for themselves as well as sustaining their own lives. Today you see a different kind of a person altogether – a well-polished somebody that is presentable in every aspect. To me that is empowerment*

The revelation here is that what constitutes effectiveness and influence is not only limited to the examination results, but has more to do with empowerment. Weeks (2012), postulates that in a culture of learning, the student *(and the community)* must be empowered to work and fit into a global village. Thus, the general consensus here is that schools are impacting on their rural society in the form of empowerment, which has overspill effects, not only to the immediate surroundings, but the region and beyond. Interestingly, rural schools in Goromonzi District boast of having produced four councillors in the past 20 years, consecutively.

Embracing the Community as an Extended Family
There was agreement in this study from the participants that the school and the community usually work as a family. The local school is not only seen as a learning environment but as a family unit as well. Sousa (2003) argues that schools do not only teach learners, but also raise them for the community. It was thus acknowledged that the work of the school leadership in the community is upheld as highly responsible and most appropriate. This kind of thinking was popularised in the statements below:

Opinion Leader 3:

> *The community is part of the extended family of the schools. Therefore, the school leadership does have a tremendous influence on the behaviour of the community.*

Opinion Leader 6:

> *Look here, the school and the seven villages surrounding it make one big family. What this school does is reflected in the community. There is the issue of cause and effect – no doubt about that.*

The emerging idea here is that the community is viewed as an extension of the school system. Consequently, this would have various influences on the community behavioural patterns. However, there was also another school of thought that believed that this role could be broadened further, especially when the schools open up their doors and also function as community centres that enhance integration. These statements bear testimony:

Opinion Leader 5:

> *Schools working in isolation cannot achieve the greatest possible influence in improving and transforming behaviour and attitudes of community members. Assuming community responsibility becomes critical since it takes a whole community to raise a child.*

Opinion Leader 4:

> *A school must trace back to the various sections of the community it serves. If it divorces itself from the community, then maximising its influence on the same community becomes limited, if not impossible.*

The idea being unveiled here is that schools are the focal points of the community. Thus, the role of educational leadership covers not only the academic life of students, but critical behavioural trends as imparted by the silent curriculum. Teachers are now being seen as both educators and parents to the learners they serve. Apart from teaching the prescribed curriculum, the schools also provide a platform to counsel and guide learners on issues that have to do with sex, drugs, personal problems, and

family problems. Sousa (2003) points out that the daily tasks, which were once left to the family are now the responsibility of the school by default. As a result, the educational impact goes deeper and further into individuals' general functioning in the wider community. Given that the study's focus is on the rural community where accountability for behavioural trends is highly regarded, educational leadership needs to take the centre stage in order to foster positive transformation. The schools must successfully balance responsibilities and priorities.

It can be deduced that the key informants in this study are of the strong contention that the community looks to the schools to provide support in their quest for explanations to some of their social concerns. Therefore, the schools must be willing and able to provide leadership that is acceptable by the community. Manyanga (2008) argues that institutions should strive to meet the demands of a wide range of interested parties whose satisfaction must be assured if the *service* is to be considered credible. Thus, the need for mutuality and reciprocity must not be underestimated. As reflected by the findings in his study, the schools in Goromonzi rural community are successfully providing the expected leadership to a considerable extent. They are deemed as resource centres for positive behavioural transformations.

Personal Conduct of School Leadership
There was a general consensus from the participants' narratives which indicated that the manner in which the school leaders conduct themselves both within and outside the school premises has a large bearing on the behaviour of the general community. School leadership is deemed to be a role model in rural communities and thus its influence on community behaviour cannot be underestimated. The participants here were of the opinion that there is need for the school leadership to be cautious of how they conduct themselves. Hence concerns about educational leadership behaviour and their relationship to community behaviour are not new. There has been much debate about whether leadership behaviours impact community behaviour or whether community behaviour is related to other external factors. However as unearthed by the findings of this study; the fact remains that it is not practical to examine community behavioural trends without considering the behaviours of the school leadership. The leaders' personal conduct becomes core when it comes to sending signals that can be easily emulated by the community. Their conduct can be viewed as the backbone that is essential in providing support, direction and stability in promoting positive community behaviour. In some cases, the participants in this study even blamed the highest authority in the school.

Student 8 from school Z:

> *At times we learn by observing and associating with the teachers. Their personal conduct is thus important.*

Student 6 from school Y:

> *The greatest effect comes from the school leaders especially when we associate with them on a regular basis. Some have even developed personal relationships with students and members of the community, while others are just emulated from a distance. That kind of association has a huge impact on community behaviour.*

Opinion Leader 6:

> *The fact that one is a teacher in this area he/she becomes a point of reference where people draw examples from. So one has to be really careful as they go about their daily business since at any given point, someone from the community is learning from them.*

The findings on the personal conduct of the school leadership here reflect the fact that there is significant effect of impartation by association. According to Kelley, Thornton and Daughtery (2005), educational leadership is possibly the most important factor of an effective learning environment and is defined as the ability of a principal to stimulate appropriate behavioural patterns from their environment. Education today requires a leader who is willing to foster positive behaviour transformation in some of the most complex environments. This can be achieved by purposefully adopting appropriate set of behaviours that are in line with the expectations of the community one finds himself/herself in. Thus, the continuous interchange that takes place between the teachers and students, and the teachers and the community has some ripple effects on what the community members would ultimately become. This is what some had to say:

Student 8 from school Y:

> *There is an issue of improper dressing among female teachers. This kind of dressing is not suitable for both the school and outside environment. The end result is that this has forced some of the male students to engage in masturbating in the school grounds. A number of them were caught at some occasions.*

Student 4 from school X:

> *Some members of the staff have a tendency of using vulgar and abusive language towards students. The same language they use at growth points and business centres is what they bring in the school environment.*

Opinion Leader 6:

> *We have an extreme case of some students caught in the school premises engaging in some sexual activities. This may not or may be linked to the conduct of some teachers. But I think if students are constantly monitored and engaged by the school leadership, this would not happen.*

As pointed out by Daniel (2007), in a learning context, contact is not only personal but also highly effective. Thus, the human contact associated with face-to-face instruction that is found in conventional teaching has lasting impact of behavioural trends of the students and the community at large. As a result, the community surrounding the school adopts a particular behaviour in response to that which is being depicted by the school leaders. Therefore, an educational leader can play a vital role in the development and maintaining of specific community behavioural patterns. Certain attitudes, views, perceptions and opinions are then displayed towards every member of the school leadership based on what those that emulate them would have deduced about them. Some gain respect and some lose it along the way. It has been revealed that:

Opinion Leader 6:

> *We also have cases of improper association of male staff members with female students. This is at times done in the full glare of the community. It doesn't give a good image, given the fact that the position of a school teacher calls for respect from community members.*

Opinion Leader 3:

> *Some teachers are perennial drunkards. They drink in the presence of school children and in some cases they even come for work drunk.*

With this kind of the status quo, one would notice that the majority of the community is not satisfied by the type of leadership provided by the school leaders. There is some level of expectation which is not forthcoming from the school leadership in general. Their integrity is compromised. Members of the students' community as well as the community at large are made to resent and dismiss the leadership of such individuals based on how they would have conducted themselves in the presence of community members. The leaders' personal conduct becomes core when it comes to sending signals that can be easily emulated by the community. Their conduct can be viewed as the backbone that is essential in providing support, direction and stability in promoting positive community behaviour. In some cases, the participants in this study even blamed the highest authority in the school.

Peri-Urban Diffusion

A considerable number of key informants in this study bemoaned the effects of urbanisation which is fast encroaching into the rural areas of Goromonzi District. They argued that such developments are negatively affecting the schools' efforts in trying to mould the students' and community behaviour. However, despite the negative experiences being experienced as a result of this influx of residents from urban centres; others were of the opinion that such a development is bringing in some positives in the rural settings. The sentiments are thus, that:

Opinion Leader 6:

> *The issue of peri-urban diffusion should not always be viewed as having a negative impact on the general behaviour of the rural folks. I see this as a development that brings in some kind of modernisation, enabling the rural society to catch up with new trends. In a way, the rural folks are forced to uplift their standards in an effort to match those of the urban settings.*

Though the development is viewed as disruptive in nature, what the rural community is suffering from is the adaptation crisis. Rural communities are generally regarded as conservative; it is usually that they do not necessarily embrace every new thing that comes along, particularly when that thing is not in line with the norms, customs, values and beliefs of the community. These are what others would label as laggards when it comes to following and adopting every modern trend that emerge. Rural folks are quite cautious and calculative in opening up to new things. Therefore, the influence of the school leadership on the community behaviour cannot be easily diluted by the influx of former urban settlers. The impact may be rapid and immediate on the teenagers and the young adults, but it cannot be a cause for alarm where effective school leadership is in force. This is so because of the centrality of educational leadership. It frequently balances, continues to restructure and interchangeably uses varying leadership traits, styles and behaviours in order to keep in check any wayward behavioural trends communities might display as a result of the influx of urban folks.

As revealed by the expressions of the participants here, the extent to which educational leadership is influencing the rural community behaviour cannot be over-emphasised. Clearly every participant would point to some evidence of behaviours that can be traced back to educational leadership, one way or the other. Both the opinion/community leaders and students seemed to be of the view that the influence of educational leadership on societal behaviour was two-pronged. Therefore, in the same manner that the educational leadership was infusing positive behavioural trends into the community, negative aspects were simultaneously being imparted.

3. **How should the 'warring' rural communities and the educational leaders of the schools be reconciled?**

Acknowledge the need for each other
The general position is that both parties need to appreciate and acknowledge the need for each other. This was the contention of the key informants in this study that no entity can operate in isolation. The parties were viewed as two sides of the same coin – they are inseparable and hence need each other. Here are some supporting sentiments from the interviews:

Opinion Leader 5:

> *The first step to bridge the gap between the school and the community is to admit and acknowledge that they need each other. It is now time to move away from the blame game, pointing fingers from a distance. It doesn't help to pretend you can go it alone, yet in actual fact, the other party is equally important.*

Opinion Leader 4:

> *The greatest danger is to walk on the assumption that the left hand does not need the right one. These are components of one unit. No human body can function without both hands. It has to be viewed in that way.*

These views are a clear indication that educational leaders and the community must recognise the value of each other in as far as the mending of relationships is concerned. As such, some efforts must be seen from either party. It is therefore, critical to identify some areas deemed to be causes of constraints and come up with possible and practical ways to create some understanding. It may also require the identification of key players from both the schools and the community, and then begin from there in making in-roads in the reconciliation process. The bottom line is the two parties must find each other.

Creating Awareness
Another related finding in this study regarding to reconciling the schools and the rural community was that the participants indicated the need to create some awareness concerning the value of each other. With the right approach and the appropriate players, it is believed that some reconciliation will be realised in some way. Statements that appear to support this position are thus:

Opinion Leader 8:

> *The need for each other cannot be realised from the blue. There are some people who are genuinely not aware of their value to the other party. Until and unless they are made aware, they may never know.*

Opinion Leader 6:

> *We have to acknowledge the fact that not all of us are knowledgeable about certain things. The only way to deal with this is to create some kind of awareness on the need to reconcile the schools and their communities, as well as their value for each other.*

All that can be concluded from these precepts is that the knowledge about the value and importance of schools and community collaboration must be put across to the concerned parties. Individuals from both parties who are knowledgeable about this must take the leading role in doing so. Such reaching out exercises must be well-calculated with the intention of bridging the information gap. One way or the other, the school leadership and the community is likely to be reconciled by such deliberate efforts.

Promoting Collaborations

One striking finding in this study related to reconciling the schools and the rural community was that the majority of the key informants indicated that at some point, the schools have initiated some collaborations of some sort, one way or the other. However, they were indications that there hasn't been mutual reciprocation from the other party, due to lack of zeal and/or interest. The culture of collaborations, if fully utilised could performs wonders for both parties if they are intertwined for the purpose of fostering health relationship between the schools and community. Statements that appear to support this position are thus:

Opinion Leader 7:

We appreciate and acknowledge the constraints that come in different forms on some community members. At the same time healthy school/community relationship requires people who are prepared to share their experiences at different occasions in different categories and capacities. Though schools are usually ready as they provide this platform, there is need for corresponding energy levels and interest from community members.

Opinion Leader 4:

The community is filled with diverse individuals with different expertise. Some are current and former educationists and professionals whose experience can greatly benefit the schools. To me there is a lack of drive from some of these individuals to be part of any collaboration that may help move things forward.

It appears this is an important finding in this study. The promotion of collaboration in the area of reconciling the schools and their communities was cited as indispensable. Thus, teamwork in this respect is viewed as an enabling tool. The following statements bear testimony to this:

Opinion Leader 2:

I am of the strong opinion that collaboration is not all that evident in the school/community relations, yet this can be the best remedy for sustaining genuine reconciliation efforts.

Opinion Leader 8:

There are tendencies of being lone rangers here. In this day and age, lone ranging has no has place. Instead the recognition and embracing of collective and collaborative actions can have lasting effects in closing any relational gaps that may exist in a society.

Opinion Leader 5

The community must look at the school leadership to provide support and attend to some of its social concerns. Schools must be viewed as focal points of the community.

Thus, the calls for reconciling in this regard are quite clear. Therefore, the need for the school leadership and the community to work in teams and networks that promote collaboration becomes imperative. Consequently, the notions emerging from these perceptions is that meaningful reconciliation of the two parties can only be effective through collaborative, purposeful interaction between the key role players involved (Weeks, 2012). The point here is that, schools working alone cannot achieve the greatest possible influence on the community. Geelan (2001) and Brown (2006) agree that knowledge must be brought into intimate relationships with the real problems and concerns of the *stakeholders* and the community the *school* is serving. Thus, collaboration is at the centre of this finding.

Open Door Policy

Another prominent observation related to open door policy that also came out is the adoption of an approachable stance by the educational leaders. Some participants indicated that the issue of open door policy cannot be effective if some members of

the school leadership cannot be easily approached. A classic example is that of the students who are usually conduit between the community, the parents' body and the school. Thus, they are privileged not only to observe certain things, but they also hear the sentiments of the community concerning the manner in which they carry and present themselves. Such expressions were captured as follows:

Student 5 from school Y:

> *Students happen to know and hear a lot about what people think concerning the school and its leadership. Given the fact that they are even closer to both the teachers and parents, they also the capacity to balance what we hear against their own experiences at school. The only challenge comes when they decide to approach the school leadership with some of these issues. Some of them are not even approachable and at times the students fear that they might also be blamed for expressing our mind and opinions hiding behind what people in the community are saying.*

Such expressions are an indication that there is one party that has issues against the other, but somehow they lack the means or knowhow of how to put such to the attention of the other. The first step in resolving a crisis is to create a conducive platform for addressing such. However, the dynamics differ when one party feels intimidated by the other, either for fear of reprisal or victimisation. Some queried that:

Student 8 from school Y:

> *After bringing whatever to the attention of the school leadership, how do we know that we will be safe? Will we not be accused of discussing the teachers and the school in bad faith with our parents?*

It appears as if there is an approach adopted by the school leadership that does not accommodate everyone. In practicing the open door policy there is therefore the need to employ different approaches to different circumstances instead of using one approach across the board. An understanding of the changing requirements in different situations must be appreciated and implemented in approaching different individuals with varying needs. This to some extent can help in guaranteeing possible ways of reconciling the school leadership and the community. In this regard, there is need on the part of the leadership to consciously deliberately accommodate divergent views, approaches and opinions from the pool of different individuals they relate with on a daily basis. Every participant would want to see a situation where there is healthy relationship between the community and the school leadership. This would make life for everyone even better, knowing fully well that the key parties in the education system are not at loggerheads.

Genuine Commitment to Reconciliation

Genuine commitment was also cited as an important aspect in reconciliation between the school leadership and the community. This arose due to the observations by others that open door policy on its own cannot be effective if it is not supported by genuineness and sincerity. These were the sentiments from the majority participants in this study. It would be a plausible thing to have genuinely committed individuals willing to come together to create understanding. An analysis of the views and opinions seem to clearly point to the notion that there is need for genuine commitment to reconciling the two parties. This is believed to be a critical aspect if the role of the educational leaders is to be as effective as it ought to be. Genuineness cannot be faked, as it is usually corroborated by one's actions during the processes of attempting to create platforms for reconciliation. Care must be taken, bearing in mind that human beings are able to read meaning into whatever efforts others are putting. Thus, whenever it is perceived that there is lack of genuine commitment by either party, it has the effect of derailing reconciliation efforts or in some cases totally shutting the doors. Some of these statements gleaned from the interview excerpts bear testimony:

Opinion Leader 3:

> *Both the school leadership and the community must be genuinely committed to finding each other. It seems they lost each other along the way, and they are both aware of this.*

Opinion Leader 1:

> *Real commitment, even if it is from one side, it will force the other unwilling side to reciprocate. There must be someone who must initiate it. As long as it is real, and not faked, at the end of the day, it will yield results.*

Opinion Leader 7:

People feel duped upon realising that there is lack of commitment from the other side. No one wants to have their time and efforts go to waste.

Thus, the aspect of commitment to reconciliation efforts is critical. Kariem (2010) argues that educational institutions are expected to be generally regarded among *the* community and other stakeholders as well founded, cohesive, self-critical and worthy organisations safeguarding their vision, mission, aims, functions, academic standards and social commitment to the range of stakeholder interests. Following this line of thinking, a high level of commitment is expected from this end, which in turn should call for a corresponding engagement from the community. It also seems like those that feel like their genuine commitment efforts are not being augmented, feel alienated by the system. As a result, Moore (2008) observed that, those that show signs of not being committed would worsen the situation by further isolating those that are committed and widening their distance from the system. The study can thus reveal that, the key informants here were closer to home by pointing out that if the school leadership be committed to the reconciliation efforts, the community is likely to emulate and meet them half-way. Their role here would trigger a behavioural response from the community.

Focusing on Needs
Narratives from the participants of this study agree to the fact that schools exist to deliver to the learners. This was unanimously agreed to be the core business of educational institutions; the very reason of their existence. The moment this is satisfactorily achieved; friction, animosity and current fighting will cease. There was therefore a call to the school leadership to attend to the needs of the students. These are said to be the direct beneficiaries or customers of the school leadership, whose satisfaction should be at the core. The following quotes bear testimony:

Opinion Leader 8:

Lack of prioritising students' needs is quite evident in our schools these days. Teachers don't report for lessons and there is no explanation from the administration. Everyone is not concerned. If there can be a huge shift in this kind of behaviour, I see things getting better between the community and the school leadership.

Student 9 from school X:

Student learning should be a major item on the list of the teachers.

Student 6 from school Y:

When the teachers do what they are paid to do, all these problems will disappear.

It therefore means this study has uncovered the fact that very little emphasis is being put on student learning. The concerns are that most teachers do not pay attention to students and they are left on their own the greater part of their learning time. Thus, a focus on student learning is seen as a remedy to bridge the gap between the rural community and the school leadership.

Conclusion
Despite some limitations in the methodological approach, the purposively sampled key informants in this study generated rich data and great insights into the subject matter. In its role in influencing societal behaviour, the rural educational leadership has several underpinning factors that work synergistically together as unearthed by the findings of this study. Influencing rural community behaviour has its own unique culture and settings that make the role of educational leadership somewhat stand out from that exercised in urban settings. This demands an apt educational leader with exceptional African unhu/ubuntu behavioural trends in a world of increased societal expectations that place high value on the concept of humanness, as defined by the display of good moral behaviours.

This study concludes that there is no single best leadership approach that triggers specific behavioural responses from a rural community as there are various competing leadership approaches and styles that simultaneously contribute to societal behaviour. This position recognises the potential for a number of different perspectives of leadership concepts and approaches to be defined in the rural community environment. While it is true that educational leadership can and does make a huge difference in terms of behaviour transformations in rural communities, the researchers conclude that this can be achieved in part and in a limited scope since educational leadership is also part and parcel of the wider rural society it operates in. It is subject to the norms, customs, beliefs, values, rules and influences of the same society it operates in. There is therefore, the need to view issues as they unfold from a particular theoretical standpoint, draw conclusions from that angle on the role of educational leadership in influencing community behaviour, when done migrate to another perspective and study how the

trends changes. In so doing, observe what is being revealed that was not revealed before and the other way round. In reality, the more the same scenario is studied from different angles and perspectives, the better the understanding.

The study further concludes that there is a lot of on-going debate amongst various scholars and academics on how educational leadership can impact and influence community behaviour. The researchers argue that the educational leadership in Goromonzi District can adopt some of the tenets of the behavioural theories, blend them with the African unhu/ubuntu philosophy to establish new patterns of thinking and a culture change to create a more harmonious relationship with the rural community because the latter is Afrocentric in its approach and its chances of appealing and success to a rural community are high. Failure to do this may spell jeopardy to the existence of an effective educational leadership alongside a supporting rural community. This is because of the nature of the crisis uncovered in this study. There is the formidable resistance of the new crop of educational leaders being injected into the education system in these modern days. These portray the opposite of the expectations of the rural community. This breed of educational leadership has been seen to be inviting the manifestation of negative attitudes and responses to their leadership in the face of conservative rural communities. There is also the failure by senior members of the educational leadership to expressly condemn the wayward and unbecoming behaviour displayed by this new crop of leaders. Such silence is being interpreted by the rural community members as being content with the status quo. Another aspect is the failure of the schools in the district under study to customise their leadership approaches and make them into home grown philosophies resulting in the utilisation and application of leadership behaviours based on the expectations of their rural communities and borrowed wisdom from the relevant leadership theories and frameworks.

The study takes a further position that community behavioural trends, especially in the rural community, are a reflection of the educational leadership provided by the school leadership in that community. Therefore, as adapted to the African unhu/ubuntu philosophy, educational leadership must be made to preserve the traditional values, norms and customs of the rural communities it operates in. While other flexible and relevant approaches are being developed, the relationship between educational leadership and the rural communities could be expected to change from one of disharmony characterised by animosity as at present, to one of healthy synergy and collaborations which is currently non-existence. The major thrust should be on responsible educational leadership behaviour, empowering community members to adopt behavioural trends that reflect a culture of good moral standing, setting the standards for an ideal African community which is an epitome of acceptable behaviour. However, the underlying issues emanate from the fact that the behaviours currently displayed by the present breed of educational leadership in the rural community under study are informed by contemporary, classic and modern concepts of conventional leadership. This might lead to situations in which leadership behaviour aspects in an African context may remain unattended. In this study, it was discovered that despite the need and the desire by the educational leadership to enhance positive behaviour transformations to the community under study, the argument is that the concept of unhu/ubuntu has not been fully embraced by those in leadership; yet this is fundamental behaviour dynamics in rural communities.

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