



## “Metaphors of leadership, metaphors of hope ....: Life stories of Black women leaders in South Africa”

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**Abstract:** This article, based on biographical narratives of Black women leaders in South Africa examines the idea of using multiple metaphors to expand creativity in respect of leadership. Metaphor is both a tool for shaping perspectives as well as site for constructing meaning (through paradox and oxymoron), and thus was particularly illuminating as a critical lens through which to view the three African women’s leadership of hope in the hopelessness world of schooling. As women describe their lives and experiences, they often use metaphors to capture their frustrations and perceived barriers, as well as the effects that motivate them. The central question is one of meaning: What leadership meanings do you derive from artifacts, documents and metaphors? How did production, understanding, and communication of human thought and action change the women’s leadership styles? The argument raised in this article reflects that using multiple metaphors to understand organization and management gives us the capacity to tap different dimensions of a situation, showing how different qualities of leadership can co-exist, supporting, reinforcing or contradicting each other. The metaphors of these ordinary people are simple ways of reflecting their understanding of their ordinary lives through two major themes “teamwork” and “hope in hopelessness”.

**Keywords :** Leadership, Feminism, Narratives, Teamwork, Hope, Change

### Introduction

Metaphors are used to express thoughts and ideas that are sometimes complex and difficult to articulate, and in the process they convey implicit rather than explicit meaning. People use metaphors to express anger, frustration, injustice, hope and many other emotions. Although different ethnic groups in South Africa use emotive metaphors that are common and co-constructed within their socio-cultural context, metaphors that portray leadership are personal. On the one hand a metaphor like “*wathintha umfazi wanthitha imbokodo*”<sup>1</sup> is socio-political in that it was commonly used during the apartheid struggle when African women were in the forefront of the struggle fighting against the apartheid regime. Its ownership lies in the minds and emotions of a group of people striving to voice their disgust and contempt of apartheid and its destructive policies.

On the other hand, a metaphor like “*I’m like water in the desert*” is personal and self-constructed. It expresses and pronounces an individual’s desire of hope in a hopeless situation. It offers a sense of optimism in the midst of despondency.

Many feminist scholarships centre on the metaphor of voice and use it as a category of epistemological analysis. The central thesis of this article is that metaphors have the potential to arouse an alert mind, carrying leaders and their followers to new fields of experience, branching out into new understanding and shedding light in the darkness. This is demonstrated through the life stories of three African women

leaders<sup>2</sup> in three schools in South Africa. This article thus challenges the reader to see possibilities of inspirational leadership in the ordinary lives of African women school leaders. Through their life stories we unravel the problem of being female by means of astonishing paradox: they found ways to speak while remaining silent, that is they embodied their own silence within their leadership. Language and leadership naturally go together. Thus it is essential to pay attention to the words leaders use and how they use them to express their actions. According to Ramsey (2002, 17), a leader’s way of thinking helps to determine the leader’s way of talking about and acting on issues of leadership. Metaphors are inherent elements of language and are used to communicate different messages. Ramsey however also warns that misplaced metaphors may send the wrong message and create confusion or misperceptions of an action, what it stands for and how it works. Thus leaders do not have to be great speakers, but they have to realize that their words can either support or hinder their actions.

My analysis of article is focused particularly on metaphor because the central question is one of meaning: “*What leadership meanings do you derive from artifacts, documents and metaphors? How did production, understanding, and communication of human thought and action change the women’s leadership styles?*” Metaphor is both a tool for shaping perspectives as well as a site for constructing meaning (through paradox and oxymoron), and thus was particularly illuminating as a critical lens through which to view the three

<sup>1</sup> In simple English the metaphor means “If you touch a woman, you move a rock, which will come rolling down to crush you with its might and ferocity”.

<sup>2</sup> The original research reported here comes from a PhD completed at Michigan State University in 2000.



African women's leadership of hope in the hopelessness world of schooling.

### Why metaphors? Theoretical background

Linguists and cultural anthropologists have used metaphorical analysis to better understand some of the more implicit meanings, beliefs and values of cultural groups. Johnson (1987) identifies metaphor as an essential structure of human understanding by means of which we symbolically comprehend our world. Metaphors are based on shared socio-historical origin, knowledge, experience and conventional social usage. Metaphors express specific values, norms, standards, stereotypes, and collective identities. In essence, they reveal knowledge that is taken for granted and they often relate to profound meanings that a cultural group understands.

Several scholars state that metaphors make associations and comparisons with "something" else, in the process clarifying and familiarizing the concept. Inkson (2002) defines a metaphor as a figure of speech in which special qualities of one concept or entity are applied to another to provide clearer meaning or to add colour to the presentation. Metaphorical ideas are relative statements of a relationship between one concept and another (see Inkson, 2002; Hartzell, 2002; Hung, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Shockley-Zalabak, 2002; Engebretson, 2002). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 5), metaphor is essentially "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". For example, by saying "The girl was a cheetah on the tennis court", the girl is endowed with cheetah-like qualities such as speed, agility and swiftness.

Metaphors themselves are taken from one context and then applied to another. For instance, although the metaphor "hands-on" derives from nursing, it may also be used by engineers, artists and others to convey the idea of careers that are dependent on using one's hands. A metaphor such as "calling" derives from biblical connotations but is also common in serving careers like teaching, nursing and ministry. "Glass ceiling" was exported from business literature and transposed to the unjust systems of the corporate world where leadership is mainly in the hands of men, while women are deprived of the opportunity to occupy senior and leadership positions.

In his article Inkson (2002) describes how Gareth Morgan applied different metaphors to understand the culture and nature of a single but complex concept such as "business organization". Morgan (1986, 1998) in his influential book, *Images of Organization*, sees "organization" as a machine, an organism, a political system, a brain and an instrument of domination respectively. Each image demonstrates different qualities of the organization. For instance, "machine" is a symbol of strength, unity of purpose, predictability and rigidity; "organism" demonstrates responsiveness to the

environment, fluidity and growth; and "brain" demonstrates information flows and potential for holistic learning. Inkson also indicates that although each metaphor embodies unique truths about organizations, no single metaphor comes near to expressing the whole truth. Hence, "the objective is not to debate which is the most 'correct' metaphor, but to use metaphors as complements to each other, so that each new metaphor contributes to a broader, more eclectic understanding" (Inkson, 2002:101).

From Morgan's work it is clear that using multiple metaphors to understand organization and management gives us the capacity to tap different dimensions of a situation, showing how different qualities of organization can co-exist, supporting, reinforcing or contradicting each other (Morgan, 1998:6). However, Hartzell (2002) cautions that each metaphor is "simultaneously illuminating and limiting", "limiting" because people impose it on us and we impose it on ourselves, which limitation could be countered by promoting the use of multiple metaphors whenever the opportunity arises.

Shockley-Zalabak (2002) also expresses a reservation: although "metaphors play a crucial role in the production, understanding, and communication of human thought and action" (Eisenberg, 1987, cited in Shockley-Zalabak, 2002), they are inherently paradoxical. Furthermore, Shockley-Zalabak (2002:240) cites Morgan (1997) to illustrate that metaphor can create powerful but distorted images, "as the way of seeing created through a metaphor becomes a way of not seeing". This is what Anderson (2002:3) calls "the role of metaphor and oxymoron in image restoration". We may have a belief that our metaphors help us define, clarify specific situations, while in essence they serve to limit our sense of reality.

In her essay Anderson (2002) examines the way in which the former First Lady of the United States of America, Hillary Rodham Clinton, encompassed both traditional and radical versions of the Madonna persona following the defeat of healthcare reform, arguing that it enabled Hillary Rodham to promote her own political agenda, respond to the Clinton sex scandals, and position herself as a credible candidate for the US Senate.

The theory is that, although Rodham Clinton worked to feminize her public voice, "the rhetorical strategy that her Madonna-phase rhetoric employs, more than feminine style, is oxymoron" (Anderson, 2002:3). In Anderson, Campbell (1974, 1998 & 1999) argues that the concept of "woman speaker" itself is oxymoronic and that "the oxymoron figuratively captures the dynamic of women's rhetoric" (Anderson, 2002:3).

For instance, women are not considered as public speakers, to be a woman is not to be a speaker. Furthermore, the utility of embracing oxymoron as a tactic is illustrated in Anderson by



Kenneth Burke's (1984) notion of perspective by incongruity, in which paradox and oxymoron become sources of new perspectives. The First Lady was perceived, paradoxically, as both tough and soft.

Accordingly this apparent incongruity created space for a new perspective in which femininity and feminism are no longer cast as adversative features.

Anderson warns that there is however one potential downside to oxymoron for women – it requires them to be everything positive. Women should be above all, feminine and powerful, assertive and accommodating, caring and competent. While men can be forgiven and maintain the opposite side of the spectrum, women must be able to move smoothly back and forth. If the only way to escape the duality of the bond is to succumb to it, women are in a dilemma. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the true power of metaphor in our roles and responsibilities. We should realize that the challenge is to become competent in the art of using metaphor, *“to find fresh ways of seeing, understanding, and shaping the situations that we want to organize and manage”* (Anderson, 2002:6).

### Research Strategy

This study sought the participation of three Black women elementary school principals in South Africa from urban/township school settings in Soweto, Johannesburg. Each professional's story is unique as it illuminates individual experiences of addressing pressing issues around race, gender, class, segregation, and oppression. While each story presents lessons learned (practical tools) that might help professional practitioners, a comparative analysis across the narratives provides rich data and informative themes which extend our understanding of the meaning of social justice that is both contextually and culturally appropriate in school settings.

The study uses the biographical narrative and phenomenological methods to collect data from three principals identified by their colleagues and communities as individuals working for social justice. Since I was interested in exploring what leadership meaning the three women derive from artifacts, documents and metaphors which transform their work for social justice, it was necessary to capture how production, understanding, and communication of their thought and action change the women's leadership styles. It can be seen from Casey's (1995) work that narratives disclose diverse political projects, but also demonstrate social inclusivity and reveal progressive points of convergence. Thus, all educators working for social change have a great deal to learn from the care these women give to their students, the outrage they feel towards injustice, and the way they dare to use the limited power and resources they have.

The stories were collected through a series of three interviews of two hours each, a one-day shadowing session, a group dialogue and document analysis. To break down what scholars (Griffin, 1989; Oakley, 1981) call the one-way male hierarchical framework of traditional interviewing techniques, my participants and I engaged in interactive and open-ended interviews, working together to arrive at what Tesch calls *“the heart of the matter”* (Tesch, 1994:147). I employed Tesch's (1994) advice on phenomenological methods and learned to take cues from my participants' expressions, questions, and occasional sidetracks to take the level of probe further. We engaged in talk between friends where I shared similar experiences with the women. Our interviews were dialogic in that both the women and I revealed ourselves and reflected on our disclosures.

This was made possible because as a black elementary school principal in Soweto, I had had similar experiences at various points in my life as an educational leader. Because of these mutual disclosures, the women were able to open up and we developed more intimate relationships. In their opinions, our dialogues were non-judgmental and my body language assured the women that I believed in their sincerity in the telling of their true experiences.

The processes of data analysis and synthesis were conducted through thematic analysis and coding. Naturalistic qualitative enquiries tend to produce large quantities of data. Since I used three interviews, shadowing, group dialogues, and documentation to collect the data, it was likely that I would become what is called *“the victim of data overload”* (Rudestam and Newton, 1992:113). Thus the phenomenological analysis of transcribed data was done on a continuous basis as the process of interviewing went on. To do this, I discussed emerging themes with my participants at different stages in our journey.

My analysis, drawing on interviews, field notes from shadowing the women, conversations from the group dialogue, and meaning derived from documents and artifacts generated the theme: *“metaphors of hope, metaphors of leadership”*.

### Women and their metaphors of leadership

Metaphors are powerful reflections of black women's enormous challenges while facing the multilayered and multiplied burdens of oppression. Their metaphors attest to the fact that they fight back through their silent resistance, and however, find hope from hopelessness and through the creation of a socially just environment, and through their caring nature create environments of hope and link families, schools and communities to advance the cause of children and youth in South Africa.



Metaphors are so ordinary that they need to be pulled apart to reveal their ordinariness and highlight the invisible yet powerful features in order to give meaning to our contemporary society.

Their colourfulness and resonance with the thinking of ordinary people give them the potential to engage all of us in more creative thinking about our role of serving others. It is with these thoughts in mind that I present the women's metaphors of leadership.

### **“Little Star”**

I named the first research participant “Little Star”, the magnet that attracted other stakeholders to the cause of justice. She demonstrated the ability to develop links beyond the borders of South Africa – Belgium, France and Germany. When this study was conducted in January 2000, Little Star had had 38 years of experience as an educator, particularly as educator and college lecturer, and was in her ninth year as an elementary school principal.

#### On becoming a leader: In her own words

Leaving the college was again a calling from above. I had to move on. I took teaching as a calling, not as a career. Hence, I believe my failing the nursing preliminary exams was a sign that I was not destined to be there. I had a vision of mobilizing the community into positive thinking. Before my time as a principal, people used to think that if you are a principal you are a know-all, a do-all. It was my challenge to change their thinking. We have to work together. We grow because we learn; we copy and implement what we have learned.

I'm like a magnet; I attract others to come and join me. I invite them to come and see what is happening in these classrooms, and let them see what these children are doing. After getting a donation from a company, I do some follow-up – I give them feedback, I make them responsible for their generosity. Right now, we are receiving donations to build three of the classrooms we need. We are not going to wait for the government to do it. The parents in my school are very supportive. It took me many years to make them understand that the school belongs to them, not to the educators or me. And that it does not belong to the government. Hence I'm just an organ and the parents are the brain, I do what they want. I believe in visions – as long as you know there is a vision, there is hope. As a transformative leader, to me, the governing body is like the main brain that coordinates all the functions of the body. We work as a team.

As a transformative leader, I change the approach to teaching and learning. To me, three elements are important, that is, pupil, educator and parent. They can never work without each other. They make a triangle that is equidistant apart. I can never run the school without parents and educators. You should bridge the gap between you and the parents. Parents think we, as educators, know all. We should show them that education is a team effort.

#### Final reflections: Meanings from artifacts, documents and metaphors

My life has been like a light to those who need progress. It has been like a book to the coming generation. Making sense of my life as a black woman has been like a motivational source to other black women. My first artifact is the picture of a blossoming flower. Everyday when I enter my office and see this picture on the wall it represents me. The blossoming flower gives life around others, that's me.

The golden vase represents the richness of others, what they can contribute to the cause of justice. Like a triangle, we give each other support and energy. When I look at this magnet, it represents me; I attract others. Like a magnet, people are drawn to me. I have proved that beyond doubt. I have succeeded well in attracting others, especially the local business sector and those from abroad.

As a former principal yourself, Thidziambi, you know it is a great challenge to a large number of black principals to locate and secure funding from white private sectors. For me, it was the hand of God that guided me through. My third artifact is the picture of this little star. Like a little star, I shine in the darkness. I give light to those in the dark. I shine to attract our parents and community at large! What I can advise people to do is that they must not carry the load alone and they must know that there are others outside who are ready to help if invited and given the opportunity. And there is no need for leaders to kill themselves by carrying the burden alone.

### **“Footprints”**

I named the second research participant “Footprints on the Sands of Time”, a self-projection of her role in life. She also used the metaphor of a driver who has no control of the car if the engine is in a bad condition. Footprints was in her 7<sup>th</sup> year as an elementary school principal at the time of our interviews in February 2000. Her 18 years of experience as an educator included teaching at her present school, radio announcer at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), high school



educator, subject advisor for Gauteng schools, adult night school head educator and a church elder.

### On becoming a leader

I don't do things on my own and I always tell my colleagues that I am a driver and that they are the engine. And when the engine is not in order the driver cannot do anything. A leader is always the one who initiates things, somebody who does things, a person who comes up with good ideas and sells them to the people she is leading, in such a way that the educators believe that such ideas come from them. A leader is a person who, when she has a dream, lets others realize it for her. We have a family-type relationship; we are a big family, like sisters and brothers. And there is a lot of teamwork and delegation. When I delegate duties, I give them the responsibility with equal accountability. My communication is transparent and our working spirit is quite good.

*I am bringing the culture of teaching and learning back into our school with the support of parents. We cannot have that culture of learning without having parental involvement. In addition, the school, the community, business people and all stakeholders must come together and work hand in hand. Because these components are not working hand in hand with the school, that is why we find some members of the community selling drugs to our students and also allowing students to stay in their houses when they are supposed to be at school. To create and to maintain healthy relationships, you have to allow people to participate and to get involved in what you are doing, and a healthy relationship is important and once a relationship is not healthy, then as a leader you will never achieve whatever you want to achieve.*

### Final reflections: Meanings from artifacts, documents and metaphors

One of my artifacts is this small three-legged pot I'm holding in my hands. If one leg breaks, the pot will lose its balance. It will not be able to stand on its own. Therefore I see the relationship among the educators as educators, students and parents as a team effort. We have to work together to maintain the equilibrium. The second and third are the two big posters on the wall. Here on the one wall is Mandela shaking the hand of the enemy and on the other side of the wall, a picture of a lifeless innocent 13-year-old boy, Hector Petersen, whose life came to an end at the hands of De Klerk's government. Black and white people had to die to pave the way to freedom. I believe that if Mandela can find it in his heart to

shake hands with his enemy who caused him so much pain for 27 years on Robben Island, and torture his family for most of the 27 years, then everything is possible. I believe there is hope even in a hopeless situation like education in our black schools. Like Mandela, we as black leaders should strive and hope for the best in all our endeavours. My third artifact is the largest poster on the furthest side of the wall, with Mandela's first public speech on the day he was released from prison on February 11, 1990. As I look at the words, his cry for education in black schools, I become more motivated to go an extra mile and help these kids. When I look at these words, every day becomes a new day of motivation to me. These are symbols of hope in hopelessness.

As I look back, my life has been like climbing a mountain of challenges, but I have probably left some footprints on the sands of time. My practice as a transformative educational leader has been very difficult in that the education department had a top-down type of management style. Making sense of my life and work as a black African woman has been a difficult task.

### "Water"

I named the third research participant "Water in the desert" because she uses the metaphor of hope. She demonstrated that she is indeed the mother who puts children first. Water's story revolved around children and the love she had for them. She was in her 10<sup>th</sup> year as an elementary school principal when the study was conducted in February 2000. In her 21 years as an educator, she had been a high school educator, head of department and deputy principal of a high school, before coming to her present position in January 1990.

### On becoming a leader

Sometimes as a woman you are treated like a donkey! You are not expected to get tired, everybody just kicks you- educators, and students, with out warning, even your own kids. And still you have to produce results.

As a full-time educator and also principal of the school I had to do a lot of things. And sometimes in the morning I had to admit new students, solve problems and conflicts, spend time with administrative work when I was expected/supposed to be teaching a Matric math class. So I realized that if I have to make these kids pass at the end of the year, I must create time. I was still a mother with very young kids who needed 100% of my time and attention.



But I also had to give 100% of my time to the other kids. And as a mother you are already a family leader even if we are not recognized as leaders in our families. But in our families we convinced these men to be exactly what we want them to be. We just let them think that they are the ones that came with the ideas, while the ideas originated from us all this time. For example, like the furniture in the house, I influence what to buy or what I want.

#### Final reflections: Meanings from artifacts, documents and metaphors

As I enter my office and look at this picture of joined hands, it is my source of inspiration. To me, it symbolizes teamwork and collaboration. If we work together, we can succeed and achieve greatly. They say in Sesotho “monwana o leese ao nopi mmele...”<sup>3</sup> When hands are joined, the work becomes light. My second artifact is the artwork on the wall. The artwork depicts a flower made of matchsticks glued together. This is bonded together to create a view of beauty. Together we can overcome all discrimination, segregation and create beautiful schools full of life and beauty.

I see my life as a fresh breeze blowing the old and unwanted away and creating the new. As a leader I am like sunshine, and as sunshine, you feel that you have to love, and create a happy environment. I'm like sunshine and fresh air! As I look back, my life has been like swimming in the dark, always with a glimmer of light from knowing that I will reach my destination no matter what it takes. It has been like rain after a long drought where one does not even mind about getting wet. In this case, doing things for the institution that one might not do under normal circumstance. Like water in the desert, having to come out of my cultural cover and be in the forefront of fragile things like education, which is life itself, has been challenging indeed.

My life experiences proved that as black education leaders women can be an endangered species if we do not join forces and work together. We as women in positions of influence should not let go. I have seen problems not as mountains but molehills to be easily climbed even though one gets bruises, but the fact that you are overcoming the problems was always a gratifying factor that makes you forget the problem you encountered along the way. I now realize that women were thought to be weak, but they have granite-like determination to go after what they think is worth pursuing.

#### **Women using metaphors in their leadership practice**

Following Donaldson (2002) in his analysis of Morgan's use of multiple metaphors, one may ask: Is metaphor potentially helpful to women? Under what circumstances does metaphorical thinking limit us to simplified stereotypes, or expand our vision to new and more productive ways of leading and of making choices and taking action to effect leadership development and change? Does metaphor assist action? And what are the key metaphors for leadership? To engage Gareth Morgan's (1986) method of “multiple metaphor” to understand leadership, I identified and gave my own interpretation to various metaphors used in the narratives of the three research participants. The metaphors of these ordinary people are simple ways of reflecting their understanding of their ordinary lives. Two major themes that emerge from their ordinary life stories are “teamwork” and “hope in hopelessness”.

#### **Teamwork**

An examination of the metaphoric triangle in the narratives of Little Star and Footprints reveals the complexity of this symbol for each of the women and the ramifications of its meanings, stated and implied. Each research participant expands the metaphor in order to communicate a coherent African worldview and simultaneously a highly personal awareness. The triangle is the most common of all leadership metaphors, and it runs directly or indirectly through the women's discourses. It conceptualizes leadership as teamwork, as a collaborative effort balanced and supported by the effective participation of everyone, that is learners, parents and educators. Little Star perceives teamwork as a magnet that attracts others towards engaging in informed decision making. She is able to attract funding, create partnerships and work effectively with parents, the governing body and other partners in her school.

Because our material conditions contribute to and shape what we conceptualize and enact, the metaphors that we take from our material conditions are context and purpose dependent. We should therefore interpret Little Star's metaphor from the context of the unequal provision of resources in schools in apartheid South Africa. African people had to strive harder to obtain the basic minimum resources for their schools..

Footprints sees teamwork as a three-legged pot where the weight is well balanced among all partner groups. Teamwork offers educators, parents and learners a family-like environment. Footprints sees herself as the driver and not the engine. Drivers have no control over the running of the engine. The engine coordinates all the functions and activities of the car, whereas the driver propels and gives direction. Footprints has the dream but allows others to make her dream come true. What Shockley-Zalabak calls “distortions” that is, seeing through a metaphor in a way that limits seeing

<sup>3</sup> A literal English translation is “One finger cannot pick up corn!”



(Shockley-Zalabak, 2000:233). This is also apparent in this dreamer metaphor. Although Footprints conceives the dream as a way of sharing most inner thoughts, it can also be seen as a way of control, where people are coerced into supporting ideas that are conceived in one's personal and private world.

For Water, teamwork is like glue that binds relationships. In most cases, the bond is expected to last a lifetime. Teamwork conveys expectations of clarity about the envisaged end result and thus direction. In teamwork, there is usually consensus on what needs to be done, and when educators and leaders share a vision, barriers are removed and climates conducive to growth are created. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) (cited in Phendla, 2000:13) indicate that real power is the power to be yourself, to be true to your best self, rather than to be the self that is fearful, jealous or spiteful. Thus, teamwork enhances relationships and creates a situation where the educator and the leader become equal partners. In short, it establishes a situation of power-with rather than power-over. It is a willingness for working collaboratively and passion for having others share someone's own interest. Meier (1995:12) states that it is through the involvement of all parties to education that we are able to reinvent schooling, it is through collective co-ownership of new designs of schooling that something new might emerge.

### Hope, change and transformation

Little Star used the metaphors of light, a book and a blossoming flower to articulate and unravel the theme of hope in hopelessness. Footprints used the metaphor of a mountain to convey the meaning of facing challenges, in the hope of working towards a better future and leaving footprints on the sands of time. Water's meaning of hope is understood through natural phenomena like a fresh breeze, sunshine, rain after a long drought and molehills as driving forces in communication of her leadership. At the same time, many see a star from near and far, stars find ways to speak to us while remaining silent. While stars appeal to our emotions, telling us that there is a future out there, their brightness draws attention to our dark surroundings. We are cautioned about the dangers looming out there in the dark. This metaphor is likened to the way teamwork draws attention in the darkness of hopelessness.

From the meanings that the research participants attached to different artifacts, from analysis of the documents and from the very language used, women see hope and new beginnings. From the pictures of a pink flower in a golden vase and the small star shining in the dark, they find hope and see possibilities. From the picture of Mandela and De Klerk shaking hands they conceive a hope-filled future, reconciliation and forgiveness beyond the odds of the legacy of apartheid. However, the inherent paradoxical nature of metaphors is also evident in the conception of Mandela as a hero and De Klerk as a villain, especially when on the

opposite side of the wall in Footprints' office appears the legendary portrait of the 13-year-old Hector Peterson who died at the hands of the apartheid government.

These images are context-bound, though – they elicit inexpressible emotions in those who lived this and similar experiences. To deny such emotions is to deny their reality for those involved. Nevertheless, the images also portray hope, new beginnings and forgiveness. These are symbolic meanings of hope, perseverance, energy and devotion to getting things right. Such attention to use of language, artifacts and metaphors should go a long way towards putting people back onto centre stage without ignoring historically formed structural conditions and unequal power relation.

Hope is about change, about transforming the educational process to provide equal opportunity and access for everyone.

### Conclusion

The idea of using multiple metaphors to expand creativity in respect of options is one that has considerable potential in the leadership context. As women describe their lives and experiences, they often use metaphors to capture their frustrations and perceived barriers, as well as the things that motivate them. It is therefore important to identify the metaphors that leading women use and to explore their full meaning and relation to what is being described (Amundson, 1998). Any single metaphor is a particular reflection of a particular part of the world.

When people have only one metaphor for a situation, their creativity is limited. The more metaphors they have to choose from for a given situation the more choice and flexibility they have in handling it. "Finding multiple metaphors expands the realm of creativity" (Combs & Freedman, 1990:32).

Certainly no one metaphor should be exclusively attached to one kind of leadership. Nor can one metaphor claim to be more apt than others to represent the ideal leadership style. Indeed evidence suggests that metaphors change continuously in respect of a prevailing concept of, for instance, organizational structure. One of the more enduring challenges for leadership is therefore the establishment of values, attitudes and behaviours that promote information sharing.

The lessons from the meanings extracted from the artifacts are that we should look beyond the obvious to build a meaningful existence, and that however small and insignificant, the meanings of symbols and artifacts could be expanded to help people survive the challenges of life. Furthermore, themes, principal metaphors, definitions of narrative, defining structures of stories (beginning, middle and end) and conclusions are often defined poetically and artistically and are content and context bound (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994:465).



Thus, metaphors and similes can be used as social signs and words to help leaders to define, explain, describe or paint a picture of their schools, to help them simplify ideas, assist them to clarify difficult functions and breakdown complex operations into understandable terms and concepts that match the reality.

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