Social justice praxis in education: Towards sustainable management strategies

Idilette van Deventer
Research Unit Edu-HRight, Faculty of Education Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa
Idilette.vanDeventer@nwu.ac.za
Philip C van der Westhuizen
Faculty of Education Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa
Ferdinand J Potgieter
Research Unit Edu-HRight, Faculty of Education Sciences, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa

Social justice, defined as an impetus towards a socially just educational world, is based on the assumption that *all* people, irrespective of belief or societal position, are entitled to be treated according to the values of human rights, human dignity and equality. Diverging from the classical positivist approach in social science research that takes injustice as its impetus, the researchers departed from a socio-rationalist approach into exploring sustainable management strategies for effective social justice praxis. This approach has enabled the construction of a conceptual-theoretical framework and an iterative qualitative inquiry, which has as its central principal the sustainable management strategies for effective social justice praxis. Four key findings affirmed the belief that good praxis was to be found in *Gemeinschaft* relationships, in the influence exerted by government and education systems and structures, where government *and* principals were found to be co-responsible in ensuring that the best interest of the child was served. This responsibility included practices found in collaborative efforts, where communities became the guardians of their schools due to a disciplined school that followed constitutional values. Lastly, these practitioners aligned their management strategies with human rights values, as well as human dignity and equality, and their strategies found pride of place in extant ubuntu principles.

Keywords: determinants; education; human rights; management strategies; restorative; social justice praxis; sustainable development; transformative; ubuntu

Exigency for Effective Social Justice Praxis in a Socio-Rationalist World

Social justice – as an impetus towards a socially just world – is based on the assumption that all people, irrespective of belief or societal position, are entitled to be treated according to the values of human rights, human dignity and equality. It is evident from international and national media reports on the dire situation in many schools, however, that the movement towards social justice has remained unfulfilled. The outcomes attained in the South African education system, for instance, have been labelled as "the worst of all middle-income countries in cross-national assessments of educational achievement" (Spaull, 2013:3). A lack of education leadership and management invariably contributes to this situation (Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). Hargreaves and Fink (2006:1) concur, and state that "sustainable improvement depends on successful leadership. But making leadership sustainable is difficult too." South Africans in particular do not yet share to the fullest degree in such a sustainable leadership and effective social justice praxis (Spaull, 2013).

A Proposition-Based Inquiry

Diverging from the classical positivist approach in social science research, which is guided by an existing problem, that is, social injustices, this study set out from the proposition that *not all school principals were contributing to injustices* as they are to be found in the "growing evidence of exceedingly low levels of learning in many developing countries, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, and South Africa" (Spaull & Taylor, 2015:137). Rather, the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach of Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) provided the opportunity to perform research from a constructive and affirming vantage point, so as to generate theory on sustainable organisational development. Those who follow the AI approach are conducting their research and theoretical propositions "in the service of their dynamically constituted vision of the good" (Cooperrider, Barrett & Srivastva, 2013:170). The AI approach offered concerns the theory development of organisations (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 1998), and is creating a positive revolution in the field of organisational development (Cooperrider et al., 2013). This article proposes that inquiry into *effective, valuable praxis* offers an alternative understanding of sustainable management interventions, rather than one informed by a problem-based approach, especially in an education system that is as complex and beleaguered as that which is to be found in South Africa. The rest of this paper is structured as follows: we commence by outlining the determinants of social justice praxis. This is followed by a conceptual-theoretical framework that forms the backdrop against which we performed the empirical investigation, where we then present a discussion of our findings and concluding remarks. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987:129) postulate that AI researchers view science from a "socio-rationalist" perspective, and as social-rationalists, they are intensely involved with their own reality in an environment where trust-building, knowledge-sharing and increased social justice praxis become the norm (Calabrese, 2006).

Sustainable Management Strategies for Social Justice Praxis

Le Grange (2007:90) postulates that sustainable development in education is, *inter alia*, to be found in "people and people relationships" that observe the social justice principles of basic human needs, inter-generational equity, human rights and participation. However, Le Grange (2007:93) cautions that although sustainable development in South African education coincides with and is integral to school reform, the concept of sustainable development are embedded in "progress stories" about successful development and improvement. Le Grange (2007) argues that progress stories are not necessarily progressive or sustainable, nor do they necessarily lead to reforms as the outcomes-based 'saga' has shown. Such progress stories on sustainable development may even limit the impact of democracy and impede efforts towards social justice. We nevertheless argue that these stories of progress are important, as they affirm the belief that sustainable management of effective social justice praxis is indeed possible, as the participants' stories in this research showed in the discussion on sustainable management strategies for social justice praxis. These strategies also offer the space in which to rebuild a sustainable education system that realises the values of human dignity. In view of

Le Grange's (2007) warning, it is important to first understand that the concept of *social justice* has two manifestations: justice as such, and social justice.

The essential being of justice manifests in society and is a reality that holds the inherent possibility to change individuals and institutions. Accordingly, justice as a concept underpins the concept of social justice. It provides a theoretical basis for the analysis and evaluation of social justice (not as onticity, but as modality of justice) in society and in institutions towards a transformed society. Social justice praxis (as a verb) includes acts of kindness towards others, with the aim to repair and transform the school and societal environments (Baillon & Brown, 2003). Social justice is a lived concept that encompasses acts of fairness, equality and justness towards others. Social justice acts in this sense are about how 'others' experience and understand complex concerns of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or class. However, social justice is also relevant for those perceived to be privileged. Both the under-privileged and the privileged ought to share in the promise of fundamental human rights and the resultant praxis of justice as fair, equitable and equal.

Figure 1 Determinants for social justice praxis (Adapted from Miller, 1999:4-7)

Rawls (1999b, 1999c) proposes that social justice is related to a set of principles that provide a way of assigning rights and duties, both to individuals, and to organised communities (determinants) in basic institutions of society. These determinants of a well-ordered society are found in external individual cognition, recognisable in naming, conceptualising and labelling categories of

social justice phenomena that are the social and historical creations of man. In Rawls' (1971) well-ordered society, there is an elucidation as to what constitutes just and unjust acts, whilst in his *Theory of Justice*, he proposes co-existence of state and individual public institutional spaces, such as schools (Rawls, 1999b). In these spaces, social justice is related to "a set of principles that provide

a way of assigning rights and duties – both to individuals and organised communities" – through these fundamental social institutions (Van Deventer, 2013:22).

The meaning of a human society is to be found in the co-dependency and co-responsibility of its members; who all flourish – or not – in a particular society, where socially just communities, as well as the hopes and prospects of each individual and the greater society, are affected. A society ought to have an institutional structure formed by the state, education system, and individuals. Additionally, a society requires human agency to bring about deliberate and transformational reform in the name of fairness and justice for all its citizens (Miller, 1999) (Figure 1).

Determinants of Social Justice Praxis: Government, Institutions and Individuals

The realities of social justice and education management consist of government systems and school sub-systems that manifest interdependently (Potgieter, 1980). The scope of social justice praxis depends on a mutual understanding of who is responsible for determining the allocation or distribution of the good and bad, advantages and burdens, as well as rights and duties (Miller, 1999). Teachers who advocate for social justice praxis are as agents of change in schools, however this role ought to be shared between the state and social justice agents (Francis & Le Roux, 2011).

In such a collaborative engagement between the state and individuals, constitutional values and human rights provide the impetus for social justice praxis. Taking as its cue a divisive apartheid past, the preamble to the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), as well as Section 1, both aim to heal the divisions of the past, and to establish a non-racist, non-sexist and democratic society based on the values of human dignity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. These values should inform all educational management endeavours, from legislation, through to policy-making and praxis. As such, the Bill of Rights (s.7(2)) imparts to educationists (all role-players) to respect, protect, promote and fulfil constitutional provisions and the values it enshrines, to create a society that is the very opposite of the apartheid order. In addition, the legal and policy frameworks have to 'will' educators to attend to these values, so as to ensure the realisation thereof for all learners. The ideal of building a transformed schooling system is supported by a series of education white papers and policy frameworks (i.e. White Paper on Education and Training, notice 196, Department of Education, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1995; Education White Paper 2: The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools, notice 130, Department of Education, 1996; as well as

legislation (National Education Policy Act (NEPA) 27/1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b)); the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84/1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996c); and the Employment of Educators Act 76/1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Of particular importance is White Paper 3, which also mentions the ideal of a future where all South Africans will enjoy an improved and sustainable quality of life, participate in a growing economy, and share in a democratic culture.

However, education remains the centre of attention, due to the breakdown in the implementation of these policies at ground level. The right to human dignity is the most fundamental in any open and democratic society. This right imparts on the state the duty that the "dignity of man shall be inviolable" and should be protected by all state authority (Goolam, 2001:45). In addition, Goolam argues that inviolable and inalienable human rights form the basis of every society, system and institution of peace and justice in the world.

Scholars provide different stances to systemic and institutional determinants for the management of social justice praxis. Rawls (1999a) argues that distributive justice is a result of a cooperative venture of mutual benefit based on two principles, the principle of equal liberty for all, and the principle of difference, both of which should be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged persons in an equal society. Rawls' (1999d) theory of justice points towards fair and equal management, found in just institutions of government and education. Such a well-ordered educational society is governed by the relational conduct of those who are able to prioritise and make judgements on that which is right over that which is good. Leaders who make judgements as to what is 'right' base their decisions on consistent value-based conduct, which is beneficial and desirable for the individual, as well as for the school community more broadly.

Fraser (2009:72-73) extends Rawls' principles of equal liberty and difference to include claims for the recognition of cultural difference found in the "politics of recognition". She asserts that social justice understood as recognition is not assimilation into a dominant culture, rather, it is constituted by a world that embraces both redistribution of power, and resources, as well as recognition of cultural difference. Fraser (2009) argues that a politics of recognition in a difference-friendly world, is part of acknowledging the existence of difference, such as those based on ethnicity, racial diversity, or gender. This perspective locates social justice praxis in both the political-governmental and the local arena, as it describes those *dimensions of justice that cut across all social strata*.

The discourse about distribution and recognition should enhance the virtues of social consciousness, recognition of a common humanity, and

a celebration of unity in diversity. Starratt (2009) proposes three virtuous acts to realise distribution and recognition as sustainable management in their praxis of responsibility, presence and authenticity. These acts ought to promote both the academic success of all learners, as well as be visible in the way in which they affect the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. The virtue of responsibility and authenticity provide the subjective grounding and moral weight to the praxis of school leaders, who must act justly and fairly towards both those who are marginalised, as well as towards those groups privileged by social constructs (Starratt, 2009). Just and fair acts create a visible mindfulness of discriminatory, marginalising and unjust practices.

The virtue of authenticity affirms the school leader's critical presence in the lives of staff and learners, and establishes the required dialogue with the other. In being authentic, the school leader takes responsibility to express a positive or negative moral response to social injustice. In being present in the lives of teachers and learners, he or she mediates actions of authenticity and responsibility towards a fair and just educational landscape (Starratt, 2009).

School leaders who practice an ethics of care are focusing on personal and professional actions of respect. Such an ethics involves acts of integrity and cultural enrichment, namely the promotion of individuality, loyalty, human potential, dignity, and empowerment. An ethics of care brings to the fore a moral imperative of improving educational praxis and student outcomes for the marginalised and economically disadvantaged majority, who have not traditionally been served well in schools (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Principals should understand, promote and enact social justice through a heightened and critical awareness of oppression, exclusion, and marginalisation that may have been experienced by their students (Freire, 2004). However, Brooks and Miles (2008) argue that awareness of social injustices is not sufficient in itself, because principals should, furthermore, act when they identify inequity; the authors point out that they are uniquely positioned to influence equitable educational practices, and that their proactive involvement is crucial.

Such a moral, dialogical integrity is found in the principles of ubuntu, underpinning educational professional development thought. According to Nafukho (2006) ubuntu is a concept described in, amongst others, the Southern African Nguni-language family (Ndebele, Swati/Swazi, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu) whilst omundu/muntu/ntu are Nguni words referring to humanity, or state of kindredness. Nafukho (2006) argues that the concept of ubuntu describes an African worldview, enshrined in the maxim 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (a person is a person through other people).

Traditional African learning articulates a basic respect and compassion for others in society. Nafukho (2006) proclaims that ubuntu provides the rule of conduct (social justice) or social ethics in society. This model of interrelation promotes religiosity, spirituality, consensus and dialogue.

According to the United Nations (UN) (2006, 2013) governments should be compelled to put in place measures that will enhance equal liberty and recognise diversity, such that they are able to represent and serve the best interest of their populations. The broader international context, the pre-amble to the UN Charter expresses commitment to justice in affirming human worth in the form of dignity, fundamental and equal human rights (UN, 2006). Mahlomaholo (2011) asserts that the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on sustainable development resonate in almost all legislative and policy imperatives and emphasise equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hope. Educational transformation, however, is dependent on a socially just educational environment that place equal value on the social justice principles of distribution and recognition (Garrett, 2010).

Education delivery is determined by management strategies executed by a person or body-in-authority (Van der Westhuizen, 1991), and is regarded by Manning (2001) to manifest in managed conversations. Social justice leaders in schools are constantly in conversation with themselves in self-reflective praxis and in dialogue with others. Intrinsically, they become agents of change in the broader educational system, and in schools. As agents of change they embrace and enhance diversity in being critically conscious of difference and sameness in a multi-, inter- and transcultural world (Van Vuuren, Van der Westhuizen & Van der Walt, 2012). Guilherme and Dietz (2015) argue that these layered concepts of diversity, consciousness, and multi, inter and transcultural difference are often used ubiquitously and indiscriminantly. The idea of diversity in education should be explored from both a monocultural and essentialising multicultural perspective as individual and collective phenomena in schools. These school leaders are bridging leaders, who overtly or covertly address inequity (Merchant & Shoho, 2010) in and through their actioned management strategies. These management strategies provide strategic direction and hope to school leaders, where matters of diversity – particularity in the school system – are encountered on a daily basis (Dantley & Tillman, 2010).

Traditionally SWOT-analyses focused on the monitoring and evaluation of an organisation's strengths (S) and weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). However, Stavros and Hinrichs (2009) advance the SOAR strategic planning framework, i.e. building on Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and (measurable) Results. This

framework focuses on strengths, and seeks to understand the whole system by including the voices of the relevant stakeholders on those aspects at which an organisation excels, which skills could be further developed, *and* that which "is compelling to those who have a 'stake' in the organization's [sic] success" (Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009:20). For Mintzberg (1989:69), strategy making is about an inner awareness found in the "mysteries of intuition", whilst Freire (2007:69) defines it as "revolutionary leadership" and "co-intentional education".

The obligation to ensure that sustainable management strategies are put in place is not only a moral one; it also implies an ongoing social agenda. In this regard, the responsibility towards social justice when devising these strategies is not restricted to the level of policy-making. It should, rather, be extended to the level of both government (at macro level) and schools (at micro level). Strategy making steers essential actions in a consistent, purposeful and coordinated manner, through continuous improvement against determinates of good practice, as described above.

Empirical Investigation
Since this research employed a socio-constructive framework to understand social justice praxis, it calls attention to individual sense-making, and to the construction of principals' social and psychological worlds. These worlds are constructed and co-constructed through rational social processes of communication and interaction.

A Qualitative Social-Constructivist Research Design
The empirical study entailed a qualitative social-constructivist research design (Merriam, 2009) to understand and interpret, albeit subjectively, the meaning that participant-principals attached to their successful management strategies, in order to enhance sustainable social justice praxis. Social-constructivists generally view reality as relative, constantly changing, and informed by linguistic convention.

Sampling and Research Instrument
A disproportional stratified purposive sampling procedure was followed, based on principles of fairness, and theoretical constructs (Mouton, 2001). District Officials in two South African provincial departments of education performed the purposive selection task in accordance with pre-determined criteria. These officials used their own discretion in determining whether the selected principals met the predetermined criteria. The criteria these principals were obliged to meet were, firstly, that they understood the concepts of justice and social justice praxis, secondly, that they adhered to and implemented legal, systemic and institutional determinants, and thirdly, that they acknowledged the need for fair distribution and educational trans-

formation. The assumption was that *general best social justice praxis* could be found in the management work that the chosen school principals maintained. No biographical data of the officials was solicited. Being independently and externally chosen by their superiors affirmed that, as transformative leaders, they were not only oriented towards social justice, but that they indeed practiced it. However, they did not proportionally reflect the population.

Two of the four district officials in the North-West Province selected 14 participant-principals, who took part in individual interviews. Accidental sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) resulted in two focus-group interviews in one school district in the Western Cape, with 11 participants. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans (presented below in translated version) and in English (verbatim).

An interview schedule served as a personal impression memo to contextualise specific schools, attitudes, and the rapport between the researchers and the participant-principals. The questions focused on the participants' role to ensure effective social justice praxis and their understanding of constitutional values and management strategies to realise these values. They were asked to share positive and negative experiences, along with their staff's preparedness for social justice in education. Lastly, they were asked to identify those who were responsible for effective social justice praxis in their schools.

The findings of this study are generalisable to the sample only. As with transferability, generalisability of this research would not lie with the researchers, but with those principals, policymakers and scholars who might use these management strategies in the future (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Trustworthiness, Ethical Considerations and Transferability
Rigid criteria validated the trustworthiness and soundness of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Trustworthiness was established where the selection criteria (discussed above) was credible. The interaction with the participants brought about raised levels of awareness and reflexivity on the part of both the researchers and the researched, which formed the catalyst for action that would follow in the proposed management strategies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Qualitative trustworthiness was evident in the ensuing relationships, which were ethical, respectful and which continued long after the interviews with the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

The following ethical aspects were accounted for (Mouton, 2001): protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, honesty with professional colleagues, internal review boards, and adherence to the professional code of ethics of the

university under whose auspices this research was done. The rights and expectations of participants were respected and anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed. The purpose of the research was communicated in a clear and honest manner and, as far as possible, no intrusion in the professional lives of the participants was allowed.

Data Analysis and Processing
The decision to use a qualitative constructivist research design was based on the premise that the data thus collected, analysed and interpreted would yield a deeper understanding of the qualitative data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) in accordance with the research premise that social justice praxis was to be found in schools. The researchers recognised that constant change in social justice as a phenomenon, and of qualitative data analysis, was inevitable. The findings of the qualitative data analysis were generated from the 12 semi-structured, individual, and two focus-group interviews. The process involved organising, perusal, classification and synthesis. From these actions, the data processing followed three phases and 18 steps. Phase I started with data recording, transcription and deconstruction of the first Atlas.ti™ transcripts. Phase II included the final construction of the Hermeneutic Unit: Social Justice in Atlas.ti™ from which an Atlas.ti™ code list emerged. Phase III commenced with the construction of an Excel-file, an Atlas.ti™ Frequency Table and network heuristics (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009) that resulted in seven management strategies, of which four are reported in this article (Figure 2): optimising principal's virtues as *Gemeinschaft* relationships, influencing the education system and its structures, fostering a disciplined school environment based on constitutional values and a sustained social justice praxis, based on compassion, love and care.

Findings and Discussion
Principals' Management Strategy as Gemeinschaft Relationships
Principals optimised the virtues of responsibility, authenticity and presence (Starratt, 2009) as *Gemeinschaft* (community) relationships towards effective social justice praxis. Whereas these principals upheld the constitutional values of human rights, human dignity, equality and social justice, which included non-discrimination on the basis of race, it should be noted that the endemic racial divide is very much alive and well in education. Contextualisation of race in this discussion was, therefore necessary in order to clarify participant-principals' stance against racialism and other injustices. Fairness formed the bedrock of their personal agency and responsibility for sustainable social justice. They were actively engaged in issues of "*a life of justice, truth and respect based on shared values*" (Calabrese, 2006:173), and these principals were astute activists and sensitive towards a "*culturally diverse learner and teacher corps.*" Social justice praxis was the praxis of "*love, an attitude of the heart ("hartsaak"), non-discrimination and acceptance of the wonder of diversity of humankind which enabled ownership.*" The virtue of responsibility informed the socially just activities of these principals towards those who are marginalised, but also towards those privileged in society, affirming Starratt's (2009) notion that responsibility returns to authenticity for its subjective grounding and moral weight in expressing a positive or negative moral response to social injustices.

One principal believed that it was important for teachers or school staff in "*monoracial and monolingual schools to attend courses to prepare them to teach*" in a diverse reality, stating "*we need teachers, schools, school principals and management teams who want to do the right thing for our country.*" The principle of redistributive justice is regarded as normative in a cooperative venture of mutual benefit (Rawls, 1999a) and mutual respect. Another, when asked what her understanding of social justice praxis was, said "*basically it's* [...] *our daily bread,* [...] *we live with it, we live it, every time everywhere you are, for as long as you're living with people, you must encounter social justice.*" Being a Hindu, another said "*[b]efore even reading the Constitution and books … we were born with these things, you know when you are brought up as a child, these things are instilled in us: you know that* [you] *need to respect* [others].*"[i] The social justice praxis reported by these principals illuminate the manner in which practice and values are connected, in the sense that the "dignity of man shall be inviolable" (Department of Education, Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1995; Goolam, 2001:45).

Influence Education Systems and Structures
The second management strategy that ran like a fils rouge throughout the interviews, was that government and union officials ought to be persuaded to influence political matters that would serve the best interest of the child. This became evident in relation to disabilities and special education needs, where principals referred to "*learners who were not able to read, subtract ...* because *primary schools followed* a '*pass-one-pass-all' policy*", which led to a bottleneck situation in secondary schools. This situation affirms the existence of a mismatch between actual learner achievement and government policies of the state as distributing agency (Miller, 1999).
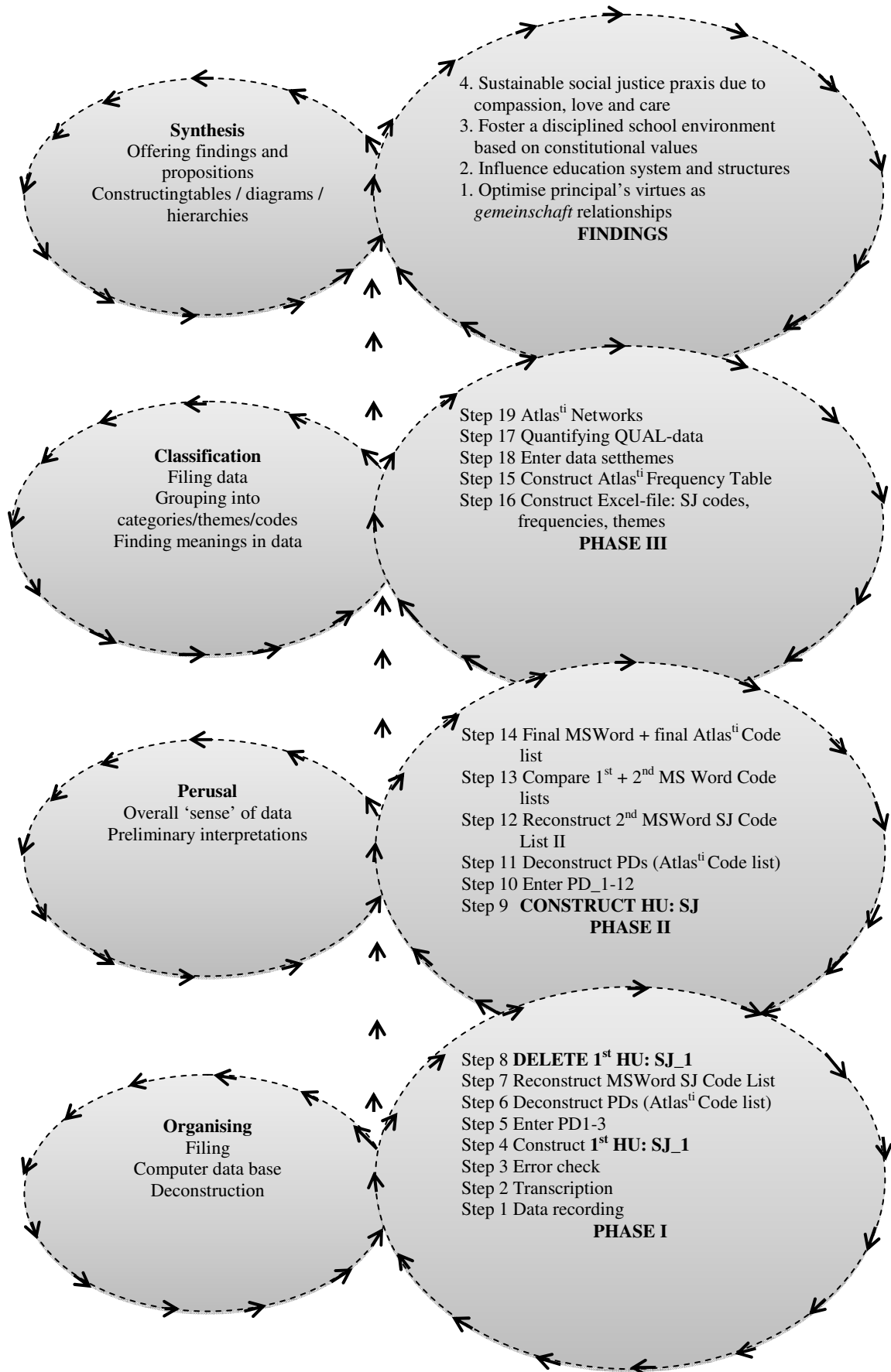
Synthesis
Offering findings and propositions
Constructingtables / diagrams / hierarchies

4. Sustainable social justice praxis due to compassion, love and care
3. Foster a disciplined school environment based on constitutional values
2. Influence education system and structures
1. Optimise principal's virtues as *gemeinschaft* relationships
FINDINGS

Classification
Filing data
Grouping into categories/themes/codes
Finding meanings in data

Step 19 Atlas^{ti} Networks
Step 17 Quantifying QUAL-data
Step 18 Enter data setthemes
Step 15 Construct Atlas^{ti} Frequency Table
Step 16 Construct Excel-file: SJ codes, frequencies, themes
PHASE III

Perusal
Overall 'sense' of data
Preliminary interpretations

Step 14 Final MSWord + final Atlas^{ti} Code list
Step 13 Compare 1st + 2nd MS Word Code lists
Step 12 Reconstruct 2nd MSWord SJ Code List II
Step 11 Deconstruct PDs (Atlas^{ti} Code list)
Step 10 Enter PD_1-12
Step 9 **CONSTRUCT HU: SJ**
PHASE II

Organising
Filing
Computer data base
Deconstruction

Step 8 **DELETE 1st HU: SJ_1**
Step 7 Reconstruct MSWord SJ Code List
Step 6 Deconstruct PDs (Atlas^{ti} Code list)
Step 5 Enter PD1-3
Step 4 Construct **1st HU: SJ_1**
Step 3 Error check
Step 2 Transcription
Step 1 Data recording
PHASE I

Figure 2 Data analysis spiral

Language as a barrier to access, but also as mother tongue and surrounding policy came to the fore where a principal [Afrikaans, white, male] said "*I had to manage two schools on one premises, an Afrikaans and Setswana school*" with a "*racial division of labour between teachers and learners.*" He changed this situation by implementing a new integrated timetable, declaring that "*they would manage the school as a single unit, no you and us, but a unitary system for all of us.*" He believed that "*the best teacher with the highest qualification would teach all the Grade 12s in a specific subject,* [i.e.] *the best maths teacher whose first language was Afrikaans would teach the Afrikaans group, and then immediately thereafter he would teach the English group.*" Another principal [Afrikaans, Coloured/person of colour, male] managed "*thirteen languages of mother tongue speakers; where multi-millionaires' children were sitting next to children from the squatter camps, where powerful religious groups could be found and each form of diversity existed.*" Principals focused on social justice may find that the management of diversity and social justice remains a challenge. Yet, in being responsible, authentic and present in the lives of learners (Starratt, 2009) they contribute to a conscious acceptance of diversity.

These principals did not regard the state as the sole agent to institute and implement government policies, nor was the state seen as the sole distributing agent of good (and bad) practices in schools. As social justice practitioners they in collaborating with the state, took responsibility, and understood that all social activities and concurrent praxis (Miller, 1999) were theirs as well.

Inculcate a Disciplined School Environment based on Constitutional Values

Basic education is primarily about learners and their cognitive and, importantly, social development, in a sustained environment. Developing people is a fundamental task of school leaders (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009) and is essentially linked to citizenship. Management strategies do, we suggest, inculcate a disciplined school environment for learners to embrace human diversity and dignity, democracy and ubuntu principles (Nafukho, 2006). Data analysis confirmed that the broader institutional framework of education ought to be influenced by those in power so as to optimise effective social justice praxis.

School safety and the story told by one principal [person of colour] was about a school that experienced a number of burglaries, due to its location amongst squatter camps. The principal noted that "*schools were virtually plundered*", but he convinced the school community that a school is "*this ray of light almost like a lighthouse, where people would gather, and not a place where half of*

the school was carried away" [sic]. He believed that "*the school did not need a fence, the community should be that fence, and the fence should not be there to keep children inside, the learners should be in the school because they* want […] *to be there.*" This approach ultimately spread through the community in question, where burglaries subsequently became isolated incidents. This instance confirms Nieuwenhuis's (2010) understanding of social justice from a holistic perspective, where it would be seen to continuously challenge past injustices and practices.

Sustainable Management Strategies for Social Justice Praxis because of Compassion, Love and Care

The fourth strategy was that school principals in a diverse school environment were obliged to actualise sustained management strategies for social justice praxis with compassion, love and care. One of the major themes was diversity, which became evident in relation to racial and cultural differences with regard to disciplinary matters. Traditional methods of classroom discipline no longer worked, because "*black learners, although 'born free' [sic], learnt how to use numbers in their favour, as opposed to white learners, who would not have the support of peers if they challenged unfair authoritarian behaviour.*"

Fairness and discipline was a *sine qua non* for black learners when it came to disciplinary matters. Social justice should be a process of conscience building, of becoming acutely aware of a heightened and critical awareness of oppression, exclusion, and marginalisation (Freire, 2004). This consciousness of the potential consequences of cultural difference becomes evident in teachers who "*recognised and respected black learners' propensity to sing, dance and move.*" One believed that "*white teachers succumbed to white political guilt, and were more lenient towards black learners than their black colleagues would be.*" These examples of push-and-pull forces lie at the heart of what Kurland (1997) refers to as relationships that brought harmony or conflict, abundance or waste, human development or degradation, a culture of life or a culture of death, equality or fairness.

Colour blindness was found in the *petit récits* by a principal of colour: a Korean missionary used the parable of all people being brothers and sisters, who needed to work together and take care of one another. When he was about to leave, a little white girl said "*my sister is not feeling well, can you please pray for her?*" He said, "*yes sure, come let's pray for her. Where's your sister? She's in the class.*" She went to fetch her 'sister' and to the missionary's surprise, he saw that she was black and not white. The principal affirmed later that the white girl was influenced to perceive her friend as

her sister, since this little girl didn't appear to notice colour in the girl, who she had adopted as if her own sister.

It is this manner of indifference to race that the South African Constitution asks for in the shared aspirations of a nation, in terms of the values and the moral and ethical direction the nation identified for its future. Principals agreed that values and ethical conduct was of paramount importance to creating a sustainable, socially just school environment, a kind of "*über* form of social consensus" (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007:400). These principals displayed what Starratt (2012) calls mature qualities of autonomy, connectedness and transcendence. However, the problem of conflicting home and school values was noted by study participants, where one expressed, "*we have to instill* […] *the proper values, which is difficult, because some of our values differ from the values they bring from home. A simple example: a boy may say to you, 'why may I not smoke, because my parents give me money for cigarettes?' There's a conflict of* […] *values* [at play in such a situation]*, and to bring about a mind change is quite difficult - you have to sit with that child and you have to show him the pros and the cons in connection with the issue*."[ii] Another said the learners "*can't wait to hear what you're saying and it's because of discipline, tradition, and values and morals* [they experience in a school environment]*, that they allow you to teach them!*"[iii] In addition, principals agreed that a vision of educational reform and social transformation was the result of a person-to-person (Le Grange, 2007) cooperation, where ownership was affirmed by a white female principal of a primarily black school. She told the parents "*you know what, this is not my school, it is* your *school, it is* your *school, I'm working for you! You are my boss, you must come and tell me if I do something wrong*" [sic]. Her voice and demeanour conveyed a sense of her conviction that she and the school form part of a community of parents, acknowledging a sense of collective 'ownership'. Principals in this study created a sustainable environment in which a change of heart occurred, where teaching was seen to involve "*walking on holy ground… .*" This leads to a closing consideration: we are walking, by the grace of the child who allows us to, on sacred ground*,* when it comes to their physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

These four key findings affirmed the *a priori* supposition that management strategies for effective social justice praxis were to be found in schools.

Conclusion
Although primarily a South African-based inquiry, the recommendations have wider implications for sustainable social justice leadership. A fils rouge throughout the research is that defining social

justice amounts to the inclusion of those individual acts towards the 'other' that require from each individual that which is necessary for the common good to prevail in their schools. It is proposed that leaders in education, on individual and universal levels, ought to incorporate social justice praxis in their active engagement with learners. Social justice praxis ought to become a personal conviction, a conviction that embraces government policies into praxis, albeit in a critical way. The progress stories told confirm and acknowledge the belief that sustainable management of effective social justice praxis is, indeed, possible. Moreover, their stories offer management strategies with which to rebuild a sustainable and coherent education system. This investigation and the interactions with the participant-principals left the researchers with a deeper insight into their management strategies, and how they shared their beliefs on social justice praxis without discrimination, a praxis that was fair towards the disadvantaged as well as the privileged. These principals' management practices were based on the constitutional values of democracy, human dignity and equality, and they advanced human rights fairly to establish a non-racist and non-sexist school environment. The participant-principals' management strategies celebrated a shared commitment to, and a responsibility towards increasingly sustainable efforts to further social change, as well as celebrating diversity and cultural enrichment, both in schools and in society more broadly. By so doing, their social justice praxis substantiated the speculation that inquiry into *effective, valuable praxis* offers an alternative understanding of sustainable management interventions.

Notes
i.   Verbatim quotation was edited for the publication.
ii.   Verbatim quotation was edited for the publication.
iii. Verbatim quotation was edited for the publication.

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