

THE IDENTITIES AND PRACTICES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE CLERKS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

by
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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

School administrative clerks are a category of educational worker that is normally overlooked by those doing research on schools. These workers are also ubiquitously underappreciated in school discourses. There is a lack of research on the identities and practices of administrative clerks which is the specific focus of this thesis. This thesis aims to address this knowledge gap in the literature. Therefore the research questions addressed in this thesis were: (1) how are school administrative clerks' identities and practices constituted? (2) what are school administrative clerks contributions to the functioning of schools?

The research questions were answered by conducting a qualitative study that involved interviewing and observing three purposively chosen school administrative clerks as well as conducting document analysis of policy documents. The analysis of the data was written up in four articles, each employing theoretical frameworks apposite for the analysis that it pursued. The articles variously addressed the way in which school administrative clerks' identities and practices are negotiated. They provided insight into their professional contributions in their worksites.

This is a thesis by articles. It consists of six chapters. The introductory wraparound chapter is followed by four articles, which constitute the four middle chapters of the thesis. These four academic articles have been published in, or submitted for publication to, different journals. Chapter six is the conclusion chapter.

The insights gained from the four articles were that the administrative clerks' identities and practices were constituted by their exercise of agency. They enacted what I regarded as a form of 'subordinated agency'. The first article suggests that their reflexive agency resulted in spatial practices that made a contribution to their schools' management and teaching practices. The second article suggests that administrative clerks' rhetorical agency was established through their careful and tactful negotiation of rhetorical spaces in order to exercise their voice. They accomplished this through their resistance to the rhetorical norms of the school. The third article argues that they enacted an ethical agency which was instantiated through their quest for self-transformation which led to professional practices that had considerable positive consequences for the school. The fourth article posits that their accumulation of information and relational resources translated into a form of participatory capital that laid the foundation for their agency. It is through the deployment of their participatory capital that they exercised their agency to fashion unique professional identities.

The conclusion of the thesis is that agency plays a significant role in the way that school administrative clerks' identities, practices and their contribution to their school spaces are instantiated. School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted by the subordinated agency that they are able to marshal within the professional spaces of their work environments. It is this subordinated agency that propels the administrative clerks' daily creative boundary crossings between their school management practices on the one hand and their broader educational practices on the other hand. The study thus presents an analysis of their incisive professional contribution in spite of their putative subordinated status.

Opsomming

Skool administratiewe klerke is 'n groep opvoedkundige werkers wat normaalweg oor die hoof gesien word wanneer navorsing in skole gedoen word. Hierdie groep word ook duidelik onder verteenwoordig in diskoerse oor skole. Daar is 'n gebrek aan navorsing oor die identiteite en praktyke van administratiewe klerke. Laasgenoemde is die spesifieke fokus van hierdie tesis. Hierdie tesis poog om hierdie leemte in die literatuur aan te spreek deur die volgende navorsingsvrae aan te spreek: (1) hoe word skool administratiewe klerke se identiteit en praktyke gekonstrueer? (2) wat is die skool administratiewe klerke se bydrae tot die funksionering van skole?

'n Kwalitatiewe studie is gebruik om die navorsingsprobleem aan te spreek. Dit het die vorm van dokumente analise sowel as onderhoude en waarnemings van drie administratiewe klerke aangeneem. Elk van hierdie artikels spreek die skool se administratiewe klerk se identiteit en praktyke aan deur van 'n verskillende teoretiese raamwerk gebruik te maak. Hierdeur is insig verkry in hul professionele bydrae in hul onderskeie werksomgewings.

Hierdie is 'n tesis deur artikel publikasie, wat uit ses hoofstukke bestaan. Die inleidende hoofstuk word gevolg deur vier hoofstukke, elk in die vorm van 'n artikel. Hierdie vier akademiese artikels is reeds gepubliseer of voorgelê vir publikasie in verskillende joernale. Die gevolgtrekking word in hoofstuk ses aangebied.

Die vier artikels het na vore gebring dat skole se administratiewe klerke se identiteite en praktyke gekonstitueer word deur die uitoefening van hulle agentuur. Daar is bevind dat hulle 'n ondergeskikte agentuur uitoefen. Die eerste artikel benadruk dat hul agentuur die resultaat is van hulle refleksiewe ruimtelike praktyke. Die tweede artikel benadruk dat administratiewe klerke se retoriese agentuur voorgebring word deur hulle retoriese ruimtes, waarin hulle hulself laat geld deur versigtige en taktvolle optrede. Laasgenoemde word vermag deur hul dialektiese weerstand teen ruimtelike norme. Die derde artikel suggereer dat administratiewe klerke 'n etiese agentuur verkry deur hulle soeke na self-transformasie. Ek wil aanvoer dat laasgenoemde aanleiding gee tot professionele praktyke wat 'n beduidende positiewe uitwerking op die skool het. Die vierde artikel dui daarop dat hul versameling van inligting en beskikbare bronne die grondslag lê vir hul agentskap. Dit is deur middel van die ontplooiing van hul deelnemende kapitaal dat administratiewe klerke by skole hulle agentskap so uitoefen dat dit meewerk in die vorming van hul unieke professionele identiteite.

Die gevolgtrekking van hierdie proefskrif is dat agentskap 'n beduidende rol speel in die wyse waarop die identiteite en praktyke van ondergeskiktes soos administratiewe klerke in skoolruimtes gevorm word. Skool administratiewe klerke se identiteit en praktyke word gekonstitueer deur die ondergeskikte agentskap wat hulle in die professionele ruimte van hulle werksomgewing versamel. Dit is hierdie ondergeskikte agentskap wat dit vir die administratiewe klerke moontlik maak om daagliks die grense tussen skool bestuurspraktyke aan die een kant en hulle breër opvoedkundige praktyke aan die ander

kant te oorbrug. Hierdie tesis bied 'n analise van die waardevolle professionele bydrae van skool administratiewe klerke, ten spyte van hulle ondergeskikte status.

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The first article appeared in a peer reviewed journal, *Perspectives in Education* 30(4): 64-75.

The second, third and fourth articles were all submitted to peer-reviewed journals.

Dedications

In memory of my father Suliaman Bayat- *ALLAH yarhamhu* [may God have mercy on him] and all my teachers and mentors who contributed to my development.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Declaration..... | i |
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Opsomming | iv |
| Acknowledgements..... | vi |
| Dedications | vii |
| Table of Contents | viii |
| 1 Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Background: how I chose the administrative clerks as a unit of analysis..... | 2 |
| 1.3 Research as dissensus: towards a personal rationale for the study | 3 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 6 |
| 1.5 Assumptions about social reality: how to know it and how to gather knowledge about it | 6 |
| 1.6 Research Methodology..... | 8 |
| 1.6.1 Research Design..... | 8 |
| 1.7 Research methods..... | 11 |
| 1.7.1 Representing others: the researcher’s positionality..... | 13 |
| 1.7.2 Sampling | 15 |
| 1.7.3 Data Collection..... | 18 |
| 1.7.4 Data Analysis | 21 |
| 1.8 Reflexivity | 23 |

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 1.9 | Ethical Considerations | 24 |
| 1.10 | The theoretical frameworks used in the four articles | 24 |
| 1.11 | Concluding comments to the introduction..... | 29 |
| 2 | Chapter 2 :The spatial practices of school administrative clerks: making space for contributive justice | 30 |
| 2.1 | Abstract | 30 |
| 2.2 | Introduction..... | 30 |
| 2.3 | Theoretical considerations..... | 33 |
| 2.4 | Introducing the spatial practitioners | 37 |
| 2.5 | Towards contributive justice: the spatial practice of the three school administrative clerks..... | 38 |
| 2.6 | Spatial practices of care | 39 |
| 2.6.1 | Pedagogic support | 40 |
| 2.7 | Spatial practices of sway | 41 |
| 2.8 | Practices of surrogacy | 45 |
| 2.9 | Main conclusions | 46 |
| 2.10 | Acknowledgement | 49 |
| 2.11 | References | 49 |
| 3 | Chapter 3: Engendering ‘rhetorical spaces’ to counter testimonial injustice: the voicing practices of school administrative clerks..... | 52 |
| 3.1 | Abstract | 52 |
| 3.2 | Introduction..... | 52 |
| 3.3 | Theoretical considerations..... | 55 |

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 3.4 | Contextualising the testimonial practices of the three school administrative clerks | 59 |
| 3.5 | Composing testimony: school administrative clerks' interactions | 60 |
| 3.6 | Experiencing testimonial injustice in rhetorical spaces | 62 |
| 3.7 | Striving for credibility: engendering rhetorical spaces..... | 64 |
| 3.7.1 | Continuity of spatial presence | 64 |
| 3.7.2 | Forming close relationships..... | 66 |
| 3.7.3 | Enhancing their credibility through academic credentialing..... | 67 |
| 3.7.4 | Fostering credibility through additional role tasks..... | 68 |
| 3.8 | Conclusion..... | 70 |
| 3.9 | Acknowledgement | 71 |
| 3.10 | References | 71 |
| 4 | Chapter 4 :Tactically deployed practices as ethical formation: the identity practices of school administrative clerks | 78 |
| 4.1 | Abstract | 78 |
| 4.2 | Introduction..... | 78 |
| 4.3 | Theoretical considerations..... | 81 |
| 4.4 | The ethical goals and aspirations of school administrative clerks..... | 85 |
| 4.5 | The practices of the professional administrative self | 88 |
| 4.5.1 | Tactical deployment of identity practices of care..... | 88 |
| 4.5.2 | Tactical deployment of management & leadership identity practices | 91 |
| 4.6 | Discussion | 94 |
| 4.7 | Conclusion..... | 96 |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 4.8 | Acknowledgement | 97 |
| 4.9 | References | 97 |
| 5 | Chapter 5: School administrative clerk's deployment of participatory capital in establishing practice-based agency | 104 |
| 5.1 | Abstract | 104 |
| 5.2 | Introduction | 104 |
| 5.3 | Theoretical framework | 106 |
| 5.4 | The school office space | 109 |
| 5.5 | School administrative clerks' participatory capital deployment in the school governing body | 113 |
| 5.6 | School administrative clerks in the school management team | 119 |
| 5.7 | Conclusion | 123 |
| 5.8 | Acknowledgement | 124 |
| 5.9 | References | 125 |
| 6 | Chapter 6: Looking back and moving forward | 128 |
| 6.1 | School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their reflexive spatial agency | 129 |
| 6.2 | School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their reflexive agency which is manifest in their dialectical resistance to rhetorical injustices | 131 |
| 6.3 | School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their ethical agency | 132 |
| 6.4 | School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through learning how to participate in the sociocultural spaces: practice based-agency based agency | 133 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 6.5 | A brief summary: answering the research questions | 134 |
| 6.5.1 | The theoretical boundaries pushed: The formation of identities and practices: the contribution of reflexivity, dialectical resistance, ethical commitments and sociocultural learning | 137 |
| 6.6 | The final word | 137 |
| 7 | References | 140 |
| | Appendix A – Approval letter from WCED to conduct research | 156 |
| | Appendix B –Ethics clearance letter from Stellenbosch University | 157 |
| | Appendix C – Letter of permission from ZPS primary school..... | 157 |
| | Appendix D – Email permission from YPS primary school..... | 159 |
| | Appendix E – Email permission from EPS primary school..... | 160 |
| | Appendix F – Stellenbosch University research consent letter | 161 |

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

no research, about education or otherwise, is politically neutral. (Kress, 2011:11)

1.1 Introduction

This thesis describes the findings, insights and interpretations that I generated through the process of doing my research for, and the writing of, this doctoral thesis, which is titled 'The identities and practices of school administrative clerks in selected schools in the Western Cape'. My thesis work was informed by my personal interest in understanding human action within the context of structural constraints.

This is a thesis by article publication. The thesis consists of two wraparound chapters, which are the Introduction and Conclusion chapters. The core of the thesis is presented in the form of four academic articles that have either been published or submitted for publication in different academic journals. As regulated by the guidelines of the Faculty of Education at Stellenbosch University for an article based thesis format, the four articles were produced and finalised after the acceptance of my doctoral proposal in 2011. At the outset I want to acknowledge the contribution of my supervisor Professor Aslam Fataar in guiding me through the component parts of this thesis and in supporting me throughout this doctoral study.

In this introductory chapter, I present the overall orientation of my thesis wherein I provide the background to the study, rationale, theoretical and methodological assumptions, research questions, and the contribution of the study.

The Introductory and Conclusion chapters enabled me to provide a coherent account of the conceptual parameters of the thesis, how these play out across the articles and a comprehensive summary of how the articles, separately and in sum, enabled me to answer the study's research question. Each article has its own theoretical framework and a discussion of the research methodology. Each is based on a specific 'reading' and application of the research data in pursuit of a particular conceptual angle. The four

articles have unavoidable commonalities and some repetition as a result of their concentration on a single research focus, i.e. school administrative clerks. However, the conceptual focus of each of the articles differs. They each pursue a distinct conceptual angle in response to the study's main research questions. I envisaged the articles as a logical build-up in my quest for a comprehensive response to the research questions. In other words, the focus of each article connects to, and builds up logically, to the rest of the articles in order to provide a coherent conceptual account of the identities and practices of these school administrative clerks and how this underpins their percipient activities that are crucial for the continuing functioning of their schools. In the remainder of the wraparound introductory chapter I capture the build-up in the research process from the reasons to why I embarked on this process, how the research is conceptualised, the research questions, the theoretical and methodological assumptions, and the ethical considerations of the research project. The chapter ends with a brief summary of this introductory chapter as a stepping stone to the ensuing four articles, which is the core of the thesis.

1.2 Background: how I chose the administrative clerks as a unit of analysis

There is scant acknowledgement of the roles of school administrative clerks in educational processes, policy discourses or academic work (Conley, Gould, & Levine, 2010; Thomson, Ellison, Byrom, & Bulman, 2007). Insufficient attention is paid to their professional contribution within school contexts. It appears as if school administrative clerks are neither valued nor appreciated, which belies their actual contributions to the functioning of schools (Casanova, 1991; Thomson et al., 2007). By exploring school administrative clerks' identities and practices, this thesis intends to fill a knowledge gap in our understanding of this category of educational worker and attempts to shed light on their work contributions in their institutional contexts.

My choice of focus emerged out of personal connections to the topic. I became acquainted with school administrative clerks when my colleague in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the university where I am a lecturer informed me about a project on school administrative clerks that he was involved in. The project involved the development of a training course, a Certificate of School Business Administration (CSBA),

intended to train administrative clerks as school business managers. My colleague and I successfully applied to do the evaluation of the CSBA training program. My role in the evaluation was to gather data, write the literature review and contribute to the final report. Having met many school administrative clerks during this process I was intrigued when I discovered that in spite of the fact that they reported experiences of feeling undervalued and unrecognised in their workplaces their daily professional contributions appeared crucial to the functioning of their schools.

After the CSBA evaluation was completed, I began to feel the need to do research on their school – based occupational identities and practices. I was primarily responding to what I perceived to be their anomalous status of on the one hand contributing to their schools' daily operations while having very little institutional recognition for their roles on the other. This anomalous identity status became the underlying motivation for my choice to concentrate my doctoral research on school administrative clerks.

1.3 Research as dissensus: towards a personal rationale for the study

The rationale for my research is twofold. On the one hand it is driven by my ethical commitments and on the other it is driven by my political commitment to equality. In terms of my ethical commitments, this thesis is about my sense of humanness, the equality principle that orders my interaction with others, and the care for the other that drives me and constitutes my identity. In operationalising my personal commitments, I developed a set of research questions that guided me into investigation of how people respond to subordination, marginalization and 'othering'. My ethics derives from my life experiences. I have experienced subordination and marginalization in my life. In the writing of this thesis I am motivated by my marginalization experienced as a young boy when my father told me that the apartheid government forbade me from playing on the sandy white beach of Strand in Cape Town, within a stone's throw from our family home, because it was reserved for whites. I am motivated by my feeling less and being agitated by my skin colour because my skin pigment was darker than my sisters and brother. Friends and family members would comment on the differences in skin colour. What motivates me to write about the plight of the subordinate are the childhood experiences of being immersed

in spaces of vulnerability and marginality when my father would take me and my sisters to Langa, Gugulethu and later Khayelitsha where we witnessed people's abject living conditions compared to the relatively privileged spaces of our own home. What also politicised me was my the experiences of personal marginalisation while I was doing religious studies in Saudi Arabia which is a society characterised by strong patriarchal norms and prejudice towards expatriates and other nationals, especially those who come from developing countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia. I experienced othering and marginalization in Saudi Arabia because my physical features matched that of peoples of the Indian subcontinent, who are regarded as inferior. These three biographical snippets are intended to indicate the symbolic and material terrains wherein I developed a personal ethics based on heightened responsiveness to the plight of the marginalised and othered. This, I believe, informed my choice of focus on understanding the identities and practices of subordinates such as the school administrative clerks that I concentrate on in this study.

I regard my thesis - the act of doing the research and completing the thesis - as a political act. Drawing on Ranciere (2003), I support a view of politics as a movement toward the disruption of the social order arrangement. I am motivated by the desire to do research and produce academic writing that aims to disclose the power relations that push marginalised people into obscurity. I think of my thesis as a political act that goes a small way toward exposing a fundamental omission in dominant understandings of educational leadership, which is based on what I would argue, is a structured silence of the presence of the school secretary.

'School administrative clerk' is the current term used to refer to this category of education worker. Educational texts and policy discourses rarely address the role and contribution of administrative clerks. The existing research on the practices of school secretaries and administrative clerks has highlighted the unrecognised and invisible nature of their practices (Casanova, 1991; Thomson et al., 2007). The limited extant literature on this educational worker only deals with how the principal should use the administrative clerk more effectively (see Hart 1985; Mann, 1980). Most administrative clerks in schools (Casanova, 1991; Van der Linde, 1998; Thomson, Ellison, Byrom & Bulman, 2007; Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010; Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2011), higher education institutions (Szekeres, 2004; Mcinnis, 2006; Whitchurch & London, 2004) and businesses

(Fearfull, 1996, 2005; Pringle, 1998; Truss, Alfes, Shantz & Rosewarne, 2012; Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995; Truss, 1993) indicate that these administrative clerks and secretaries are regarded as marginal and invisible even though their contributions are vital for the smooth running of their workplaces. Thus, there is a gap in the literature since not much has been written on the school administrative clerks' identities and practices and there have only been a few instances of literature that capture their perspectives (see Casanova, 1991). This thesis aims to move toward closing this gap. The purpose of this thesis is to use various theoretical frameworks to explore the identities and practices of school administrative clerks with a view to highlighting the practices and activities that school administrative clerks engage in within their schools. The aim is to bring to light what activities school administrative clerks contribute to the functioning of their schools. In addition, I aim to highlight the way they negotiate their social contexts and dominant discourses of their schools to show the extent of their involvement in schooling processes.

Continuing the Rancierian reading, my thesis is a politics of refusal; i.e. a refusal to let structured inequalities persist without confrontation. My research study and thesis aim to engender a dissensus that disrupts the consensus that school administrative clerks are marginal and subordinate and therefore are not worthy of academic study. Dissensus in a Rancierian reading aims at opening "a gap in the very configuration of sensible concepts, a dissociation introduced into the correspondence between ways of being and ways of doing, seeing and speaking" (Ranciere, 2010:15). I had set out to disrupt and challenge settled notions about the role of school administrative clerks. My study intended to provide a basis for challenging the hegemonic notion that the professional management of schools are limited to the practices of principals. For example the literature on school governing bodies (SGB) only speaks to the contribution of principal and parents (Heystek, 2004; Mncube, 2009). There is no mention of administrative clerks even though they are eligible for, and in many cases actually are, members of their school governing bodies.

In sum, I identified the knowledge gap concerning school administrative clerks and transformed my political and ethical concerns into analytical questions and set out to operationalise them in this research study. In the next section I elaborate on my research questions.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

- How are school administrative clerks' identities and practices constituted?
- What are school administrative clerks' contributions to the functioning of their schools?

These questions allowed me to explore school administrative clerks' self-conceptions, how they are interpellated by dominant discourses, their doings and actions, the reasons for why they do what they do, which I approach with a focus on their identities and practices. I also delve into the type of practices that administrative clerks engage in as well as what these practices mean for the schools that they are part off.

In the next section I put forward my philosophical assumptions of social reality and how one can come to gather information thereof.

1.5 Assumptions about social reality: how to know it and how to gather knowledge about it

My assumptions regarding social reality and what can be known of it is that all theories about the world are grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and that all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible. There is no 'objective' or certain knowledge about the world, only multiple perspectives. However, I subscribe to a realist position of knowing, which is a position about knowing that emphasises the view that there exists a world out there beyond the level of thinking. In other words, I support the view that accepts that there is a real world out there, but that aspects of our social world and our knowledge of it, is constructed. This position conforms to what Howarth (2013: 93) refers to as a 'minimal' realist position at the ontological level. In addition, I subscribe to an interpretivist epistemological perspective. Frazer and Lacey (1993: 182) contend that "(e)ven if one is a realist at the ontological level, one could be an epistemological interpretivist . . . our knowledge of the real world is inevitably interpretive and provisional rather than

straightforwardly representational". From this perspective, there are potentially multiple interpretations of research contexts which are context-bound, and shaped by the interaction of the researcher and the research context (Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

In addition, the epistemological assumptions by which I pursue my research are informed by poststructuralist conventions that suggest that understanding the social world requires interrogating the dominant discourses that circulate within a society. Poststructuralist approaches tend to collapse social reality (ontology) to what we can know about this reality (epistemology) (Lincoln, 1995; Derrida, 1982, Foucault, 1973). Thus, poststructuralist approaches are said to subscribe to a constructionist ontology in that they see 'reality' as socially constructed. However, I draw on Lacan's concept of the Real -as interpreted by (Zizek, 1994). Lacan considers the Real as the realm that exists before discourse. This enabled me to use poststructuralism while maintaining a minimalist realist ontology (Howarth, 2013). Lacan contends that discourses always fall short of the Real, i.e. they are never able to fully describe it. Daly (2007: 59) explains that "from a post-structuralist perspective, the ontological is essentially that which shows the limits of every epistemological system". This means that people's experience of the Real can invalidate, compete or add to the discourses in circulation. It means that the 'lived experiences' of respondents can add to our discourses of the nature of the social world.

A Foucauldian poststructuralist position, for example, holds that identity categories are subject positions within discourses (Foucault, 1965; Weedon, 1987). In addition, individuals may occupy multiple subject positions simultaneously. A person's identity is not fixed: instead through discourse the person is positioned and may respond by positioning him or herself in discourse (Davies and Harré 1990; Bamberg 2004). These discourses are historical and cultural (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). They change over time and are not 'real' universal categories (Foucault, 1973). In sum, poststructuralism presents a picture of social reality as constructed by discourse and that it posits that individuals occupy multiple positions within these discourses.

The view explained above can be said to resemble an epistemologically relativist position which suggests that all knowledge claims are equal. While this is an accepted logical outflow of such a position, I do not subscribe to this relativist position. Contrary to this position, I hold that it is possible to gather knowledge and favour a version of the knowledge of social 'reality' that is consistent with my values. I endorse the opinion that

there are different valid epistemological perspectives on reality but that it is my values that influence and determine what I choose to accept as my epistemological perspective (Gill, 1991). As stated earlier, language does not fully capture the Real so my values and my empirical investigation of my respondents' experience allow me to capture some insights, even if it is just a slight insight, into that extra-discursive reality.

In sum, my assumptions concerning social reality is there is a real world out there but that the knowledge we gather thereof reflects our perspectives and our values. This knowledge of social reality is based on socially constructed concepts and ideas but can be challenged by experience.

1.6 Research Methodology

I conceptualise my research methodology as encompassing the decisions and considerations I took in the design and the implementing of my research study. In research books and articles the term methodology is used broadly (Carter and Little, 2007). In some instances it is used to describe methods or philosophical approaches to research and inquiry. In this thesis I use the term methodology to refer to “the study—the description, the explanation, and the justification—of methods, and not the methods themselves” (Kaplan, 1964: 18 cited in Carter and Little, 2007). I start by discussing and explaining the decisions I took concerning the design of the study.

1.6.1 Research Design

Ragin (1994: 191) defines ‘research design’ as “a plan for collecting and analysing evidence that will make it possible for the investigator to answer whatever questions he or she has posed. The design of an investigation touches almost all aspects of the research, from the minute details of data collection to the selection of the techniques of data analysis”. There is no standard procedure for designing or doing qualitative research (Maxwell, 1998).

The research plan of my research followed the logic of a qualitative study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007: 274) define qualitative research as “an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subject’s point of view.” Qualitative research is a term that encompasses a wide range of modes of inquiry that aim at understanding the meaning of human action. Qualitative research involves doing research within the natural setting of the informants (see Marshall and Rossman (2006), Creswell (2007) and Flick (2009). Thus I went to the schools to interview the respondents. Qualitative researchers contend that researcher is the key instrument of data collection (Merriam, 1998).

In order to answer my research, I needed to set up a qualitative research design that would get me to an understanding of how school administrative clerks’ identities and practices were constituted. I drew on poststructuralist insights on the way that identities and subjectivities are constructed via dominant discourses (Foucault, 1965; Foucault, 1973). In order to get to the dominant discourses I needed to study the relevant policy documents. I also needed to interview the principal and educational officials, principal and parents to see how they utilised dominant discourse to position the administrative clerk. But I also needed to get the respondents’ own experience of occupying a subject position. This I accessed by drawing on phenomenological research design principles to gather administrative clerks lived experience. In addition, I wanted to know what administrative clerks did, what motivated them and how these practices were constituted. Thus, I drew on ethnographical research design principles to incorporate a participation observation strategy into my study so that I could witness the practices of administrative clerks. Furthermore, I drew on researchers experiences in social science research (Plummer, 2001), ethnography (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1977) and social geography (Crosbie, 2006) to include respondent diaries for researching the administrative clerks practices. According to Alaszewski (2005: 25) “diary research can be used within different research designs.” All in all, mine was a qualitative study that drew on various established research methodological traditions in order to answer the research question.

In qualitative research, data is collected from multiple sources and uses multiple methods. I collected data from the school administrative clerks as the primary focus, and selected teachers, principals, education district officials. The multiple methods that I used to gather data included interviews, participation observation, and documents (such as policy

documents). In qualitative research the aim is to get the perspectives of the participants. I focused on the participants' perspectives, their meanings and their subjective views. However, I was aware that their experience was generated within the dominant discourses and I was aware of the influence social, political and historical factors. I was also aware of the multiple and even contradictory perspectives that respondents might have because of the multiple identity positions they talk from (Sandelowski, 2002). In addition to the above issues, the fact that I hold the assumption that subjectivities are closely tied to dominant discourses meant that discourses were interrogated during my data collection and data analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). I was also aware of soliciting a holistic account as opposed to narrow accounts of cause and effect relationships.

The research plan aimed at descriptive and explanatory research. The study was descriptive in terms of searching for and describing administrative clerks' actions and activities. It was explanatory in that I endeavoured to ascertain from the administrative clerks what identities they adopted as well as their rationales and explanations for their actions.

Being a qualitative study, this meant that the study was emergent (Staller, 2010). It was emergent in the sense that what I initially planned would not always unfold as planned. By way of example, I had initially planned to use a governmentality (Dean, 2009; Marttila, 2013) theoretical framework but through my observation of administrative clerks I saw that theoretical frameworks that allow for exploring agency would be more appropriate in terms of the actual work of administrative clerks and more appropriate to answering the research question. There were many other decisions or planned research steps that I had to change as the study unfolded. For example, I had initially decided to include a fourth respondent from a private school but when I found that the context of private schools differed considerably from public schools I decide not to use the data from that respondent in the doctoral research project.

In a research study designed along qualitative lines, data analysis starts from the beginning of the research. Data is analysed inductively, recursively and interactively. I specifically employed an abductive data analysis approach. According to Reichertz (2009) "(a)bduction is ... an intellectual act, a mental leap, that brings together things which one had never associated with one another". From another angle "abduction can be thought of

as the argument to the best explanation. It is the hypothesis that makes the most sense given observed phenomenon or data and based on prior experience” (Kolko, 2010:20).

Finally, in my research design I integrated reflexivity into all the research steps. This means that as the study unfolded I could carefully contemplate my research decisions and make changes where necessary. I did this by incorporating a reflective journal into my research design (Ortlipp, 2008).

In the next few sections I explain the various decisions that were taken in order to ensure that I would be able to gather the appropriate data to answer my research questions.

1.7 Research methods

In this section I explain the research methods used in the study. Methods are the tools and techniques used to gather data (Wainwright, 1997). My qualitative research design guided me to use certain methods instead of others. It guided me to use methods that allow me to gather and interrogate the discourses that shape respondents subjectivities, to get to the respondents’ views, interpretations and experiences, and to witness respondents’ practices.

Dominant discourses that provide school administrative clerks with their subjectivities and identities are to be found within the discourses circulating in the school and in educational departments but it also circulate in society at large. In order to access these discourses I required policy documents and I needed to hear and listen to the dominant discourses within the education. Thus, I employed document analysis to determine the dominant discourses that construct administrative clerk subjectivities and identities. I also used document analysis as one key means of helping me to construct the necessary policy and contextual backdrop of the school administrative clerks’ work. Bowen explains that “(d)ocument analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents- both printed and electronic” (Bowen, 2009: 27). Documents such as policy document or departmental circulars are ‘social facts’ (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997). The document analysis that I carried out was to review policy documents and to see how administrative clerks are positioned by the official educational discourses. This included reviewing the

South African Schools Act, 1996 (SASA), the Western Cape Provincial School Education Act, 1997 (WCPSEA), Western Cape Education Department manuals and circulars and the minutes of SGB meetings where these documents were provided. These documents played a role in the way administrative clerks constructed their identities and established their administrative and other school based practices were constructed.

The rationale behind participation observation involves examining social behaviour as it occurs in situ rather than as it is reported through interviews and questionnaires. The rationale for using participant observation is to capture tacit and embodied actions and activities (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010). Through participant observation I immersed myself into the research context to gain an insider perspective (Madden, 2010). Participant observation is an interactive experience. The researcher interacts with the respondents and visa versa. It is also relatively unstructured. It is normally associated with exploratory and descriptive research objectives. Through participant observation I was able to acquire insights into the lifeworlds of the school administrative clerks.

I also used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the respondents' perspectives, feelings and motivations in order to describe their identities and practices. Semi-structured interviews were also useful in gaining an understanding of the way dominant discourses were articulated in schools. The rationale for using semi-structured interviews is that they provide the researcher with flexibility in gathering data. I chose semi-structured interviews because it allowed me the opportunity to ask follow up questions as well as to ask complex questions. It would allow me to explain or rephrase questions if respondents were unclear about the questions. This method of data gathering also allows the interviewee to go into as much depth as they want to. It would allow me to "... explore, probe, and ask questions ... [to] elucidate and illuminate [and] ... to build a conversation ... to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on [the research topic that had] been predetermined" (Patton, 2002: 343). However, even though it was an appropriate method for research I had to be careful that I do not digress and become side-tracked with anecdotes and inappropriate and irrelevant information.

I also made use of self-reporting methods such as an activity diary. I used this method because I intended to use the respondent as an observer of their own activities (Johnson, 1990). I thought that it would be an ideal instrument to gather respondents' practices, from

their own perspective. I handed out activity diaries to the three administrative clerks, but after it was returned to me at the end of the term I found that the entries were sparse entries. The respondents explained that they were too busy; they did not have time to enter data into the diaries. I decided to abandon this technique because it did not provide the information that I thought it would.

The use of interviews, participant observation and document analysis is also suitable for exploratory and descriptive research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In exploratory research the major emphasis is on gaining ideas and insights and the purpose of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and to explore factors that influence and interact with it. Descriptive research involves recoding the conditions, attitudes, or characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals. Thus, the conducting of interviews, participant observation and document analysis was apposite for exploratory and descriptive research that I was aiming at.

In the next section I discuss the effect of the researcher's position on his/her research.

1.7.1 Representing others: the researcher's positionality

The assumption I proceed from is that research is a socially constructed activity. I posit that all 'realities' are interpretations and that my interpretations are aimed at re-presenting the perspectives of my respondents. Willis explains that "research is ... a socially constructed activity, and the 'reality' it tells us about therefore is also socially constructed" (2007: 96).

Alcoff (1991) maintains that the social position of the researcher affects the meaning of spoken words and meanings assigned to an event. As Denzin (1986:12) suggests, "research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher". Berger (2013:2) states that the aspects of the researcher's positioning that can affect the research "include personal characteristics, such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistic tradition, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional responses to participants. (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Finlay, 2000; Hamzeh and Oliver, 2010; Horsburgh, 2003;

Kosygina, 2005; Padgett, 2008; Primeau, 2003)”. In this regard, an important personal consideration that affected my approach to the research relationship between me and the respondents was that I always attempted to present myself as sympathetic to their experiences of marginalization at their worksites.

I acknowledge that all interpretations and observations are filtered by my values and my identity (Staller, 2010). I have endeavoured to disclose how this affects my stances to the research and the ways I generate research understandings from the study (see my rationale for the study, section 1.3). Berger (2013) goes further to say that the positioning of the researcher affects the research in three main ways: it affects access to respondents, influences the nature of the researcher-researched relationship and shapes the findings and the conclusions of the study. In my study the respondents were willing to participate in the study, grant me access to them at school and share their experiences. My interest in their identities and practices gave them an opportunity to tell their story. In this case I think it was the positionality of those researched, i.e. the clerks that facilitated access. Telling their story to me was a way of making themselves and their contributions at their schools visible. I cultivated a relationship of mutual respect with the three administrative clerks. While I was at the schools while the interviews were in progress the administrative clerks were called on to do some work, I would wait for the respondents and not get irritated with them if this recurred repeatedly (which it did). In terms of Berger’s (2013) point, the researcher affects the way the data is interpreted, I acknowledge that my commitment to a worldview of human equality meant that I interpreted the data in terms of my values and political commitments.

While generally accepting such a view, I have endeavoured in my representation of the administrative clerks to be aware of the ‘representative discretion’ that I wield. Gill (1991, 1995) argues that to move beyond the relativist position that all truth claims are equal we turn to our values to guide our research practices. Gill (1995:178-179) suggests that “we make social transformation an *explicit* concern of our work, acknowledge the values that inform it, and situate all interpretations ... in the political realm’ (emphasis in original)”. This is the decision I have taken in my research. Researching administrative clerks is aimed at bringing about greater recognition of school administrative clerks’ contribution to the education project. Gill (1991:178) calls this position “politically informed relativism” and compares it to Butler’s (1992) notion of ‘contingent foundationalism’, Hall’s (1986) notion of

Marxism 'without guarantees' and Fraser and Nicholson's (1988) notion of 'feminist postmodernism'. It is a call to for "a return to values" since "values are inescapable" in research (Lea and Auburn 2001: 14). I am committed to a politics of equality and through this research I seek ways of mitigating the marginalization of school administrative clerks.

Representing the other means 'to speak for and to speak about' (Lee, 1994 cited in Madill, 1996: 159) the other. To mitigate my representational 'power', I sent the three administrative clerks copies of the first article and asked them to check my interpretations. One of them commented that it was an accurate description of what they did at school. They also commented that they felt affirmed to have someone interested in them and their subject position. They said they were further affirmed when they read the article. They expressed satisfaction that the article showed the complexity and wide ranging nature of their work practices that was going unacknowledged. Another one said about the emotion evoked by the research and the subsequent article: "I feel important". This confirms that the school administrative clerks' perspectives were even-handedly portrayed.

The next section highlights my decisions concerning my sampling strategy.

1.7.2 Sampling

In order to address my research questions I used a purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a "nonprobability sampling procedure in which ...[respondents] are selected from the target population on the basis of their fit with the purposes of the study and specific inclusion and exclusion criteria" (Daniel, 2012:87). Purposeful sampling involves the selection of information-rich individuals (Coyne, 1997) in relation to the research question/s of a study.

I chose school administrative clerks whose association with public schools was lengthy and who had many years' experience in this occupational role. I initially considered a sample size of four administrative clerks. I interviewed all of them but I decided to focus on three administrative clerks. Each of these three school administrative clerks had done the Certificate in School Business Administration (CSBA) which is an extensive accredited training program designed specifically for school administrative clerks. I relied on the

informed opinions of the facilitators of the CSBA program to choose the four administrative clerks. The facilitators had spent more than a year interacting with the four school administrative clerks concerning their work contexts. They pointed me in the direction of administrative clerks -of which I chose four administrative clerks -whom they thought best suited to my requirement of administrative clerks who were very engaged and actively committed to the affairs of their schools. Three of the school administrative clerks worked at schools in different working class suburbs of Cape Town and the fourth administrative clerk worked at a semi-private school. In sum, the sample reflected a specific type of administrative clerk that was aimed at in this study: a school administrative clerks who was committed to her/his school.

As I was gathering the data, and as my understanding of the identities and practices began to develop and expand, I decided to restrict my sample to the three administrative clerks from public schools because their characteristics were apposite for answering my research questions. These characteristics included participation on the school governing body, involvement in the sub-committees of the school and individuals who represented information rich contexts. These three school administrative clerks would be adequate because they were able to provide the necessary nuanced information to answer the research questions. By narrowing my sample to three administrative clerks I would be able to gain a fairly expansive picture of the identities and practices of school administrative clerks. In addition, the administrative clerk not included in this study was an administrative manager at a private school and the context of her work was very different to the context of the administrative clerks in public schools. Including her in the sample would not contribute to answering my research questions because she acted in a managerial-related position. The selection of the three informants was made after the original number of four administrative clerks was interviewed can be considered theoretical sampling (Coyne, 1997; Sandelowski, Holditch-Davis, & Harris, 1992) because this refined sample was chosen to further my theoretical aim of understanding the identities and practices of school administrative clerks. I decided to choose two females and one male as a way of mitigating the fact that majority of these administrative clerks are female (Naicker, Combrinck, & Bayat, 2012). The choice of the male administrative clerk was made, at the time, so as to see whether gender would be a major factor in how administrative clerks from different identities and practices are constituted. However, because of the theoretical frameworks

used in the articles and because the administrative clerk position is a feminized occupation I did not explore this theoretical thread in my thesis. I might look at it in a follow up study.

One of the clerks worked at a former white (model C) school, another was based at a school in a coloured area and the other at a school in a black area in Cape Town in Western Cape¹. All three schools were in working class areas. Their students are mainly from impoverished and poor families. In article one and article two I provide some the biographical and descriptions about the school working contexts of each administrative clerk.

There is no cap on how many informants should make up a purposive sample, as long as the needed information is obtained, categories are expounded and theoretical insights are generated (Bernard, 2002). My study had an intensive focus on a small number of participants (Frost, 2011). Also, the aim of the sample was based on achieving depth and richness of description and not the size of the sample, hence my decision to restrict my research to the three school administrative clerks.

The fact that purposive sampling is done subjectively is not a limitation. The challenge in purposive sampling arises when the choice of respondents is ill-conceived or poorly considered. In other words, doing purposive sampling where the sample choice has not been based on clear theoretical criteria is the major error that be made when using this sampling method. This can have a major impact on the ability of the research study to bring to light the appropriate data to answer the research questions. I am confident that my criteria were apposite to the research questions I was pursuing because I critically followed the recommendations of qualitative scholars concerning my choice of sample (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Patton, 1990; Sandelowski *et al.* 1992; Coyne, 1997; Breckenridge and Jones 2009).

In the next two sections I explain of my methods of data collection and data analysis.

¹ The apartheid geographical legacy made that Cape Town suburbs are racially demarcated. I only use these categories for informational and contextual reasons.

1.7.3 Data Collection

I started my field research by engaging in participation observation. My participant observation at the schools, in the field, as required by my research focus, was only for a short duration. This meant that I was more of an observer than a participant. I would characterise myself as a tactical participant observer. This means that my participation observation was targeted at actions, interactions with others and activities of the administrative clerks in order to get an understanding of their practices and their identities. Cooper, Lewis and Urquhart (2004) notes that between participant and non-participant observation there are a myriad of ways that participation observation can be conducted. The ways in which participation observation can be approached is on a continuum from full participation as member of the community to a totally removed observer. I chose the manner of participant observation through which I could get to understand the administrative clerks' activities and intentions. This meant that in my participation observation position, I was more of an observer than a participant. As I observed the school administrative clerks I made observation notes, personal notes, methodological as well as theoretical notes (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Observational notes are notes on what happened, what I experienced, heard, and saw. I made notes to remind myself of certain issues that I had to attend to as I was gathering my data. This included making a note that I wanted to corroborate a particular point raised by the principal with the school administrative clerks. Personal notes were the notes I made for myself that included my feelings about the research, my doubts, anxieties and sudden leaps of understanding.

During the data collection period I would spend the greater portion of the school day at the school. Some of the time would be spent interviewing the school administrative clerk, principal and teachers. The rest of the school day I would observe the school administrative clerk at work, interacting with others, answering the phone, photocopying, writing, answering the phone and many other actions. I remained a researcher watching and looking on. I engaged in naturalistic observation. I would make notes during my observational sessions. I observed school administrative physical actions, such as walking to classrooms, verbal behaviour, such as talking to the principal, students and teachers, expressive behaviour, their facial expression and forms of body language and their spatial relations and locations, the way they arranged their office space. I would ask questions of

clarification, when an opportunity arose, to get an explanation as to the unfolding events such as when someone unknown to me visited the school or when an event took place. I not only observed the school administrative clerks or those that interacted with them but also observed the interactions in the school space.

I collected rich data on the lived experiences of school administrative clerks, in which respondents would describe, explain and justify their actions. I interviewed the school administrative clerks at their schools. During the semi-structured interviews I would ask questions from various angles in order to get to the meanings that the participants attributed to their actions, in order to get to the voice of the school administrative clerks. Through the interviews I captured the life history of the respondent, details of the school administrative clerks experience and endeavoured to get at the meanings that school administrative clerks attributed to their actions. This process allowed me to gain in-depth understandings in relation to the study's research objectives. I used active listening skills to reflect upon what the respondents were saying. During the interviews or shortly thereafter I would work hard to understand and interpret what was said. This often involved seeking further clarity throughout the interviews or in follow up interviews, email and telephone communication with the clerks. These follow up sessions were necessary to clarify points that came up in the interviews and during my participation observation. These were done regularly response to the need to clarify a theme or ask a question for clarification.

In order to make the respondents feel comfortable I engaged in 'impression management' (to attempt to actively control the way others perceive me to minimize the positional and occupational differences between me (as a lecturer and a PhD candidate) and the school administrative clerks. Engaging respondents through interviews and participant observation involved cultivating relationships with the respondents. I was very careful in the manner in which I managed my relationships with the three school administrative clerks. This strategy paid off and they remained willing to respond to questions via email or phone long after our first encounter.

Interviews were conducted periodically over a three-month period, one school per week per which produced over 400 pages of transcribed interview conversations. Each interview took, on average, 90 minutes, and these were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim into English (or Afrikaans where required). I continued to interact with the school

administrative clerks while working through the data especially when I needed further clarification or had to ask specific questions that arose as I composed the four articles.

I also interviewed selected teachers, parent governors, the principals, current and past principals, educational officials, other school administrative clerks, and other staff such as the school janitor. I conducted most of these interviews at school. There were instances where it was not possible to arrange a meeting with school and I interviewed certain individuals over the telephone such as ex-principals or district officials. The purpose of these interviews was to corroborate the school administrative clerks' statements, to understand how these actors were interacting with the school administrative, how they viewed them, and what their opinion was of the administrative clerks contribution to their schools.

I kept a reflective journal wherein I jotted notes for myself. These included observational notes, methodological notes, personal notes and analytical notes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At times, after a day of reflection, I would make a digital recording of my reflections and then later transcribe it. I maintained this reflexivity throughout the data collection and data analysis (Malterud, 2001, Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

I gathered data on the experiences of the school administrative clerks while being cognizant of the role that dominant discourses play in the constitution of their subjectivities. Important government and official institutional documents and texts related to school administrative clerks, school governance, and school management were also scrutinised. This included legal acts, policy documents, and local education district circulars and manuals. From these documents I ascertained how the school administrative clerks were positioned in official discourse.

In sum, I employed methodological crystallisation (a version of triangulation see Ellingson, 2008; Richardson, 2000) by gaining data through multiple methods and integrating this data. Methodological crystallisation refers to where "researchers are encouraged to engage in multiple types of data collection, at multiple points in time, ...in order to construct a multi-faceted, more complicated, and therefore more credible picture of the context" (Tracy, 2013: 237). Seale (1999) confirmed that multi-methods of data collection "can be used for work that is located within[the]... poststructuralist" tradition to ensure the

quality of the research, Thus, by using multiple methods of data collection I enhanced the quality of the research.

1.7.4 Data Analysis

I used an iterative approach to data analysis (Tracy, 2013). This means that I analysed my data using existing theoretical frameworks while simultaneously allowing the data to shape the outcomes of the analysis. Tracy (2013: 184) asserts that “(r)ather than grounding the meaning solely in the emergent data, an iterative approach ... encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data”.

In the light of my decision to opt for a thesis by articles format key aspects of the research questions were addressed in the four articles using a variety of theoretical frameworks. This means that as opposed to a conventional thesis I approached the research questions from various theoretical angles. I understood that the different theoretical perspectives as different ways of analysing my data. Each of the perspectives illuminated certain aspects of the empirical data, which in effect produced different conceptual accounts in response to various aspects related to my research focus.

In my data analysis, I engaged in searching for a pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2003) throughout the research process. I would categorise my meaning making process as a process of abduction. Abduction was the inferential system that I utilised in analysing my data and drawing implications from it (Reichertz, 2009). Reichertz (2009) suggests that when qualitative researchers, during analysis, develop themes, codes and categories that structure data they are, in fact, insightfully abducting. In other words they are making fair suppositions about the meaning of their data and when these suppositions are matched with theory it is ‘verified’ in a sense. In other words the suppositions can be said to be ‘valid’. This is exactly how I experienced some of the insights that came across during the data analysis stage. For example, when I make the argument that the consistent disregard of administrative clerks’ opinions at school is a form of testimonial injustice then I have made an abductive claim. I could also say that the consistent disregard of their opinions is because they do not have an academic qualification. But when the claim that they are

suffering testimonial injustice is corroborated in many different ways-that even when they get an academic degree their opinions are still marginalised- then choosing this claim can be seen as abduction.

Data analysis "...involves taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:333). In qualitative research, "data generation and analysis are undertaken concurrently in an iterative process" (Allen, 2010:360). Throughout the research process from the time I started to gather data I would mull over what I heard and saw at the schools. These points would be jotted down as theoretical or personal notes.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994) suggestion, I engaged in the following three processes to analyse my data: reducing, displaying and drawing conclusions. I reduced the data by coding, summarizing, simplifying it. The data was organized in chunks of thematic data. I also graphically gathered data into thematic files where I would gather the quotations related to a particular theme. Once the data was organised and displayed I could then draw conclusions from them.

I did not employ a grounded theory analysis where I generated concepts directly from the interview transcriptions. Instead I was informed by my theoretical frameworks. This does not mean that I only looked for data that confirmed what I was looking for. Instead in my data analysis I employed an iterative and interactive approach moving from theory data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In addition to Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion on qualitative data analysis techniques I also employed other related data analysis techniques. These included the constant comparison method, thematic analysis and content analysis. I did not use each technique separately but used them in an integrative manner. The constant comparison method was deployed inductively for me to see what ideas and themes came from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In my approach to the data using the thematic approach I was sorting and organizing the data which was also a process of interpreting the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Using the constant comparative methods of analysis, comparisons were made within and between transcripts. This resulted in common patterns emerging. For example, in integrating all these approaches, I identified the theme of 'school governing body

participation' and then I trawled through the transcripts looking for words that were linked to participation, governance and management. Thereafter I would contact the school administrative clerks by telephone, email or in person to follow up and to gain more insight into the particular theme. The participation observation data was similarly coded and grouped into thematic categories. I would jot down what I saw and then later I would inquire about what I observed.

1.8 Reflexivity

In order to ensure the quality of my research I employed a reflexive orientation (Day, 2012) throughout the research steps and processes. A reflexive approach was important, so that I could “explore and realise the influence of my own power, discursive formation and subjective positions over my research endeavours so that my unintended distortions would be exposed (Lather, 1991; Etherington, 2004; Sunderland, 2006)” (Mclaren, 2009: 5).

Mauthner and Doucet (2003:424) contend that “research which relies on the interpretation of subject accounts can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity and awareness about the epistemological, theoretical and ontological conceptions of subjects and subjectivities” that influences research practices and analytic processes. My supervisor, Professor Aslam Fataar coached me in the theoretical and practical decisions during the research process. We would reflect on my decisions and my interpretations and what the next step forward would be. This occurred throughout the PhD study. He would remind me to be reflexive at every step.

In the background section, I explained how I came to the research questions and research respondents. To assist with assuring the accuracy, trustworthiness, and quality of my study I engaged with my respondents and shared my understanding of what they had said to me. This is called member check. It is also known as informant feedback or respondent validation (Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

Writing the thesis in a reflexive style ensures that readers can judge for themselves how the researcher’s subjectivity influences the research outcomes. The aim of my reflexive approach was to ensure the quality of the research and the insights it generated.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

I endeavoured to comply with the general recommendations made by qualitative researchers (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2002) concerning an ethical approach to my research. Consequently, I applied for permission to do research from the Western Cape Education Department who had control over the schools where I did my research. I then applied for permission from the SGBs and principals of each of the schools to do the research at their sites. Thereafter I applied to for ethical clearance for Stellenbosch University human research ethics committee. In terms of interacting ethically with the respondents they were asked to give their written informed consent. I assured them that their anonymity would be protected and that the information shared would remain confidential. I conducted my study based on the principle of beneficence-doing good for others and preventing harm. I made sure that they understood the risks they may face as a result of being part of the research. I informed them that had the right to withdraw from the research process at any point in time (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). In addition, I took all the necessary precautions so that my research and conduct would not harm the respondents or anybody else that I interacted with during the course of the research project.

In addition, adopting a reflexive attitude during the research is also a dimension of the ethics of research (Mauthner, Birch, Jessop, & Miller, 2002). Gillies and Alldred (2002) advocate that as part of the ethics of research the researcher must state his or her political intentions of their research. I contend that I have lived up to their recommendation by clarifying the role of my personal ethics and my political commitment to equality and that I see my research as an act dissensus (see the rationale for the study).

1.10 The theoretical frameworks used in the four articles

There is a conceptual build up in the content and form of the four articles. I start by looking at the spatial practices of the administrative clerks in the first article (i.e. what they do, their practices). In article two I look at a specific aspect of what they do in terms of engendering rhetorical spaces for the exercise of their voice. These two articles focus primarily on

administrative clerks' spatial practices, in other words, their 'spatialized' engagements within the social space of the school. The third article looks specifically at their identities and the process of self-transformation. The fourth article moves the focus to their exercise of agency within school spaces.

Throughout the articles I employed what I thought were apposite theoretical frameworks to provide an analytical basis for understanding the specific contours, nature and depth of their identities and practices. The study's conceptual contribution in response to the research questions is that these school administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted by their subordinated agency. In other words, the thesis presents the view that their agency is established primarily in light of their professional location and discursive positioning as subordinates. In addition, the various theoretical frameworks also allowed me to capture the diverse and crucial work practices of school administrative clerks.

I used a different set of theoretical lenses in each of the four articles. Using multiple perspectives allowed me to approach my research problem and data analysis from different angles. Each theoretical lens used provided me with a different vantage point from which I was able to discern distinct conceptual insights.

The first article investigates school administrative clerks' spatial practices. The theoretical frame used in this article is based on my observations of their work activities. In the writing of the articles, I worked and moved iteratively between the theories and empirical data.

I draw in the first article on Lefebvre (1991) who suggests that social space is produced every day in material spaces through the dialectical interaction between the three elements of his conceptual triad: spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation. Material space and the social relations that take place therein define the social space of the school office. Lefebvre (1991) suggests that the production of space occurs through the dialectical relationship between what he calls conceived space, perceived space and lived space. The framework posits that the production of social space such as the school office is influenced by the local education department expectations for the school office (conceived space), what administrative clerks do in the space (perceived space) and what the administrative clerks aspire to accomplish in the school office space (lived space). All of these interact with the other and collectively give rise to the (negotiated) school office space. I add an additional focus to my theoretical lens

by suggesting that the production of space is influenced by the tactics of those that inhabit it (see De Certeau, 1984; Fiske, 1988). I draw on Archer's (2007) reflexivity as a framework for understanding the school administrative clerks spatial agency. This spatial agency is operationalized through the appropriation of existing socio-spatial practices and the tactical move to enacting novel socio-spatial practices that go beyond the normalized practices. Furthermore I employ the theoretical frame of contributive justice/injustice (see Gomberg, 2007) which suggests that it is an injustice to deny people work tasks and opportunities through which they can develop themselves since the type of work that a person does influences the type of person they can be and become. Using this theory I look at whether administrative clerks suffer contributive injustice, and if they do, how they respond to this injustice.

These theoretical lenses allow me to see how material space entangled with social interaction results in the daily production of space. It allows me to see how agents may exercise spatial agency, even though they might be constrained by the spatial limits dictated by the physical space. It also allows for discerning whether administrative work, as it is manifested in schools, results in contributive injustice or not. This article represents my endeavour to understand how administrative clerks' engage in spatial agency.

In the next article (article two) I turn to a specific form of the administrative clerks' spatial practices: their rhetorical spatial practices. Rhetorical spatial practices refer to how school administrative clerks' opinions and vocal expressions are received within the school. I focus on the voicing opportunities that school administrative clerks have (or are denied) at school. In addition to the 'production of space' and spatial agency theories, I supplement my theoretical framework with the notion of rhetorical space. Rhetorical space refers to the social limits and restrictions on voice-related spatial practices. Rhetorical space imposes normative limits on participants voicing practices. I explore what the normative rhetorical spaces are for administrative clerks and how they live and produce transformed rhetorical spaces. In addition, I also use the theoretical lens of testimonial injustice. Testimonial injustice "occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker, 2007:1). I use this lens to ascertain whether school administrative clerks are subjected to testimonial injustice and I use the spatial agency lens to see whether they counter this injustice and if they do, how they go about doing it.

The theoretical frame used in this article is a result of the iterative approach that I utilised in my data analysis where my analysis draws on a blend of theory and empirical data. As I participated within the school office space I noticed the variation in voicing practices between administrative clerks, teachers and the principal. This led to me looking for a theory through which I could view the voicing practices of the school office interlocutors. I turned to Code's (1995) rhetorical space. This theory holds that every social space places rhetorical limitations on participants. Rhetorical space tells us that only certain people are heard in certain spaces (Code, 1995). It tells us that subordinate opinions will probably not be taken serious in certain social spaces. Fricker's (2007) theoretical lens allows me see whether school administrative clerks voicing practices are constrained. If they are, then the spatial agency/production of space theoretical lens allows seeing how voice related spatial agency might be exercised to engender social spaces wherein which subordinate opinions are listened to, accepted and judged by the merit of the argument.

The conceptual focus of the first two articles is on the school administrative clerks' spatial practices. These articles describe what their spatial practices are and they also attempt to explain how their spatial practices are constituted.

In the third article I focus on the school administrative clerks' identities. I delve into how they transform their subjectivities and identities. The theoretical frame used in this article interrogates the relationship between school administrative clerks' practices and their identities. As I became familiar with the school administrative clerks I noticed that their practices went beyond administrative practices. I employ a broadly Foucauldian theoretical framework and work between the tensions between his earlier and later work.

Foucauldian earlier theorizations posit that subjectivities are assigned through dominant discourses. In Foucault's later writing he turned to a focus on the 'ethics of the self' to suggest that there is room for a transformation of the self. I turned to Foucault's (1984) ethics of the self to understand how administrative clerks came to engage in practices that went beyond their subject position. A Foucauldian ethics of the self refers to the transformation of one's self by imbibing practices that takes one to one's ethical goals. One's ethical practices could be to live according to certain values such as honesty, integrity and could even include practices that relieve "suffering, or being more able to cope with ... discriminatory practices, or stylization to conform to an artistic or creative trajectory"(Vintges, 2012 :9).

This theoretical framework allowed me to see that identities are prescribed by dominant discourses like bureaucracy. It also allowed me to see whether administrative clerks transform their identity by adopting an ideal to which they wish to live up to or whether they adopt a new discourse and thereafter act according to the prescriptions of their new subject position. Foucault's ethics of the self is a theoretical lens that asserts that agency lies in the processes of becoming self-aware, adopting an ethical goal and then enacting reflexive practices that changes aspects of one's subjectivity and identity that brings oneself to realising one's ethical goal. The contribution of this article is that identities are not fixed by discourses and that it is possible for persons to choose to refashion themselves within their discursive regimes that provide them with their subjectivities by engaging in an ethics of the self.

In the fourth article, I turn my focus to what I contend is the driving force behind administrative clerks' identities and practices. The fourth article delves into the processes around the exercise of agency and the construction of identities. As in the third article my assumption is that identities are fluid. The theoretical framework suggests that an individual may transform their identities through their agency. It also suggests that agency is augmented through access to resources. It contends that through participation in sociocultural contexts people are able to accumulate information and relational resources. 'Participatory capital' is the lens that I use in reference to the build-up and application of contextual and relational resources used by agents to hail their identities into being. I propose that by participating in a sociocultural context, a person gathers participatory capital which they deploy to extend the scope of their agency and transform their identities. The article focuses on whether and how administrative clerks extend the scope of agency and the bases on which they deploy participatory capital to reposition their identity.

The contribution of the final two articles is to provide an exposition of how the identities and practices of the administrative clerks are constituted from multiple vantage points. They provide me with distinct angles from which I am able to understand the nature of their agency as holders of subordinate occupational identities.

1.11 Concluding comments to the introduction

The introductory chapter explained and contextualised the research steps that preceded the four articles. It also explained what the knowledge gap was that the four articles were addressing.

The study is about school administrative clerks' identities and practices. I was motivated to investigate this category of educational worker because even though they contribute significantly to the functioning of schools they are rendered invisible. I was motivated by ethical values and my political commitment to equality to do this study. Through my thesis I aim to bring about a dissensus around the conventional conceptions of administrative clerks as subordinate and marginalised to schooling activities. The research questions that the thesis addressed were: "How are school administrative clerks' identities and practices constituted? What are school administrative clerks contributions to the functioning of their schools?"

I explained that the research design is qualitative research study. My assumptions concerning social reality is that there are multiple perspectives and that it our political commitments that make us choose a particular perspective from which we take action and conduct our research.

In the section on research methodology I explained the reasons why I used semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis. Thus, when I conducted my research I employed multiple methods semi- interviewing, participant observation and document analysis. The data was analysed using qualitative data analysis techniques using abduction as the inferential method. The ethical steps followed in the research were also expounded. I explained that the research insights and interpretations were written up in four articles and that in each article a different theoretical framework was used. These theoretical frameworks provided lenses through which the identities and the activities of school administrative clerks could be interpreted. This thesis now goes on to present the four articles. Thereafter, in the concluding chapter, I draw together all the interpretations and insights gained from the articles and suggest ways that this research can be taken forward.

2 Chapter 2 :The spatial practices of school administrative clerks: making space for contributive justice

2.1 Abstract

This article discusses the work practices of the much neglected phenomenon of the work of school administrative clerks in schools. Popular accounts of school administrative clerks portray them as subjectified – assigned roles with limited power and discretion – as subordinate and expected to be compliant, passive and deferent to the principal and senior teachers. Despite the vital role they play in schools, their neglect is characterised by their invisible, largely taken-for-granted roles in a school's everyday functioning. This main aim of this article is to make their everyday practices and contributions visible, to elevate them as indispensable, albeit discounted, role players in their schools, whose particular expressions of agency contribute qualitatively to a school's practices.

Using the theoretical lens of 'space', and based on in-depth semi-structured interviews in the qualitative research tradition, the article discusses how selected school administrative clerks' production of space exceeds their assigned spatial limitations, i.e. they move beyond the expectations that their work contexts narrowly assign to them. They resist the contributive injustice visited upon them and, through their agency, they engage in spatial practices that counter this injustice. They carve out a productive niche for themselves at their schools through their daily practice. This niche, I will argue, embodies practices of 'care', 'sway' and 'surrogacy,' understood through a vigorous 'production of space'. Through these unique spatial practices they reflect their agency and their appropriation of existing spatial practices at their schools. Thus, they produce personalized meanings for their existing practice as well as generate novel lived spatial practices.

Key words: School administrative clerks, space, spatial practices, lived space, contributive justice

2.2 Introduction

The article aims to contribute to our analysis of social justice by suggesting that we broaden our focus on social justice to include issues of contributive justice. It highlights

how those who are denied contributive justice do not simply lie down and accept their fate but actively counter the contributive injustice visited upon them. Contributive injustice is where workers' opportunities for self-development, gaining self-esteem and recognition by others is thwarted by the unequal division of labour that assigns them simple, mindless and routine tasks (Gomberg, 2007; Sayer, 2009, 2011). I agree with the assertion by the proponents of contributive justice that the unequal division of labour leads to the curtailing of opportunities for self-development for those who are denied complex work (Sayer, 2011). However, I posit that administrative clerks do not passively accept this inequality of opportunity but through their agency, reflexivity and tactics, carve out spatial practices of self-development and, in the process, gain self-esteem and recognition at school level.

Literature on the practice of school administrative clerks in South Africa is sparse (Van der Linde, 1998; Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2011). These clerks suffer inequalities of opportunity because of the division of labour which relegates them to a role that offers low remuneration, little recognition and limited participation. Studies of the roles of administrative clerks in schools (Casanova, 1991; Van der Linde, 1998; Thomson, Ellison, Byrom & Bulman, 2007; Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010; Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2011), higher education institutions (Szekeres, 2004; Mcinnis, 2006; Whitchurch & London, 2004) and businesses (Fearfull, 1996, 2005; Truss, 1993) found that they are regarded as marginal and invisible even though their contributions are essential for the smooth running of their workplaces.

Secretarial work is regarded as a ghetto occupation (Truss, 1993; Truss, Alfes, Shantz & Rosewarne, 2012). It is precisely this low esteem and lack of recognition attached to it as an occupation that confirms that those who fill these roles are subjected to contributive injustice.

This article sheds light on school administrative clerks' spatial practices within the exigencies of their everyday professional contexts. It highlights their noteworthy contributions to the on-going functioning of the school, especially the surreptitious and sometimes very concrete impact on the lives of students, teachers, the principal, parent governors and auxiliary staff. In authoring their spatial practices they counter and subtly resist the marginalisation and contributive injustice of their occupation. The article reveals their largely invisible spatial practices and unacknowledged contributions to the daily operation of their schools in which they engage to counter contributive injustice.

Following an emphasis on 'space' in social studies (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1989) and education in South Africa (see Jacklin, 2004; Fataar, 2007, 2009; Dixon, 2007), researchers contend that we cannot ignore that human behaviour and space are interrelated and overlap. The theory of the production of social space argues that space is not empty or devoid of formative power. It opposes those arguments that consider space to be a container in which events occur and takes a perspective that space is firmly intertwined with social events. Space is thus regarded as constitutive of social relations.

Jacklin (2004) draws our attention to the constituent nature of spatial practices in the pedagogical routines of teachers and students in classroom contexts. Dixon (2007) argues that there is a relationship between classroom order and spatial organisation and that social space is used to manage, regulate and produce specific kinds of students enmeshed in knowledge and power constructions. Fataar's (2007) spatial lens highlights the agency and reflexivity of students from 'other' social spaces as they move to middle-class social spaces and the bodily adjustments they make to fit into these spaces. My article builds on their perspectives of the constituent nature of space in everyday practice.

The data was collected from a qualitative research study of three administrative clerks in public schools in the Western Cape. There were one male and two women participants. They are referred to as P, M and F. The research included semi-structured interviews with them as well as participative observations at school. The data was analysed thematically through the spatial lenses discussed earlier. There are other themes in the data but I focus on those yielded by the specific lens used in this paper.

I spent one school term observing the three administrative clerks at their schools, during which time I interviewed them over several days. I also interviewed their principals as well as members of the teaching staff. I spent several days at the schools making observations, taking field notes and interviewing the administrative clerks about their practices as they worked.

In the next section I advance my theoretical lens and thereafter use it to analyse the data collected on the spatial practices of the three school administrative clerks. Three sets of spatial practices are identified through which administrative clerks counter their experiences of contributive injustice and contribute significantly to the functioning of the school and the positive experiences of students, teachers and the principal.

2.3 Theoretical considerations

Social justice is considered to be primarily about distributive justice – concerned with what people get. Of late it has been complemented by cultural/identity recognition and political participation perspectives of social justice (Fraser, 2008). A further development around the ideas and theories of social justice is the contributive justice perspective. Contributive justice asks us to turn our attention away from what people *get* to what people *do*.

Focusing on what we do is based on the Aristotelian perspective that what we *do* has as much an influence on the quality of our lives as what we *get*. Thus, the contributive justice perspective urges us to consider social justice as arising from the variety and quality of practices that workers are able to engage in (Gomberg, 2007; Sayer, 2009).

Contributive justice is a normative framework which suggests that the unequal divisions of labour within an organisation and within the economy subject workers to unequal opportunities for realising their potential. This is an Aristotelian approach which emphasises the human development of dispositions and abilities through work and practice.

The type of work one does is directly related to the psychological and economic rewards that one receives which, in turn, have an effect on our well-being (Sayer, 2011). Work is not only a source of economic rewards but also of fulfilment, whether through self-satisfaction or recognition by others. The contributive justice argument is that the type of work that one does, affects what one can become, how one views oneself and is viewed by others. It shapes the capabilities of the individual (Sayer, 2011). For example, the administrative clerk develops her financial management skills through doing the budget of her school, feels a sense of accomplishment for doing a complex task and is lauded by the school management team. If she is only restricted to capturing financial data, her financial management capabilities would be limited, her sense of accomplishment would be less than in the previous example and this basic task would not get her much recognition.

Sayer (2009: 1) citing Gomberg (2007) argues that:

As long as the more satisfying and complex kinds of work are concentrated into a subset of jobs, rather than shared out among all jobs, then many workers will be denied the chance to have meaningful work and the recognition and esteem that goes with it.

Contributive justice is where workers receive the types of work that enable them to develop their capabilities, receive internal goods of satisfaction and external goods of recognition (Sayer, 2011). However, most schools are organised with an unequal division of labour. This unequal division of labour situates the administrative clerk in an occupation that is assigned routine and mundane tasks. They have fewer opportunities for developing their capabilities, gaining satisfaction or receiving recognition. The argument is that the unequal division of labour leads to inequality in the development of capabilities. Murphy (1993), cited in Sayer (2011), mentions studies that show those who do complex work see their capabilities improve over time, whereas those who are subjected to routine work capabilities stagnate and deteriorate. However, I propose that administrative clerks do not let the division of labour dictate their practices but, through their agency, carve out practices that allow them to counter the contributive injustice of their occupation.

A focus on agency locates administrative clerks' daily practice as practice oriented towards personal action and meaning making. In foregrounding school administrative clerk's agency, I do not deny that they develop certain routine and habitual actions through role internalisation. However, within the everyday complex interplay of people, situations and events, administrative clerks exercise creative expressions of agency even if they are circumscribed and largely discounted. It is apparent that their exercise of agency is coloured by context, relationships, culture and existing spatial practice, aspects of which the analysis below sets out to capture. I am specifically motivated by Archer's position on agency, which she views as an outcome of reflexive internal deliberations within oneself around a course of action in relation to personal projects (Archer, 2007). These internal conversations and deliberations about personal projects lay the foundation for the production of administrative clerks' spatial practice.

I theorise space using Schmid (2008) and Zhang and Beyes (2011) reading of Lefebvre. The premise is that human beings produce social space through their everyday spatial practices and they, in turn, are shaped by it. This novel approach shifts the focus from material space to the practices that constitute or produce social space. I forward the argument that administrative clerks exercise agency in their production of space. They are not the only producers of space – certainly the principal and teachers as well as students produce spatial practices – but my focus in this article is on the administrative clerks.

Lefebvre (1991) argues that social space is produced through three dialectically

interconnected processes. The spatial triad of 'spatial practices,' 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation,' or, 'perceived' (production of material), 'conceived' (ideological-institutional) and 'lived' (symbolic-experienced) space respectively. The triad corresponds to Lefebvre's three-dimensional conceptualisation of social reality: material social practice, language and thought, and the creative poetic act (Schmid, 2008).

Spatial practices refer to the material dimension of social activity and interaction. It is the activities, networks, relations, interactions that are constitutive of all spaces. The empirical relationship between the body and its physical environment is referred to as perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). Perceived space is concrete, tangible and recognised directly through the senses.

The representations of space, i.e. conceived space, emerge at the level of discourse and speech and constitute conceptual frameworks of material spaces. These are the maps, plans and organisational charts and organograms that aim to structure or construct spaces (Schmid, 2008). This is the intellectual and conceptual language or discourse of a particular space.

The lived space "dimension denotes the world as human beings experience it through the practice of their everyday life" (Schmid, 2008: 40). It describes what a particular space means to an individual. Representational spaces or lived spaces overlay "physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). This is the experiential dimension of space. However, it is important to note that the three spaces are not separate realities but rather "features of a single – and ever-changing – reality" (Lehtovuori, 2010: 55).

Fiske's (1988) conceptualisation of the 'locale' as the micro level of spatial practice, where those in subordinate positions in society 'produce' their own meaning of images and events in everyday life, exemplifies the insertion of agency into the production of space. The locale is the space of agency and 'little victories' (Fiske, 1988). De Certeau (1984) sees space as the micro relations, where the subordinates spatially appropriate their conceived spaces ascribing new meanings to spatial practices. The work of "De Certeau ... frames the everyday as the sphere of creativeness par excellence" (Brownlie & Hewer, 2011: 248). Thus, users or consumers of space do not passively enter spaces, but produce their own lived space by negotiating, changing and 'metaphorizing' spaces, thereby producing singular concretions at the same time that they are subjected to the

framing of the conceived space.

The “production of space is an embodied process” (Zhang & Beyes, 2011: 17). It is to be found in the moment of bodily action. Thus, “bodies ... ‘produce’ or generate spaces” (McCormack, 2008: 1823). What the body does in a particular material space is what the space becomes in that moment. It is what we pay attention to when we research space (Zhang & Beyes, 2011). There is a generative relationship between space and the bodily movement therein (McCormack, 2008). So my focus on the production of space is on bodily movement, i.e. spatial practice as embodied action.

The spatial practices of administrative clerks are dialectically produced. The office space is conceived by educational authorities as a space of routine and mundane activities. The administrative clerks reproduce the objectives of the designers of the conceived space and employ their agency and tactics to construct their personalised spatial practices with their attendant lived space experience. Their spatial practices are everyday practices influenced by what is expected of them as well as what they intend to accomplish through their practices. This can lead to spatial practices that have one physical form for the principal, school management team (SMT), school governing body (SGB) or educational authorities but multiple meanings for the administrative clerks themselves. Social space is thus a spatial production fuelled by *both* structure and agency, domination and appropriation, and power and resistance (Lefebvre, 1991). The production of the spatial practices of administrative clerks is simultaneously fuelled by their conceived, perceived and lived space.

My premise is that administrative clerks’ agency gives rise to their creative poetic spatial practice: a new spatial practice, a new meaning for an existing spatial practice or a modification of an old spatial practice. Through these novel spatial practices and lived space moments, administrative clerks counter the contributive injustice of the unequal division of labour.

In the next section, I briefly introduce the three administrative clerks and their school contexts. Thereafter, I identify and discuss three major sets of their spatial practice: spatial practices of care, spatial practices of sway, and spatial practices of surrogacy. These spatial practices reflect their agency in countering the contributive injustice of their occupational role.

2.4 Introducing the spatial practitioners

In this section, I introduce the three administrative clerks and their schools. This provides us with the contextual backdrop to make sense of their spatial practices.

M has worked at Y Primary School (YPS) since 1999. She started off in the position of personal assistant to the principal and became the school secretary/administrative clerk when the senior administrative clerk retired in 2004. She grew up in the area and attended the school as a child. She has a matric certificate and worked in secretarial and administrative positions for more than ten years before she joined the school. She is currently the only administrative clerk at YPS. She has a close relationship with the principal, Mr K. He is a disciplinarian who runs the school with a firm hand. M is a member of the SGB and acts as both secretary and treasurer to the SGB. She actively participates in its meetings. She is not part of the SMT.

P was part of the community committee that initiated and urged the educational authorities to establish a primary school in the area. Subsequently, he worked at the school soon after the school was established in 2001. He is the more senior of the two administrative clerks at the school. He has a friendly relationship with the principal and with most of the teachers. He is currently a member of the SMT. He was previously a member of the SGB and served it in the capacity of financial officer, a role which he still occupies even though he has resigned from the SGB. The principal depends on him to do many of his administrative and managerial tasks. P has an honours degree in social development and is currently doing his master's degree in public administration at a local university.

F has been an administrative clerk since 1997. She has been at her current school since 2002. She is one of two administrative clerks at the school. She serves on the SGB and had previously served on the SMT. F handles the school finances. She has a somewhat turbulent relationship with some of the teachers.

F has completed an adult basic education and training diploma course and has been teaching adults. She is currently registered for an undergraduate degree in education at a distance learning university. During the course of the research study, the incumbent principal resigned and an acting principal was appointed. F's spatial practice thus became even more important and pivotal. The acting principal relies extensively on her experience

and knowledge to manage the school. They have a congenial but not close relationship.

The three administrative clerks have many years of experience working in three primary schools that impose different constraints upon their spatial practices. They have served and continue to serve on the SMTs and SGBs of their schools. I contend that it is their many years of experience, as well as the varied types of work they are engaged in, which has given rise to the spatial practices that will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 Towards contributive justice: the spatial practice of the three school administrative clerks

The contributive justice thesis emphasises that the work we do affects the extent to which we are able to realise and develop our capacities and gain internal and external goods. In the following section I demonstrate how administrative clerks engage in spatial practices that are instances of agency within a circumscribed role. These spatial practices counter the contributive injustice of the administrative clerks' role and occupation. Spatial practices are the locale of agency and tactics of appropriation. These spatial practices are not only beneficial to the administrative clerks' development, but are integral and essential for the running of the school.

Their spatial practices are simultaneously an outcome of their conceived, perceived and lived space. The conceived space refers to the discourses and designs of the educational authorities of what should occur in the school office space. At school, the space designed for the administrative clerk is the school reception, office or administration block. This conceived space forms part of a broader conceptualisation of schools as spaces where the principal does all the strategic planning and thinking and the administrative clerks simply execute all the routine tasks. It is the space where the administrative clerks' work is conceived as routine, non-essential, non-pedagogic or involving non-strategic tasks. Yet, as I show below, this study has found that their hub is vital as a space of thought, creativity and strategy.

Perceived space refers to the immediate bodily feedback of enacting spatial practices. It refers to those bodily sensations that accompany three spatial practices of the administrative clerks, i.e. their everyday perceptions of the school space. An example of this is their routine response to a student requesting their help. In the spatial practices highlighted below, I provide examples of students' and teachers' routine perceptions of the

administrative clerks' spatial practices.

Lived space is the affect and personal meaning making – the meaning ascribed to the spatial practice. It refers to the affective dimension of their spatial practice. In the next section their affective experiences are described as important to their spatial practices.

I highlight three sets of spatial practices. These spatial practices of care, sway and surrogacy are particular spatial practices that demonstrate how administrative clerks' agency in the form of spatial practices dialectically interacts with the conceived space, which gives rise to particular lived spaces. It shows how the agency-inspired moments of spatial practices operate side by side with the subordination of the administrative clerks. These practices demonstrate instances of spatial practices that counter, but are also intertwined, with the hegemonic conceived space.

2.6 Spatial practices of care

'Spatial practices of care' refer to the practices of administrative clerks where they interact with students, teachers or the principal with care and affection in their spatial domains. Students regularly come to M when they feel ill and she responds by undertaking a range of practices that reflect her care. This is akin to Hochschild's (1983) emotional labour. She asks them to sit on the couch in the reception foyer and attends to them when able. She touches their foreheads to check their temperatures. If she decides that they are ill she informs the teacher and then, depending on the severity of the illness, informs the parents.

Sometimes after some attention, students feel better and return to class without further intervention. M's emotional work is embodied. This means that she responds to students' cries for help with motherly postures and expressions.

P has assisted a number of novice teachers and helped them with their assignments. He reads their assignments and gives them feedback. He even assisted a teacher in preparing lessons related to budgeting and accounting. He also assisted teachers with word processing and using the computer lab. His caring for the students extends to him prodding and urging the principal to do more to improve the quality of teaching at the school, which sometimes leads to a fractious relationship with the principal. He expressed that he felt he had let down the school when he resigned from the SGB.

He is always ready to go the extra mile because he cares about the students. The school

is facing a great deal of social problems and he is currently participating in the 'Schools as Nodes of Care and Support for Vulnerable Children' (SNOCS) initiative. He says that students are being abused sexually, emotionally, physically and verbally. SNOCS aims to identify these students and help them. He is involved in several community projects that aim to uplift the community around and within the school.

F also engages in practices of care. Commenting on an interaction where she had played a significant role in the decision taken, she describes her lived space experience:

Yes, at the end of the day you also feel good because you were helping someone else and not just that you doing the job. And you doing it because it's your passion and it is your work.

F cares about the students and receives them warmly when they come to pay their school fees. She is welcoming if they request any assistance and sees herself as contributing to their development. She says:

I like working with the learners and ... [when] one or two or some learners come visit that was at the school and finished with high school and ... tell you that they achieved so much in life, you feel ... you were a part of their education, you feel so good.

She also provides the SGB chairperson with food and spent many afternoons making the SGB chairperson feel comfortable in her new position.

Poor students receive food and money from M. In one incident she bought a pair of shoes for a needy student. She provides support for the teachers, giving information about educational authority-related matters such as issues regarding salaries or how to access the web-based Integrated School Administration and Management System. All of these practices go beyond her job description.

2.6.1 Pedagogic support

A subset of their practices of care is their pedagogic support for students. When students come to M's office complaining about other students, M tries to teach them to be fair and kind towards one another. She models good behaviour to them. When students are hungry or she knows that their parents are in need, she provides money or food and assigns the hungry students to receive food from the school kitchen.

M's school is a bilingual school that has many foreign language speakers. The policy of the school states that foreign students must not be placed in bilingual English and

Afrikaans classes. When she encountered a foreign learner who had been placed in a bilingual class, she immediately brought the matter to the attention of the head of department (HOD), who moved the learner to the English class.

P's pedagogic concern extends to leading and coaching students outside of the school curriculum and formal structures about being aware of their bodies and themselves. He acts as a life skills mentor. His involvement in such activities is based on his personal project of wanting to make a difference in his community. This is what drives him in many of his spatial practices.

F regularly assists students with their projects especially where they need information from the Internet. She would search and download information for them, even consulting with their teachers to ascertain what information they needed.

M, F and P produce these spatial practices of care because they perceive the "school as a home away from home". Although their principals consider their spatial practices as contributing toward a better functioning school, for them, these spatial practices make them feel better about themselves and who they are or want to be. This means that they derive internal goods of satisfaction from embodying spatial practices of care. In producing a caring social space they are appropriating the office space and using their agency to transform it through their bodily action into spaces of care, hope and potential. They are poaching conceived spaces with their tactical spatial practice. Through their spatial practices of care, these three administrative clerks simultaneously embody their workspaces as spaces of care and work.

2.7 Spatial practices of sway

'Practices of sway' are practices where the administrative clerks manoeuvre themselves into positions where their everyday practices allow them to transform moments of their spatial practice into moments of influence. These spatial practices are deliberate manoeuvres by the three administrative clerks to influence decisions at school. They include coaxing, lobbying and negotiating.

F lobbied and was influential with a previous principal who allowed her to be part of the SMT meetings. He needed her insight and support as he was new to the school. Via his support she attended and influenced the school management meetings. She remarks about the influence she used to have:

... the ... senior teacher comes in – '*nee juffrou, ek gaan nou eers my regterhand vra*' [no teacher, I am first going to ask my right hand]. Then he will call me in: 'Mrs F, what do you think of the idea? What should we do now?'

This previous principal acknowledged that she used her position on the SMT to influence decisions that improved the effectiveness of the management of the school.

Once he left, she lost much of her direct influence on the SMT, yet she continued to influence the school management in more subtle ways. For instance, F proposed that Mr P, a retired educational authority official who had been the Institutional Management and Governance (IMG) manager assigned to the school, attend the recruitment and selection meetings to ensure that the school followed the educational authorities' policies and procedures.

F not only briefs the SGB chairperson before SGB meetings on the correct policies and procedures, but also on what she can expect from the principal and teachers. She acts as an 'unofficial' adviser to the chairperson. She has influence in the SGB meetings since she is responsible for school finance, which includes drawing up the budget. She also influences the SGB by proposing how the funds should be spent. She is very forthright in the meetings having developed her confidence over her many years of experience.

F's spatial practices of influence and sway were evident when she tactically manoeuvred herself to appropriate the school office spaces (SGB and SMT meetings) as spheres of influence for herself. These opportunities for self-development, satisfaction and recognition have increased, especially with the appointment of the acting principal, who now relies upon her for direction and guidance.

M also embodies practices of sway. She has made herself indispensable to the principal and teachers through the spatial practice of doing some of their administrative and even personal tasks. This seems to be a tactic that all the school administrative clerks embody. They are prepared to do extra tasks, whether through subtle coercion or through commitment, which gives them room to negotiate influence within their social spaces. M describes her influence on decision making in the school saying:

Mr K [the principal] won't have me in the school management team meetings but he ... discuss(es) what was discussed at the meeting or ask(s) me, 'have you got money for this' or 'what do you think of this'... so I play a huge part in the decision making.

M's school is a fee-paying school. According to the South African Schools Act, 1996 (SASA), parents can apply for a full or partial exemption from school fees. M's official task is to record all the applications and present them to the SGB. However, her practice goes beyond this expectation. She has developed techniques and tactics to gather information about parents who apply for the fee exemption, noting among other things the quality of their clothing and the cars that they drive. During the fee exemption application process, she studies the bodily practices of the parent applicants when they deliver their fee exemption documents as well as observes their children's attire to ascertain their financial status. She then produces a comprehensive summary of what that family or individual should receive in terms of a fee exemption. Once she has gathered all the relevant documents, as prescribed by the SASA, she presents her data along with her interpretation and recommendation regarding an exemption based on her visual analysis of the bodily movements of parents, students and the spaces they occupy.

P has been influential both on the SGB and the SMT. He requested to be on the SMT even though this is conceived as the teachers' and principal's space. He says:

I asked ... to be part of the SMT and the intention was that being an administrative clerk is not challenging for me and it doesn't give me any opportunity, maybe to give my views on the way the school is being run.

Once on the SMT, he influenced the principal's decision to adopt a standard agenda for the SMT meeting. On the SGB, he worked tirelessly to inform the parent governors about correct policy and procedure. Whenever they would decide something that was contrary to the education authorities' policies, he would explain why that decision was incorrect.

For example, with the appointment of a second deputy principal, the SGB wanted to appoint a junior teacher, even though there was a more senior teacher who was qualified for the post. He intervened and explained to them that this was not correct procedure. He exerted his influence and experience on the SGB to ensure that the new post selection was done correctly. However, because he felt that the principal was commandeering the SGB, he stepped down from the SGB.

F was on the SMT and is currently on the SGB. She remarked that teachers and even the principal did not follow the educational authorities' policies and procedures. The school had experienced money going missing and many procedures were being ignored. She said that she constantly had to fight the tendency by staff to do their own thing, especially

if it was contrary to the educational authorities' policies. She says she would reproach them:

'... you don't come with you[r] *knoeiery* [cheating and corruption] and then I must go and explain to the [education] department this and that. I am not going to do that and I am not going to allow it. When I see, I see right through you. Don't come with an agenda.' And I say it just like that in the meeting.

This shows the extent of her influence.

M acts as a sensitive conduit between the principal and the teachers, where she selectively communicates the information that she informally acquires to the principal. Sometimes she omits information that she knows will upset the conservative principal in order to keep the organisational climate favourable. F passes on important 'insider' information to the new SGB chairperson not only to socialise, but also to alert her to vested interests in school decisions. But F also does it so that she may have influence with the SGB chairperson.

P's son attends the school, so he cares about the school's success. He constantly passes on information to the principal in the hope that the principal will consider some of these suggestions (for instance, doing something about the poor annual national assessment scores of the school's students). When P was a member of the SGB he made it his duty to inform parents of what was happening in the school, at a day-to-day level, so that they could make 'better', more informed decisions.

All three administrative clerks have been given or have taken responsibility for financial matters at the school. Through their 'control' of the purse strings, they influence financial decisions. Whenever the principal wants to access petty cash, he has to go via the administrative clerk. Teachers know that they will have to go via the administrative clerk if they want to solicit petty cash for purchases or local travel related to the school.

These spatial practices of sway reveal the tactics they employ to increase their participation in decision making. It demonstrates how they have extended the range of their tasks in order to develop their capabilities and gain internal and external goods. From the above, we note that the administrative clerks engage in a multitude of spatial practices despite the limited tasks assigned to their occupational role and, in so doing, counter the contributive injustice of their ghetto occupation.

2.8 Practices of surrogacy

'Practices of surrogacy' refer to those practices where the administrative clerks act as a substitute for the principal or the management of the school. These spatial practices include making management-related decisions when the principal is absent as well as making important management-related decisions while the principal is present at school.

When the principal is physically absent, all three school administrative clerks are able to reproduce the spatial practices required. This also applies to when the principal does not do his job. For example, P will gather and compile the documents that the educational authorities require, ensure they are correct and submit them to the correct recipient. When the principal is absent, M and F support the deputies and HODs, if the latter are not familiar with the task at hand. F is an important surrogate for the acting principal when she is faced with something with which she does not have experience. All the school administrative clerks know the requirements of the educational authorities and their principals well enough to be able to act on their behalf.

Whenever the administrative clerk is absent from the school, the principal and even the teachers complain when they return. One of the teachers commented: "If [the administrative clerk were to] leave now ... I think we will be lost ...". This is because so many of their tasks cannot be done without information or insight from the administrative clerk. Their spatial practices have become integral to the work of the other stakeholders at school. When P was absent from the school for a few days due to study leave, he came back to school and found that the requisite forms for the submission of the financial subsidy application for Grade R, that had been due while he was on leave, had not been submitted. Even though this task is the responsibility of the principal, he waited for the administrative clerk to do it. The reason he did not do it was because P had exercised his agency and done much of the principal's work in the past and now the principal had become reliant on him.

P does the finances even though he is not officially the financial officer. He also assists in the computer laboratory as the Local Area Network administrator, helps with the school policy documentation, helps administer the school feeding scheme and assists with fundraising. All these activities are not part of his contracted work description but derive

from the fact that the principal or the responsible person is not doing his or her job.

At the SGB meetings, P endeavoured to inform parents about their rights and responsibilities as well as the policies and procedures of the educational authorities. He acted as their facilitator. This is the responsibility of the principal and the educational authorities but he stepped in. He transformed the SGB meeting space to include a pedagogic space. The IMG manager responsible for P's school says that P is practically "running the school".

F does the management-related tasks that are necessary at the school, even though these tasks are not part of her remit, taking on some of the responsibilities of the acting principal. Because the school does not have sufficient students to qualify for a deputy principal, she does some of what would have been the deputy principal's work. This arises out of her need to extend her capabilities but is chiefly a response to the urgency and immediacy of the situation at school. This sense of immediacy of problems that crop up at school is what honed the spatial practices of surrogacy of the administrative clerks. In the aftermath of funds going missing from the school premises, F insisted that nobody else be allowed to deal with finance matters at school other than her. Despite grumbling from some of the teachers, she was given this responsibility and most of them are satisfied with her financial management.

F's spatial practices extend outside the school sphere. She is the coordinator of the school's fundraising efforts. She has coordinated the high tea fundraiser of the school for the past few years. She raised funds amounting to about R25 000, which is the biggest fundraising contribution to the budget. She visits donors to collect donated goods and to drop off letters of thanks. This takes place both during school hours and in her personal time.

Because principals have to see to many different responsibilities, the administrative clerks sometimes fulfil the managerial school requirements and the on-the-ground activities of the school. In doing all of these management-related tasks, the administrative clerks' spatial practices counter the inherent contributive injustice of their occupational role. These spatial practices complement their existing capabilities as well as help them to develop new capabilities. This self-development affords them respect and recognition from their peers.

2.9 Main conclusions

I used the normative framework of contributive justice to analyse the spatial practices of administrative clerks in public schools in the Western Cape. I found that even though administrative clerks were thought of as non-teachers and non-managers their spatial practices included pedagogic and managerial practices.

Even though administrative clerks suffered contributive injustice through the unequal division of labour of their occupational role, which relegated them to doing mundane and routine tasks, they countered this injustice and engaged in complex practices that led to self-development, self-satisfaction and recognition by those around them. This article confirms that administrative clerks are producers of, as much as they are positioned by, their school space. As producers of their social spaces, I argue that they counter the unequal division of labour which denies them opportunities for self-development, satisfaction and recognition. In producing their personal, yet social spaces, they reflect their reflexively arrived at personal projects. They do not resist the contributive injustice inherent in their occupational role merely to counter managerial control; they resist to achieve self-development and to gain internal rewards of satisfaction and external rewards of recognition by their peers.

Through their spatial practices of care, sway and surrogacy the school administrative clerks countered the contributive injustice – by using their spatial practices to generate new spatial relationships with the teachers, students and principals. This led to their deep participation in the school and substantial benefits for the functioning of the school. Their novel spatial practices can be seen as personal projects that they want to see come to fruition at school as well as reactions to the spatial practices of the principal, teachers or the educational authorities' representatives.

Administrative clerks, as they go along every day, change their spatial practices, invent new ones, and appropriate existing spatial practices. As they do that, they deploy their agency toward an imagined space – a space of possibility. Through their creative acts of bringing about new practices in the midst of existing spatial practice, they have appropriated and transformed their spaces of work into spaces of care, and in doing so they have transformed their spaces of subordination into potential spaces of participation.

Administrative clerks' occupational role provides them with lowly tasks which limit their ability for self-development. Yet, this investigation into their spatial practice shows them to

be active agents, i.e. active readers, interpreters, articulators of space, while simultaneously still having to reproduce the demands of their conceived space. This research demonstrates that administrative clerks, even as they occupy marginalised positions, engage in spatial practices that increase their capabilities, recognition and participation. It demonstrates that the lived spaces of administrative clerks are filled with little victories. One of the most important findings is that the administrative clerks' spatial practices, with tangible effects, are precisely successful because they are unrecognised and remain invisible. If they become visible, they may be shut down and troubled by the authorities. I view their spaces as spaces of enablement, operating in the shadows.

Administrative clerks are placed in particular spaces and are expected to enact particular spatial practices. Yet, they have agency (however circumscribed) and embody subjective understandings of their spatial practices amidst institutional expectations. In this study M, F and P creatively embody spatial practices that reflect citizenship behaviour, kindness and care while, at the same time, being very competent at the work that they are required to do. In doing so, they counter the contributive injustice of their occupational role and make space for contributive justice in their schools.

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3 Chapter 3: Engendering 'rhetorical spaces' to counter testimonial injustice: the voicing practices of school administrative clerks

3.1 Abstract

This article discusses the phenomenon of how people's voices or opinions are taken up in relation to their status. I focus on administrative clerks in school contexts, people who occupy a professional category that is regarded as one of voicelessness and therefore easily ignored. Their low social location and occupational role means that their testimonies are deemed less credible than the testimonies of school principals and teachers. This is referred to as testimonial injustice. However, this article argues that administrative clerks exercise spatial agency to counter the testimonial injustice to which they are subjected.

Methodologically, this article is based on a qualitative study of three administrative clerks in South Africa public schools undertaken over a 12-week period, followed up by more interviews and site observations. Combining the theoretical constructs 'testimonial injustice' and 'rhetorical space', I argue that the administrative clerks I studied engendered transformed rhetorical spaces - which are negotiated social spaces - that allowed for their voices and opinions to challenge the testimonial injustice they experience. I suggest that these rhetorical spaces are achieved by them through their continuous and active presence in their work environments. They engender rhetorical spaces in which their voices are deemed legitimate by forming close relationships, enhancing their human capital by furthering their educational qualifications, and their successful accomplishment of additional role tasks. My main argument is that these clerks, despite occupying a marginalised occupational status and suffering testimonial injustice, are able to exercise their reflexive agency to improve their credibility and thereby resist the testimonial injustice visited upon them.

Key words: epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice, spatial practice, social justice, rhetorical spaces, school administrative clerks

3.2 Introduction

It is a familiar scenario in schools. When junior teachers, female staff members or employees from minority groups voice an opinion or make a suggestion not much

attention is paid to them. Yet when a senior or higher positioned staff member makes a similar suggestion it is considered a good idea and everybody listens. In this context the testimony of those occupying lower ranking positions or marginalised social groups is disadvantaged, discriminated against and marginalized. Wherever there is such an unequal normative framework regulating the giving of testimony, then those whose testimony is disadvantaged by this system suffers what this article will argue is a type of testimonial injustice. This refers to the discrimination visited on the voices, opinions and testimonies of marginal groups.

Testimony is the exchange of information and knowledge between people who by virtue of their interaction establish a relationship. Testimony is given within a social space that is shaped by the particular material and social dimensions of a specific physical space. This social space has norms which include rhetorical norms. These rhetorical norms govern who can speak and who listens to whom.

This article explores the everyday spatial practices of three school administrative clerks who suffer testimonial injustice within their professional contexts. It aims to reveal how they exercise their agency through specific spatial practices that are enacted in their workplaces as a means of countering the injustice meted out to them by virtue of their subordinate positions.

Research indicates that marginalised individuals suffer significant testimonial injustice (Fricker, 2007). School administrative clerks in schools are an example of such marginalisation. Research has confirmed that those who occupy secretarial and clerical positions are routinely disregarded (Fearfull et al., 2008; Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010) and that their voices go unrecognised (Whitchurch & London, 2004). Administrative clerks' marginalisation is a result of public schools being largely bureaucratic organisations with hierarchical ordering. This hierarchy impacts negatively on the credibility of lower ranked employees. Bureaucracy endows the holders of powerful positions such as management with greater credibility while undervaluing the testimonies of those in lower marginalised positions. Wong (2003: 110) explains that "marginalised groups typically tend not to be thought of as possessing much credibility". Administrative clerks' testimonies are thought of as irrelevant because of the prejudices and stereotypes on the part of hearers. The rejection of their testimony is related to the hearer's judgement of them as having a credibility deficit. This is testimonial injustice.

This article is a discussion of the agency of school administrative clerks in their attempt to counter their marginal status. I argue that the qualitative findings from the study of three school administrative clerks in three public schools in Cape Town show that administrative clerks actively work to enhance their credibility as well as engender rhetorical spaces within the school. Through these means they are able to voice their opinions. I suggest that their voices and opinions are significant because their work practices within school spaces produce significant contextual and institutional knowledge. These voicing practices within their school contexts include interactions with principals, teachers and students. It is wide-ranging since they interact with different officials and people. Administrative clerks also tend to remain at their schools for long periods (Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2011) and hold a history of accumulated knowledge.

The article is based on a qualitative study of three administrative clerks, one male and two female, whom I purposively selected for a broader project on the identities and practices of school administrative clerks in public schools. I refer to them in this article as P, M and F. The fieldwork included site visits to each school site over a period of one school term (12 weeks) where I observed, interacted with and interviewed the three administrative clerks. This was followed up by regular interviews over a period of a school year. I kept a fieldwork journal to gather observations. I also interviewed their principals, members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, parents on the school governing body (SGB) and educational district officials.

The data gathering included semi-structured interviews and participative observations. I did not originally set out to investigate their voicing practices or how their testimony was being received. Instead I was interested in their identities and work practices. I was drawn to researching administrative clerks because of experiences and insights gained from a previous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) project of training provided for administrative clerks. Through the M&E project I realised that they were making huge contributions at school while remaining invisible. Fearfull, Carter, Sy and Tinker (2008) call this the clerical conundrum, which refers to how the dominant discourse in organisations, at least in part, renders administrative clerks' contribution invisible. Thus, I embarked on this research study to make their contribution visible.

The questions were broad in the beginning but became more focussed as the study progressed. As I listened to the administrative clerks I realised that, as they were voicing

their stories, they were intent on getting me as researcher to delve beyond surface appearances. I had to be a virtuous listener, having to listen carefully to the stories that were being related. As the interviews and observations progressed within their social spaces, my efforts of being a virtuous listener paid off. I began to notice that the administrative clerks were engaged in a complicated two way interaction with the structures and strictures of their schools, which tended to render them invisible on the one hand and on the other, to be tested and probed by their considerable efforts for visibility. I struggled to make sense of this tussle. I employed an iterative research approach of moving between data and theory to illuminate the constitutive processes at play, simultaneously made up by practices of invisibility, visibility and voicing. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) work on social or lived space, I suggest that it was through the resistance to the testimonial injustice in the form of spatial practices that they succeeded in creating a rhetorical lived space for themselves. The next section presents the theoretical approach I apply in this article. It is based on a consideration of testimony as a spatial practice combined with the notion of 'rhetorical space,' which allows for understanding how testimony calls forms of agency into being.

3.3 Theoretical considerations

Testimony is the core vehicle through which people communicate. Testimony is broadly defined "as any kind of telling in and through which the expression and transmission of knowledge becomes possible" (Medina, 2012: 28). Such testimony or telling, if expressed in a manner unencumbered by social position or status constraints, enables the expression of agency. In contrast, Fricker (2007) explains that testimonial injustice refers to a situation where a person's testimony is ignored because of her marginalised social location, occupation or identity (Fricker, 2007). The testimony of a person is dismissed because of prejudice on the part of the hearer. Fricker (2007: 39) argues that "testimonial injustice is a normal part of discursive life" for those who have their testimonies routinely dismissed and devalued as a consequence of their marginalised status. Testimonial injustices take place "when speakers suffer *credibility deficits* due to *identity prejudices* on the part of their hearers" (Maitra, 2010: 196). Persons who are identified as socially marginal, such as the administrative clerks discussed below, experience plummeting credibility irrespective of the veracity of their testimony.

Testimonial injustice occurs when the listener does not fulfil his obligation to make sure his credibility judgment considers the veracity of evidence and not solely the social position of the speaker. When this occurs, the testimony of those with less social prestige enjoys less credibility. Fricker (2007) suggests that worthy informants may be ignored given their identification with a subjugated social group. Thus worthy informants are denied an opportunity to participate in the transmission of knowledge and the hearer misses out on an opportunity to benefit from their testimony. For example, the worthy testimony of an administrative clerk might be overlooked because of her low occupational role and the social status associated with her position, while the principal and senior teachers are given an excess of credibility by virtue of the higher status of their occupational roles.

Based on the view that space is thoroughly social (Lefebvre, 1991), I suggest that giving testimony is entangled in space and is constitutive of space. Space is not an empty background but a constitutive part of an administrative clerk's social world and workplaces. Social space shapes the manner in which testimonial injustice occurs and how it can be resisted. Lefebvre (1991) argues that social space is produced through three dialectically interconnected processes – what he calls a spatial triad – that consists of 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation'. Lefebvre (1991: 38-39) also labelled this spatial triad, from a phenomenological perspective, 'perceived' (production of material), 'conceived' (the ideological and institutional sphere) and 'lived' (symbolic and experienced sphere) space respectively (Schmid, 2008). The spatial triad is constitutive of all spaces. All three processes of spatial production occur simultaneously in everyday interaction. In other words, it is the particular interaction among these three spaces that produces social practices. An analysis of social space depends on a relational reading of the specific articulation of the spatial triad – in my case, the social practices of giving testimony, institutional norms concerning testimony and knowledge and the symbolic and imaginative dimension of administrative clerks' testimonies in their work sites.

In the context of the article the 'representations of space' or 'conceived space' structure administrative clerks' decisions about how to operate and make sense of their space. Conceived space provides the rules that govern the office space. These rules are embedded in the school's discourses and include the occupational role that

administrative clerks are supposed to play at school, as well as the requirement that administrative clerks comply with the directives of their principals and teachers.

Emphasising the rules of dominant actors, 'conceived space' refers to the rhetorical rules and restrictions placed upon the clerks' testimony and practices while also providing them certain rhetorical 'allowances'. The rules and restrictions circumscribe the clerks' communicative influence in their workplace. This makes it difficult for them to contribute substantively to administrative and management processes or to decision making related to teaching or student relations.

'Perceived space' refers to what the administrative clerks grasp through their senses, including seeing, feeling and hearing. 'Spatial practices' refers to the activities and interactions as they occur in a particular space. Both 'perceived space' and 'spatial practices' thus describe the social-material dimension of space. Testimonial communicative events are spatial practices of school administrative clerks. Giving testimony is a spatial practice. Administrative clerks' notion of their perceived space is sensed by them as principals and teachers, students, parents and district officials interact and communicate with them every day. The identity prejudices and credibility deficits that some school staff have toward administrative clerks are woven into the fabric of school spaces. The clerks sense the responses of the principal and teachers to their testimony; experiencing it sometimes as affirming and at other times as a sensation of being denied. The perceived sensations of how the administrative clerks' testimony is dealt with by the school staff form and fashion their notion of their perceived space and what spatial practices are acceptable. Normative spatial practices are maintained, both through organisational systems and through informal aspects of school culture and context.

The third element in the triad – 'spaces of representation' or 'lived space' – refers to the administrative clerks' desire, affective experiences and imagined potentiality, which they may establish within their professional practices. This is the space of enablement or lived agency, where, in interaction with perceived and conceived space, the agent establishes viable social practices through a range of tactics, positioning's and testimonial deployments (De Certeau, 1984). This is an active space of agency acquisition.

Linking the giving of testimony to social space, I draw on the concept of 'rhetorical space' which emphasises the ways in which space limits and shapes all that can and will be "heard, understood, [and] taken seriously" (Code, 1995) within that space. Testimonies

are given within rhetorical spaces which are constructed through a specific articulation of the spatial triad. When an administrative clerk gives testimony it takes place within a particular social space, i.e. a particular rhetorical space. Rhetorical spaces are social spaces in which there are particular structuring's of who may speak and how and which language regime or discursive register is in use. Code (1995) explains, rhetorical spaces as:

fictive but not fanciful locations whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure ... and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them ...an expectation of being heard, understood, taken seriously.

Each rhetorical space within the school has its own imperatives and constraints that arise from how the space has been 'conceived', 'perceived' and 'lived' by the administrative clerks. Although all three spatial dimensions influence the nature of school administrative clerks' rhetorical space, it is their lived space which I wish to explore. Notwithstanding my focus on lived space, the dialectical nature of the spatial triad means that I interact with all dimensions of the spatial triad. Combining testimonial injustice with the lived dimension of rhetorical space means that it is possible to see the agency of administrative clerks as they deal with the attitudes of school staff – whether stereotypical and prejudicial or accepting – toward their testimony. Agency is entangled in lived space and becomes manifest in the reshaping of rhetorical spaces within the school context. By positing that space is being produced in everyday interaction, I am suggesting that through their spatial practices school administrative clerks rework and adjust the school's existent 'rhetorical space'. The clerks transform their subordinate spatial positions and work with the discursive materials in their work sites to establish themselves as empowered agents.

This theoretical frame provides a lens through which to view administrative clerks' testimonies. Looking at the giving of testimony as a spatial practice can inform us about how administrative clerks' testimonies are received in their schools. If administrative clerks are suffering testimonial injustice then their spatial practices, as instances of agency, can show us how they carefully craft and carve out transformed rhetorical spaces in order to give testimony. Their spatial practices assist us to see how structured school social spaces can also simultaneously be sites of administrative clerks' agency and resistance. The lived space dimension can tell us how the administrative clerks experience the school and how they imagine it as a space where their testimonies are heard and social practices established.

3.4 Contextualising the testimonial practices of the three school administrative clerks

The discussion here provides a contextual backdrop of the administrative clerks' occupational terrain against which their testimonial practices can be viewed and understood. In general, administrative clerks in the Western Cape have lower educational qualifications (Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2012) compared to the teachers and principals at the schools in which they work. The typical administrative clerk has a matric (Grade 12) certificate and administrative experience (Naicker, Combrinck & Bayat, 2012) and, even if they have a post-matric qualification, it is not in teaching. School administrative clerks are designated as 'non-teaching staff' and this, combined with their low occupational status, leads to an identity deficit that confers on them a subordinate occupational status at their school.

M has worked at Gardenia Primary School (pseudonym) since 1999. The school is in a poor, previously 'white' area which has experienced a dwindling white population. M grew up and lived in the area, attended Gardenia school as a student, and previously worked as a secretary for a local medical doctor. She is currently the school's only administrative clerk. She has a formal yet close relationship with the principal. He runs the school in a top down manner with a strict and controlling leadership style. M is a member of the school governing body (SGB) but is not part of the school management team (SMT). She is actively engaged in the affairs of the SGB where she finds resonance for her opinions. M has a certificate in school business administration. She graduated as the top student on her certificate course and was honoured as such at her college graduation.

M actively engages students and parents. She keeps abreast of developments and changes in their families. She knows whose parents have divorced and who is looking after the children when the parents are at work. Having grown up in the area, her lengthy duration of service has given her insight into the social dynamics of the students and their families. Thus, she has a nuanced understanding of what is happening in the lives of many of the school's students. If, for example, a student is acting up in class she might have information that could help the teacher deal with the student. She is actively involved on the SGB which she uses as a rhetorical space where she voices her opinion.

P is employed at a primary school that is situated in a black township. The students that attend the school are typically impoverished. P lives in this township and his son attends

the school. P is a male, which is atypical for administrative clerks in the Western Cape. He is an active community member and leader. He started working at the school soon after it was established in 2001. P is the more senior of the two school administrative clerks at his school. He is currently a member of the SMT and the SGB. He serves as the financial officer on the SGB. P has an honours degree and is currently doing his master's degree in public administration at a local university. P also holds a certificate in school business administration. His involvement in local community issues gives him a deep contextual understanding of the students and teachers from the area.

F has been an administrative clerk since 1997. She has been at her current school, which is situated in a working class 'coloured' area, since 2002. F grew up in a similar community. She is one of two school administrative clerks. She handles the finances and heads the fundraising committee. F completed an adult basic education and training diploma course and has been teaching adults at a local school. She is currently registered for a teaching degree through a distance learning university. She is a member of the SGB and was previously a member of the SMT. Her knowledge of finances and fundraising raises her testimonial profile at school and makes her testimony credible in this domain. This extends to the SGB and to the time when she participated in meetings of the SMT.

The office space of an administrative clerk is designed as a support office for a support and non-teaching staff member. It is not conceived as a management, teaching or learning space. These limitations impact upon the rhetorical situation of the administrative clerks. However, the three clerks actively voiced their opinions within their office space, the corridors of the school, on the SMTs and SGBs of their schools, contributing their insights to key management and governance decisions. The administrative clerks' experiences have provided them with insight and understanding regarding teaching and learning matters, school management and community affairs. Their contextual and institutional knowledge support their testimonial practice and bolster their credibility. In the next section, I discuss the significance of the three administrative clerks' testimonies.

3.5 Composing testimony: school administrative clerks' interactions

Administrative clerks have unique perspectives and situated knowledge that are the products of their spatial practices at school (Harding, 2004; Nonaka & Toyama, 2003). The creation and dissemination of testimony involves situated human beings whose

experiences and understanding are shaped by the social interactions and relationships that permeate their social positioning within particular spaces. The three administrative clerks have many years of interacting socially and building relationships in their respective schools. Albeit relegated, their social position gives them insight into the daily social functioning and activities of the school that might not be available to those in more elevated positions, such as the teachers and principals.

Administrative clerks interact with students and parents in ways that the teachers do not. They have access to personal information to which teachers do not have access. They gain the trust of the students. They interact with parents and students when the parents enrol their children, when they come to pay fees, purchase uniforms, and when students deliver messages from their teachers. Students also interact with the administrative clerk when parents phone the office and leave messages or when students need medical attention or mediation when involved in an altercation.

The administrative clerks' situated knowledge and perspectives are an important resource for teachers and principals. For example, administrative clerks would know which students have not paid fees and probably their reasons for non-payment. They might also know what private troubles students suffer at school or at home. This contextual information would be of value to teachers but, if being dismissive of the administrative clerks' testimony, they miss out on crucial information that the clerks could provide.

Administrative clerks have experience and training in school administration and management from which the teachers and the principals benefit (Rimer, 1984). Even without formal teacher training, they engage in practices that enhance students' social and moral development. A particular example I witnessed was M being called on to arbitrate between two students who had been fighting in the playground. She listened to each of the students' reason for his action and then proceeded to guide them toward resolving their differences.

The administrative clerks' acquisition of anecdotal information from various sources, such as students, parents, social workers and educational officials, is valuable when used to enhance the work of teachers and the principal. The school administrative clerks in this study could therefore be regarded as situated knowers whose testimonies hold enormous value for their schools' administrative functioning in addition to their educational

effectiveness. In spite of this, in the next section, I show how their testimonies are ignored and overlooked.

3.6 Experiencing testimonial injustice in rhetorical spaces

In this section, I lay out a synopsis of the administrative clerks' rhetorical space. I then go on to draw attention to incidents of testimonial injustice that the school administrative clerks experienced within their spaces of work. Their experiences are nuanced and reflect the different spatial contexts within which they work.

The conceived space of administrative clerks is regulated. They have to obey and defer to the principal. They have to know their place. They are expected to keep their spatial practices in accordance with the hierarchical order of administrative clerks' conceived space. This dimension of space has an impact on how the principal listens to, hears and mishears the administrative clerk. This spatial articulation carries within it limited potential for administrative clerks' voicing practices. The clerks often perceive this limitation as frustrating and a negation of their potential to make a multi-dimension contribution to the school. The quotes below bear testimony to the above synopsis.

P says, venting his frustration at not being heard by the principal: "it seems...whatever we [referring to himself] say doesn't make sense to him [the principal]." Here P is confirming that his testimony is not been given credibility and he is suffering testimonial injustice.

M explains how the teachers and the principal do not acknowledge her testimony: "but I'd say to them...but it does not register". She attempted to engender a rhetorical lived space to converse with them about 'certain kids' (who are problematic for teachers) but did not succeed. M said:

...teachers and with the principals, they're very hard on certain kids and I know what their [students] circumstances are so I tend to be soft with them, and they [the students] will come to me, they'll actually come into my office...but I'd say to them [the teachers], 'but you know what, what's going on at home?' But it doesn't register [to the teachers], I suppose they have to be the disciplinarian.

F commented on her frustration when asked for her opinion but then having her testimony ignored. Her testimony was solicited but when the principal spoke to someone else (a teacher), he set her testimony aside. He had allowed her to expand her rhetorical lived

space to advise him but then retracted and restricted it and devalued her testimony in relation to the teacher's testimony. F said:

Sometimes he [the principal] will come to me for advice, then I will tell him, 'okay this', then he will go, then he talk to that person, then he rather...my thing is this, why did you come to me in the first place?...I want to put in my input and it's not...welcomed.

Her comments indicate that the principal occasionally gave her an opportunity to voice her opinion but that he gave it a lower value compared to the opinions of the teachers.

P stated that, in some instances, his testimony was ignored by the principal and teachers. He said that he placed notices on his door with regard to when he could be approached but that teachers ignored this. He explained that "the rules are on the door but they're ignoring the rules". Thus his lived experience has been one of frustration. The experiences of P and the other clerks of their perceived space – their grasp of their sensory experiences in their work spaces – can therefore be said to be one of encountering testimonial injustice.

F found that when she presented the budget at the SGB meeting at the beginning of the school year, she received negative comments from some of the senior teachers. She says that no one came forward to question her about the budget. She implied that they were questioning her credibility to discuss the budget. She felt that those teachers did not consider her testimony credible because she was an administrative clerk. According to her, "they did not question the worth of my work but rather they questioned my worth". She seemed to imply in one of her interviews that teachers might be jealous of her because of her knowledge of the school's financial matters. F commented that the teachers think that she is beneath them, that they think that [she] is only a secretary: "*jy is maar net 'n secretary*".

From the above discussion I can infer that administrative clerks are subjected to testimonial injustice. The 'conceived space' for administrative clerks' testimony is restrictive. They interact every day within a constricted rhetorical space, speaking even though they are not heard. Their affective experience of providing testimony is one of rejection, being belittled and having their testimony ignored. However, as I show below, their lived encounters in their workspaces are not closed off to meaningful agency and social practices. Their 'lived space' is also where they imagine themselves as being

accepted, respected and credible. Testimonial injustice is a part of their schools' 'conceived', 'perceived' and 'lived space' but in their lived space they envisage and imagine a greater testimonial role for themselves. Their 'lived space' is therefore also framed by the hope of being heard. In the next sections, I go on to discuss some of the administrative clerks' spatial practices through which they attempted to enhance their credibility.

3.7 Striving for credibility: engendering rhetorical spaces

In the previous section I demonstrated the testimonial injustice that administrative clerks suffered and the limited rhetorical space they enjoyed at their schools. In this section, I discuss the spatial practices through which the administrative clerks engendered their rhetorical spaces, which I suggest can be considered creative lived spaces. Four issues are considered: their presence within their work spaces, forming close relationships, credibility enhancement through further study, and the role of taking on additional work in improving their testimony. I argue that it is through these spatial practices that the administrative clerks succeeded in renovating their rhetorical space by conferring it with testimonial credibility and agency.

3.7.1 Continuity of spatial presence

Continuity of spatial presence refers to administrative clerks being physically present and participating in the rhetorical spaces that their school spaces offered. Their physical presence in the front office of the school is a job requirement. However, it requires the administrative clerks' agency to activate their physical presence and turn it into a spatial practice of building credibility. It was their desire to play a meaningful role and be recognised as more than just administrative clerks that motivated them.

In terms of their 'continuity of presence' strategy, the selected administrative clerks strove to remain rhetorically involved in many forums and spaces within their schools. This included being part of the SMT (P and F at particular times), the SGB (all three administrative clerks) and sub-committees of the SGB, particularly the finance and the fundraising committees. Being on the SMT was not an expected requirement for the clerks but they all requested access to this social space. They did not restrict themselves to the conceived space notions of the SGB and SMT. As they cautiously exercised their agency to counter the testimonial injustice of their occupational status on the SGB, they found that their testimonies were noted. The three administrative clerks indicated that it

was a gradual process that led to the production of a more just and inclusive rhetorical space at school. Once negotiated as a more inclusive space, the administrative clerks found fertile ground for their testimonial contribution.

One of the teachers interviewed acknowledged P's credibility when she said:

"Even...when there's [a] parents' meeting, he [is] the one who is able to convince and talk about the problems...and bring good suggestions." In addition, the deputy principal commented on how P had enhanced his credibility at school:

P was the one who is always on the school premises, he knows what is happening and he would be the one who tells the governing body what is really happening. If the governing body sometimes is resisting, he will then intervene...because he is always at, he knows what is going on inside the school you know.

Their continuity of spatial presence is established by them being in their offices to answer the phone, welcome guests and deal with queries from the education department officials, teachers and parents. This allows them to acquire an in-depth perspective of events and issues occurring at school. As I observed, their continuity of presence also means being the first at school and probably the last to leave. Whenever teachers had a query they tended to turn to the administrative clerks for assistance.

M's principal has come to rely on her testimony to reflect on his decision making and to aid him in making further decisions. M's testimony helps him to manage the school. M illustrated the dynamics of the morning rhetorical space between her and the principal:

So we got about ten minutes between 5 past 7 and quarter past 7 that we'll chat about the day ahead or yesterday...but we do have that informal meeting...He either comes to chat to me here or I go to his office. He'll tell me what he's worried about, this is going to happen today, he'll tell me if he is going to be out for a while...

M said that the principal used informal chats to check with her on which issues needed to be addressed.

F recounted many instances where one of her previous principals would step into her office and ask her about the background and advice concerning an issue before making a

decision. This action by the principal underscored the testimonial credibility that she had gained over time at the school.

Their continuity of spatial presence afforded them situated knowledge which they used to enhance their credibility. Their ongoing testimonial contributions helped them make their testimonial presence felt.

3.7.2 Forming close relationships

Cultivating and maintaining relationships is a key spatial practice by which they improved their credibility. The dialectical nature of school social spaces means that rhetorical spaces are sites of contestation and negotiation. Administrative clerks courted relationships with school staff to enhance their rhetorical spaces. P cultivated a close relationship with the principal and some of the heads of departments. P recounted many conversations with the principal about how to improve the school. For example, P addressed the principal at the end of the school year about implementing strategies to improve the low annual national assessment scores. The principal agreed that he would implement a plan in the following year to improve the implementation of the curriculum, which, according to the principal, was informed by some of P's "sensible practical advice".

Describing his interaction and communication with the principal, P explained:

I approached Mr S [the principal] and tell him about my concerns...because normally when I talk to him, I wouldn't say 'Mr S, can I have your minute because I have a concern'. I normally would communicate, maybe hijacking, the conversations that we made and then comment about a certain thing.

Thus, P's spatial practice was to inject his testimony within the existing conversation. This was his effort to engender a rhetorical space to voice his opinion. He attempted to appropriate a rhetorical space within the conversations between himself and the principal.

P said that he developed a relationship with a former principal who was now a local educational district official and that he had come to respect P's opinion. He said that this official came to him recently and said: "P, you are the person, I trust your opinion". P explained that this official also said he had trusted him [P] to "always have a neutral opinion":

... so he asked me....he used to give me a scenario and then and he ask my opinion around that and I normally give my opinion.

M formed close relationships with certain teachers and the principal. Thus the principal felt he could trust her voice and testimony and ask her for advice. He said [about M], “if I ask her for ...advice, she will give it.” M’s close relationship with her principal allowed her to gradually exercise agency within her rhetorical space.

F also established a close relationship with one of her previous principals and enjoyed testimonial credibility. She said:

He could see where I’m coming from, we were talking out of each other’s hand... You see, but with the previous one [principal],.. if I say 'Mr V what do think of this? *Juffrou, ons maak dit soos jy sê* [Miss, we do it as you say].

There is a spatial dimension that helps to foster close relationships. The close proximity in which the principal and the administrative clerks work promotes mutual understanding and respect. All three of the administrative clerks in this study developed close relationships with their principals and certain teachers through working closely with them over many years and gaining their trust. They also developed working relationships with many service providers, community nurses, parents and educational authority officials across the educational environment, with whom they enjoyed testimonial credibility.

Through these relationships administrative clerks established credibility at the school level and with the educational authority at district level. It is therefore clear that, their circumscribed agency notwithstanding, the administrative clerks established spatial practices based in part on fostering close relationships which positioned their testimonies, knowledge sharing and other practices to meaningfully contribute to the school’s daily operations.

3.7.3 Enhancing their credibility through academic credentialing

The testimonial injustice that administrative clerks experienced is related to their lack of social power. Thus, in order to increase their credibility, the administrative clerks increased their human and social capital. All three administrative clerks embarked on improving their academic credentials, which included completing the specialised Certificate in School Business Administration (CSBA) training course. All three administrative clerks commented that the CSBA training had enhanced their understanding of school governance and school management, which enhanced their capacity for agency within these domains. They all did further training and two of them are currently pursuing academic degrees at local universities.

P explained that “If people [the teachers and principal] are aware that you are a master's student they will tend to listen to what you are saying”. M said: “it [my credibility after doing the CSBA] has [improved] a lot with Mr K [the principal]...and the...new governing body as well”. She also said that the principal now introduces her to a new parent with “this is the school business manager”.

Through increasing their educational credentials, the administrative clerks enhanced their credibility, which enhanced their authority as well as gained some newfound respect for their opinions. Academic credentialing therefore played a key role in enhancing their testimonial credibility.

3.7.4 Fostering credibility through additional role tasks

Another spatial practice through which the administrative clerks fostered their credibility was by constantly doing additional role tasks and doing them successfully. Even though they were sometimes subtly coerced into doing these extra role tasks, they used the successful execution of these tasks to build credibility within the school. This included doing some of the principal's and the teachers' work, attending after school functions and events and being part of the various sub-committees of the SGB.

F recounted an incident with a previous principal:

If I say...what do you think of this? *Juffrou ons maak dit soos jy sê* [Miss, we do it as you say]. He could already see, because he was also a financial [officer]...He did the finances at...[his previous] school and he was the deputy there.

Demonstrating her competence, she persuaded the principal to accept her testimony. At the same time she remarks that this principal also said somewhat playfully: “*Jy sê nie iets vir my nie, hoor* [You don't tell me anything, you hear me]”. This shows that although she had carved out a rhetorical space where she could voice her opinions with the principal, he was alerting her not to abuse the concession.

Commenting on how she makes time for these extra role tasks, M said: “you do your daily tasks, things that Mr K would ask me to do that I would fit in, things that the teachers ask me to do, I would fit in then.” She also said that the more successful she got at these extra tasks the more her credibility increased: “as I got more responsibility, I got more respect as everything went smoothly”.

P also commented that he was successfully doing some of the work of the principal, which I consider an important reason why he was able to gain credibility with his current principal. He said: "I'm doing the administration that is supposed to be done by the principal". The deputy principal at P's school commented on P's commitment to the school when she said:

P is really doing a good job. He's sometimes assisting the principal writing the minutes for the SGB you know. P is good in keeping the finances and when you ask P to do something for you, he's willing to do that, he's always willing.

In the above quotation the deputy principal acknowledged P's credibility when she said: "P is really doing a good job". These and similar statements bear testimony to P's enhanced status and credibility at school.

In sum, the administrative clerks exercised their agency. They engaged in novel spatial practices, imagined new lived spaces and tried to influence the 'conceived space' notions of those around them to engender a rhetorical space where their voices were heard. Being on the SGB and SMT was a major rhetorical space where the administrative clerks made their voices heard.

Administrative clerks were able to imagine a different lived space and engaged in spatial practices that reflected their agency. They established spatial practices that engendered a new perceived rhetorical space and allowed them a voice. Administrative clerks reflexively employed their agency to change the perceptions of their testimonial competency among their principals and teachers. They engaged in sustained spatial practices that enhanced their credibility. Their new and renovated spatial practices were acts of resistance to the notions of their limited 'conceived space'.

Administrative clerks' spatial practices of 'continuity of presence', cultivating close relationships, doing praiseworthy additional role work and increasing their human capital through further study were deployed to engender an expanded rhetorical school space.

I have argued that the administrative clerks engendered, renovated and re-fashioned rhetorical spaces in which they were able to voice their opinions. They made themselves heard and voiced their opinions, and thus their testimonies were listened to and not dismissed. Countering the testimonial injustice they were subjected to, administrative

clerks enhanced their credibility and engaged in 'voicing' practices to counter the stereotypes and prejudice of hearers.

3.8 Conclusion

I hope that this article has confirmed Fricker's (2007) contention that marginalised individuals' testimony is ignored and overlooked. The bureaucracy and hierarchical structure of public schools as well as their insignificant occupational status limited the administrative clerks' testimonial credibility. Schools are bureaucratically structured to facilitate testimonial injustice rather than testimonial justice. Extant educational management discourses confer limited testimonial credibility on the school's administrative clerk. Their office spaces have limited rhetorical prospects. Thus administrative clerks are restricted from having their testimony heard, understood and believed.

Given these restrictions, this article shows that the three school administrative clerks exercised their agency through establishing alternative spatial practices. They engendered rhetorical spaces where they were able to voice their opinions. Through their spatial practices administrative clerks enhanced their credibility and provided their testimony within selected rhetorical spaces, despite being subjected to testimonial injustice.

I have demonstrated how testimonial injustices are perpetuated but also how they are resisted. The lived space of the school administrative clerks included both testimonial injustice and spatial practices intended to generate testimonial justice. I have shown that, despite the spatial constrictions that confront the clerks in their school work spaces, they have strategically and deliberately fashioned rhetorical spaces that conferred on them the testimonial credibility to play a meaningful role in their work environments.

To this end the three administrative clerks wanted to be heard, to be recognised and to contribute to their schools, so they reflexively went about building credibility. Their engendering of rhetorical spaces was a result of prudently engaging in sustained micro spatial practices. These spatial practices included their continuous spatial presence, close relationships with significant others, furthering their academic qualifications and performing additional role tasks successfully and competently. I argued that subordinate groups, such as the school administrative clerks discussed here, engage in credibility

enhancing exercises by which they enhance their credibility within their specific local contexts and in doing so, change the lived nature of their work spaces.

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4 Chapter 4 :Tactically deployed practices as ethical formation: the identity practices of school administrative clerks

4.1 Abstract

School administrative clerks' identities are discursively constructed by the storylines of schooling, gender and bureaucracy. These storylines allocate them limited agency and positions them as subordinates in their workplaces. The article posits that school administrative clerks rework their identities by adopting ethical goals and practices. As such the article contends that school clerks' identities may be imbued with professional agency. Based on a study of selected school administrative clerks, this article discusses how they tactically construct professional institutional identities via ethical goals and practices. It seeks to explain how these clerks, by means of ethical aspirations, engage in practices beyond the apparent strictures of the dominant institutional discourses and thereby professionally contribute to their school contexts.

Key words: school administrative clerk, ethics, tactics, institutional identities, practices

4.2 Introduction

School administrative clerks' identities and practices are an under-researched aspect of educational research (Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010). The existing research on the practices of school secretaries and administrative clerks has highlighted the unrecognised and invisible nature of their practices (Casanova, 1991; Thomson, Ellison, Byrom & Bulman, 2007). In general, secretarial and clerical work is described as lacking autonomy (Ames, 1996; Kanter, 1977). In a South African context, for example, school administrative clerks' job description requires them to provide secretarial duties and administrative support (Western Cape Education Department (WCED), 2004). However, research has indicated that school secretaries and administrative clerks' practices make critical contributions toward the running of the school (Casanova, 1991; Conley *et al.*, 2010; Hart, 1985; Rimer, 1984). Moreover, their practices are starting to be recognised by local educational authorities as crucial in enabling and supporting principals in carrying out their leadership roles (Woods, Armstrong & Pearson, 2012). Despite this, there have been no detailed studies that address the agency of school administrative clerks, perhaps because they are regarded as subordinate support staff (Casanova, 1991). This article explores the practices of school administrative clerks in a bid to address the dearth in the literature.

The article applies a theoretical framework that brings issues of identity, ethical intentionality and agency into conceptual focus (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1990; Gee, 2001) in considering the practices of school administrative clerks. A key conceptual consideration of the article centres on the role of poststructuralist ethics in engendering agency. A key aim of the article is to offer analytical purchase on the influence of ethical goals and identity practices as they pertain to the institutional identities of school administrative clerks. Based on an analysis of the data, the article demonstrates that, due to the subordinate status of school administrative clerks' institutional identities, they are motivated to engage in ethical self-transforming work. It furthermore illustrates that they appropriate discourses such as professionalism and care by which they 'subjectify' themselves and thereby establish what I would suggest is an ethically formed subjectivity. They deploy and engage in a range of ethical practices that signify this ethical subjectivity. I present the argument that these agency orientated practices are established and co-exist in light of the subordinating or dominant discourses that are prevalent in the professional spaces.

The institutional identities of school administrative clerks are embedded within societal and organisational discourses. For school administrative clerks, discourses associated with gender and bureaucracy are among the dominant discourses that frame their institutional identity and their identity practices (Ames, 1996). Gender discourses and norms are a ubiquitous and constituent feature of organisational and social life. Certain job categories and occupations have become associated with masculinity and others have been associated with femininity (Hodson & Sullivan, 2007). Secretarial and administrative occupations are regarded as feminine occupations (Pringle, 1988; Truss, Alfes, Shantz & Rosewarne, 2012; Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995). Norms such as deference, nurturing and relational work are associated with femininity (Truss *et al.*, 1995). The literature argues that the institutional identity of school administrative clerks is framed by discourses of femininity (Ames, 1996; Truss *et al.*, 1995).

Similarly, bureaucracy is another subordinating discourse that structures school administrative clerks' institutional identity (Ames, 1996). One of the principles of bureaucracy is the division of labour within a hierarchical system where occupational roles have specific discrete activities that must be executed rationally and impartially (Kallinikos, 2004). Power is distributed hierarchically, where principals at the top of the bureaucracy

are dominant and school administrative clerks at the bottom are subordinate. The latter are required to serve their immediate superiors, the principals. They must take instructions and are generally not in positions that allow them to manage others (Pringle, 1988). Thus, through the gender and bureaucracy discourses, school administrative clerks are discursively constructed as holders of subordinate institutional identities that afford little agency (Truss *et al.*, 1995).

Every discursive subject position generates resistance (Foucault, 1997). I suggest that school administrative clerks' resistance is informed by the ethical goal of having, or desiring to have, a respectable and recognisable professional identity. Ethics within a poststructuralist Foucauldian framework refers to how a subject invokes particular moral norms in order to shape his or her identity within the constraint of dominant discursive identity norms (Foucault, 1990). This ethical goal is instantiated through identity practices which make the subject's resistance goal-driven and not merely random.

Three school administrative clerks in three primary schools in Cape Town participated in this study. I refer to them in this article as M, P and F. One was a male and two were female administrative clerks. I have written elsewhere about the context of this study (Bayat, 2012). They were purposively chosen because of their outstanding contribution to their schools and their extended tenure as school administrative clerks. The methodological approach was qualitative, drawing on discursive and ethnographic orientated research approaches.

The data collection and data analysis proceeded as follows. I initially did a literature review to guide me toward theoretical constructs for my data collection. I then found that research pertaining to school administrative clerks was limited (Casanova, 1991; Conley *et al.*, 2010; Hart, 1985; Rimer, 1984) and together with the literature on secretarial and clerical work (Ames, 1996; Fearfull, Carter, Sy & Tinker, 2008; Fearfull, 1996; Maguire, 1996; Pringle, 1988; Truss *et al.*, 2012), revealed gaps in respect of the discussion of their identity, agency and practices.

I then interviewed the selected administrative clerks using open-ended, semi-structured interview schedules at their schools over a 12-week period. I also interviewed teachers and the principals with whom they work with the purpose of providing verifying perspectives for my understanding of the clerks' narratives. I also spent several days at

each school observing the administrative clerks. As the interview data was transcribed, I reviewed the transcripts and did initial data analysis. Data was analysed through a recursive iterative process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which field notes and interview transcripts were read, interrogated and reflected upon.

As themes emerged I went back to the administrative clerks and engaged them further in respect of the selected themes. Thus the data collection and analysis proceeded in a reiterative manner. I decided to start with theoretical constructs, interview the administrative clerks, read and interrogate their answers and then go back and gather more data to answer the new questions that would arise.

The next section of the article discusses the theoretical considerations and conceptual framework of the article which provide the analytical lenses for the study.

4.3 Theoretical considerations

The starting point is Gee's (2001) concept of institutional identity which asserts that individuals in occupations derive their identity from the institutions for whom they work or of which they are part. Institutions authorise institutional positions (teacher, principal, administrative clerk) which discursively frame the subjectivity of those who take up these positions. Drawing on insights from Butler (1990), these institutional identities have to be performed in order for them to be instantiated. They require enactments via practice. Identity (or subjectivity) is not solely derived from the subject's position but includes what the subject does, i.e. their practice (Butler, 1990; McKinlay, 2010). However, practice does not always correspond to the normative expectations associated with a given subject position. There is a gap between the normative expectations of the authorities (for example, an education department) and the daily practice of the person occupying that subject position (Davies, 2010). It is in this gap that subjects constitute their practice by subjectifying themselves to ethical norms (Foucault, 1990).

Thus, in my theoretical framework discourses engender subject positions. Subject positions are performed through daily practices. Where daily practices differ from the dominant norms, it may be argued that this variation stems from the subject's assertions of her own ethical norms. In other words, it is through subjectifying themselves through the exercise of their ethical norms that subjects' practices differ from expected norms. Thus, these practices serve as the basis of their ethical identity. It is through these ethically

inspired practices that subjects enact and perform their personalised institutional identities. Thus each subject can live out his or her personalised ethical version of the subject position.

The theoretical perspective employed here views school administrative clerks' practices as agentic – not just acts of resistance, or 'making do' (De Certeau, 1984) – but rather ethically inspired and tactically located identity practices. Foucault's ethics are not about justice or moral codes, but are rather about self-formation (Styhre, 2001), working on the self to change one's identity (or a part thereof). From a Foucauldian perspective "ethics...denote the possibilities of individual agency" (Styhre, 2001: 799). For Foucault, ethics is:

...a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve and transform himself. (Foucault, 1990: 28)

Foucault provides a four-part schema for the "self-formation as an 'ethical subject'" (Foucault, 1990: 28). First, there is the *ethical substance*, which concerns the specific aspects of himself or herself that the subject targets for transformation. The ethical substance can be their actions, desires or emotions. Second, there is the *mode of subjectivation*, which refers to "the way in which the individual establishes his (sic) relation to the rule" (Foucault, 1990: 27); that is, the ways in which individuals come to take on moral obligations. An individual might, for example, accept a rule as part of a religious precept, societal norms or based on its aesthetic value. Third, the *forms of elaboration*, which are the practices and technologies of the self, the various forms of elaboration of ethical work that a subject might apply not just to modify her conduct in relation to a rule, but to modify herself as the ethical subject of her actions. Such techniques might include regular meditation, prayer, training, adopting pre-existing moral practices, and self-examination of actions, thoughts and desires. Fourth, there is the *telos* of the ethical subject, which refers to the purpose and in particular the *mode of being* that the subject is aiming for in his ethical practice. The telos of ethical action might, for example, be taken to be 'goodness', recognition or the achievement of self-mastery.

All four parts are interlinked and intertwined. Discussing one dimension means that the other dimensions are also implicated. I discuss below the school administrative clerks' constitution of their practices and technologies of the self, which are:

techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies,...their own thoughts, their own conduct,...so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection (Foucault, 1988: 18).

Technologies of the Self (ToS) are the activities and practices by which a subject changes his or her own practice. Although Foucault (1990) does not say it directly he seems to suggest that ToS are methodically deployed. My suggestion is that ToS practices can be methodically and tactically deployed.

Tactics, as conceptualised by De Certeau (1984), are improvisations and small acts of resistance. De Certeau (1984) asserts that tactics are the practices of ordinary persons as they respond to the discursive constraints to structure their personalised spaces and identities. Examples of tactical ToS practices are informal communication, improvisations and the subversion of standard practices. In a sense, they are those acts that enact the ethical aspirations of the doer.

Gender and bureaucracy are dominant discourses within schools. Gender norms associated with the secretarial occupational position dominate the institutional identity of the subject occupying the secretarial position. Gender is defined as "patterned, socially produced, distinctions between female and male, feminine and masculine" (Acker, 1992: 250). These patterned behaviours generally assign agency to men and masculinity and subordinate status to women and femininity. The secretarial institutional identity is infused with traditional gender norms associated with femininity, such as deference, nurturing and relational work, because of the high frequency of women occupying the secretarial position (Kanter, 1977; Wichroski, 1994; Truss *et al.*, 2012). Traditional feminine metaphors are used to describe it. These include office wife and office mother (Casanova, 1991; Kanter, 1977).

Bureaucratic discourse has placed clerks at the bottom of the hierarchy with little control over their tasks. Bureaucratic norms subordinate them to explicitly defined tasks. The secretary has to respond "to momentary demands and immediate requests generated on the spot" (Kanter, 1977: 79). Murphree (1987: 104) states that "(s)ecretarial tasks are

generally defined by a principal or boss who has a great deal of latitude and personal authority in determining what a secretary does". Thus, the bureaucratic discourse constructs the institutional identity of the administrative clerk with minimal agency. Discourses on gender and bureaucracy engender a subordinated institutional identity for the school administrative clerk. However, as much as discursive regimes aim to close off school administrative clerks' institutional identities, they act ethically and tactically transform their institutional identities. The norms and practices associated with bureaucracy and gender are potential resources for administrative clerk's ethical goals and practices.

The discourse of professionalism is a dominant discourse in organisations, including schools (Dent & Whitehead, 2002). Professionalism is closely associated with practices that denote specialism, autonomy and trust (Dent & Whitehead, 2002). However, the norms of professionalism, such as working autonomously, are not discursively associated with the institutional identities of secretaries and administrative clerks since they are considered support staff (Pringle, 1988). In this article, I argue that the administrative clerks' practices are directed at realising the ethical goal of being professionals imbued with agency.

The theoretical framework presented above is based on the view that subject positions are discursively constructed but require a deployment or performance of practices for their enactment. However, when subjects practice an ethics of the self, they can transform a part of their institutional identity because ethics opens up the possibilities for agency. I posit that these ethical goals may be arrived at through introspection and in response to their subordinate status. The transformation of the self is accomplished through the tactical use of technologies and practices of the self to move towards a certain *mode of being*. Technologies for self-transformation are multiple, improvised, goal-directed practices and may include appropriated standard practices. Technologies of the self includes practices that may be derived from the discourses of gender, bureaucracy and professionalism, such as care, management and leadership practices, if these take the subject towards his/her ethical *telos*. When these practices are tactically performed and enacted to achieve the subject's ethical goal, they become practices and techniques of self-transformation.

In the next section, I draw on data from the study to show how school administrative clerks go about working ethically on their discursively constructed institutional identity. I first

discuss the ethical goals of the administrative clerks. Thereafter, I present the data that exemplifies my argument that the practices of administrative clerks are tactically deployed toward enacting their ethical goal of being professionals.

4.4 The ethical goals and aspirations of school administrative clerks

This section of the article focuses on exposing the ethical goals of the three administrative clerks. I start with their ethical aspirations since their practices are constituted by their ethical goals and aspirations. In the section thereafter I present a discussion of their ethically infused practices.

School administrative clerks' ethical goals reflect their internalisation of societal, religious and organisational values but personalised to their unique histories, experiences and ethical values. These include being honest, fair, responsible and professional. Their mode of being refers to the type of person they aspire to be. It is the goal of their self-transformation practices. In terms of their institutional ethical goal, their mode of being within their institutional context is that they act as professionals imbued with agency.

In order to explicate the administrative clerks' goals or *telos*, I review their comments where they express the mode of being that they strive to enact. I will relay each administrative clerk's goals individually and then I will summarise their positions at the end of the section.

Commenting on her ethical aspirations as an administrative clerk, M said, "I want my judgement to be respected...I want my opinion...to be important". This statement indicates that M wants to be a professional and to be treated as one. The normative position concerning administrative clerks' opinions is that they are insignificant. The administrative clerks noted that when they challenged decisions the usual retort would be 'but you are just a secretary.'

Further commenting on her ethical aspirations, M said that she endeavoured to be "fair, honesty comes first, it is very important. I don't let my personal feelings get in the way of what is right".

M's ethical goal that she strives for as her mode of being is subjecting herself to the norms of fairness and honesty even if it goes against her own personal feelings. The point of going against her own feelings is important in terms of her wanting to let her ethical code

rule her rather than her “own feelings” in the heat of the moment. She wants her impartiality to be trusted. This is crucial for enacting a professional identity. Commenting on her ethical aspirations as they relate to the teachers and students, M said:

I want to help them [teachers] because they're so busy in classes...And I'm very much into the kids at this school. I mean I want to help them...if I could I would devote my entire time to their psychological wellbeing, I would.

From the above statements I suggest that M is aiming for a mode of being that incorporates both goals and aspirations for her relationship with herself as well as how she wants to relate to others. The relationship with her self is to act according to the norms of professionalism. In her relationship with those at school, she wants to relate to the students and teachers as a carer. Thus her mode of being of professionalism is to be a caring professional.

Commenting on his ethical aspirations, P said:

Being an administrative clerk is not challenging for me and it doesn't give me any opportunity, maybe, to air my views on the way how the school is being run...I want to influence things about the area I know better [P speaking about school management]...I was elected to be in the school governing body and I accepted that I want to be in the school governing body, because I thought that I could make a difference in the governance in the running of the school. I want to be there because I feel...I have a feeling that if I can be there then I can influence things to happen.

From the above statements, we can see that the mode of being that P is aiming for is a professional subjectivity, a subjectivity that goes beyond the subordinate status of his institutional identity. Based on my interviews with P, it is clear that he wants to be involved in decision making that affects the school. He wants to feel that he is recognised for his specific contextual knowledge. He wants to transcend the normative bounds of being a subordinate school administrative clerk. He wants to influence issues, events and decision making. He wants to be a professional.

From the statements below, I contend that P's professional goals include developing, transforming and growing himself as a professional:

I think it is also educational on my part because if I am being limited to the Western Cape Education Department job description of an admin clerk, I won't grow beyond the secretary job. But if I am engaging in more, other

things that's not in the job description this makes me grow, understanding other things in education.

He is aiming to broaden his knowledge and understanding and achieve a professional institutional identity. This emphasis on growth as part of developing his professional institutional identity can also be seen in P's completion of the Certificate in School Business Administration and current postgraduate studies (CSBA) at a local university.

Reflecting his ethical goal of having a professional identity, P said:

Even if that situation is not completely changed the way you want to be...but at least you make an effort to change that situation and I think that satisfies you because if maybe you see things that are going wrong when you didn't take any effort, then you won't be happy within yourself because you'd always blame yourself that, okay there was a situation and I felt that I can do something but I didn't, then you can't be happy...

The above comment demonstrates that P's concerns go beyond the concerns of his subject position. His concern is how he would relate to himself if he did not pursue his ethical goals. P's ethical goals engender him with professional agency to attend to challenges at school.

When asked about her aspirations and dreams, F replied: "for me ...[to be a] school business manager". This is a professional position and the apex to which an administrative clerk can aspire.

F's ethical aspirations relate both to the type of relationship she aims to have with herself as well as the type of relationship she wants to have with others. F said about her relationship to herself and others, "I'm just a straight person". F also speaks about growth and development as an ethical goal. She said, "if you are in that position, as a secretary, you would want to be the best...the best at all times". When asked about what she valued, i.e. her ethical aspirations and goals, F said, "...you must just try and do the right thing *volgens die boek* [following the injunctions of the Bible]".

From the above comments we can see that one of F's ethical goals is to strive to be 'the best' and morally responsible, which are professional aspirations.

In sum, M, F and P have professional aspirations regarding the way and mode of being they aspire to at school. For all three of them it is to go beyond the subordinate position to which they are subjected. They are committed to professional goals such as honesty and

fairness. They each formulated their specific ethical goals in a nuanced manner within their overall aspiration of being professional. For M, caring is an aspect of her ethical goal of being professional. P's professional identity is communicated as exercising professional agency in addressing challenges at school. For F it is to be the foremost school administrative clerk and reach the level of a school business manager, which is a designation of someone who can contribute to the school in a non-subordinate and managerial manner.

Having an ethical goal is the most significant aspect of pursuing ethical identity work. In striving for new modes of being, the administrative clerks are subjecting themselves to the discourse of professionalism that somewhat displaces the bureaucratic discourse that normalises their discursive identity. Now that they have subjected themselves to the discourse of professionalism, this discourse provides them with techniques and practices for becoming and being professionals.

In the next section, I discuss some of the practices of the administrative clerks which I contend are practices that both reflect their ethical goals and are the techniques with which they build their professional identities and thereby transform their institutional identities. Since identities are constantly worked on, I contend that their practices have a double implication: they are outcomes of ethical goals and instruments for becoming ethical.

4.5 The practices of the professional administrative self

In this section, I argue for viewing administrative clerks' practices as enactments toward achieving their ethical goals. Their practices are tactical instances and practices through which they bring into being their professional personae.

It was with this in mind that I focus on two sets of professional administrative clerk practices. The first set concerns practices that exemplify care. The second set consists of practices that exemplify management and leadership. I read these practices as enactments of school administrative clerks' professional institutional identities. They tactically deploy these practices as *technologies of a professional self*. The point of this section is to show the way that these practices allow them to exercise their professional 'becoming'.

4.5.1 Tactical deployment of identity practices of care

Care and service are professional norms in educational professions. Therefore to make the case that the administrative clerks are enacting a professional identity, I illustrate their

enactment of practices of care. These are tactical practices because they are done in the space and time of their administration work and because they disrupt the dominant norms of such work.

I argue that the following description of M's practice is an illustration of practices of care. The extracts below are taken from an interview with one of the teachers, commenting on M's benevolent behaviour:

There's a little boy in my class...She [M] would always come in and give him R2 or a sweetie or whatever and she would really make him feel good...I let him take the money [school fees, money for printing, fundraising money, etc.] to Aunty M...when he comes back, he's a totally different boy, where sometimes walking with a frown, whatever, but when he comes back from her...And I know she's given him a sweet or a hug or something but then he is a different boy...

...you see a lot of time M getting out of the car with bags of food, and bags with clothes, pillows, and cushions and stuff, I don't know, I don't always know who this goes to, but it comes from her and she gives it to the kids...

The above observations, corroborated by others with whom I spoke, are examples of M's care for impoverished students. These practices go beyond the normative expectations of being a school secretary. I consider these care practices as tactical practices because M is diverging from her discursive institutional identity. She enacts these practices to construct her professional institutional identity. By adopting care as an identity marker she projects her ethical aspirations. Her practices are engendered by her ethical aspirations and through her practices, her discursive institutional identity shifts. Through these practices she transforms herself for herself and for those around her. M's enactment of these professional practices is her exercise of agency.

Furthermore, M said: "I bought... [a student] a pair of shoes two months ago, pair of *tekkies* [canvas shoes] again today". Buying canvas shoes for impoverished students is not part of her job description. By purchasing the shoes she exercises a practice of care. The act of buying the shoes is a tactical practice that instantiates her ethical identity.

In terms of her practices of dealing with teachers M said, "*ja* [yes], I do care about them, I must say". Another teacher commented on M's practices of care and said:

I know the textbook and so forth, she releases me in that, when that supplier comes, she would check the books when they arrive because she knows we're busy teaching so she would check, count the books to check that

everything's in the box and makes sure it gets signed, invoiced and so forth. So she files it and then at the end of the day she would just tell me a package arrived, it's accounted for, it's all there and you can just take the books basically. So that takes quite a lot of workload off us.

She uses the clerical practice of receiving books as a caring practice. It becomes a practice of care when the reason for doing the act is the instantiation of her ethical aspirations. The teacher acknowledges M's professional service which further augments and strengthens M's claim of being professional.

Commenting on her practices, F explained that:

...the member of the governing body phoned me to say that the child [student] has been discharged at N1 city hospital. So I went to N1 City hospital, picked her up, dropped her off at home and then I came to school...

This is a practice of care. It demonstrates F's professional ethic of care. Fetching learners at hospitals is not the normative practice of administrative clerks. In assisting the learner and moving beyond the office space, F tactically enacts a professional institutional identity through her practice of care.

A teacher at P's school said [concerning P]:

I'm doing my studies, when I need some help, maybe I have a problem on my assignment, he's the one who come(s) to help me.

The teacher was a young undergraduate education student at a local university. She approached P when she had a problem with her course assignments. Teaching is a recognised professional position. Her approaching P for assistance suggests that P has been successful in projecting his professional identity to the teachers at his school. Because providing this type assistance is not part of the administrative clerk's job description, I argue that his assistance is a tactical practice of care. P's helping of the teacher with her undergraduate assignment is a professional identity practice. It also shows that the teacher recognises P as a caring professional.

The administrative clerks' practices of care cited above are enactments of their ethically infused professional institutional identity. Their ethical aspirations have engendered them with professional agency. They have internalised professional norms and enacted practices of service and care. These practices go beyond the job description of administrative clerks. These practices are tactical performances of their institutional

identities as professional administrative clerks. Since they are ethically goal oriented, I argue that these practices that differ from the clerical norm are instances of agency that arise through their commitment to their ethical goals. Concurrently, these are practices that take them toward their ethical goal. Through their practice they have acted upon themselves and in the process transformed themselves. These tactical practices are instances of their identity work.

In the next section, I discuss the identity practices of the school administrative clerks that relate to management and leadership to further develop the argument that their practices are infused with professional aspirations.

4.5.2 Tactical deployment of management & leadership identity practices

Management and leadership practices can be seen as processes of working with and through others to achieve organisational objectives (Drucker, 2007). By showing that administrative clerks enact management and leadership practices, I make the argument that these are tactical practices through which the administrative clerks craft their professional identity.

P is respected as a community leader. He engendered respect through his leadership practices that led to houses being built for the local community. P, commenting on his involvement in community organisations, said, "I used to be heavily involved...I was the secretary of the board...we managed to build houses for the people..."

P's enactment of management and leadership practices within his community organisation allowed him to build and craft his professional identity within and beyond the school. P said:

...there are things that I have identified during the CSBA course, there are administrative problems that I have identified, that need to be rectified in the school. I was thinking that being on the [school] management [team (SMT)], then, I can influence things to happen.

From the above, I contend that P's tactical practices included reflection on the managerial problems of the school. Because of his professional learning and development, but also because of his community experience, P tactically got himself onto the SMT. Being part of the SMT is outside of a school administrative clerk's professional role expectations. Notwithstanding this, P attended the SMT meetings, where he motivated for a standard

format for an SMT agenda in order to more productively conduct the SMT meetings. This was adopted and, according to P, allowed the members of the SMT to follow up on previous issues raised as well as to provide a process for how issues could be dealt with systematically. These tactical practices are managerial practices that inscribe P as a proactive professional.

F's management and leadership practices included tactically deploying ethical anti-corruption practices. She used the moral codes of bureaucracy to police errant senior teachers and a past principal. F recounted practices of curbing fraud involving the previous principal and said that she had considered it her professional duty to counter this. She recounted an interaction with the principal where, instead of acting subordinate herself, she enacted a professional persona. F said that in her response to the principal, she retorted:

...we're doing the right thing now. It's no more *smokkel* [bribery] or *agter die ding se* [doing things clandestinely and irregularly] ... no more *knoeiery* [conniving]...

M's management and leadership practices included her intervention in the dispute around the shortlisting of a new principal for the school. A dispute was lodged by a dissenting teacher who felt she ought to have been shortlisted and the matter was investigated. When she was interviewed on the matter [since she is part of the school governing body (SGB)], she justifiably accused the school institutional governance and management (IMG) manager of not following WCED procedures in the shortlisting of a candidate for the incoming principal. This is an identity practice that endorses her as a professional even though the IMG manager attempted to discredit her by saying 'you are only a secretary'.

In another incident M opposed the SGB which wanted to intervene in the distribution of funds meant for a school family instead of paying it to them. The school had received funds for a family whose child had lost her life outside the school premises. The SGB wanted to control the distribution of funds to the family. M intervened and insisted that the money be paid over to the family instead of the SGB deciding how and when to release the money. The SGB relented and followed her recommendation. Being able to engage and express her opinions, but also to persuade the SGB to implement her recommendations, evidently provided her professional sway in her work context.

All three of these administrative clerks were on the SGB as the non-academic staff representative. They tactically engaged in multifaceted governance practices. They did not just accept the narrowly prescribed roles of secretaries to the SGBs as the dominant discursive scripts would have expected. For example, P chaired the selection process for a new deputy principal; F played a role in the selection of principals and teachers and mentored new SGB parent governors; and M was involved in the selection processes and influenced decision making around the granting of parent fee exemptions.

They did not stay silent and express low-key comments and opinions as would be advocated by the dominant discourses. Instead, they engaged in debate, gave their opinions, differed with the principals and teachers and considered themselves capable governors.

P stated that he played an important role on the SGB. However, he said that at one time he resigned from the SGB because the principal deceitfully tried to get his preferred candidate nominated as the deputy principal during the SGB selection process. P said that because he could not stop the principal's deceitful attempts, his tactical move was to resign. According to him, he sent a clear message to the principal through his resignation. Subsequently, he returned to the SGB and continued to engage. Having made his point, he viewed his return as a move to further engage governance issues under altered conditions. P's professional identity is apparent in the manner in which he tactically moved in and out of spaces that afforded him opportunities to engage in practices of management and leadership.

F said that when she started working at the school she too deployed managerial practices to establish her agency. There was a clique of teachers who resisted her attempts at assertion. They wanted her to be the subordinate administrative clerk. She felt that she experienced resistance because she did not toe the line and slot into the normative subordinate institutional identity. She continued to engage in managerial practices which eventually led to teachers' begrudging respect for her as a professional. An example of F's managerial practice was her successful coordination of the school's main fundraising functions and her practice of doing the school budget. In another example, when a new governing body chairperson was appointed, she provided the chairperson with contextual information and knowledge. The SGB chairperson lauded her for this professional contribution. Her successes led the principal to accede to her request to join the SMT. F

agreed that being on the SMT allowed her space to deploy managerial and leadership practices and enact a professional identity.

The school administrative clerks' professional identity practices made them indispensable. Each of their principals conceded their dependence on the work of the school administrative clerks. M's principal said:

Well if M had to be absent for a week, I think quite frankly I think it's going to be chaos and because we really depend on her...but...if she had to undergo a liver operation quickly and she had to be absent for two to three weeks, then we're going to sit with a problem.

This comment indicates that M's principal acknowledged that without M's coordination work the school would flounder. When P was absent from school, the principal would delay the completion of tasks until P returned to work. Also when F was off from school for an extended period, the principal struggled to reconcile the accounting records and had to institute a new financial record system.

From the above comments and discussions it can be said that the administrative clerks tactically enact and engage in management and leadership practices. Through enacting these practices they constitute and bring into being their professional identity. Specifically, by joining and participating in governance and managerial forums at school, these spaces enabled the crafting and enacting of their professional identities.

In the next section I briefly discuss administrative clerks' ethical aspirations that lead them to enact tactical practices that can be considered practices and technologies of the self. These practices are transformative but also represent a specific instantiation of the professional mode of being for which they are striving.

4.6 Discussion

School administrative clerks are aware of the normalising discursive strategies at play in their institutional context. Theirs is a subordinate institutional identity. They are also mindful that to challenge these normalising forces they have to act tactically. They grasp that the dominant discourses conceive their office as a subordinate space in which they are to follow instructions and have a limited control over their work and work priorities. However, the school administrative clerks have an ethical goal – a professional mode of

being. I contend that what motivates them to act ethically and submit themselves to following the moral rules of professionalism is a desire for recognition.

The characteristics of the practices through which they constituted their professional identity varied. These included concern and care for students and teachers, accepting responsibility for financial matters, curbing fraud and corruption, fundraising, leadership, mentoring and inhabiting spaces of management and governance. All these practices demonstrate the professional personae of the school administrative clerks in this study.

They appropriate practices and use them tactfully toward realising their professional mode of being. Tactics enable school administrative clerks to adapt the strategies of the elite for their ethical goals and aspirations. The practices of care, management and leadership are technologies of the self. Technologies of the self are performed by administrative clerks to achieve their professional identity and in the process modify and transform their subordinate institutional identity. They strive to modify their discursive institutional identity and fulfil their professional notion of what it means to be a school administrative clerk.

The theoretical contribution of this article is that ethical aspirations constitute identity and that identities give rise to practice. The particular argument is that the administrative clerks' professional ethical goals motivate them to engage in practices that take them to their ethical mode of being. These practices are then to be seen as identity practices and the subjects as engaging in ethical self-transformation. These practices are considered tactical since they are improvisations. These are everyday practices tactically deployed as identity practices. I view the formulation of ethical goals and the deployment of tactical identity practices as administrative clerks' exercise of professional agency.

In sum, the administrative clerks practice ethics of the self to transform themselves into professional subjects. They craft and carve out their professional identity using practices of care as well as management and leadership practices.

The research presented here provides a nuanced rejoinder to the conventional impoverished notions and stereotypical representations of school administrative clerks. It describes what is currently happening in some public primary schools in South Africa. Importantly, it informs us that certain school administrative clerks can take up their subordinate subject position and rework it tactically and creatively to counter their marginalised institutional identity. It informs us, at least for the administrative clerks

reported on in this paper, that administrative clerks' reworked ethically augmented professional identity can serve as a vehicle for a significant contribution to their schools. Given local challenges such as poverty and poor governance and management institutional structures, ethical school administrative clerks contribute significantly to the South African public school system.

4.7 Conclusion

This article contributes to making school administrative clerks' practices visible and to the argument that their identity and work practices are sites of agency. School administrative clerks' practices are presented as tactical identity practices that they enact toward the formation of a professional identity. I suggest that through their ethical orientations these administrative clerks craft and cultivate a professional identity through practices of care and practices of management and leadership.

The article develops and unpacks the dynamics of an agent-centred approach to ethics as a means of self-transformation within a poststructuralist discursive framework of identity. School administrative clerks engaged with the discourses that constituted their subjectivity, read their position as subordinate and deployed identity practices in a tactical manner to transform their subjectivity. Their practices originated from their ethical goals but simultaneously took them toward their professional identity. The article thus provides a rationale as to why school administrative clerks engage in practices beyond their occupational remit. Their ethical goal is to be professional and so they enact practices associated with being a professional.

School administrative clerks constructed a different and distinctive mode of being in school. Resisting the imposition of subordinate identities they presented and enacted professional identities. They reworked their institutional identities, employing carefully chosen tactical practices and, through their everyday practices, renegotiated their institutional identities. Their professional identity practices were varied and multifaceted, including curbing fraud and irregularities, doing philanthropic work, mentoring SGB governors, students and teachers, providing emotional support and enacting management and leadership practices.

In conclusion, administrative clerks' practices should not be seen as conforming to the dominant discourses or as kneejerk subversion to their subordinate status, but rather as

prudently crafted and constructed practices that are directed at the construction of professional identities through which they contribute significantly to their schools.

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5 Chapter 5: School administrative clerk's deployment of participatory capital in establishing practice-based agency

5.1 Abstract

I set out to explore the workings of subordinate agency. The article suggests that it is through administrative clerks' interaction in sociocultural contexts that they, as holders of putative subordinate occupational positions, expand their agency. The article employs the analytical construct 'participatory capital' to analyse the ways in which these clerks establish their agency. Based on a qualitative research study of three purposively selected administrative clerks in three primary schools in Cape Town, this article argues that, while administrative clerks' occupational identity remains subordinate within the bureaucratic discourse, they extended the scope of their agency through their participatory capital.

Key words: school administrative clerks, participatory capital, agency, identity

5.2 Introduction

Although occupying subordinate positions, school administrative clerks have been described as crucial to the optimal functioning of public schools in South Africa (Webb & Norton, 1999, cited in Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010). However, there has been very little written on their agency and professional identities. For example, they are seldom the focus of discussion in textbooks, articles and policy documents concerning school operations, management and governance (Conley, Gould & Levine, 2010). Conley et al (2010: 311) found that "(i)n particular, there appears to be a lack of written ... [work] regarding the complexities (e.g. tasks encountered beyond formal job descriptions) entailed in their work".

Thomson, Ellison, Byrom and Bulman (2007: 146) suggest that the lack of representation of administrative clerks in school management and governance discourses is in stark contrast to their actual "agency which is critical to ongoing events" in the school office. The explicit focus of this article is to highlight how administrative clerks accumulate resources, contextual know-how and relationships in their everyday work contexts, which they carefully deploy to enable them to expand the scope of their agency and transcend the narrow popular constructions of their professional identities as support workers in subordinate roles.

The extant literature on administrative clerks situates them as peripheral, as a support to the work done by the principal (Hart, 1985; Casanova, 1991). The normative assumption is that school administrative clerks have little agency because they have a subordinated occupational identity (Mann, 1980; Hart, 1985). In schools, as in other organisations, the secretarial job has a subordinate work status wherein “the secretary support(s) someone who is assumed to do the 'real' work and who has supervisory control over her [*sic*]” (Ames, 1996: 38). The work of the secretary is deemed relatively skill-less (Crompton & Jones, 1984; Gaskell, 1991). School secretaries are generally given little recognition outside of their school (Wolcott, 1973), their job descriptions are vague (Mann, 1980) and they are generally poorly paid (Rimer, 1984).

This article draws on data from a purposive sample of three public school administrative clerks who were chosen because of their range of responsibilities, experience and lengthy tenure in public schools. I refer to these school administrative clerks as P, M and F. There were two females and one male (see Bayat, 2012). P, M and F were administrative clerks in three public primary schools in the Western Cape in which the bureaucracy discourse prevails (see Fataar, 2009). Each of P, M and F were the non-teaching staff representatives on their schools' governing bodies (SGBs)². In addition, P and F had been members of the School Management Teams (SMTs) of their schools, a position not held by many administrative clerks. It is the contention of this article that their participation in the school community, but particularly in smaller sub-communities such as the SGB and SMT, provides them with the opportunities and resources that they deploy to deepen the ways in which they act in the school and shape their professional identity.

I employed a qualitative approach to gather the respondents' subjective meanings and experiences of how they went about exercising agency within the school setting and their manoeuvres to restructure the roles and activities that they could take on at their schools. I interviewed and observed them over a period of a school term. I specifically employed semi-structured interviews and informal interviews and engaged in participant observation, visiting each school extensively during the period. I interviewed the principal of each school, a few teachers, some parent governors and local members of the education department. These interviews concentrated on aspects of their administrative biographies,

² In South Africa, administrative clerks can formally participate on the school governing body if elected as the non-teaching staff representative (Department of Education, 1996).

including their backgrounds, education and work experiences. After I transcribed the interviews, I took into account my observation notes and analysed the transcribed data using a combination of content analysis techniques and thematic analysis. The interviews and observations provided textured depictions of their activities which I inductively analysed to arrive at the ways that their involvement and interaction made it possible for them to widen the ambit in which they exercised their agency.

In the next section I explain the theoretical lens that I used to explore the argument that school administrative clerks' participation within the sociocultural context of the school provides them with participatory resources which they deploy to enhance their agency and reposition their administrative identity.

5.3 Theoretical framework

My theoretical lens for examining administrative clerks' discourses and practices is the concept of 'participatory capital'. Participatory capital is a term that I use to refer to what individuals learn and acquire through involvement and interaction in sociocultural contexts. The conception of participatory capital that I use here is based on combining sociocultural theoretical orientations with poststructuralist approaches for the study of agency and identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moje & Lewis, 2007). In brief, the focus is on practice-based agency emerging out of a sociocultural context combined with a notion that agency is also a reflexive appropriation of discourses. The key idea is that both discourse communities and the sociocultural contexts provide opportunities for agency and identity self-formation as well as playing a crucial role in shaping the contours of the subject's agency and identity. Sociocultural perspectives give prominence to the effect of the existing and ongoing practice within a particular social space in fashioning the individual. Poststructuralist theories give prominence to discourses and their effect in shaping the subjectivity of the individual. This article brings together both these perspectives and argues for their integration. Participatory capital refers to the contextual understandings, relationships cultivated and the discourses with their attendant subject positions that are learnt and imbibed when people participate in a sociocultural setting. Participatory capital refers to learnt ways of being, ways of talking, ways of taking up discourses, relationships cultivated, shared perspectives and viewpoints. Participatory capital forms part of the history of the individual and shapes the future of that person.

Participatory capital can be thought of as resources generated in a particular social setting that can be transferred to another sociocultural space. Social agents' participatory capital is not only derived from their participation within a particular school or organisation, but also includes participatory capital accumulated while being part of social groups outside of their immediate organisation and school (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Vågan, 2011).

Participatory capital refers to the information and relational resources that accrue to, or are accumulated by, individuals by virtue of their social interaction and relationships. Interaction within the particular sociocultural context of a school enables a participant such as an administrative clerk to learn the discourses that circulate in that school and the subject positions that are made available through these discourses, understand the broader contextual issues facing that school (such as its financial position and student throughput) and cultivate relationships with other participants (such as teachers, the principal and the students). Thus, what this framework emphasises is that the accumulation of resources, positions and knowledge is crucial to understanding how participatory capital is cultivated. In other words, the focus is on the mediated ways in which the administrative clerk could be said to have accumulated participatory capital within particular sociocultural contexts.

The second element of participatory capital concerns the ways in which the subject uses the accumulated resources and positions; what may be described as the deployment of participatory capital. This deployment of participatory capital occurs when an administrative clerk, drawing on her accumulated participative resources, exercises her agency to take up an alternate identity position and engage in situated action. A given occupational identity position can be further expanded, negotiated and subjected to change (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Weedon, 1987) by drawing on accumulated participatory capital.

Accumulation and deployment of participatory capital are consequences of interaction, involvement and participation. According to Wenger (1998: 165), "the various forms of participation all contribute in some ways to the production of our identities". Lave and Wenger (1991) speak about legitimate peripheral participation where newcomers follow and imitate those who are experienced, while those with the experience gradually facilitate newcomers to take on a legitimate identity within the particular sociocultural context. The

accumulation of participatory capital occurs through everyday participation but can be actively sought by individuals through asking questions and cultivating relationships. For example, if a novice teacher participates in a school, he or she can proactively ask questions of and cultivate relationships with experienced teachers.

Wenger (1998: 72-84) identifies three dimensions that constitute practice-based sociocultural contexts – what he calls 'communities of practices' – through which participatory capital is accumulated. Firstly, members interact with one another, establishing norms and relationships through mutual engagement. Secondly, members are bound together by an understanding of a sense of joint enterprise. Finally, members produce, over time, a shared repertoire of communal resources, including language, routines, artefacts and stories. It is along these three dimensions, and especially the shared repertoire of resources, that participatory capital is accumulated³.

Accumulating participatory capital also depends on the attitudes of existing participants within the sociocultural setting. Access to contextual information, an open context for relationship cultivation and transparency of practices shape the newcomers' trajectory toward legitimate participation and the accumulation of participatory capital. If newcomers are welcomed, they learn the practices and discourses that constitute the sociocultural setting. But if the old-timers resist the entrance of newcomers, then newcomers experience 'non-participation marginality' and will struggle to become full members. If they are not welcomed they withdraw and remain non-participants (Wenger, 1998) and they do not accumulate participatory capital. This shows that sociocultural contexts mediate the accumulation of participatory capital in particular practice-based activities.

I contend that individuals who occupy subordinate occupational identities exercise agency through the deployment of participatory capital. My conception of agency draws on Kabeer's (1999) insight that, in order to widen the ambit for people to exercise agency, they need an increase in resources. Participatory capital provides these informational and relational resources for greater agency deployment. Drawing on their participatory capital, administrative clerks are enabled to reposition themselves and to act beyond and outside of their given occupational identity. For example, when a school administrative clerk uses

³ An important distinction that I wish to acknowledge is that I use the concept of participatory capital as a theoretical lens, i.e. a tool for engaging in analysis, and I also use it to refer to the actual communal information and relational resources that individuals accumulate and deploy.

her contextual understanding that the school's poor student performance is associated with students being hungry to organise a feeding programme with other volunteer teachers, she is exercising agency because organising a feeding programme is not a normative practice associated with school administrative clerks.

She uses the relationships cultivated at school (her accumulated participatory capital) to recruit volunteers from among the staff. She takes up the subject position of care to motivate for the introduction of the feeding programme. All of these actions and positioning outside of her occupational identity are made possible through her deployment of participatory capital. Participatory capital makes available information and relational resources that enable an individual to realise that, even though structures and discourses constrain an individual's action, there is space to manoeuvre within the social world beyond the restrictions that are imposed by structures or discourses.

In this section, I have elaborated upon the theoretical lens of participatory capital, through which school administrative clerks exercise agency to reposition their identities and engage in novel and productive practices. In the next section of the paper, I discuss how the selected school administrative clerks establish their participatory capital as part of exercising their agency, which allows them to take up various identity positions in their everyday practices.

5.4 The school office space

In the previous section, the participatory capital theoretical lens was presented. I now apply this lens to the data collected from the three administrative clerks in order to discuss their accumulation and deployment of participatory capital by virtue of their practices in their school office space.

The administrative clerks' accumulation of participatory capital occurred over time. P, F and M had participated within the sociocultural context of their schools for over a decade, becoming familiar with their schools' discourses and building up contextual knowledge through social interaction. They broadened their contextual understanding by asking questions and forming relationships with their principals, teachers, parents, students, other school administrative clerks and local education district officials. Their cultivation of relationships was an important part of their participatory capital accumulation, especially their relationships with their principals.

F explained that she had formed a close working relationship with the principal at the school where she had worked previously, and had learnt a great deal from her. She also said this of a past principal of her current school. Both principals had mentored her and facilitated her uptake of participatory capital. M said that she 'learnt as she went along' by seeking information and knowledge from those around her, especially from the school principal with whom she had worked from the time she joined the school over a decade ago. P said that in his many years of experience at the school, he had cultivated friendships with its principals. One of these principals had moved on to a position at the education district office and P still enjoyed a close relationship with him. The three school administrative clerks' cultivation of their relationships with their principals was an important source of participatory capital.

Furthermore, all the administrative clerks indicated that they had built up a network of relationships and contacts that they could draw on when needed. For example, M recounted that she established multiple relationships, inside and outside the school, to be able to accumulate contextually relevant information. These relationships enabled her to position herself as an aid and assistant to teachers needing information relating to matters regarding their employment.

Another dimension of participatory capital accumulation involved their contextualised understanding of the school. Because they dealt with correspondence between the local education district office and their school, each administrative clerk was well aware of the issues affecting the school and the broader educational context, including which teachers were retiring, which teacher was going on maternity leave, teacher disciplinary processes, annual national literacy and numeracy test scores of the school, and other matters on which information was required by the local education district office. They were aware of the budgetary allocations for the schools, knew about the financial challenges faced by their schools and had an opinion about what needed to be done to deal with these challenges.

M had grown up in the area where her school is located, attended it as a student and later became its secretary. Her understanding of the school and the broader community was extensive. M explained that she continued to make a concerted effort to stay informed about what was going on in and around the school. She kept abreast of all the happenings

at school and personalised her relationships with students, parents and teachers.

Describing her knowledge of the background of students M said:

I know what their [students] circumstances are so I tend to be soft with them, and they will come to me, they'll actually come into my office ... but I'd say to them [the teachers], but do you know what, what's going on at home?

M explained that she used this contextual information to influence the teachers' interaction with their troubled or difficult students.

F said that she dealt with all correspondence at the school and engaged in fundraising because the school's finances were poor. P was well aware of the socioeconomic context of the parents and students since he lived in the area and his son attended the school. The three school administrative clerks built up participatory capital through their knowledge of the school context, the economic and social status of parents and students, as well as the personal circumstances of teachers and the principal. They knew the challenges that the teachers faced, how their students were performing, whether the teachers and principal were studying further, complaints that students or other staff might have and teachers' personal problems. Their understanding and knowledge of the school context formed another dimension of their participatory capital.

An additional dimension of their participatory resources was learning and understanding the education management discourses and the subject positions available within these discourses. Public schools operate within bureaucratic professional and managerialist discourses that emphasised output-input efficiencies and tended to hold the school accountable for its results without regard to the impact of the social context (Fataar, 2009). The three administrative clerks were acutely aware of these discourses as the teachers' and principals' practices were informed by them. As they became more familiar with the practices associated with these subject positions they gradually began inserting themselves into these subject positions.

In the interviews, the administrative clerks articulated their opinions, drawing on the managerialist and professional discourses. They were aware of these discourses and saw themselves taking up these discourses. They endeavoured to distance themselves from the bureaucratic administrative subject position because of the lower status it offered and made efforts to be associated with the subject positions and practices that offered more prestige and decision-making discretion. Thus they made an effort to learn how to speak

and act like professionals. They enacted symbolic practices associated with professionalism. Their attire and the way they arranged their offices reflected their accumulation of this dimension of participatory capital.

Thus they had learnt and were familiar with education management discourses and the related subject positions. They had accumulated this dimension of participatory capital and used it in their interactions in the school office. In my participant observation sessions, I saw them speaking confidently, even sometimes in conflict with the principal and teachers.

The school administrative clerks deployed their participatory capital to exercise their agency and choose identity positions that were not subordinate. F took up a managerial subject position concerning the payment of staff. F said that she negotiated with the principal to be loaded as an authorised user on the education district's computerised payment management system. The principal discussed it with the education district office and was given permission. F said that "they" [the principal and the education district office] had given permission because she was competent in handling the school finances. This indicates that she had successfully enhanced the status of her occupational identity by marshalling her participatory capital to position herself as a manager and thus be assigned responsibility for a confidential aspect of school financial administration.

Through a combination of M's contextual knowledge and her cultivation of a relationship with the school social worker, M positioned herself as a professional caregiver to provide the social worker with information concerning students that needed assistance. She positioned herself as a scout for students at risk. Not only did she scout for students who were candidates for social work intervention but she also acted as an information provider. M said about her positioning with regard to the social worker: "she's our social worker, she phones me, first, before she comes in for anybody else". This suggests that M has successfully positioned herself as a professional functionary who is well acquainted with her school and a person who could be depended on to enable the work of other professionals.

Being in the school office meant that the administrative clerks were acquainted with most issues that were happening in the school. P's school was being poorly managed by the principal who made little effort to bring about change. This was confirmed through my observations and conversations with teachers at P's school. Within this context, and

specifically because of his contextual knowledge, P positioned himself as a professional information manager, relaying information between the school and the education district officials. He said that, because he knows the principal does not answer emailed requests for information from the education district, he answers the emails on behalf of the school without even consulting with the principal.

P also said that he would print out the notices from the local education district that the principal was supposed to distribute and give them directly to the relevant teachers. He did this because the principal had shown on numerous occasions that, even when P reminded him about the notices, he would fail to bring the notices to the attention of the relevant teachers. This had resulted in teachers missing out on important training events. In both situations P subjected himself to the professional discourse, taking up the subject position as a professional, enacting the professional self of knowing how to act autonomously, and enacting the signifying practices of a professional, which included not consulting the principal.

The data exemplifications cited above indicate that the administrative clerks had accumulated participatory capital by virtue of their participation within the school over many years. They had cultivated relationships, had a deep understanding of the context of the school, and were familiar with education management discourses. They used these dimensions of participatory capital as resources to expand the ambit of their agency and deploy a broad range of professional and managerial practices. In doing so they went beyond the discursive constraints imposed upon them by the education management and bureaucratic discourses that positioned them as subordinate administrative clerks and secretaries. By exercising their agency in this way, the school administrative clerks deployed the participatory capital accumulated over many years to construct unique professional school identities.

In the next section I will specifically discuss the school administrative clerks' participation in the school governing body (SGB) and the school management team (SMT) to tease out their participatory capital accumulation and deployment processes. Thereafter I discuss how they exercise their agency by drawing on their participatory capital.

5.5 School administrative clerks' participatory capital deployment in the school governing body

In the previous section I highlighted the administrative clerks' accumulation and deployment of participatory capital in their school offices. I now discuss the administrative clerks' practices as participants in their schools' SGBs. I turn to their SGB participation as a specific practice-based site of their professional work that confers higher status and symbolic forms of participatory capital. This is because a governance identity, I would argue, taken on during their SGB participation, confers greater prestige than an administrative clerk identity. The aim of this section is to exemplify the ways in which the administrative clerks accumulate and deploy their governance-related participatory capital to enhance the scope of their agency and negotiate their localised identities.

All three administrative clerks were participants in their schools' SGBs. I contend that they chose to be involved in the SGB because it was a social space in which they could accumulate participatory resources. Accumulation of participatory capital on the SGB involved getting to know the discourses that constituted the governing body of the school. They had to learn how to act and think like school governors. Furthermore, it meant forging and cultivating relationships with the other school governors. It also meant that the school administrative clerks had to learn the situated dynamics of their SGB whose policy enactments often contradicted normative policy expectations.

They spoke of their hesitancy when they joined the SGB and how they became more confident as their participation increased. F explained:

I was a bit nervous because I did not know what to expect and ... I did not know the governing body members ... so it was a learning curve ... then you could observe and by observing you could automatically see ... and then afterwards I was then quite confident because everybody was there to learn ... and if I didn't understand I would normally phone ... (an)other school principal or school secretary and then I will ask for advice.

Here F is explaining how she slowly built up her participatory capital as she observed the inner workings of the SGB in the early days of interaction on the SGB, while continuing to engage and ask questions until she built up her confidence. Her confidence was a sign that she had accumulated sufficient participatory capital to deploy her SGB practice-based agency.

Similarly, having spent many years on the SGB, P explained: "I was involved with the school governing body, then, we have to learn, so that you make informed decisions". This statement indicates that through his participation on the SGB, P was gradually inculcating

the 'know-how' of school governor practices. He was therefore gradually able to adopt a governor subject position by laying claim to school governance perspectives and discourses. M was initially a hesitant participant on the SGB, explaining that she "didn't say much then". But as she became acquainted with the practices of the SGB, learning and mimicking the practices and perspectives of participants, she accumulated SGB practices and information and relational resources to become an active member of the SGB.

As the years went by, F cultivated a relationship with SGB parent members, including the chairperson. Commenting on F, the chairperson explained that, at the start of her tenure as a chairperson, F had assisted her a great deal by familiarising her with the expectations of her role. The SGB chairperson further indicated that she continued to be receptive to suggestions by F. P had cultivated firm relationships with SGB members during his extended tenure on the SGB. The following quote by P indicates the importance of extended periods of interaction for nurturing participatory capital: "the people I was on the governing body with, we had a relationship because we were on the governing body for the second term working together".

In her ongoing quest to renegotiate her identity and enhance her agency, M cultivated productive relationships with the parent governors. M said that she has "an extremely good relationship with them [parent governors], I give them a lift home after the meetings ... we've got a good relationship, working relationship, an informal relationship". She commented that this relationship led to governing body members working together productively within a positive atmosphere.

After spending many years on the SGB, the three school administrative clerks' contextual understanding of the role and functioning of the SGB grew and expanded. In addition to her current SGB involvement, F had also served on the SGB of the school that she had worked at previously. In the course of the interviews, she evinced a thorough understanding of the responsibilities of being a school governor within the school's existing circumstances. For example, she stated that she had been actively involved in the drafting of school policies and had suggested many novel and productive practices to deal with past and present challenges that the school faced.

During a participant observation day at her school, I witnessed an emergency SGB meeting that was called to discuss the purchasing of office equipment. After the meeting she told me that the principal had wanted to purchase a liquid crystal display (LCD) projector but wanted the consent of the SGB members. She said that she had drawn the SGB's attention to the school improvement plan and the school budget that made allowances for office equipment. Through her intervention they agreed to the purchase of the LCD projector. In this situation, through her knowledge of the school improvement plan and the budgetary allocations, which she had accumulated by being part of the SGB, F deployed this participatory capital which enabled the SGB to make a procedurally justifiable decision. Her action should be viewed in the light of a principal who was prone to taking important procurement decisions without following proper procedures.

The appointment of new management staff can challenge the internal organisational climate of the school. F's school had experienced disputes because of procedural irregularities with the appointment of a principal in previous years. Thus, when a deputy principal and a Head of Department (HoD) had to be appointed, F suggested that a recently retired education district official be approached to advise the SGB on the correct practices for the selection of new management staff. F altered the dynamic and nature of the selection process through her agency. She said:

...now with this interview of these positions, I said that we must get someone who is professional ... Mr ... so I suggested, listen I am going to phone him to give us some training on that...

F suggested this novel practice because she was able to assert her identity as a school governor who had accumulated the requisite participatory capital to feel it appropriate to act in this particular manner. The retired official agreed and the selection process was successfully conducted.

At P's school there was also a dispute regarding the appointment of a deputy principal. P was asked to chair the selection process. This indicated that he had accumulated sufficient participatory capital to accept the position as the chair of the selection process on the SGB. I posit that he was offered the chairperson position for this process because the governors felt confident about his contextual knowledge of the school requirements and the rules and regulations concerning the appointment process. P had cultivated strong enough relationships with the governors for them to feel confident that he was sufficiently

informed of governance discourses. However, P said that he withdrew as an act of protest when the principal told him that, because of a grudge he (the principal) bore towards the teacher who was more deserving of the post, he would not support that teacher's appointment. P said:

I feel that the only weapon I will use against them is for me to resign from the governing body, because they rely on me to a larger extent so if I am not there, they will suffer.

P's withdrawal from the SGB was an exercise of agency in that it was intended to show his displeasure with the way matters were being dealt with on the SGB.

SGBs in South African working class schools are challenged by parents' lack of experience in matters of governance and management (Mncube, 2009). From my discussions with the administrative clerks, I discerned that they felt that parents struggled to develop a governor identity. According to P, "parent governors misunderstand their role on the SGB". F concurred, asserting that "most parents are only there to sit [on the SGB]". The parent governors tended to participate marginally and to defer to the principal, who they deemed the educational leader. They struggled with negotiating their governor identities and displayed a tendency to hand over the reins of the SGB to the principal. However, this was where P seized the opportunity to contribute substantially to governance dynamics at the school. Drawing on his governor identity, P used his knowledge of school governance, and assisted the parent treasurer on the SGB to implement the legitimate practices associated with that function. P also facilitated other parent governors' understanding of their roles and their appropriation of a shared perspective of what it meant to be a school governor. The deputy principal said the following concerning P's facilitation of practices on the SGB:

He contributed a lot on the SGB ... and P was the one who is always in the school premises, he knows what is happening and he would be the one who tells the governing body what is really happening. If the governing body sometimes is resisting you know, he will then intervene. Because he is always at [school], he knows what is going on inside the school.

In this statement the deputy principal implicitly acknowledged P's legitimate participation in the SGB, his productive practices and the respect that he enjoys from the parent governors. The deputy principal also highlighted P's role of inducting parent governing board members onto the SGB, by explaining how P provided them with contextual

knowledge and information so that they could make appropriate decisions. Thus, P deployed his participatory capital to act as a mentor to the parent governors, which is a subject position that is not normally available to school administrative clerks.

The deputy principal confirmed that P exercised agency as a participant of the SGB when she said of P that “if the governing body sometimes is resisting ... he [P] will then intervene”. He thus influenced the decisions of the governors. She also commented that he acted in a way that was socially recognisable to her, indicating that he had accumulated participatory resources which allowed him to act as a governor of the SGB.

P said of himself: “I accepted that I want to be in the school governing body, because I thought that I could make a difference in the governance in the running of the school”. I would contend that P’s decision to be on the SGB was meant by him as a way of accumulating the necessary participatory capital to engender an identity that would enable him to exercise the type of agency that allowed him to influence the governance of the school.

M was the secretary of the SGB and had many responsibilities. For example, M said that she was responsible for the finances and this role on the SGB made it possible for her to contest procurement and purchasing decisions. She explains that “they try their luck but they don’t get away with it, I’m very assertive there. I mean that is my role, I’m the financial officer; I’m the chair of the financial committee”.

In another example, M said that she would type up the school improvement plan (SIP) for the SGB and needed to only clarify some issues with the principal. Concerning her role in the SIP, M said that “it takes me about half a day to do it on the computer and then they discuss it, it’s a final meeting with the governing body”. These two examples show the breadth of M’s agency. They illustrate her acting beyond her administrative clerk subject position. They also demonstrate her know-how of SGB subject positions, practices and perspectives.

M was familiar with the school governance discourse. She said that the school governors would approach her because she was well versed in the local education district's interpretations of the rules and regulations pertaining to governance. She had a governance perspective and took up a governor subject position, which allowed her to see what less experienced governors did not see. M suggested that “being in on all the [SGB]

meetings, that is my goal, because I can make a contribution, I see little loopholes that the others don't".

From the above comment we can see that M's immersion in her school's sociocultural context engendered within her participatory capital which she was able to use to successfully take up a school governor identity. She had imbibed ways of talking and being on the SGB which translated into a higher placed identity position.

These examples show how the clerks' deployment of their participatory capital allowed them to assume contributory subject positionality in the SGB and in their professional practices more generally. In sum, each of the three administrative clerks had to cultivate relationships with the school governors, be aware of the contextual dynamics of how the SGB operated and become familiar with school governance discourses. In the above section I demonstrated that, through their membership of the SGB, the school administrative clerks gained and accumulated participatory capital. This capital was then used to choose and construct school governor identity positions, which formed the basis for them to enact productive governance practices. In the next section I explore the school administrative clerks' engagement on their schools' SMTs to understand how they deploy their existing participatory capital, and how they accumulate further participatory resources.

5.6 School administrative clerks in the school management team

For the administrative clerks, the SMT represented a school sub-community in which they could deploy their participatory capital. Being on the school management team is not an officially designated arena of practice for school administrative clerks. However, after many years of involvement on the SGB, two of the three administrative clerks (P and F) broadened their involvement in the school and became members of their schools' SMTs. They approached their principals and requested to be part of the SMT. The request was made at a time when the local education department was providing administrative and management-related training to the three school administrative clerks (as part of a larger group learning school business management). The local education department at the time also suggested that principals allow school administrative clerks who were doing this course onto the SMT. This would provide the administrative clerks with the space to put their newly acquired knowledge into practice. Unlike the SGB, this forum deals with more specific operational matters, including the managing of teaching and learning, student

discipline, as well as curriculum and curriculum implementation issues (Naidoo, 1999; Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & Van Rooyen, 2010). The precise operation of this sub-community vis-à-vis the SGB and the principal within South African schools varies from school to school (Christie, 2010). For two of the three administrative clerks this social space was a fertile ground for deploying their participatory capital.

I contend that P's decision to join the SMT illustrates his deployment of his information and relational resources. His request to be in the SMT was a practice of agency that positioned him as a professional. He had only recently joined the SMT at the time of my research. He was therefore still a relative newcomer and a peripheral SMT participant but, because of his contextual understanding of the school, the relationships he had with the principal and teachers and his familiarity with education management discourses, he immediately suggested improvements to the SMT meeting structure. P said:

I asked, myself, to be part of the SMT and then the intentions was that ... being on the management will put me in the position to have a say on the things that I think, maybe, I can have an influence onto.

P said that his position in the school office space and his interaction on the SGB gave him insight and contextual knowledge into how the school was being run and how it could be better steered at the management level. On the SGB, he gained insight into the failings of the school management, including the divide between the SGB and the SMT at his school. According to P, the breakdown between these two forums stemmed from the perception that teachers on the SGB used their position to garner staff promotions only for themselves. Thus, there were feelings of distrust between the teachers on the SGB and teachers in the SMT. He used this knowledge and his involvement in both the SGB and SMT to make suggestions to bridge this divide. He suggested that a closer relationship be forged between the SGB and SMT. He even suggested that a meeting be set up between the two forums and made an effort to relay information from the SGB to the SMT and vice-versa in order to engender a positive relationship between these two important steering forums. The way he handled this issue indicates his professional leadership, which I contend stems from his participatory capital.

One of the challenges that P's school faces is the fighting between child-gangs. These gangs come onto the school premises during school time and attack learners who are members of rival child-gangs, traumatising other learners and teachers. Because of his

contextual understanding garnered from being in the school office and a member of the SGB, P suggested that the SMT approach the local education district and request funding to reinforce the school fence. This suggestion was taken up by the SMT members, the local district was approached, funding was eventually procured and the fence was fortified. This reduced the incidence of gangs coming on to the school premises. This example demonstrates how P used his contextual knowledge of how the education district funds special projects and brought this understanding to the SMT forum members.

In another indication of the value of a school administrative clerk's contextual knowledge for the functioning of the SMT, F said, "nobody else knows what's going on there besides that person [i.e. the school administrative clerk]". This statement provides some indication of the depth and wide range of school administrative clerk's contextual knowledge. Describing F, the principal said, "she was quite clued up". Because of this, F was asked by the principal to shoulder greater responsibilities. Commenting on this, F said that she reminded the principal, "this isn't my job, this is your deputy's job or HOD's [head of department's] or senior teacher's [responsibility]". This statement indicates the extent of F's contribution to the management of the school, equivalent to a deputy principal or a senior teacher. In another example, F commented on how she accepted responsibility to manage the Khanya information technology laboratory at school (she was trained to be the LAN administrator for the lab). The Khanya project is a provincial education project aimed at establishing computer labs at schools. About her involvement in the Khanya lab and her contribution to other important matters in the school, F said, "I'm already doing the manager's job". This comment indicates that F has taken up a managerial subject position combined with managerial practices.

Teachers in the SMT were appreciative of P's suggestions on the SMT. Because of his involvement in the daily management of the school, his interaction with local education district officials, parents, teachers and learners and his professional leadership, the institutional management and governance (IMG) official assigned to the school remarked that P was literally running the school.

F's participation in the SMT lasted for the tenure of one of the principals at her school. Reflecting on F's participation in the SMT, this particular principal said that F had developed the mindset of a school manager and principal: "I could see the growth in her ... if roles ... were reversed she would run a school successfully". This statement indicates

that F had taken up a managerial subject position, and enacted the symbolic practices associated with management in the SMT. She had thus accumulated SMT-related participatory capital. However, she experienced resistance from some of the senior teaching staff. Eventually, due to this resistance, she withdrew from the SMT when the principal resigned.

M was not in the SMT at school but engaged informally with the principal on management issues related to the SMT functions. She said that she would have an informal meeting with the principal in the morning before his meetings with the SMT and teachers. M said that the principal would consult her and ask what the issues were that he needed to raise with the teachers. M said that she would then make suggestions. M said, however, “Mr K won’t have me in the school management team meetings”. Not being part of the SMT community of practice meant that she had limited access to the SMT participatory capital but this did not prevent her from deploying her contextual and relational resources when briefing the principal before his SMT meeting. For example, M said: “he [the principal] would ask me, what do I think here, I mean before we had the meeting this morning, I’d already made my comments”. Citing another example, M said:

...even if he doesn’t phone me and give me instructions, they’d [the teachers] come to me and say 'it’s Tuesday morning, we’re supposed to meet, but Mr K’s not here'. So, I said, 'then you must still meet because I’d open his office for you and you’ll still carry on as normal'.

In this example M described her deployment of her participatory resources to ensure that the school functioned as it should, even if the principal was absent. Her actions demonstrate that she was comfortable with the managerial subject position, enacted management practices and voiced the management discourse.

P’s and F’s requests to participate in the SMT were a deployment of their participatory capital by which they engendered a wider scope for their agency and repositioned their occupational identity. Moving onto the SMT was a confirmation that they had inculcated professional norms and practices. Their participation in a management forum took them into a social space where their subordinate positions were challenged and surpassed. This was precisely their goal. However, I would contend that M’s principal not allowing her on the SMT and F currently not being on her school’s SMT indicate that their quest for involvement in the SMT was contested – because their involvement would rearrange the

existing power relations with regard to the management of their schools. In other words, when their deployment of participatory capital was seen as potentially infringing on power relationships, their participation was strongly resisted (in the case of F) or ended (in the case of M).

Having analysed the practices and experiences of school administrative clerks in the SMT, I contend that it is through their deployment of participatory capital that they joined the SMT sociocultural space. Their successful participation in the SMT was further proof of their effective deployment of participatory capital. This boosted the range of their agency and presented them with opportunities to redesign their position at school and migrate from their subordinate occupational position. Nevertheless, their efforts were met with some resistance.

In sum, the article aimed to show how, through cultivating relationships, deepening their contextual knowledge, familiarity with organisational discourses and their related subject positions, holders of subordinate occupational identities are able to enhance their agency and reposition themselves as holders of professional identities.

5.7 Conclusion

The data analysis in the previous section showed that school administrative clerks' involvement and interaction across the sociocultural contexts of the school facilitated their accumulation of participatory capital, which they deployed in augmenting their agency and sculpturing a unique professional identity. Furthermore, their participatory capital enabled school administrative clerks to enact professional practices that went beyond the subordinate and support status of their occupational identity, to the extent that their principals, teachers and local district officials acknowledged them as professionals.

The article demonstrated how holders of subordinate occupational identities enhance their agency and reposition themselves in improved positions within their workplaces and social spaces. The article shows how three individuals accomplished this through the build-up and deployment of participatory capital. School administrative clerks cultivated relationships, became immersed in the context of their schools and familiarised themselves with the discourses that intersected their schools. They used these information and relational resources to increase the ambit of their agency and negotiate enhanced school-based identity positions. Thus, the three school administrative clerks moved their

subordinate identity up the ladder of influence by subverting and negotiating the assigned meaning of what it meant to be a school administrative clerk by taking up a professional subject position.

Had P, F and M not participated in the SGBs of their schools they would not have accumulated the necessary participatory capital that they could deploy to enact professional identities. To a lesser extent, the study indicated that the administrative clerks' identities were not only produced through the sociocultural contexts they participated in but also through those in which they did not participate. M did not participate in the SMT and her agency and the identity positions available to her were shaped by her non-participation. I posit that M's principal deliberately kept her off the SMT because the participatory capital that she could have accumulated would have allowed her a modality of agency that would have upset the balance of power relations. The same could be said of the teachers that resisted F's position in the SMT.

The practical and policy implications of this research suggest that schools would benefit from deepening administrative clerks' or even teachers' participation in their school contexts. This participation would provide administrative clerks with opportunities to accumulate participatory capital, but more importantly, lead to potential benefits for them and their schools if they were to deploy their resources productively. Crucially, access to the sociocultural context of the school would have to include acceptance by the existing participants.

This article raises important questions about the workings of subordinate agency. Clearly, discursively constructed subordinate occupational positions do not necessarily restrict the agency of their holders. Through participation in the sociocultural contexts of their workplaces and organisations, participants can and do accumulate and deploy participatory capital, which forms the basis for their enhanced agency by which they engage in productive practices and reposition their occupational identities within discourses such as professionalism that would provide them with greater status and influence.

5.8 Acknowledgement

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6 Chapter 6: Looking back and moving forward

*writing about the same subject, over and over again, leads to discoveries—
new ways of seeing, saying, and thinking*

(Flannery O'Connor cited in Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997:20)

The thesis aimed at investigating the identities and practices of school administrative clerks in order to highlight their contribution to the functioning of schooling within their local school context. This chapter commences with a restatement of the research questions. Thereafter I provide a response to the research questions by integrating the insights and ideas into a comprehensive conceptual account of the study's focus. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptual or knowledge contribution of this thesis.

At the start of my thesis I explained that the contribution that this thesis sought to make was to contribute to our understanding of the identities and practices of school administrative clerks. Thereafter I explained what motivated me to embark on this study. I indicated that it was my ethical responsiveness to persons from marginalised categories and my political commitment to equality that motivated me to do this research. In addition, what motivated the study was that I had found that in educational textbooks and educational policy discourses the school administrative clerk was hardly commented on. Thereafter I explained the steps taken in the research process. I now I turn to the research questions and explain how the four articles answer these questions

The research questions addressed by the study were:

- How are school administrative clerks' identities and practices constituted?
- In relation to their identities and practices, what are school administrative clerks' contributions to the functioning of their schools?

In order to answer these questions, I wrote four articles using different theoretical frameworks. The integration of novel and distinct theoretical frameworks is one of the key theoretical boundaries that are pushed in this study of school administrative clerks within South African public schools. Each of the articles addresses specific dimensions of how administrative clerks' identities were negotiated, what practices they engaged in and what this meant for the functioning of their schools.

6.1 School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their reflexive spatial agency

The first article primarily addressed school administrative spatial practices. I reported on what the administrative clerks did and what motivated their practices. In my theoretical framework for this article I employed Lefebvre's (1991) production of space theory, insights from De Certeau (1984) and Fiske (1988) and agency as a reflexive practice (Archer, 2007) in order to advance the notion 'spatial agency' that enables a particular reading of the practices of the school administrative clerks. This was based on the view that social action is intertwined with social space and that "space is produced through social action" (Jeyasingham 2013: 5). Spatial agency involves being able to reflexively engage in spatial practices. I used Archer's (2007) notion of reflexivity to focus on the administrative clerks' internal conversations' as important constituents of their reflexive being. Reflexivity is "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa" (Archer, 2007: 4) by way of internal conversation (about what they want to do). Thus, to exercise reflexive spatial agency is to have an internal conversation (where people think about who they are and what they want to do) in terms of which they go about enacting socio-spatial practices that go beyond the normalized practices associated with the dominant discourses operating in their conceived spaces. This theoretical lens allowed me to see how agents' spatial practices were constituted by their spatial agency. The theoretical contribution of this article is that by interlacing notions of social space with reflexive agency I was able to provide a theoretical framework for exploring spatial agency in the enactment of spatial practices.

The first article also reported on how administrative clerks' spatial practices contributed to them somewhat undoing the contributive injustice that they are subjected to as lowly clerks. Contributive injustice refers to a situation where the type of work or practice one is assigned to does not allow one to develop one's potential capabilities. Administrative clerks' practices counter and mitigate the contributive injustice of their hierarchical and bureaucratic occupational position. Through their spatial practices they gain internal and external goods (Sayer, 2011). The internal goods that they gain are the development of

their capabilities as contributors to the management and pedagogic demands of the school. Internal goods include the satisfaction, achievements and skill-development. External goods are the recognition that they receive from their school community.

The conceptual contribution that is gained by utilising this theoretical lens is that school administrative clerks' engagement in practices of care, sway and surrogacy is a consequence of their agency. School administrative clerks produced spaces of care, spaces of influence and spaces of leadership and management. These were spaces carved out by the school administrative clerks' bodily practices. These spatial practices constitute some of the salient practices that administrative clerks were engaging in by which they were contributing to the successful functioning of the schools.

In sum, in this article (article 1) I answer the research question of how school administrative clerks' practices are constituted by suggesting the exercise of reflexive based subordinate agency. These practices are reflexively enacted in order to gain internal and external goods. I am not asserting that agents are autonomous inventors of practices but rather that they appropriate existing models and forms of practices (care, support, management) existing within the social space of the school. I am suggesting that social "space provides [predictable and] unpredictable opportunities to act with some power" (Jeyasingham, 2013:12). Lefebvre (1991) explains that lived space is living "life without concepts" i.e. living it beyond the limits of conceived space. Lefebvre (1991) suggests here that beyond conceived prescriptions and norms of spatial practice there is lived space- "the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). Subordinate agency lies in the reflexive production of lived space through the imaginative appropriation of normalized practices and the enactment of 'novel' practices. However, these practices are not radical for otherwise they would be shut down. One key argument that I offer, based on an acute understanding of my empirical data, corroborated by conceptual understanding gleaned from my theoretical approaches, is that the subordinate agency of these clerks is kept in check by the conceived and perceived orders regulating space, i.e. the discourses of domination is not challenged. I offer the view that their agency is subordinate precisely because it exists and is mediated within the confines of the dominant discourse. In the next article (article two) I provide further insights into how administrative clerks' identities and spatial practices were constituted. Here I also answer the second research question, i.e. what the school administrative clerks' contributions are to the functioning of schools.

This article informs us that school administrative clerks contribute to the assemblages of spatial practices that make up the daily schooling practices that constitute their schools. The article contributes both to an understanding of their administrative practices as well as the broader educational dimensions of their practice, which goes beyond their administrative identity.

6.2 School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their reflexive agency which is manifest in their dialectical resistance to rhetorical injustices

The second article addressed the limited voicing opportunities that school administrative clerks have and the practices they engaged in to counter this. I explore how they resisted by engendering rhetorical spaces in which they engage in voicing practices. I combine the theoretical lenses of social space, rhetorical space and testimonial injustice to argue that administrative clerks are rhetorically marginalised. Rhetorical space refers to the norms that govern voicing practices with a particular space. Testimonial injustice is where a person's testimony is judged not by the veracity of what is being said but by the status or identity of the one saying it. The school rhetorical space with regards to school administrative clerks is a space where they experience testimonial injustice. Listeners are prejudiced toward subordinate identity holders. The theoretical framework that I assembled suggests that social spaces have normative limitations that negatively affect the rhetorical spaces of those who are deemed subordinate. School administrative clerks' voices are denied expression with the school rhetorical space and their testimonies are rejected because of the identity prejudices of their listeners. However, in order to gain voice they negotiated and engendered rhetorical spaces where they could express themselves as in the case of the school governing board meetings and to a lesser extent the school management team meetings.

The conceptual contribution of this article resides in the understanding that while the school administrative clerks experienced testimonial injustice, they did not accept this subordination and injustice. They resisted it by engaging in spatial practices to modify their school's rhetorical spaces which in effect provide them a platform from where they could voice their opinions. They exercised their spatial agency to engender transformed

rhetorical spaces by their continuity of 'spatial presence', forming close relationships, enhancing their credibility through academic credentialing and fostering credibility through performing additional role tasks. The three school administrative clerks exercised their agency and engendered reconstituted rhetorical spaces where they were able to voice their opinions. Through their spatial practices the three administrative clerks enhanced their credibility and were thus able to provide their testimony within reworked rhetorical spaces. The core insight of this article lays in highlighting school administrative clerks' spatial practices to redraw the rhetorical spaces of their schools within the confines of a discursive space that operated to devalue their voicing practices. The article shows how they establish their agency through the use of spatial practices in terms of which they establish productive rhetorical spaces for their contributions to their schools' overall functioning. In forming their identities as professional members capable of giving insightful testimony, school administrative clerks extend their spatial practices and successfully contribute to opening up the rhetorical space of the school to their ideas, which, in turn, contributes to an augmented intellectual climate within their schools.

6.3 School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through their ethical agency

The third article sheds light on how school administrative clerks' identities are constituted. The article highlights the transformative work that administrative clerks engaged in, in order to transform their identities. The article illustrated the school administrative clerks' ethical goal. Their ethical goal was professionalism. The article delineated the professional practices that the school administrative clerks engaged in to live up to their ethical goal.

The theoretical framework is based on a combination of Foucault's insights on identities as constructed in and through discourse and De Certeau's explanation of tactical deployment. This theoretical lens enabled me to suggest that individuals act ethically by enacting tactical practices for self-transformation. Through these ethical practices they transform their identities. They enacted a professional mode of being by looking, doing and being professional. They worked on their subjectivities by subjecting themselves to the professional discourses. The conceptual focus of this article is an explanation of professional identity as constituted by the tactical cultivation and deployment of

professional acts. The conceptual contribution of this article lays in showing that school administrative clerks subjected themselves to the discourse of professionalism while deploying 'technologies of the self' (practices) to construct professional identities. In their everyday practice their aim was to construct a professional mode of being. Their everyday practices consisted of practices that enabled them to build and establish their professional mode of being.

In concord with the first two articles, the insight this article provides, is that administrative clerks' identities are constituted through their ethical practices. Furthermore their ethical practices are indicative of ethical agency. However, this ethical agency remains a subordinated agency because administrative clerks agency orientated practices are concomitant with the subordinating discourses that constitute their 'spaces of practice'. In other words, the article demonstrates that though administrative clerks act and consider themselves to be professionals, their position remains subordinate constituted by virtue of the bureaucratic discourse related to the school. In addition the article also goes some way towards answering the second research question, i.e. -what are school administrative clerks' contributions to the functioning of schools? It provides us with the understanding that in engaging in ethical practices school administrative clerks contribute to making the school administration a professional space and simultaneously a social space of care and nurturing.

6.4 School administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted through learning how to participate in the sociocultural spaces: practice based-agency based agency

The first three articles provided me with an understanding of how school administrative clerks' identities and practices were constituted. In sum, it suggested that the exercise of agency was at the heart of their identities and practices. In the fourth article the focus shifts to how the administrative clerks engendered the agency that constitutes their identities and practices. In this light, this final article addressed the administrative clerks practice based-agency based.

In the theoretical frame used in this article I combined sociocultural and poststructuralist

perspectives on identity. I suggested that school administrative clerks' identity is simultaneously a function of dominant discourses and an outcome of their sociocultural involvement in school spaces. I suggested that the marshalling of participatory resources instantiates school administrative clerks' agency. The key theoretical contribution is the notion of participatory capital. Participatory capital refers to the information and relational resources which subordinate occupation holders accumulate and deploy which provides a way of explaining how they extend the scope of their agency and reposition themselves as professionals.

The conceptual contribution of the article is the argument that while dominant discourses provide an individual with a subject position, it is through involvement in a sociocultural context (learning how to be a participant) that an individual accumulates resources to be able to act appropriately within social spaces. They deployed this participatory capital to exercise a modality of agency beyond their subordinate administrative clerk position. Through this augmented agency they were able to fashion professional identities. In addition, by deploying their participatory capital within the various social spaces (such as the school governing body and school management team) within the school they enhanced the deliberations and decision making with these social spaces

In sum, the theoretical frameworks that I employed in each article enabled me to generate insight into the role of spatial participation in the formation of school administrative clerks' identities and practices. The contention was that their identities and practices have been constituted through their *subordinated agency*. In the next section I discuss the contribution of each article to understanding school administrative clerks' identities and what the contribution is that they bring to the school through their spatial practices.

6.5 A brief summary: answering the research questions

The thesis aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How school are administrative clerks' identities and practices constituted?
- What are school administrative clerks' contributions to the functioning of their schools?

In answering the first research question I contend that school administrative clerks constituted their identities and practices by:

- Exercising their reflexive spatial agency to enact spatial practices of care, pedagogy, sway and surrogacy.
- Enacting spatial practices in order to engender rhetorical spaces wherein they could get their voices heard
- Engaging in practices of self-transformation to take on professional identities. These practices included practices of professional care and management and leadership practices.
- Accumulating and deploying participatory resources to exercise their agency and thereby transform their identities.

In answering the second research question I contend that school administrative clerks' contribution lies in the following spatial practices

- Spatial practices of care, pedagogy, sway and surrogacy that complement their administrative practices and demonstrate the way they contribute to educational dimensions of teaching and leadership
- Spatial practices that enable them to exercise their rhetorical agency. These practices include deep involvement within the school, engendering relational capital with school staff, self-development, and the doing of extra role tasks. All these spatial practices, –besides having a positive effect on the daily constitution of their schools, also enable them to share their extensive knowledge and understanding of the school context.
- They engaged in practices of self-transformation in terms of which they contributed to the school as carers and professionals that went beyond a school administrative clerk's job descriptions.
- School administrative clerks' participatory capital enabled them to influence decision-making far beyond administrative issues and concerns. Deploying their participatory capital they engaged in school governance and school management.

In this thesis I have shown that the makeup of school administrative clerks' identities and practices is a result of a complex interplay between agency and structure on the one hand

and discourse and subject position on the other. There is a dialectical relationship between the multiple material and social factors that produce social space and their 'living' within these social spaces. However, there is a sliver of agency that is ever present. It manifests itself in minute ways and in extensive ways. Key to their agency is the way in which subordinated agency is activated. The four articles collectively suggest that it is reflexivity, dialectical resistance, ethics, and the deployment participatory capital that are the articulators of subordinated agency. This is manifest in the desire for recognition; the aspiration to escape subordination; the specific socio-spatial context; the desire for an ethical self and finally relationships and participation in sociocultural spaces which provide the resources for the deployment of agency.

Thus, the study's contribution -in response to the first research question- is that these school administrative clerks' identities and practices are constituted by their subordinated agency. In other words, the thesis, drawing on multiple theoretical frameworks, suggests that the identities and practices of school administrative clerks unfold within the constraints and allowances afforded to them by the context of their social world. At the same time agency is instantiated as a result of the administrative clerks choosing to live creatively and poetically.

The study's contribution -in response to the second research question- is that these school administrative clerks' engage in leadership and management practices as well as a range of educational practices that contribute to the well-being of students, principals and teachers.

The study's contribution is to have provided an understanding of the administrative clerks' daily creative boundary crossings between their school management practices on the one hand and broader educational dimensions of their schools on the other. The study presents an analysis of their incisive professional and supportive contribution to the functioning of their schools in spite of their putative subordinated agency.

6.5.1 The theoretical boundaries pushed: The formation of identities and practices: the contribution of reflexivity, dialectical resistance, ethical commitments and sociocultural learning

Multiple theoretical frameworks allow us several ways by which we are able to explain empirical phenomena. More important accepting multiple interpretations of social reality provides us with multiple ways in which to respond to and deal with social challenges. In employing different theoretical frameworks to make sense of my research problem, I have been able to generate the following statement that captures the study's overall conceptual conclusion:

The identities and practices of school administrative clerks are constituted by subordinated agency which is operationalised and exercised through subordinates engaging in reflexive positioning, dialectical (interactive) resistance to norms (spatial or otherwise), commitments to ethical projects of self-transformation, and learning the potentialities for acting within sociocultural contexts. These identities and practices allow them to make contributions to school administration and to educational dimensions that go far beyond the limited job description of school administrative clerks

In other words school administrative clerks' identities and practices are reflexive products of their careful readings of their social location. These readings lead them to engage in practices that make a palpable difference to the lives of teachers, principals and students. They actively mediate their social world and make a difference therein. Within social space and social time as events unfold there is a dialectical relationship between the school administrative clerks and their school spaces. From another angle administrative clerks are participants in various sociocultural spaces that equip them with participatory capital which then becomes the fuel that drives their agency. All things considered, school administrative clerks' agency leads to, and leads on from their identities and their practices.

6.6 The final word

The thesis was an act of dissensus. Dissensus is the act of attempting to challenge the normalised social structure that governs a society. The thesis aimed to challenge the

normative and conventional narratives hides the fact that the daily running of the school is underpinned, in no small measure, by the efforts of school administrative clerks

The dissensus was aimed at questioning the conventional frame of reference that naturalises the dominant the role of principals and teachers in school functioning while minimizing and even rendering invisible the role and contribution of the school administrative clerks. Rancière (2011: 2) explains that

Political dissensus is not a discussion between speaking people who would confront their interests and values. It is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument on justice.

In this thesis, I brought into focus the school administrative clerks' identities and practices in ways which cannot be currently seen because of the manner in which current discourses/ frameworks foreclose or inhibit us from seeing what is happening in the lived space of the school office. The existing literature on educational administration and management does not recognise or provide a role for the administrative clerks. They are seen as 'part of the furniture' and not given any consideration in terms of management, leadership and agency.

I think that I can safely conclude that this thesis has challenged the hegemony of education management and teaching discourses that neglected the identities and practices of school administrative clerks.

It is my ethical and political contribution to making silenced voices heard. However, I acknowledge that speaking on behalf of subordinates can be a form of epistemic violence. I therefore acknowledge that this thesis is my analysis school administrative clerks informed by my values.

The multiple theoretical perspectives used in this thesis hopefully provided fresh angles to appreciate the identities and practices of school administrative clerks. The insights and understandings brought into focus for us, via these lenses, alert us to the fact that dominant discourses 'hide' alternate perspectives. It challenges us to re-think our categories that we build our educational foundation on. Categories such as principal, teacher, student, are all historical and cultural concepts that may hide more than what they reveal about who or what they attempt to represent. Furthermore such discourses can act

as controlling mechanisms. However, in this thesis I have shown that dominant discourses do not fully capture the subject's agency. Administrative clerks' identities and practices, even though they are constrained by such discourses, were constituted by an active, if subordinated type of agency by which they were able to contribute to their schools' advancement.

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Appendix A – Approval letter from WCED to conduct research

Navrae
Enquiries
Imibuzo
Telephone
Telephoon
IFoni
Faks
Fax
IFekesi
Verwysing
Reference
Isalathiso

Dr A.T Wyngaard

021 467 9272

(021) 425-7445

20101116-0042



Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISEBE leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mr Abdullah Bayat
School of Business & Finance
UWC

Dear Mr Abdullah Bayat

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A NEGLECTED TECHNOLOGY OF GOVERNANCE: THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE CLERK IN SELECTED WCED SCHOOLS

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2011 till 30 September 2011 and 01 March 2012 till 30 September 2012**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards,
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 15 November 2010

MELD AS SEBILIEF VERWYSINGSNUMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /
NCEDA UBHALA IINGOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALILWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

INBELSENTRUM/CALL CENTRE

INDIENS NEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22
VEILIGE SKOLESAFPE SCHOOLS ☎0800 45 46 47

Appendix B –Ethics clearance letter from Stellenbosch University



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jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

19 July 2011

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Reference No. 519/2011

Mr A Bayat
Department of Education Policy Studies
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Mr A Bayat

LETTER OF ETHICS CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *A neglected technology of governance: The leadership and management practices of the school administration clerk in selected Western Cape Educational Department (WCED) schools*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



MR SF ENGELBRECHT
Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanora)



Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling • Division for Research Development
Privaatsak/Private Bag XI • Matieland 7602 • Suid-Afrika/South Africa
Tel: +27 21 808 9184 • Faks/Fax: +27 21 808 4537
www.sun.ac.za/research

Appendix C – Letter of permission from ZPS primary school

WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Corner of Vietnam Drive & 5th Street
Vietnam
PHILIPPI
7785

admin@zanemfundops.wcape.school.za



P O Box 354
Mitchell's Plain
7789
Tel: 082 677 5477
Fax:
Date:

Attention: Mr Abdullah Bayat

09 May 2011

School of Business & Finance
University of the Western Cape
Bellville

Dear Sir

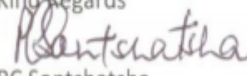
RE: CONDUCTING OF RESEARCH IN ZANEMFUNDO PRIMARY

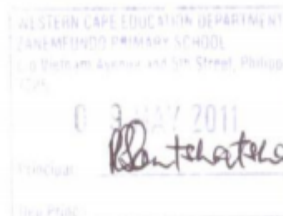
This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated 04 May 2011 requesting permission to conduct research to our school. I must however apologise for not responding in time, I was occupied by some other things.

You are welcome to do your research at our school.

Thank you.

Kind Regards


PC Sontshatsha
Principal



Appendix D – Email permission from YPS primary school

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface with a search bar at the top containing 'ysterplaat'. Below the search bar is a navigation bar with icons for back, forward, trash, and 'Move to Inbox'. The left sidebar lists folders: Compose, Inbox (10,754), Sent Mail, Drafts (197), [Mailbox] (1), Boomerang, Boomerang-Outbox, Deleted Messages, Junk E-mail, Sent Messages, and More. The main content area displays an email with the subject 'Re: permission to visit the school' and a date of 11/02/2011. The email is from j.kruger@talkomsa.net to Abdullah Bayat. The body of the email contains the following text:

Dear Mr Bayat

You are most welcome to visit my school on Wednesday 16 February to observe and job shadow my secretary, Margie Wiid.

Kindly note that we are YSTFRPIAAT PRIMARY and not Ysterplaat ILINIOR Primary (two totally different schools)

Regards

Johann Kruger
Headmaster
----- Original Message ----- From: "Abdullah Bayat" <abbayat@uwc.ac.za>
To: <j.kruger@talkomsa.net>
Cc: <ysterplaatps@talkomsa.net>
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 10:42 AM
Subject: permission to visit the school

Dear Mr Kruger

Please find a letter attached requesting permission to do visit your school to do some preliminary fieldwork at your school.

many thanks

Abdullah Bayat
School of Business & Finance
University of the Western Cape
Tel: 00 27 21 959 3332
Fax: 00 27 21 959 3219
Fax to e-mail: 00 27 86 627 0147
mobile: 00 27 82 496 0366
abbayat@uwc.ac.za

Appendix E – Email permission from EPS primary school

The screenshot shows a Gmail interface. At the top left is the Google logo. A search bar contains the email address 'admin@eureconps.wcape.school.za'. Below the search bar is a row of action buttons: 'Gmail', a back arrow, a trash can, a delete icon, 'Move to Inbox', a flag icon, and 'More'. On the right side of this row, it says '10 of 12'. On the left sidebar, there is a 'COMPOSE' button and a list of folders: 'Inbox (10,754)', 'Sent Mail', 'Drafts (197)', '▶ [Mailbox] (1)', 'Boomerang', 'Boomerang-Outbox', 'Deleted Messages', 'Junk E-mail', 'Sent Messages', and 'More'. The main email content area shows the subject 'Re: request to do research at Eurecon PS' with an 'Inbox x' label. The sender is 'admin@eureconps.wcape.school.za' and the date is '11/05/2011'. The recipient is 'Abdullah'. The email body text reads: 'Good morning Abdullah', 'I gave the letter requesting to do research at our school to Mr Nagan. Permission was granted for you to do the research.', 'Thanking you in anticipation.', 'I will let you know shortly when you can come visit. (Hopefully in June).', and 'Warm regards'. There is a small icon with three dots below the signature. The name 'Frances Arendse' is visible at the bottom of the email content.

Appendix F – Stellenbosch University research consent letter



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH-School Administrative Clerks

A neglected technology of governance: The leadership and management practices of the school administrative clerk in selected WCED schools

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Abdullah Bayat, from the Education Policy Studies department at Stellenbosch University. The results of this research will contribute to his PhD dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because the study is focused on the leadership and management practices of the school administrative clerk so he needs to interview you as an incumbent school administrative clerk.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is designed to explore and describe the daily practices of school administrative staff and how this relates to school governance. The aim of the study is not to assess you or your work.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you would be asked to:

- be interviewed using unstructured and semi-structured interview protocols.
- be observed during working hours for three working days.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no reasonable foreseeable risks discomforts, inconveniences that can occur through participation in this study. The study will be done at a time and venue that is suitable to you.

There are no significant physical or psychological risks to participation.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefits for you as a participant are that you get an opportunity to reflect on your work and the issues you encounter. This may most probably support you to develop and improve in the position you are currently occupying.

The research findings of this study will contribute and enrich the scholarship and discourse with regards to educational management and leadership. Through this study some of the issues in the South African educational context can be addressed in order to find viable solutions to the educational challenges in our country. The study specifically investigates the relationship between the school governing body and the school management team on the one side and school administrative clerks on the other side. The study will aim to illustrate how these relationships can be improved.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for participating in this research.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of assigning a code to each and every person interviewed. No names will be recorded unless consented and the data will be held in safe filing cupboard where only the researcher will have access to it.

The information obtained will only be seen by the supervisor and the dissertation will be written only using pseudonyms or codes. Contextual information will be minimized so that participants are never be at risk to being exposed.

Some of the interviews and observation activities are to be audio and videotaped. You as the researched subject have the right to review/edit the tapes. Only my supervisor and myself will have access to and will only be used for my PhD dissertation and for any subsequent articles. Anonymity will be ensured and provided for whenever the results are disseminated publically.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact myself Abdullah Bayat and my promoter Aslam Fataar. The contact details are as follows:

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Prof Aslam Fataar | + 27 21 808 2281 |
| Department of Education Policy Studies | + 27 21 808 2283 Fax |
| Faculty of Education | 084 722 9136 |

Stellenbosch University

Abdullah Bayat

School Of Business and Finance

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Office: (021) 959-3332

Bellville

Home: (021) 706 8434

CAPE TOWN

Mobile: 082 4960356

7535

Email: abbayat@uwc.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by Abdullah Bayat in English and I am in command of this language. I as the participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____
[He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date