

**The manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's
educational philosophy in Horizon Educational
Trust schools in South Africa**

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, sincerely declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree

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A. Inal

Bloemfontein

November 2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the volunteers of the HM worldwide, who devoted their lives, including their wealth and personal and professional skills to the service of the people of all backgrounds without discrimination by promoting education, dialogue and outreach. I especially would like to mention those who lost their lives in jails under torture and due to trauma caused by the persecution in their home country. Many have paid the ultimate price while trying to escape torture and imprisonment. You will live in the hearts of millions around the world and beyond. Only God can justly repay you for what you have done. May your souls rest in peace in the Mercy of the Almighty.

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* While I was attending to the corrections and changes to this thesis, I learned that my mother, 78, was admitted to ICU as she had been battling cancer. She passed on after a few days, on 18 November 2020. While I am very sad that I could not see her and be with her during her last days and could not be there for the funeral, I am comforted that she is now rid of the troubles and pains of this temporal existence. May the Mercy and Compassion of the Almighty be upon her and may she be reunited with all of us, especially her grandchildren whom she loved so much.

SUMMARY

This study aimed to explore the manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education in Horizon Education Trusts schools in South Africa. Gülen is a Turkish born Islamic scholar whose ideas gave rise to a transnational movement in the fields of education, dialogue and outreach. Central to this movement, known as the *Hizmet* Movement (HM), is the philosophy of *hizmet*, which means service in Turkish. Inspired by Gülen's philosophy of education, the HM volunteers have established schools in Turkey and other countries. Under the guidance of the trustees of Horizon Educational Trust (HET) who are equally inspired by Gülen's philosophy, various schools were established in South Africa. Although not pronounced as HM schools, I worked with the assumption that since HM followers established them, it might be possible to trace manifestations of Gülen's educational ideas in policy and practice at the HET schools.

This research was a qualitative case study informed by an interpretive paradigm. Due to my involvement for a long time in the HM, this study involved the voice of an insider. In general, the HM does not conform to general characteristics of social movements either from the perspective of contemporary Islamic movements or in the western sense of contentious social movements. Although qualitative research from an insider's perspective has risks, my insider status rendered an appreciation of the HM's characteristics, a familiarity with the context, ease of access and command of the shared terminology. My status also contributed positively in establishing rapport with and gaining the trust of the research participants.

To realise the research aim and to give a systematic and structural expression of Gülen's philosophy of education, I constructed a theoretical framework consisting of critical themes associated with the philosophy. For document analysis, the schools' documents were classified into three categories, namely foundational, policy and procedural, and operational documents. Informed by the theoretical framework, the analysis of these documents revealed traces of aspects of Gülen's educational philosophy, although in an implicit manner and not overtly associated with the philosophy and general practices of the HM schools. Issues such as holistic education, the importance of academic achievement, values and moral education,

the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and diverse stakeholder involvement were brought to the fore. The findings from the data generated through semi-structured interviews with twenty-four purposefully selected participants revealed implicit resonance with Gülen's philosophy of education. However, the findings alluded to school practices that are not aligned with the documents, and also differential interpretations and practices among different HET schools. In drawing on the results of the study, the lack of a well-articulated educational philosophy in the foundational documents was identified as the reason for divergent interpretations and practices. Two broad suggestions were made. Firstly, holistic education should be centred as the philosophical impetus of the schools' philosophy of education. Central to Gülen's philosophy of education is his notion of holistic education as subject teaching accompanied by values education. In this sense, holistic education is informed by Gülen's understanding of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit. This understanding of holistic education feeds into the second suggestion. Thus, secondly, and following from a well-articulated philosophy of education, is the suggestion for the development of a *rehberlik* (or guidance) policy. The necessity of such a policy is twofold. It can guide the development of a *rehberlik* programme that infuses universally accepted values with local values, and enable *temsil* (teaching by example) as a connection between value-free subject teaching and values education. I contend that a clear articulation of the underpinning philosophy of education and a well defined *rehberlik* policy can support common understanding, coherent practices, good communication, and productive cooperation with the stakeholders in the HET school context.

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Chapter 1: Orientation

1.1 Introduction

Literature on philosophy of education highlights the difficulty in proposing a single definition for this particular field of study. In his discussion of the difficulties surrounding such a definition, Burbules (2000) alludes to how such attempts include negotiating the discipline's borders and issues of inclusion and exclusion. In addition to some researchers intentionally refraining from a single definition (Erturk, 1988), there also seems to be tensions between philosophical and disciplinary aspirations and their relevance to educational policy, procedure and practice (Burbules, 2000; Vokey, 2006). Of further relevance for a broad definition, different contexts and traditions should also be considered. In this regard, Burbules (2000) states that in European thought, philosophy of education is usually associated with concerns about childrearing, while in non-European traditions, issues of intellectual development are not regarded as separate from spiritual, moral and cultural development (Smeyers cited in Vokey, 2006; Smeyers and Marshall, cited in Burbules, 2000). In a similar vein, Kaygisiz (1997) claims that various philosophies define education differently and the philosophy of the dominant class in a country is often reflected in its philosophy of education. Hence the existence of different philosophies of education, all influenced by different philosophies of life.

In the African context, a number of researchers argue that colonialism is responsible for the major part of conceptual problems in educational philosophy in Africa. In this regard, it is stated that African values and indigenous knowledge systems have been marginalised due to a westernisation of educational theory and practice (Mkabela, 1997; Higgs, 2012, Le Grange, 2012; Waghid and Smeyers, 2012). However, despite conceptual problems, there seems to be consensus among these researchers on the suggestion that African philosophy, specifically the notion of Ubuntu, should play greater role in educational theory and practice going forward.

In the South African case, Mkabela (1997) alludes to a distinction between pre and post-apartheid (pre and post-1994) philosophies of education. Whilst education during the apartheid era was dominated by a Christian monolithic worldview and racial policies, post-apartheid education is rather seen as more secular and often

informed by debates on African philosophy of education and the Africanisation of philosophy of education (Le Grange, 2004; Ramose, 2004; Higgs, 2003; Mkabela, 1997; Mohamed, 2007). The racialised apartheid education system served divisive and hegemonic purposes (Mkabela, 1997, Venter, n.d.) to keep the education system segregated and to stop black students from pursuing further education to occupy certain positions (RSA 1953). Current post-apartheid education, however, is rather characterised by a political and philosophical inclination to regard education as a vehicle of economic emancipation (RSA, 2011).

Although not identical to the preceding example, Turkey also went through significant changes when the 600-year-old Ottoman regime changed from a semi theocratic monarchy to a republic in 1923. This regime change was informed and guided by a philosophy, which prioritised modernity over religion (Hermann, 2014). Education during the Ottoman regime was characterised by concerns for preserving and transmitting Islamic knowledge and lifestyle (Sönmez, 2013; Ergun, n.d.). The Turkish Republic, on the other hand, was not only established on modern secular foundations but aimed to minimise and abolish the influence of religion, i.e. Islam, while utilising education as a tool in the project of 'modernising' the public (Hermann, 2014; Mohamed, 2007). As a result, further and quality education not only became the privilege of the urban elite, but schools are primarily secular in the sense that religion is excluded (Toprak, 2005; Çetin, 2012; Mohamed, 2007).

In response to the limiting and even banning of religion in education, law, politics and public administration, as well as attempts by the Turkish state to reduce the influence of Islam in society, Islamic civic movements started to emerge mostly secretly (Toprak, 2005; Kuru, 2009). Arguably, one of the most significant civic initiatives in recent Turkish history is the development of the *Hizmet* Movement (HM). This movement was initiated in the late 1960s and inspired by the philosophy of the Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen (1942 -). As a faith-inspired movement, HM, also known as the Gülen Movement, regards the serving of society as the most important way of serving God - to serve society is a religious act (Aras and Caha, 2000). Over the past few decades, HM has been transformed into a transnational civic movement with affiliated institutions in education, dialogue, publishing, media, outreach, business and finance (Çetin, 2010; Çetin, 2012; Alam 2015). As education remains

the priority and the most prominent field of action of the movement, it is primarily referred to as an education movement.

Framed within a strong Islamic background and rooted in Islam, the HM has established non-religious schools in over 150 countries, including six schools in South Africa (Kurt, 2013; Mohamed, 2013). HM schools are primarily informed by the philosophy of Gülen (2005:50) who wrote:

Since 'real' life is possible only through knowledge, those who neglect learning and teaching are considered "dead" even though they are still alive, for we were created to learn and to communicate what we have learned to others.

As the HM schools are based on and inspired by Gülen's philosophy of education, the expectation is that these schools should demonstrate elements thereof. It is in this regard that my research interest alludes to the extent to which Gülen's philosophy is manifested in the HM schools that house students of many religious, cultural and ethnic variety.

Despite all the difficulties, limitations, reservations and concerns in defining philosophy of education as raised by Burbules (2000), Kaygisiz (1997) and Vokey (2006), in this study I accept this field of study as the justification of educational elaborations, reflections and vision on life-long intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural development of human being. In this regard, I agree with these scholars (Burbules, 2000; Kaygisiz, 1997; Vokey, 2006) that such justifications should be systematic and coherent and philosophically acceptable with regards to epistemology, ethics, politics and human nature.

1.2 Rationale for the study

As a follower of Gülen's philosophy, I have been listening to his talks and reading his books since my high school years. I believe that the most striking aspect of his philosophy and the HM is the promotion of non-reactionary positive action and a universal outlook on thought and activism (Aras and Caha, 2000; Çetin, 2010). Another appeal to the philosophy is that it encourages serving human beings,

regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race and gender, as not only the most important social action, but as an act of serving God (Aras and Caha, 2000). As a Muslim who believes in the universality of Islam and its peaceful essence, I believe Gülen's approach and the HM creates a much-needed space for Muslims to integrate with the world and provides them with the self-confidence to do so.

My contact with the HM commenced during my high school years in the mid-1980s when I stayed in a hostel run by people from the movement. My ties with the movement were further strengthened during my years at university and I wanted to travel abroad and work in one of the HM schools after my graduation as a teacher. It was my subjective view that it was my responsibility to contribute to the service of humanity as it is an ideal of the movement. In this regard, I was granted the opportunity to come to South Africa in 1998 and was involved in the HM school that was established in 1999 in Cape Town while studying for a Master Degree. This first HM school in South Africa was sponsored by the Horizon Education Trust (HET) whose trustees and sponsors were Turkish individuals conducting business and living in South Africa (Mohamed 2013; Shin 2015). I worked at the school as a teacher between 1999 and 2002 and later as the principal from 2003 until the end of 2005. Thereafter, I moved to Johannesburg where I served until the end of 2008 as a school principal at a HM school that was run by the Fountain Education Trust that runs Islamic institutions targeting only Muslim communities. After serving as an executive director of a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Turquoise Harmony Institute (THI) run by the HM from 2009 until 2012, I moved to the Free State province in 2013 to facilitate the establishment of a new HET school. However, this did not materialise and I then took up a position in Cape Town in 2017 with THI where I currently serve and I consult for the HET Cape Town office. The HET is currently running six schools in South Africa and they are, according to annual the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination results and achievements in various national and international academic competitions and Olympiads, producing good academic results (Star College, 2017; Hatemi, 2013; Mohamed, 2013; Shinn 2015).

Having been involved in the HM schools for such a lengthy period resulted into raising various questions. The most important question for me is about the extent to which *Gülen's educational philosophy manifests in the HET schools*. My contention

is that research on Gülen's educational philosophy and its manifestations in the HET schools can contribute to not only answering this question, but can also contribute towards the broader discourse around the HM schools worldwide.

Very little research has been undertaken in the HET schools in South Africa. Mohamed (2007 and 2013) and Samuel (2014) conducted interviews with the school principals and administrators at the HET schools in Cape Town and Durban. Shinn (2015) has published a book on the HM in Africa and allocated five pages to schools in SA by offering a brief background. Whilst extensive research involving all HET schools in South Africa has not been undertaken, it is anticipated that the exploration of the extent to which Gülen's philosophy of education manifests in the HET schools may contribute to debates on a philosophy of education in practice. As this research will study a particular philosophy of education (of Gülen) and its manifestations in practice, it can indeed contribute to the debate on the relevance of philosophy of education for educational practice and policy and procedural formulations (Vokey, 2006).

As a broad model of educational practices at the HM schools has not been constructed, I argue that a significant contribution can be made towards developing and constructing a Gülen education model. Developing an educational model out of Gülen's philosophy and the practices at the HM schools may have the potential to contribute to the debates on the possibility of the HM schools' capacity to offer an alternative model of education. In addition, studying the HM schools also has the potential to offer an alternative way to engage with religion and the modernity dichotomy in general, secular education, and Islamic education in particular. I admit that my study alone is unable to offer conclusive arguments on this; however, it can offer useful insight into future efforts on this. In this regard, Mohamed (2013) gives a brief history of how education developed in South Africa from pre-apartheid to democracy and mentions Muslim schools where Islamic subjects are taught in addition to secular subjects in an Islamic environment. He then contends that Gülen's philosophy presents an alternative to both secular and Muslim education. As such, the research may also have implications for Muslims in South Africa.

In addition, one of the most important aspects of the HM schools is the dedication of the teachers (Mohamed, 2013; Aydin, 2011). Various studies undertaken on the HM schools indicate a high degree of motivation and commitment by teachers (Aydin, 2011; Ebaugh, 2010; Çetin, 2010; Ergil, 2012). As such, the research also has the potential to contribute to the debate on teacher education in South Africa, especially in relation to teacher motivation that has been voiced as an area of concern (DBE, 2011). This research can offer valuable insight on the dynamics underlying teachers' dedication at the HM schools.

From an epistemological perspective, the literature contains a significant body of knowledge on the HM. However, as stated, presence of and awareness about the HM in Africa and relevant literature on the movement is very limited (Shinn, 2015; Park, 2007). Although Shinn (2015) cautions against overstating the importance of the HM in Africa, he states that specialists on Africa, should understand what it is and what impact it now or potentially has in any given country. On the other hand, Park (2007) concludes that the HM is a transnational actor and he argues that the impact of transnational phenomenon cannot readily be measured or even defined with precision.

I anticipate that recommendations with regard to the manifestation of the philosophy could contribute to adopting a critical look by those involved in the new projects of the HET in South Africa, and other international HM educational projects. This may also contribute to constructing a broad model that can apply to other HM schools.

1.3 Research question and subsidiary questions

The HET was established in 1998 in South Africa and the first school was opened in 1999 in Cape Town. As indicated, the HET currently operates schools in Johannesburg, Durban and Pretoria (HET, 2020). Admission to the schools is open to all and the schools implement the *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements* (DBE, 2011) as stipulated by the South African Government.

The majority of decision-makers at the HET and its schools are of Turkish origin and non-South African teachers receive their training as educators outside South Africa.

Turkish teachers teach science, mathematics and computer/technology subjects, while local teachers teach others subjects such as languages, social and economic sciences (Mohamed 2013). In these schools, there is an explicit emphasis on science and mathematics (HET, 2020) and Mohamed (2013) points out that the HET schools academically perform well and their graduates have been gaining access to reputable tertiary institutions. The principal of each school is always a Turkish individual and there usually are Turkish and local deputy principals. It is also significant to note that the Turkish teachers are all followers of Gülen's philosophy (Balci, 2003; Park, 2008).

One of the most significant aspects of the HET schools is that they are part of the HM that is a network of institutions across fields and countries (Mohamed 2013). These schools do not teach religion but focus especially on the practice of moral values as portrayed in Gülen's educational philosophy (Mohamed, 2007). Gülen's educational philosophy aims at nurturing the whole child in terms of both cognitive skills and moral values (Mohamed, 2013). Another principle that Alam (2015) identifies is pluralism on which Gülen's philosophy of education is based. As these schools are informed and underpinned by Gülen's philosophy of education, the expectation is that this philosophy should find manifestation in the HET schools' policies and practices. As I am interested in the degree of such manifestation in particular, my research will be guided by the question: *To what extent is Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy manifested in the policies and practices of Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa?*

In an attempt to answer this question, I will explore the following subsidiary questions:

- 1.3.1 What are the major aspects and educational implications of Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy, and how can it be (re)conceptualised to serve as a theoretical framework?
- 1.3.2 What is the history of *Hizmet* Movement schools, internationally and in South Africa?
- 1.3.3 How is Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy embedded in the policies of the Horizon Educational Trust schools, whilst simultaneously directing its expectations?

- 1.3.4 To what extent are the educational perceptions and practices of teachers and perceptions of graduates, influenced by Fethullah Gülen's philosophy?
- 1.3.5 What comments and recommendations can be made with regard to the manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy for new Horizon Educational Trust schools in SA?

1.4 Research aim and objectives

In alignment with the primary research question, this study aims to explore the extent to which Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy finds expression in the HET schools in South Africa. By implication, this study concerns the infusion of Gülen's educational philosophy in the HET schools in South Africa. For the purposes of this study, Gülen's own writings and talks, literature on the HM and Gülen's thought, information on the HET and schools' relevant documents have been explored and analysed respectively, while teachers, other relevant staff members and graduates have been interviewed.

Thus, in order to fulfil this aim I attempted to meet certain objectives, namely to

- 1.4.1 explore the major themes in Fethullah Gülen's philosophy and indicate the implications for education. Positioned within the broader discourse of Islamic philosophy of education, such themes and implications are (re)constructed to serve as the theoretical framework of this study. This objective subsequently served as the theoretical basis for the study of the policies and documents of the HET schools, as well as for the exploration of the perceptions of the participants involved in this study.
- 1.4.2 provide a background of the *Hizmet* Movement and affiliated schools, both internationally and in South Africa. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the subject of the study is part of an international movement. The international affiliation is significant as the process of the HM's entering South Africa through the HET may reveal information relevant to the aims of this study.
- 1.4.3 explore the expectations of the HET for the HM schools by analysing available documentation and other relevant structures and mechanisms employed by

schools. The aim was to determine the extent to which these expectations are influenced by Gülen's philosophy.

- 1.4.4 determine the degree to which teachers' educational perceptions and practices, as well as graduates' perceptions are influenced by Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy. The rationale for this objective was that teachers are indeed most important as the implementing agents of an educational philosophy, while students are the observers and the recipients of the services offered by the schools. If the schools' policies and practices are infused with Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy, it might continue to have an influence on the graduates.
- 1.4.5 comment, by drawing on information gained through the above-mentioned objectives, on the extent to which Gülen's educational philosophy is manifested in the HET schools in SA.

1.5 Research design

This section presents an overview of the research design used to pursue the research questions. The theoretical framework on which this research was built is described, including the philosophical assumptions and relevant methodological and other critical issues relating to the planning and carrying out of the research. The ethical concerns related to the research are also clarified.

1.5.1 Theoretical framework

As indicated, the aim of the study was to explore the manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 1.4). By implication, Gülen's educational philosophy served as the theoretical framework and subsequent lens through which I read and made sense of the data generated through document analysis and semi-structured interviews. It is, however, important to note that there is no agreed-upon Gülenian model of education, and thus no clearly developed philosophy of education. Rather, as an Islamic scholar, his educational philosophy can be derived from his interpretation of Muslim intellectualism as depicted in his writings and talks. Although it could be argued that Gülen's ideas are couched in Islamic philosophy, the focus of my study was on his interpretation of the status of humanity and the consequences for education. The

theoretical framework used in this study can therefore be perceived as a subjective (re)construction of Gülen's ideas on, *inter alia*, the golden generation, holistic development informed by a harmonious composition of mind, body, spirit and feelings, advocacy for the practice of values, and service through exemplary lives. In Chapter 2, I give an overview of Gülen's philosophical ideas as depicted in his writings and talks. The exposition of the dominant aspects of Gülen's philosophical ideas were used to present a structured version of Gülen's philosophy of education, which in turn, was used as the theoretical framework in this study.

1.5.2 Research methodology

1.5.2.1 A qualitative research approach informed by interpretivism

In alignment with my research aim, I attempted to explore how the decision-makers and other role-players responsible for establishing and managing HET schools interpret Gülen's philosophy. It was my contention that such interpretation would manifest in practice. In addition, I was also interested in how Gülen's philosophy influenced and infused the perceptions of graduates from the HET schools. Stake (1995) reminds that how the researcher conducts the research in the field needs to be guided by the research questions. My research question suggested the use of textual data and various role-players' understanding, interpretations, perceptions, experiences and conducts. As such, I adopted a qualitative methodology informed by an interpretivism paradigm for this study.

My decision to opt for a qualitative research methodology coincides with Merriam's (2009) statement that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. Yin (2011) states that qualitative research is instrumental in studying real life settings and the way in which people cope in such settings. A qualitative approach to a study enables the capturing of the contextual richness of people's everyday lives. Similarly, Nieuwenhuis (2012) states that qualitative research is concerned with the "why" question while studying people or systems in their natural settings. Whilst qualitative research aims at understanding the meaning people construct, interpretive research proceeds from the assumption that reality is socially constructed (Merriam, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Baxter and

Jack, 2008). Within the context of this study, I assumed that people in the Hizmet Movement interpret their mandates differently, thus creating their own subjective meaning of the notion of *hizmet* (cf. Samuel, 2012). I argued that the interpretation of Gülen's philosophy within the context of the HET schools, is constructed through multi-dimensional interactions and experiences of various role-players. Such interactions and experiences can be captured in both textual data and data generated through interviews. I subsequently worked with the premise that the possible existence of multiple and perhaps even competing interpretations of Gülen's philosophy, might result in multiple manifestations. Interpretivism proceeds from the ontological assumption that a multiplicity typifies social reality because people interpret events differently (cf. Nieuwenhuis, 2016); hence my decision to work with an interpretivist paradigm.

1.5.2.2 *The voice of the insider*

The aim of the researcher in qualitative research is to understand the real-life situation from the perspective of the insider by giving privilege to the voice of the insider (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Merriam, 2009). If the purpose is to understand the insider's perspective and since all researchers interpret their observations in some way, it can be argued that it is an advantage for the researcher to be familiar with the experiences and circumstances of the participants. This argument is further strengthened with Nieuwenhuis's (2016) view that the researcher cannot be separated from the researched, especially in a qualitative investigation. Mercer (2007) defines an insider as a researcher who shares a particular characteristic, for example gender, ethnicity or culture, with the researched. In accordance with this definition, I regarded myself as an insider. Although I do not work directly with the participants in this study, I worked for the HET and am a follower of Gülen's philosophy, as many of the participants in this study. Scholars such as Arthur, Waring, Coe and Hedges (2012), Baxter and Jack (2008), Scott (1996) and Yin (2011) emphasise the importance of establishing rapport and trust for successfully interviewing participants. For developing rapport and familiarity, an insider is in a better position than an outsider who may not be familiar with an institution and its philosophical underpinnings. Thus, within the context of this research, an outsider would usually use the term 'Gülen Movement' which is used more in academic and public context and refer to Gülen by his name, while an insider would know that the

movement participants simply call it *hizmet* and Gülen is referred to as *Hocaefendi* (respected teacher) (Balci and Miller, 2012). In this study, I also use the HM for the sake of academic style and for outsider readers. I believed that my insider status as well as the use of terminology that is familiar to the movement participants, was a contributing factor in attaining rapport and trust with the participants in this study. Merriam (2009) states that using words that make sense to the interviewee reflects the participant's worldview and will subsequently improve the quality of data.

1.5.2.3 A case study

Experts identify various types of qualitative studies and a few of the most common ones are ethnographic, phenomenological, grounded theory, critical theory, biographical, narrative analysis and case study researches (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). As my research was situated within a qualitative approach, and in accordance with the aim of the study, I concluded that conducting a case study was the best option in addressing my research questions. I have an intrinsic interest in the case of the HET and the schools in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town run by this trust. Since it was possible to study a single holistic case with embedded units or multiple cases (cf. Baxter and Jack, 2008), I decided to treat my case as a single holistic case with embedded units. In this study, the schools operated by the HET were treated as embedded units in a single holistic case.

1.5.3 Research methods

Research methods are the instruments that are used to generate data (Scott, 1996). Merriam (2009) defines data as bits and pieces of information and indicates that what makes these bits and pieces of information important is the researcher's interest and perspective. Whilst Yin (2011) states that data serve as the foundation of any research and are generated, in qualitative research, through field activities, what one does in the field and use of particular methods should be guided by the research topic, research questions and theoretical framework (Stake, 1995; Edwards and Holland, 2013). Literature suggests that some of the most common methods utilised in qualitative case research are literature study, document analysis, participant observation and interviews (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Scott, 1996). In this particular study, three of the mentioned four

methods research methods were utilised to pursue the various subsidiary questions (cf. 1.3).

1.5.3.1 Literature study

According to Merriam (2009), literature refers to what has been theoretically and conceptually written about a certain topic or phenomenon based on empirical data gathered by other researchers. She (Merriam, 2009) continues by pointing to three places where references to previous literature may appear in a research study. In the introduction, a reference to previous literature places the current research in context and points to the paucity of research on the topic. A literature review section included in a study can foreground an analysis of research done previously, and finally, in the discussion of the findings reference to previous literature can assist in indicating how the findings extend, modify or contradict previous work. One of the advantages of a literature study is according to Hancock and Algozzine (2006), the guidance it could provide in establishing the conceptual foundation for a study, in identifying viable research questions, relevant research methodologies and methods. In this regard, a literature study has the advantage of enabling a researcher to establish the strengths and weaknesses of previously used research designs to identify the most appropriate style and form for current research questions. Yin (2009) points out that a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature is required for finding alternative ways of good data interpretation.

Of importance for my research was the construction of a theoretical framework based on Gülen's philosophy. Although a literature study assisted me in establishing the research design for this particular study, I also drew on studies of Gülen's writings to conceptualise the theoretical framework. In line with Baxter and Jack's (2008) emphasis on the use of literature to compare and contrast research findings, the existing body of literature by scholars of Gülen's philosophy and the HM's activities were consulted. Consulting the writings of other scholars was especially important in identifying what has been done on Gülen's philosophy and the HM schools. In this regard, the literature review was instrumental in determining the direction of this research.

1.5.3.2 Document analysis

Ary *et al.* (2010) describe a document or content analysis as a research method that involves the studying of written or visual material in order to determine the meaning reflected in the material. Documents usually serve as substitutes for what the researcher could not directly observe and are analysed for frequencies and contingencies to acquire an understanding into the thinking of those who compiled them (Stake, 1995). Merriam (2009) regards a document analysis as a complementary strategy to interviewing. Although Ary *et al.* (2010) provide a list of purposes of document analysis, it is, in particular, the purpose of describing prevailing practices that appealed to my study. To explore the extent to which Gülen's educational philosophy is embedded in the policies of the HET schools, various documents such as the Trust Deed of the HET, the schools' constitutions, policies on various issues, handbooks, newsletters, school brochures, websites, meeting minutes and other accessible written correspondence and related material were analysed. It was subsequently my contention that a document analysis would be of assistance in determining whether Gülen's philosophy is indeed considered in the devising and formulation of the various HET schools' policies.

1.5.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

As a qualitative case study seeks an in-depth description of the case in real-life settings from the perspectives of the participants (cf. 1.5.2.1), interviews were arguably regarded as the most important and most widely used source of data in qualitative research (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008). Edwards and Holland (2013) define an interview as one person asking questions to another person on a particular topic or issue and the interviewer generating data out of the interviewee's responses. I decided to use of semi-structured interviews in this research, as they seemed to be most appropriate to achieve some of the objectives of my study, namely the exploration of the perceptions and interpretations of Gülen's philosophy by Turkish teachers and how local teachers and graduates perceive its manifestations (cf. 1.4.4 and 1.4.5). In line with the characteristics of qualitative research and the possibility of semi-structure interviews to offer an in-depth description of multiple interpretations by teachers and graduates, I devised interview schedules separately for the teachers, the school management and the graduates (cf. Appendix F) to guide the process, whilst

simultaneously allowing for flexibility. Since my study focused on the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education, participants' familiarity with this philosophy of education was used as a criterion in defining the insider and outsider status of the participants. Hence, while the perceptions of the Turkish teachers who are Gülen followers offered the insider voice on Gülen's philosophy, local teachers and graduates served as outside observers.

1.6 Integrity of the study

Qualitative research is often regarded to lack objectivity and rigour and to be biased in its data generation and analysis (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). However, despite the suspicions and objections of researchers who are aligned with a positivist paradigm, qualitative researchers have developed methods of addressing the issue of trustworthiness and credibility of their work (Shenton, 2004; Golafshani, 2003; Patton, 1999; Brink, 1993; Merriam, 2009). To ensure that the integrity of the study was not compromised, I mitigated potential challenges related to researcher bias and subjectivity, risks associated with the participants, rigour in conducting the research, and data gathering and analysis.

1.6.1 Researcher subjectivity and bias

In qualitative research, the research is not only regarded as the primary instrument of data generation and data analysis, but the generated data is filtered through the researcher's particular theoretical position and biases (Merriam, 2009; Willis, 2008; Mertens, 2010). Therefore, qualitative case studies are limited by the subjectivity and integrity of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). In this regard, Nieuwenhuis (2012) notes that objectivity is an ideal that can never be achieved and research, especially in a qualitative approach, is conducted with a great awareness of subjectivity.

To mitigate the risks posed by my on subjectivity and bias as a researcher, I clarified my research interest with reference to my involvement with the HET and the HM (cf. 1.5.2.2). As this research is informed by an insider's voice and since I have a keen interest and a particular understanding of Gülen's philosophy, I affirmed my own preconceived understandings and loyalty to the HM from the onset of this study. In

addition, I intentionally sought and challenged negative data during the interviews in order to mitigate the influence of my preconceived assumptions.

1.6.2 Participant bias

The interviewee and the interviewer are co-producers of the data in a qualitative study (Tinggaard, 2008). Since participants played a significant role in generating most of the data in qualitative research, possible threats associated with the participants need to be addressed. In this study, I generated data through document analysis (cf. 1.5.3.2) and semi-structured interviews (cf. 1.5.3.3). Issues associated with the process of data generation through the involvement of participants range from identifying participants to ensuring the quality of the data they will provide. Brink (1993) reminds that participant bias may also be due to fatigue, motivation or anxiety, duration of the recall, attention span, mood and health. Walford, (2001; also Brink, 1993) further states that individuals may behave differently under different social circumstances, and participants may resort to offering wrong information intentionally when risk is involved. Tinggaard (2008) draws attention to the relations between the researcher and the participants that could be counter-productively influenced by too much control of the data and the interview process.

Drawing on purposive participant selection, (cf. Mason, 2002; Given, 2008), I selected participants who were best positioned to offer knowledge and insight in terms of Gülen's philosophy and the HET policies and practices. In order to address the possibility of participant bias, I visited the schools prior to conducting the interviews. My intention was to become familiar with the potential participants, to explain the aim of the study and to give insurances regarding issues of confidentiality and privacy.

1.6.3 Issues of rigour in conducting the research

Merriam (2009) states that the results of the research are trustworthy to the extent that there has been some rigour in the carrying out of the study. Lincoln and Guba (2000) underscore the significance of findings being sufficiently authentic so that they can be trusted in acting upon their implications. They further added that conclusions should ring true to the readers, practitioners and other researchers. This

implies that I had to report the results and draw conclusions with extreme caution by taking measures such as the clarity of interview questions and the authenticity and sincerity of the views expressed in interviews. This matter has guided how I designed my interview questions and left sufficient flexibility for me to ask further questions for clarity and further insight, furthermore, giving the freedom to the participants to question, object and engage during the interview. I also improved rigour in my study by first discussing the interview schedule with people who had experiences with the HM schools and then by piloting the interview questions with teachers at one of the HET schools (School A) at different times. This process assisted me in making the questions more relevant to the South African context, and in revising questions that caused confusion. To ensure the authenticity of the data, I shared the interview content with the participants. To eliminate my preconceived ideas, I asked the participants to clarify their ideas and the concepts they raised to rely not on my own interpretations only.

1.6.4 Risks in data generation and analysis

Research, in general, is about data. Qualitative research is about generating data conveyed through words (Merriam, 2009), which are how participants express their views. Data in a qualitative study is how the researcher interprets the participants' words. In other words, data is the interpretation of the interpretations of the participants, which is a series of interpretations (Mertens, 2010). This implies that when generating and analysing data, it is imperative to keep this reality of multiple interpretation processes in mind.

In the case of my particular study, I had to generate data relevant to my research aim, i.e. data that speak to the extent to which Gülen's philosophy manifests itself in the HET schools in South Africa. As such, my conclusions and interpretations are based on the data generated through various research methods such as a literature study (cf. 1.5.3.1), a document analysis (cf. 1.5.3.2) and semi-structured interviews (cf. 1.5.3.3). Each of these methods entails unique techniques, aspects and contribute to the quality of the data collected. However, there are risks associated with the process of data generation, which could, in turn, threaten the integrity of the research. As the researcher, I had the privilege to choose what counts as data (cf.

Stake, 1995; Walford, 2001) and it was this judgement that may pose a risk to the quality of data. To mitigate the risks associated with data generation and analysis, I adopted various strategies. I developed a plan of action, which guided the research process from identifying participants to the analysis of data. I worked carefully on conceptual clarity surrounding the research questions and consistency among the research paradigm, methodology, methods used and the data generation processes. I also ensured that my selected sample of participants was representative of the case in the study.

1.7 Ethical considerations

Research ethics should inform every stage of the research, and an ethical framework needs to be reflexive. In this regard, Atkins and Wallace (2012) claim that ethical and moral debates have no clear answers, so the researcher has to conduct the research in the best interest of everyone concerned. The University of the Free State's guidelines for ethical clearance for human research lists seven concerns for ethics of human research, namely harm/risk and mitigation, informed consent/assent, confidentiality and anonymity, vulnerable participants, conflict of interest, beneficence, reciprocity and remuneration, and deception (UFS, 2014). I have however, taken various steps to ensure that my research is conducted in an ethical manner.

In alignment with ethical considerations within a qualitative research context, each participant in this study signed a consent form (cf. Appendix D). I ensured the confidentiality of the participants' identities by assigning codes to each participant when reporting. No payment was offered to the participants, and interviews were conducted with the permission of the school management during the participants' free periods during school hours. I ensured that my study did not include overt conflicts of interest by the participants. However, when a participant made a comment, which I suspected to be biased, I attempted to interrogate such a comment further as the participant might have had other motivations for making such a comment.

In addition to applying for and obtaining ethical clearance from the UFS Faculty of Education (cf. Appendix A; Ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2018/1282), I obtained permission from the HET (cf. Appendix B) and the management of the various schools to conduct my research at their institutions (cf. Appendix C). The permission was accompanied by a brief outline of the study, my proposed activities at the schools, and requirements from the schools such as availing particular documents relevant to my research.

1.8 Demarcation of the study

1.8.1 Scientific demarcation

At the beginning of this chapter, philosophy of education as a discipline was discussed and its boundaries and major characteristics were touched on. In light of those discussions, reflections on the intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural development of a child fall under the field of philosophy of education. As discussed above (cf. 1.5.1), Gülen reflects extensively on education through propositions on the role of education and expectations from it as well as how education fits in his broader philosophy. In Gülen's thinking, an ideal human being can tackle the problems of today, and such a generation can only be raised through an ideal education model. In line with the above, one can conclude that Gülen's reflections and vision of education can be classified as a philosophy of education. Gülen's reflections and proposals on education are coherent, systematic and philosophically sound in his own paradigm.

This study aimed at studying Gülen's philosophy of education as it manifests at the HET schools in South Africa. Since the focus of the research was on a specific philosophy of education, it is demarcated to the field of philosophy of education.

1.8.2 Geographical demarcation

This study was conducted at the six schools that were established and are run by the Horizon Educational Trust in South Africa. These schools are situated in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. In total, twenty-four interviews were conducted with interviewees, ranging from school principals, to head of departments, to teachers and graduates from the HET schools (cf. Table 5.1).

1.9 Layout of the thesis

This study unfolded in seven chapters.

- In Chapter 2, Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education is unpacked through an extensive literature review of his writings and that of other scholars who wrote on his philosophy. Following from the literature review and positioned against the broader discourse of Islamic philosophy of education, Gülen's philosophy of education is proposed in a reconstructed format as the theoretical framework, which enabled the pursuit of the research aim.
- Chapter 3 provides a background of the *Hizmet* Movement and follows from Chapter 2, which forms the conceptual framework for the formation and expansion of the *Hizmet* Movement. A literature review assisted in the highlighting of the historical development of the movement from a small, faith-based community of activists to a transnational phenomenon.
- In Chapter 4, an exposition is given of the research methodology and the research methods used in the undertaking of this study. A rationale for the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews to generate data is provided. Ethical concerns and steps taken to mitigate the risks associated with qualitative research and to ensure the integrity of the study are foregrounded.
- In Chapter 5, document analysis enabled the analysis of various policies and related documents of the Horizon Educational Trust and the HET schools. The objective of the document analysis was to determine the extent to which foundational, policy and procedural, and operational documents were infused with and directed by Gülen's philosophy of education.
- The focus of Chapter 6 is on the degree to which teachers' educational perceptions and practices are influenced by Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy and the extent to which Gülen's educational philosophy continues to find expression in graduates' perceptions. The findings on teachers' and graduates' perceptions emerged from the analysis of data that was generated through semi-structured interviews.
- In the final chapter, Chapter 7, comments and suggestions are made on the extent to which Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education finds manifestation in Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented an introduction to the study. The research question was foregrounded as: *To what extent is Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy manifested in the policies and practices of Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa?* The various subsidiary questions and the concomitant objectives are indicated, followed by a brief exposition of the philosophical underpinnings of the study. The research methodology is indicated as a case study framed within a qualitative approach informed by an insider voice. The research methods employed to generate data are introduced, and possible issues and risks posed by the methodology and the methods are discussed briefly. Concerning the latter, I presented the strategies that I used to mitigate and minimise potential risks.

In the next chapter, I present an in-depth exposition of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education and provide the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education

2.1 Introduction

Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education forms the theoretical framework of this research. However, it should be noted that there exists no agreed-upon Gülenian model of education, and subsequently no clearly developed philosophy of education. Rather, as an Islamic scholar, Gülen's educational philosophy can be derived from his interpretation of Islamic text, his conception of the human being, and his reading of the modern world as depicted in his writings and talks (cf. 1.5.1). In this chapter, I first provide a comprehensive and systematic exposition of Gülen's ideas with the aim to develop an understanding of him as a person and the movement that evolved from his philosophy, specifically his educational philosophy (cf. 1.4.1). This exposition introduces the first step in the process of (re)constructing his philosophy in a structured manner to serve as the theoretical framework of this study. Since Gülen's ideas are couched in Islamic philosophy, I consider in the second part of this chapter, the broader discourse of Islamic philosophy of education as a means to contextualise Gülen's ideas better. Waghid (2020) points out that there are multiple conceptions of Islamic education. I contended that a brief comparison of Gülen's philosophy of education with other philosophies of Islamic education could be insightful to position his philosophy within some dominant trends in contemporary Islamic education debates. I conclude the chapter with a diagram in which I depict my structured version of Gülen's philosophy of education. It is this (re)constructed philosophy of education that served as the theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 Fethullah Gülen as a person

Fethullah Gülen's official website describes him as "a mainstream Turkish Muslim scholar, thinker, author, poet, opinion leader and educational activist who supports interfaith and intercultural dialogue, science, democracy and spirituality and opposes violence and turning religion into a political ideology" (fGulen.com, 2010). Gülen received his early training at traditional Islamic institutions and grew up in an environment where he was surrounded by devout Muslims. Therefore, it is expected that his thought and activism be deeply rooted in Islamic teachings.

Amongst the Muslim peoples of the world, including Turkey, there are numerous movements and schools of thought, claiming that they represent true Islamic heritage and teachings (Ergene, 2009). Sevindi (2008) points out that one may be speaking about different things when referring to Islam in Turkey, in the Arab world or in Iran. One can argue that the differences among them mostly arise in the various approaches to activism and how a response to and engagement with the modern world are conceptualised and advocated. Although various interpretations of Islam resemble one another in most aspects, there are attributes which separate them from one another. This chapter offers an introduction to the philosophy of Fethullah Gülen and the associated HM, and point to unique characteristics that separate him and the HM from other Islamic movements.

2.2.1 Historical developments relevant to Gülen's life and growth

Turkey's modern history and the developments in the 20th century have significant relevance for Gülen's philosophy and activism. After the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, the resistance fought for independence during the independence war (1919-1922) and secured the territories of current-day Turkey. The new Republic was declared in 1923. As part of the modernisation project, the newly established Republic of Turkey was to be a secular state and integrate with the western world (Harrington, 2011; Hefner, 2010). Religious education at schools in the new secular state was monolithic (Hefner, 2010) as the Turkish state adopted and pushed forward an official version of Islam (Yilmaz, 2005). This position of the Turkish state was an attempt to shape a homogeneous nation that could only succeed with the constitutive element of Islam (Hermann, 2014). However, Yimaz (2005) argues that despite such desires of the state, an unofficial Islam has persisted alongside the state-sanctioned 'official' Islam. Gülen was exposed to such an 'unofficial' Islam and received his training from these scholars. Such an unofficial training and qualification was not recognised by the state, and in order to obtain the required qualification to work as a state-employed *imam*¹, external examinations of the state needed to be completed. Gülen's early writings and talks focused on issues that posed challenges to Muslims. He picked up and built on some major issues from Said Nursi (1878-1960) who was one of the most significant Muslim scholars and activists of the early

¹ Imam is the Muslim religious officer in charge of leading prayers in a mosque

20th century in Turkey. These issues concern the Islamic qualities that Muslim individuals and societies need to possess and uphold. Concerning the individual, Gülen focuses on attaining true faith as well as the crises of ignorance, disunity and poverty in relation to social concerns (Alam, 2015). This historical background relating to the establishment of foundations of modern Turkey and Gülen's development should be kept in mind while studying Gülen's development because his thought and activism is a response to such crises. For example, he believes the materialist perspective of modernity imposed on Turkish society after the founding of the new Republic is the major cause of most individual and social ills (Gülen, 2012h; Gulay, 2007).

2.2.2 The life of Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen was born in 1941 in Erzurum, Eastern Turkey, where the population is largely conservative and devout Muslims, as was his own family (Ergene, 2009). His father served as an imam, and his first Qur'an teacher was his mother (Hermansen, 2015). He could not continue his formal education beyond primary school and had to write external examinations later on to officially complete his secondary education (Hermansen, 2015). Consequently, he attended the local informal but structured institutions where Islamic education was provided following a *Sufi*² approach. On completion of his studies, Gülen obtained a licence to teach (*ijaza*) (Çetin, 2010). He also attended *sufi* lodges (*tekkes*), which offered spiritual guidance to the attendees.

Gülen travelled to Edirne in 1959, a city near the western border of Turkey with Greece, where he was officially posted to one of the mosques. He lived an ascetic life in Edirne by staying at the mosque and living in minimal comfort (Hermansen, 2015; Çetin, 2010). He joined the army to complete his compulsory military service in 1961 after which he gave a series of lectures in Erzurum, his home city, as well as evening talks on moral issues. In 1964, Gülen returned to Edirne where he continued to give public lectures.

² *Sufism* is the spiritual dimension of Islam, which encourages Muslims to deepen their spiritual experience and become more tolerant and accepting of others.

In 1966 he was transferred to Izmir as a preacher and took up the administrator, mentor and tutor roles at a Qur'anic school (Hermansen, 2015). He filled this position until 1981 when he took a permanent leave of absence and served mostly as a preacher in various parts of western Turkey. During this time, Gülen travelled extensively, giving talks and conferences not only in mosques but in what could also be considered unconventional venues. These talks and conferences were on a wide range of topics including culture, religion and modern science (Hermansen, 2015). During this time, Gülen also initiated evening discussions for the general public (fGulen.com, 2010; Hermansen, 2015). These sessions consequently made him a well-known figure in Turkey (Soltes, 2013).

During 1980 the Turkish military staged a successful *coup d'état*, and Gülen was placed on the wanted list of the junta like many socially active public figures. In 1986, he was briefly detained and released. He once again took up preaching in mosques in 1989, which was halted in 1991 (fGulen.com, 2010). In 1999 Gülen travelled to the United States of America (USA) for medical treatment, and due to subsequent developments in Turkey, he has since been living in Pennsylvania. He currently chairs graduate study and discussion groups on Islamic matters at the retreat centre where he resides and offers commentary on issues ranging from contemporary Islam to social and current affairs (Hermansen, 2015).

Gülen's religious identity, fame and influence often made him a controversial figure. During different periods he was accused of having alternative agendas ranging from establishing an Islamic state to staging the failed *coup d'état* against the Turkish government on 15 July 2016 (Alam, 2019). Although such developments are outside the scope of the study, the aspects, which had an impact on the HM and are relevant to this study are touched on (cf. 3.4).

2.2.3 Training, intellectual and spiritual development

It is important to state that it is not easy to establish all the influences on Gülen. He is not an academic and does not conform to the norms and standards of academic writing and speaking. Also, he does not occupy himself with referencing when he writes and speaks. Grinell (2015), for example, draws the same conclusion when he claims that Gülen's views on the impossibility of scientific knowledge resonate with

those of Kuhn, but since Gülen does not offer references, it is not possible to know if he read Kuhn or was influenced by him. Yet, inevitably Fethullah Gülen's philosophy was influenced primarily by the texts he studied and the environment he lived in. In addition, the developments in the broader context of Turkey and the Muslim world would have also influenced him. With regard to the Turkish experience, developments following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey brought about changes and restrictions to many spheres of the state and society. Among these was the changing of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin on which the current Turkish alphabet is based and is still used today (Harrington, 2011). This change of alphabets was significant for religious education, as there was no religious literature available in the newly-adopted Turkish alphabet that makes use of the Latin letters (Ebaugh, 2010).

In support of Gülen's views, having been influenced by other scholars and literature, Gage's (2014) work is significant. Gage (2014) juxtaposes Gülen's views on knowledge, teaching and learning, schooling, mind, psychology, development and moral education with that of prominent theorists of education and teaching, and points out the many similarities between Gülen's ideas and those of other educationists. Mohamed (2007) also claimed that Gülen's views on the psychology of the soul are influenced by Miskawaysh (d 1030), who also notably developed his philosophy of education.

In addition to intellectual influences, the circumstances of the time also influenced Gülen's thinking. Since the inception of the Republic of Turkey, political and sectarian fights, inner feuds, ongoing economic crises, poverty and numerous other problems were prevalent and Gülen, like many other Islamic scholars of the same era, pondered on such issues and their root causes (Ergene, 2009). However, it is important to note that Gülen believes current social, economic, cultural and moral predicaments such as moral degeneration, the prevalence of poverty and failing to keep up with the progress of the West, have their roots in the developments during the last few centuries (Gülen, 2012b; Gülen, 2012f; Gülen, 2012l; Gülen, 2012m; Gülen, 2012d). He believes that the situation was not analysed well and efforts were either inefficient, short-sighted and failed to address the real causes of these predicaments. For example, Gülen (2012m) argues that most of the work done under

the guise of civilising was, in fact, nothing more than modernisation. He posits that civilisation is an intellectual and spiritual project and is not related to dress code, material comfort and luxury or even technology. As Gülen grew intellectually, he observed the modernisation project of the Turkish Republic and the varying responses to this; ranging from extreme conservatism to total rejection of historical and traditional legacies (Ergene, 2009).

Ebaugh (2010) presents a detailed account of the developments during the early years of the Turkish Republic, also paying attention to how religious freedoms fluctuated. Arguably, the secularisation that took place during the early decades of the Republic, especially until the commencement of the multi-party era in 1950, produced a whole generation of intellectuals, professionals, politicians, bureaucrats and the public who distanced themselves from religion, even taking an anti-religious stance at times. Most formal educational institutions focused on maintaining a secular environment and as such religious thought and practices were curtailed. Coercive exclusion of religion and declining religiosity was a concern for people like Gülen who were disturbed by the status of Islam and the new dominance of positivist and materialist thinking (Gulay, 2007).

Gülen continued his education through informal ways during his early years, primarily from his father who was also a scholar in his village but also from other local sufi *madrasa*³ masters. (Ebaugh, 2010). Albayrak (2011) claims that Gülen is well acquainted with classical and modern commentaries on the Qur'an, and he is also familiar with contemporary issues and scientific thought. Gülen's official website cites that on the recommendation of his commanding officer during his military service, he read Eastern and Western classics. Gülen's command of Eastern and Western thought places him in a potentially significant position as he had the opportunity to reconcile the traditional with the contemporary. This position is observable in both his thought and action. For example, while he argues strongly for the relevance and importance of upholding Islamic values and practices, he advocates establishing modern schools instead of mosques or religious *madrasas* (Hermansen, 2015). As discussed later in the thesis (cf. 2.3), Gülen advocates for an

³ Traditional Islamic institution of teaching

ideal generation, that he hopes will be raised through such schools. Characteristics of such a generation include perfect faith, love, free thought, mathematical thought and art (Gülen, 2012n).

Said Nursi is one of the most apparent influences on Gülen's thought and activism (Yücel, 2010; Seufert, 2014). In 1957, Gülen came across the writings of Said Nursi through one of his followers. Before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Nursi was politically active and campaigned for the establishment of a university in the eastern part of current-day Turkey where both Islamic and modern teaching would be offered (Nursi, 2004). On observing that the new Republic prioritised secularisation, Nursi decided that sectarian and party politics did not possess the potential of producing a positive contribution to addressing long-ignored issues and progress of society and as such he went into seclusion in eastern Turkey. During this time, Nursi commenced writing his collection known as *Risale-i Nur* (Treatise of Light) in which he advocated that Muslims should foster perfect faith. In this collection, he further argued strongly against a materialistic worldview, which claims that Islam was incompatible with modern sciences. Grinell (2015) argues that Said Nursi's discussion of Islam and Western philosophy is closely tied to the specific circumstances of the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey.

Nursi's writings and the way his followers lived influenced Gülen enormously. This influence was intellectual, spiritual and methodological with regard to serving the people. Gulay (2007) also emphasises that the most obvious influence on Gülen's theological thinking was Said Nursi. Mohamed (2013) and Elridge (2007) both point to Nursi's influence by stating that a major aspect of Gülen's philosophy of education is to reconcile religion and modern sciences. Nursi advocates that scientific knowledge without religion could lead to atheism, while religious knowledge without science could lead to fanaticism (Nursi, 2004). In agreement with this view, Gülen also considers ignorance, disunity and poverty as three major problems of the day (Ünal and Williams, 2000). What makes Gülen differ from Nursi, Wagner (2013) argues, is that Gülen transforms Nursi's ideas and examples into societal expressions such as schools and other HM institutions.

2.3 Gülen's philosophical ideas on education

Given the history of the philosophy of education, it must be noted that many of the leading philosophers' deliberations on education were not considered to belong to a distinct discipline on their own or branch of philosophy (cf. 1.1). These philosophers thought about and deliberated on the aims and methods of education in accordance with their broader philosophies (Carroll, 2011; Sönmez, 2008), which can be regarded as their educational philosophies informed by their broader philosophies. As individual philosophers have philosophies, countries, societies, and civic movements also adopt certain ideologies or philosophies upon the ideas of their founders and/or leaders (Shroff, 2009). Similarly, the HM's underlying philosophy is built on Fethullah Gülen's thought. Gülen's ideas on education, which are scattered throughout his writings and talks, constitute his educational philosophy.

Fethullah Gülen is regarded as one of the most significant Muslim scholars/leaders today (Wagner, 2013; Yücel, 2010). He formulated his philosophy of *hizmet*, which means 'service' in Turkish, in which he proclaims that serving people is serving God (Aslandoğan, 2007). The greatest aim for a Muslim is to achieve a status where God is pleased with him or her. Gülen relates the pleasure of God to serve others and bases his philosophy of *hizmet* on this aim. Furthermore, central to the philosophy of *hizmet* is that service must be taken to all humanity (Alam, 2015; Aras and Caha, 2000; Kurt, 2013). This aspect of *hizmet* is not interpreted in a narrow sense of uplifting and serving Muslims only but taking the service to everyone regardless of their faith, race, ethnicity and nationality. It is based on this tenet, Ergene (2009) argues, that the general ideal of the HM is to serve the individual, society and humanity. Ergene (2009) further elaborates on this ideal of service by emphasising often-used concepts and relates the HM to modesty, self-sacrifice, altruism, devotion, togetherness, service without expectations by a depth of the spirit and heart with no anticipation for personal gain, intention or deed. This movement, which developed on Gülen's philosophy, primarily focuses on education, since Gülen believes that the ills of our time are caused by human beings and can thus only be appropriately addressed through holistic education (cf. 2.3.3).

It is relevant to mention here that in his early talks and writings, Gülen expresses his pain in watching the status of the Muslim world and humanity and his longing for what he referred to as a new generation. At least some Muslim scholars and leaders tend to express a longing for “good old days”. However, while Gülen also expresses admiration for and appreciation of the past, his vision for the future is not one in which the past becomes purely emulated in the future, but rather one that builds a new future, which borrows the good from the past and reinterprets this in light of contemporary realities and challenges. It is through such an approach that his ‘new generation’ can be educated. He refers to this generation with various names such as the golden generation, inheritors of the Earth, architects of the future, people of thought and action, people of heart, devotees of our time and people of ideal (Gülen, 2012b). Gülen believes that the ‘golden generation’ armed with the tools of science, faith and moral values will solve the problems of the future (Mohamed 2007). His key concepts of education are geared towards raising such a golden generation (Agai, 2003). This golden generation is to consist of ideal human beings, which Carol (2011) juxtaposes with Plato’s philosopher-king and Confucius’s superior men. Gülen elaborates on the attributes of such a generation: perfect faith; love; turning to knowledge with a tripartite foundation on reason, logic and consciousness; critiquing right and wrong by reconsidering conceptions of universe, human and life; free thinking and recognition of freedom of thought; consultation and collective awareness; mathematical thinking; and artistic thought (Gülen, 2012f).

With the emergence and dominance of modernity in the west, Muslim countries and communities faced a new challenge of how to respond to the challenges that modernity posed. This challenge resulted in various debates around the relationship between Islam, tradition and modernity. Alam (2015) lists three dominant responses that have emanated from these debates, namely Islamising modernity and sciences as advocated by al-Faruqi (1988) and al-Attas (1991); efforts to demonstrate compatibility between Islam and modernity; and the total rejection of modernity by Muslims. Alam (2015) contends that none of these responses caught the imagination of Gülen, and instead, he offered an alternative philosophy that cuts across the binary framework of tradition versus modernity. Gülen proposes a new system of thought for Muslims, which he believes has been missing, and that is necessary for the regeneration of human civilization. Agai (2003) states that by building

educational institutions, Gülen and the HM offer an answer to the question of what it means to be Muslim in a modern world. This, Agai (2003) argues, is informed by Gülen's interpretation of Said Nursi's work in which he advocates that through education it is possible to raise a generation rooted in Islam whilst engaged in modern life. This approach is unique among Muslim leaders and scholars. While some scholars (al-Attas, 1991 and al-Faruqi, 1988) suggested establishing Muslim schools to offer Islamic education only, others proposed Islamising the existing body of knowledge by re-writing textbooks and training teachers. Gülen too prioritises education as an essential tool to offer young generations the opportunity of reaching their true potential and true humanity. Gülen relates the future of society to education, which is a moral and spiritual mission intended to benefit all of society (Gage, 2014). For Gülen, such an education model should combine the material and spiritual. Thus, Gülen attaches a central role to school in relation to the life journey of a person. He describes a school as a nest, which appears to influence one part of a person's life but in actuality governs every aspect of it (Gülen, 2012b).

Given that Gülen argues that the human being lies at the heart of current economic, social, military, political and cultural problems, he attaches great importance to the potential of holistic education to address such problems (Gülen, 2012f). Aydin (2011) asserts that Gülen stated that the aim of education is to bring about a peaceful coexistence among peoples of the world. This aim resonates with the objective of what Waghid (2011) calls a maximalist Islamic education. Waghid and Davids (2015) describe maximalist Islamic as cultivating relations among people on the basis of mutual engagement and public deliberation through a discourse of mutual respect. This view is supported by Eldridge (2007) and Muzalevsky (2009) who aver that the HM attempts to promote tolerance, inter-faith and inter-cultural understanding and cooperation primarily through secular education. The phenomenon of secular education is also raised by Agai (2003) as the most striking point of *Hizmet* schools. He points out that the main motivational factor for the HM participants to engage in service activities is rooted in their religious faith.

What is of importance to note is that Gülen's views on education are scattered throughout his writings and talks, which make it difficult to point to a structured, generally accepted and implemented philosophy of education. This, in turn, means

that there is no common practice of a *hizmet* philosophy, but there are multiple implementations arising out of multiple interpretations by teachers and the variations present in various contexts. This lack of a structured philosophy of education is also pointed out by Gage (2014), who states that the HM schools have no central structure nor a specifically approved teaching methodology. Most researchers, however, point to certain phenomena, principles and characteristics that appear to be common across the HM schools (see for example Aydin, 2011; Aslandoğan, 2007; Çetin, 2010, Mohamed, 2013, Kalyoncu, 2008).

Aslandoğan and Çetin (2007) identify four dimensions of Gülen's educational philosophy. The first dimension is a paradigm shift, which attaches a noble status to education, teaching and the profession of teaching. The second dimension entails the promotion of altruism and eradication of selfishness, specifically in the field of education. The third dimension relates to a tripartite relation among the educator, the parent and the sponsor with the final dimension being epistemological. The epistemological dimension alludes to the synthesis of the heart and the mind, tradition with modernity, and the spiritual with the intellectual. Such classification and aspects are useful in researching Gülen's philosophy of education.

Although I believe that in-depth research is inconclusive in constructing one common educational model applicable to all HM schools and in depicting a comprehensive picture of various interpretations of Gülen's educational philosophy by teachers, the existing literature reveals some common themes, aspects and phenomena, which are useful for the objectives of this research. In drawing on the work of various scholars (Aslandoğan and Çetin, 2006; Aydin, 2011; Barton, 2013; Carol, 2011; Ebaugh, 2010; Michel, 2003; Park, 2008, Yavuz, 2003), I categorised these communalities into four groups, namely:

- a) *Aims of education*, which include raising a golden generation; eliminating ignorance; developing a sense of purpose and a higher sense of identity; building bridges and promoting love and tolerance;
- b) *Methods in education* which entail a holistic approach to education which combines mind, body and heart; teaching by example; cooperation of the teacher, family and sponsor; implementation of contemporary pedagogical methods;

- c) *Perspectives on education* which refer to learning being an obligation and a necessary part of being human; an emphasis on academic achievement and high quality education which is often linked to high achievement in the fields of science, technology and mathematics; non-tolerance of undesirable habits and practices such as drug abuse; education to cover all aspects of life; consultation; an opposition to the politicisation of education, emphasis on secular curricula; and
- d) *Values in education*, which comprise patriotism and loyalty to countries; hard work; altruism; intercultural acceptance; promotion of universal values; recognition of local cultures; moral standards of the teachers; moral action and moral reasoning and reward-free sponsorship.

Given that Gülen does not offer a structured model of education, I focused on and discussed selected aspects of his philosophy of education, which I consider as dominant and occur more prominently in the literature. Within the context of this study, I identified four themes, which, I regard as most dominant in guiding my attempt to observe whether Gülen's educational philosophy manifests in Horizon Education Trust schools in South Africa. These themes as associated with Gülen's philosophy are *knowledge, learning and teaching; reconciliation of religion and science; distinguishing value-focused and moral education from teaching subject material, and teaching by example (temsil)*.

2.3.1 Knowledge, learning and teaching

Historically in Muslim tradition, education has been regarded as the transmission of religious knowledge. Due to the centrality of religion in Muslim societies, establishing institutions for its transmission has been a central imperative (Hefner, 2010). This does not imply that Islamic education has not been unchanging as is reflected in the initiatives for reform at various points in history. A common call across most of these reforms was a return to the Qur'an and *hadith*⁴, and rigorous *ijtihad*⁵ (Hefner, 2010). The advent and growth of modern science have posed challenges to this phenomenon, and as a result, Muslim scholars have responded by proposing

⁴ *Hadith* refers to the traditions of the Prophet of Islam

⁵ *Ijtihad* refers to the practice of independent religious reasoning

various approaches in response to modern scientific epistemologies and knowledge systems.

In developing his educational philosophy, Gülen places a heavy emphasis on those passages from the Qur'an and the hadith that position the pursuit of knowledge as a religious duty, and on equal footing with prayer and charity (Afsaruddin, 2005). For Gülen, the universe is the subject of study, and science is the tool. Yet, he believes that the primary source of knowledge and wisdom remains the Qur'an and *hadith*. Furthermore, he objects to the Qur'an and *hadith* being made dependent on verification and confirmation by modern sciences (Grinell, 2015). This position of Gülen resonates with the views of the mainstream Muslim position (Davids and Waghid, 2016) like Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987) who asserts that phenomena of nature are signs of God. Like Nasr (1987), Gülen supports scientific endeavours and science education but argues that scientific data are incomplete, limited and disconnected from the meaning and the purpose of life. Although both Nasr and Gülen agree on emphasizing the limitations of modern sciences and the need to adopt a critical approach in studying it, they differ on science education. Nasr (1987) explicitly insists on teaching Islamic sciences and the Muslim origins of modern science before proceeding to the teaching of modern sciences. Whereas Gülen does not stipulate such an order. Gülen claims that western modernity parted with religion and mainstream Muslims abandoned science, and in the process, both the West and Muslims were negatively impacted (Grinell, 2015). Given this, Gülen aspires to reconcile religious and scientific thought (Grinell 2015). This may be linked to his view that both the universe and the Qur'an are creations of God and studying both Qur'anic and natural sciences are desirable. Even a non-Muslim scientist producing knowledge in various branches of sciences can contribute to understanding a natural phenomenon, which then contributes towards a deeper appreciation of God's attributes.

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy's (SEP) (2013) entry on the philosophy of education notes that most figures in the western philosophical tradition with varying degrees and qualifications regarded the fostering of reason or rationality as a fundamental aim (SEP, 2013). Gülen also relates correct and cautious decision-making to logic and reason, which he claims, can only be illuminated by knowledge

and wisdom (Gülen, 2012). He, however, is critical of overvaluing the reach and claims of reason and scientific endeavour (Grinell, 2015). Alam (2015) analysed Gülen's educational thought by looking at different approaches to knowledge and education by other Islamic scholars and traditions and states that Fethullah Gülen shifts the discourse from "seeking Islamic education" to "education as an Islamic value", irrespective of the field.

Gülen links the purpose of the creation of humans and the essence of being to learning, teaching and illuminating others. Knowledge, he argues, ensures that a person remains distant of evil and harm (Gülen, 2012k). For Gülen, true living is only possible through knowledge and wisdom. Often, he uses "learning and teaching" together, which points to his belief that it is expected of a person that s/he should teach others what s/he learns. In his discussion of the attributes of a leader, Gülen cites love for learning and capacity to teach (Gülen, 2012d). As such, the purpose of a human's creation is to know and teach others what he or she learns: "we were created to learn and communicate to others what we have learned" (Gage, 2014:65). Gülen's perspective on knowledge, learning and teaching clarifies why he emphasises education and also why the HM primarily developed its activities in education. However, Gülen does not refer to rote-learning of content when referring to education. The following section sheds light on his conception of education as holistic development of the individual, which combines the teaching of school subject contents and includes moral guidance.

2.3.2 Reconciliation of religion and science

One can argue that the most disturbing development for Gülen regarding modern sciences is an over-emphasis on its reach and its acceptance as the ultimate verifier of the Truth. Gülen states that there is no reason to fear science but points to the danger of irresponsibility and ignorance of the scientists and others who exploit it for their selfish interest (Grinell, 2015). Gülen identifies materialism and positivism as two of the major ills of today's world and blames a scientific understanding based on these for wars and destruction of the environment (Agai, 2003). For him, another just as important problem is the view that religion, and particularly Islam, is seen as the cause of backwardness. While he accepts that extreme modernity and

fundamentalist Islam are likely to be incompatible, there is, he believes, a middle way. Just as reason's excess is demagoguery and its deficiency is ignorance, its middle way is wisdom (Kuru, 2003).

True religion, Gülen argues (2009), promotes tolerance, an open mind, compassion, hard work, peace and other universal values and practices that lead a person to virtue and perfection. Given this, his educational philosophy seeks to reconcile and combine theological, spiritual and scientific knowledge (Elridge, 2007). This philosophy finds expression where universal values and modern sciences are taught alongside each other in seeking to create a better world based on positive activism, altruism, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and a desire to serve others and thereby to gain God's pleasure (Gülen, 2009). Ozsoy (cited in Agai, 2002) states that according to Gülen, in order to transform attributes such as faith, love, idealism and selflessness into action, they should be combined with science and knowledge. As dealt with above, this can be linked to Gülen's understanding of a human being as a harmonious combination of body, mind, feelings and spirit together with his epistemological stance which asserts that natural phenomena and the Qur'an are in agreement since they are both manifestations of God's attributes.

Although they use different justifications, some scientists adopting materialist positions and traditionalist Islamic scholars both share the view that modern sciences and Islamic knowledge are not compatible (Gulay, 2007; Alam 2015). This resulted in some contemporary Muslim scholars and societies remaining suspicious of modern sciences. At the same time, Western nations progressed in science and technology with the result of Western domination over Muslim nations. Gülen argues that the contemporary Muslim world remained behind the West because it neglected to study principles governing the universe and life (*Shariah-al Firtiya*), which are the subjects of modern sciences (Gülen, 2001).

Another significant issue that should be studied is the issue of teaching sciences and other school subjects in a value-free perspective. The next section will attempt to discover this in Gülen's thought.

2.3.3 Distinguishing value-focused and moral education from teaching subject material

Gülen's position regarding the teaching of modern sciences and morality is not uncommon in relation to other thinkers who elaborated on education (Morsy, 1993; Morsy 1994). He makes a distinction between teaching and education (Gülen, 2004) and describes them as lofty tasks that hail from heaven (Gülen, 2012b). For him, teaching refers to the value-free teaching of the content of modern sciences and school subjects. In other words, teaching refers to transferring value-free scientific knowledge onto the child through a purely intellectual process. In contrast, education is posited as the holistic development of the child, where moral guidance accompanies the transferring of knowledge in school subjects (Michel, 2003). This distinction is informed by Gülen's understanding that the human being is not comprised of mind and body only, but is rather a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit (Gülen, 2004). According to Alam (2015), this conception of the human being is one of two important factors that shape Gülen's educational philosophy; the other factor being the manner in which he interprets Islamic texts and his views on the modern world. Therefore, an ideal education in Gülen's opinion, should address various faculties of the person namely body, mind and spirit, and equip him or her with appropriate bodily, intellectual and spiritual skills to be able to deal with the challenges and needs of the modern world.

Gülen, (2012k) furthermore, contends that the qualities of upbringing and training that relate to physical attributes may be perceptible to everyone. Still, the value and significance of the intellectual, emotional and spiritual education may not necessarily be so widely accepted.

Within the modern world, Gülen (2012o) understands education as a foundational aspect for raising new generations as is evident from his view that young people who are not provided with a holistic education, will be crushed under the grinding pressures of lust, violence and greed. Thus, a good school is not a physical space where only theoretical knowledge is taught but a laboratory where students are prepared for various aspects of life, and as such, every requirement of life is addressed (Gülen, 2004 cited in Elridge, 2007). Gage (2014) points out that Maria

Montessori, John Dewey and Gülen express similar views on combining theoretical and methodological concepts with the mystical. Such similarities can be found, for example, in the manner in which the science curriculum and teaching are combined with modelling and the practising of moral values through moral education. Dewey, for instance, proposed progressive education, which is inclusive and emphasised the practical, emotional and social aspects of education (Gage, 2014). Dewey's approach is echoed by Gülen (Ergene, 2008), who claims that the fragmentation of once harmonious heart and mind lies at the root of the modern education crisis.

Mohamed (2013) identifies respect, co-operation, tolerance and integration into modern society while individuals remain devoted to their respective faiths as dominating social virtues that the HM schools in South Africa aim to foster. Indeed, Gülen emphasizes the adoption, practice and transmission of universal values such as the afore-mentioned, which are acceptable by people of all faiths and cultures. Mohamed (2013) also observes that although these values are not taught as separate subjects, they are incorporated in the affairs of the school and most importantly, embodied in the moral example of teachers. Park (2008) raises the point that overt religious teaching and the explicit mention of Fethullah Gülen, are generally absent from HM schools. The focus is instead on the teaching of scientific material and the promotion of universal values. The aim of the HM schools is therefore not to indoctrinate but to impart knowledge in a non-sectarian manner. This approach fits well within Gülen's philosophy of education as the latter aims to reconcile science and religion, and to selflessly serve everyone regardless of their religious, cultural or ethnical background.

In the next section, I discuss the relationship and connection between religion and science in more detail. Such a discussion is necessary because Gülen, as in mainstream Islamic thought, believes in the unity of knowledge in whether it is based on science or religion.

2.3.4 *Temsil*: Teaching by example

In studying Gülen's philosophy of education, one of the most common themes is *temsil*⁶. *Temsil* presupposes that a teacher possesses certain character traits and qualities. Expecting a teacher to be of good character and moral standard is a common strand in the writings of philosophers of education such as Avicenna (al-Naqib, 1993), al-Farabi (al-Talbi, 1993), al-Ghazali (Nofal, 1993) and Plato (Hummel, 1993). Al-Farabi expects teachers to possess a good character, to be free of cravings and to be people of virtue (al-Talbi, 1993). Similarly, within the Confucius tradition, Huanyin (1993) points to the idea that teachers should cultivate their personalities to be of good character and set good examples for their students. Waghid (2011) makes a strong argument that in a maximalist Islamic education the educator should also be a role model, which resonates with Gülen's concept of *temsil*. Mohamed (2013) posits that universal values (cf. 2.3.3) are incorporated in the affairs of the school and embodied in the moral example of the teachers in the HM schools.

The role of the teacher is vital in achieving educational goals and the transference of skills and knowledge to new generations. Adu and Ngibe (2014) emphasise that teachers are the custodians and implementers of the curriculum that entails the body of knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn and achieve. Gülen takes the role of a teacher further by not limiting it to a mere transmitter of a body of knowledge and skills. In addition to taking an interest in the intellectual and physical development of the student, he believes, the teacher should take special interest and play a role in the students' spiritual progress.

Within Gülen's thought, the teacher is given an exalted status. As noted, the teacher is not just a person who transfers worldly knowledge through the teaching of school subjects, but he or she should also facilitate the development of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the students by setting an example (Gülen, 2012c; Naqvi and Ibrar, 2013; Balci, 2003, Clement, 2011; Alam, 2015). In the context of Islamic education, guiding believers in religious and spiritual matters is hailed as desirable and much effort is mobilised to achieve such education. However, Gülen

⁶ *Temsil* refers to teaching by example

does not limit education to religious education; rather, he takes his educational perspective further by including the teaching of secular subjects (Agai, 2003). Following from Gülen's construction of a golden generation and their attributes, an ideal education model should address all faculties of human being, namely physical, intellectual, and spiritual.

Gage (2014) states that Dewey and Gülen are remarkably similar in their perception of the role of the teacher in that they both emphasise such a role to be more than simply relaying information. According to Gage (2014), Montessori points to the notion of imitation by students. Gülen is a strong advocate of setting an example through modelling moral values. A teacher teaches skills, but an educator is someone who fosters thought and reflection, assists students' personalities to emerge, and contributes towards the building of character (Gage, 2014). Otherwise, it is the blind leading the blind (Michel, 2014).

2.4 Theoretical framework

As this study aimed to explore the manifestations of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 1.4), this educational philosophy served as the theoretical framework for the analysis of data generated through document analysis (cf. Chapter 4) and semi-structured interviews (cf. Chapter 5). In the absence of a clearly developed philosophy of education, I (re)constructed Gülen's ideas on education as they emerged from his writings and talks, and foregrounded by other scholars who explored Gülen's ideas (cf. 2.3) to constitute a more structured version of his philosophy of education. As earlier noted, since Gülen's ideas are couched in Islamic philosophy, I give a brief exposition of some dominant trends in contemporary Islamic education debates. A consideration of Gülen's philosophy of education in comparison to other philosophies of Islamic education could be insightful in positioning his philosophy in the broader discourse of Islamic philosophies of education. In this section of the chapter, I also briefly discuss *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of education and point out parallels and contradictions that may exist between Gülen's philosophy of education and *ubuntu*. How *ubuntu* is projected to influence educational policy in Africa and specifically in South Africa, can offer a lens to explore the current and potential relevance of

Gülen's philosophy of education for the South African educational landscape. After briefly considering these two aspects, namely contemporary Islamic education debates and *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of education, I proceed to (re)construct Gülen's philosophy of education in a structured manner to serve as the theoretical framework for this study.

2.4.1 Islamic philosophy of education

Historically, education in Muslim societies focused on the transmission of religious knowledge and instructing students in devotional practices (cf. 2.3.1). However, with the proliferation of knowledge both in the study of religion, as well as in the modern branches of natural and social sciences, Muslim scholars embarked on deliberations on what an Islamic education ought to look like in modern times. Such deliberations were mostly driven by Muslims' response to modernity, which included adoption, Islamisation and outright rejection of existing knowledge (cf. 2.3). I briefly allude to the ideas of scholars such as Rahman, al-Attas, al-Faruqi and Wan Daud. They wrote extensively on Islamic education and point to some relevant convergences and divergences between them and Gülen's philosophy of education. In the deliberations on Islamic philosophy of education, the notion of Islamisation of knowledge seems to be a point of discourse with varying degrees of contestation on its definition and methods (Hashim and Rossidy, 2000; Waghid and Davids, 2018). According to al-Faruqi, modern knowledge is neither value-free nor universal but rather ethnocentric and Eurocentric and, therefore, should not be applied to Muslim societies. This position of al-Faruqi forms the basis of the drive for the Islamisation of contemporary knowledge. Hashim and Rossidy (2000) point out that Islamisation of knowledge concerns modern knowledge as knowledge produced historically in the Muslim world has already been through a process of Islamisation. A further point that is raised is that such knowledge was never detached from God. However, Hashim and Rossidy (2000) argue that there is no consensus among Muslim scholars on the definition of Islamisation and some prefer to use terms such as desecularisation, dewesternisation, integration of knowledge and holistic knowledge. They point out that in essence, all understanding of Islamisation is founded on the Islamic *tawhidic*⁷ paradigm according to which the object of knowledge is the pattern of the universe,

⁷ *Tawheed* refers to the notion of unity and associated with terms such as unification and union, which signifies the monotheism in Islamic theology.

which is the work of God. God knows the creation as He is the creator, and therefore the knowledge He reveals is absolute and universal. Waghid (2020) similarly acknowledges that there are multiple interpretations of Islamic education. Whether Gülen's philosophy of education fits within these interpretations requires further interrogation which, however, is beyond the aim and scope of this study, primarily because it focuses on schools which offer secular education complemented by moral education (cf. 2.3.3). How Gülen's philosophy of education influences such secular schools would not, one assume, depict overtly Islamic elements.

As an Islamic scholar, Gülen sees religion as the primary source of knowledge, which does not need affirmation by modern scientific methods (cf. 2.3.2). In this sense, he is not necessarily unique, and his thought aligns with other Islamic scholars such as al-Attas (1991) and Rahman (Waghid and Davids, 2018). Unlike Tariq Ramadan, who sees religion and science as separate but equal, Gülen argues for a hierarchical relationship between religion and science (Grinell, 2015), where religion should guide sciences and determine their goals. As such, science must be conscious of its limitations in its claims (Grinell, 2015). Even though Gülen proposes a hierarchized relationship between religion and science, his position stands in contrast to some Muslim scholars such as Ziauddin Sardar, al-Faruqi and al-Attas who propose for sciences to be Islamised. For Waghid (2011), Islamic education is most appropriately couched as *tarbiyya* (nurturing), *ta'lim* (learning) and *ta'dib* (goodness) and there exist minimalist and maximalist interpretations of these conceptions. Waghid argues for a maximalist implementation of these three notions whereby a student would firstly acquire knowledge and appreciate its justifications. Secondly, such learning would go beyond rote memorisation of religious text and the interpretations of other scholars. And thirdly, such a student would develop an interest in the well-being of all humanity and not only Muslims (Waghid, 2011). Based on Waghid's interpretation, one can make an argument that Gülen's philosophy of education leans, at least in some aspects, toward a maximalist view of Islamic education. For example, emphasis on intercultural interaction and dialogue alludes to a maximalist perspective of education as it calls for an appreciation of the other. Furthermore, Gülen's focus on universal values (cf. 2.3) instead of referring to Islamic values only, and his view that knowledge should be a guide in life (cf. 1.5.1),

encourages going beyond memorisations and alludes to critical evaluation of acquired knowledge.

On the other hand, al-Attas (1991) proposes that the problem of the Muslim world is the loss of *adâb*, which alone is most appropriate to define Islamic education, which he described as

recognition, and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one's proper place in relation to that reality and to one's physical, intellectual, and spiritual capacities and potential (Ardiansyah, Hafidhuddin, Mujahidin and Syafrin, 2019:53).

The hierarchy of being and knowledge are common to both Gülen and al-Attas, and they both place religious knowledge on top of this hierarchy. However, from a practical perspective, while al-Attas stipulates that teaching of religious knowledge should precede teaching scientific knowledge, Gülen does not specify if an order should apply in teaching and learning. Gülen does not openly distinguish between religious and secular knowledge and recognises learning and teaching as a religious duty (cf. 2.3.1). From the perspective of a secular-religious dichotomy, Gülen seems to agree with Rahman who argues that all forms of knowledge are integrated, and philosophy of Islamic education should adopt a non-separationist view of knowledge by understanding religious and secular knowledge to be intertwined (Waghid and Davids, 2018). Gülen and Rahman both seem to converge on the view that the problem is not necessarily with secular knowledge but the dominance of materialism and related abuse of such knowledge (cf. 2.2.3; Waghid and Davids, 2018). Further convergence of the ideas of Gülen and al-Attas exists in that they both propose that an educational model should acknowledge physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of a human being (cf. 2.3.2; Sanusi, 2020).

Regarding the aims of education, Sanusi (2020) states that for al-Attas, Islamic education aims to raise good humans with *adâb* and not necessarily good citizens in the western sense. However, while Ardiansyah *et al.* (2019) agree on the centrality of *adâb*, they object to a separation between a good citizen and a person with *adâb* and claim that they are not mutually exclusive. Aslandogan and Cetin (2006) argue

that Gülen appealed to patriotic sensibilities of Turkish people to mobilise them in the educational initiatives and transform students into productive citizens through education. This was visible in the early 1990s when volunteers first started establishing schools in former Soviet republics motivated by ethnic proximity (cf. 3.2.1). Aslandogan and Cetin (2006) also identified patriotism as a common theme at HM schools (Figure 2.1). They stated that Gülen called on the youth to choose education as their profession and serve their fellow citizens and humanity through education, which he regards as the purpose of human creation.

Gülen is critical of a materialistic view of modern sciences (cf. 1.5.1); he does not seem to adopt a reactionary discourse when he engages in or elaborates on his activism. Scholars such as Rahman, al-Attas, al-Faruqi, Wan Daud and Nasr adopt discourses which explicitly call for de-westernisation of knowledge systems and education and Islamising the existing body of modern knowledge. Wan Daud (2013) claims that western domination intensified through processes associated with modernisation and development, and adopting the concepts of democracy, freedom and human rights. He (Wan Daud) further argues that globalisation has transcended its geographical boundaries through a knowledge framework that could arguably form one of the perspectives for the Islamisation of modern knowledge. While it can be argued that Gülen would agree with Wan Daud on the views about the domination of the west and western thought, a reactionary stance and rhetoric, especially in his activism seems to be absent. Islamisation of knowledge involves isolating modern-day knowledge from the key concepts and elements of western culture and civilisation and infusing it with Islamic elements and concepts (Davids and Waghid, 2018; Sanusi 2020; Wan Daud, 2013; Ardiansyah *et al.*, 2019). Gülen also advocates a return to and regeneration of authentic values, but he is not prescriptive in how this should be achieved (Gülen, 2012b). Whereas al-Attas proposes that religious knowledge should be taught at all levels from primary school to university, Gülen seems to suggest an integrated method which combines the teaching of positive sciences⁸ and religion. Even though Gülen calls for renewal, he is not prescriptive about the methods for achieving this. One can, therefore argue that Gülen expects individuals who are holistically educated to tackle the challenges

⁸ In alignment with Gülen's (2004:232) writings, modern sciences such as mathematics and natural sciences are referred to as positive sciences.

associated with the dominance of a materialistic worldview. Arguably, the schools established by the HM volunteers are expected to implement such a holistic education model in the attempt to raise such individuals. As such, it is essential to briefly consider the HM schools here (a more in-depth discussion is presented in Chapter 3).

The HM schools in different countries are established by volunteers living in specific locations. These schools operate under officially registered institutions, which are given different names. Therefore, the HM schools refer to schools in different countries that are established by volunteers of the HM, who are influenced by the teachings of Gülen. While the majority of these schools adopt a secular curriculum and do not teach religion, HM volunteers have also established Islamic schools in few countries (cf. 1.3). In South Africa, the HM participants have found two types of schools operating under two separate institutions. Firstly, the Horizon Education Trust (HET) operates secular schools, which do not teach religion and are attended by students regardless of their faith. Secondly, Fountain Education Trust operates Islamic schools where they teach both the schools subjects as stipulated by the curriculum, as well as additional Islamic subjects. My study focuses on the HET schools where there is no explicit teaching of a specific religion; consequently, it is expected that teachers do not impose religious viewpoints in classes.

Having briefly explored some of the central tenets of Islamic philosophy of education and how certain aspects of Gülen's philosophy of education converge or diverge with these, I next turn to *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of education. *Ubuntu* as a philosophy of education has significant relevance to educational policy and practice in South Africa, hence the following section to further contextualise my research.

2.4.2 African philosophy of education and ubuntu

While positioning Gülen's philosophy of education vis-à-vis the views of scholars of Islamic philosophy of education, it should be noted that the notion of *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of education, has significant relevance as this research concerns schools located in South African context. *Ubuntu* is listed in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (DoE, 2001) report by the Department of Education

among the fundamental values expressed in the South African Constitution relating to education. Other values included in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* are democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation. Letseka (2012) points out that in the notion of *ubuntu* values such as altruism, kindness, generosity, benevolence, courtesy and respect for others are expressed. Nkondo (cited in Letseka, 2012) asserts that *ubuntu* has the potential to deepen humans' disposition of caring and compassion. While there is an overlap between these values and those identified in the literature about the HM educational model (cf. 2.3.3), a more in-depth theoretical analysis has the potential to explore greater overlap or possibly discord between the two. Such a critique of Gülen's philosophy of education can also contribute toward developing it to be more relevant to South African context with appropriate strategies for implementation.

Letseka (2012) argues for *ubuntu* to serve as a moral theory and public policy. In a similar vein, Waghid (2020) also defends *ubuntu* against critics who claim that it does not exist by citing challenges in Africa such as genocides, dictatorships and environmental degradation. In a similar vein, Le Grange (2012) blames these challenges on colonialism, modern sciences and technology, apartheid, capitalism and so on. Le Grange's critique of modern sciences alludes to Gülen's criticism of modern sciences based on a materialistic view (cf. 2.3.2). Hence, one can draw a parallel among those who defend the value of *ubuntu* and Gülen's notion of *hizmet* as possible philosophies that can contribute to the transformation of education. In Archbishop Tutu's exposition, a person with *ubuntu* is available to others and does not feel threatened by others (Waghid, 2020). Gülen's philosophy of *hizmet*, service (cf. 2.3), essentially points to similar ideas as *hizmet* must be premised on being available to others and being comfortable with and accepting others, which manifest in the form of activities by the HM volunteers as dialogue (cf. 3.2.2). Hence if one can position Gülen's educational model as an implementation of *ubuntu*, a significant contribution can be made for educational practice in South Africa.

2.4.3 Gülen's philosophy of education as theoretical framework

Having briefly considered the broader discourse of Islamic philosophy of education and *ubuntu* to contextualise Gülen's ideas better, I now turn to a discussion of his philosophy of education as a means to clarify a theoretical framework for my study. In his writings and talks, Gülen (2012a; 2012b) not only attempts to diagnose the ills of his time but also proposes models of activism in which reference is made to an ideal human being (Gülen, 2012c) who is holistically equipped and able to tackle ills and challenges in society and in the world. Gülen epitomises this ideal human being in his earlier writings whom he describes as people of ideal, the golden generation (Gülen, 2012d), architects of the future (Gülen, 2012b), people of the heart (Gülen, 2012e) and inheritors of the Earth (Gülen, 2012f). He describes ideal human beings as individuals who first and foremost have strong faith accompanied by love (Gülen, 2012g). They are holistically developed as a harmonious composition of mind, body, spirit and feelings (Gülen, 2006) through an education that considers human beings as such.

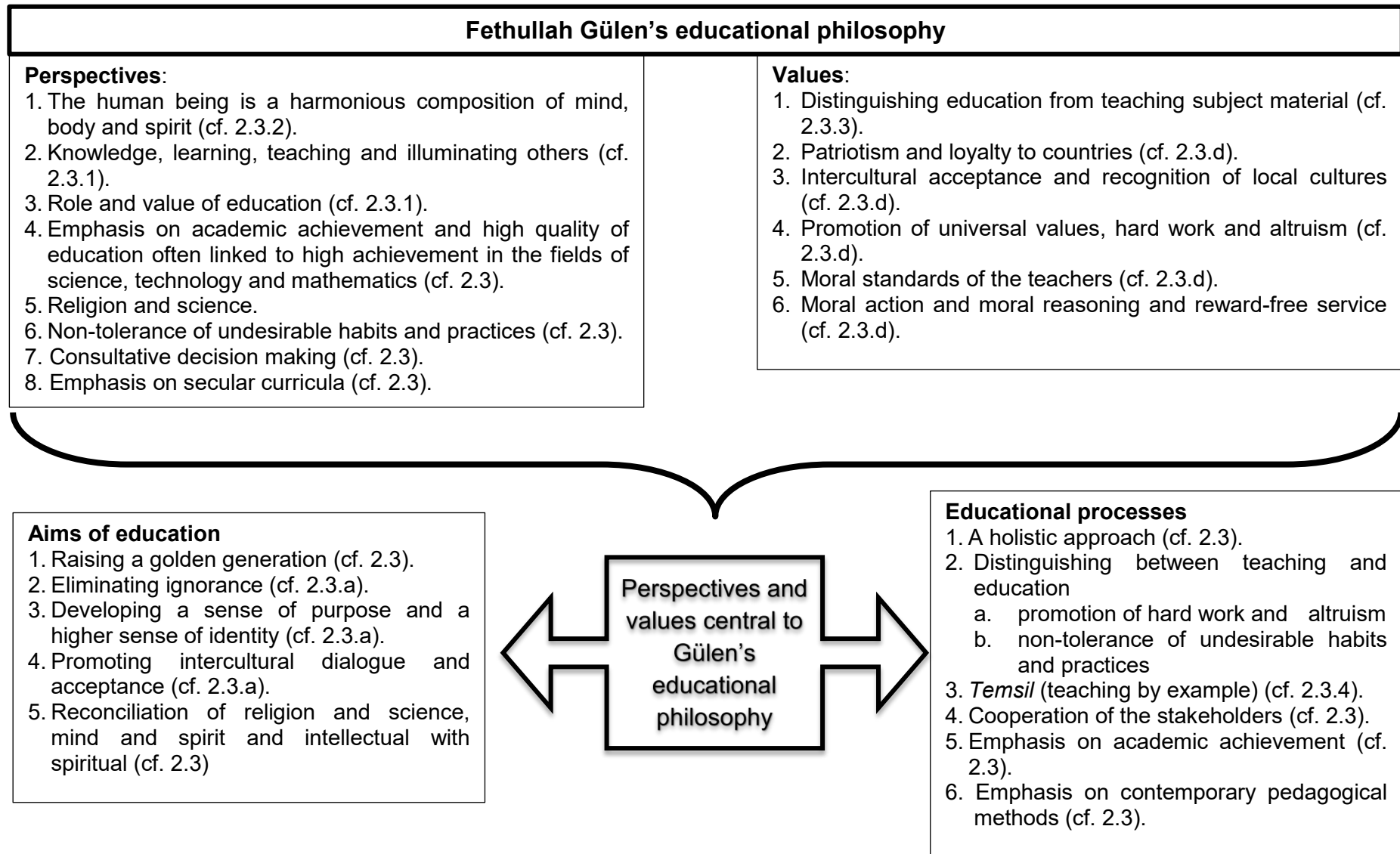
From the earlier talks and articles of Gülen (2012h) to the later ones, it is clear that he was deeply disturbed by the dominance of a materialistic philosophy (Gülen, 2012i) and the perception that religion, and Islam in particular, was seen as the cause of backwardness (Gülen, 2012j). Gülen's concern for the status of humanity, and specifically for the Turkish nation, was primarily informed by his assumption that such an ideal human has been missing. He is also concerned that western, as well as Muslims nations, neglect to excel in modern sciences and address the spiritual needs of human beings at the same time (Gülen, 2012h). Whilst Gülen (2012b) argues that the lack of ideal humans is the root cause of the dominance of a materialistic worldview, he proposes that renewal is only possible when these ideal people raise themselves spiritually, morally and intellectually to lead humanity into a new era through service and exemplary lives (Carroll, 2011). This assumption raises the issue of representation or setting an example in Gülen's educational philosophy (Çelik, 2010). This proposition is based upon his advocacy for an educator who does not only preach values but also practices them, which is assumed much more effective in transmitting the values of an ideal human being to the students.

While Gülen's philosophy of education is constructed around how the ideal human can be raised and educated, Alam (2015) suggests that this philosophy is constructed on Gülen's holistic reading of the human being as a combination of body, mind, feelings and spirit, his reading of Islamic texts, and the modern world. As such, Gülen (2006) advocates a holistic educational model, which takes care of the body, mind, feelings and spirit of the students and attempts to achieve this by merging religious text with positive aspects of the modern world. Also as a firm believer in attaining knowledge, and learning and teaching as an integral aspect of being human, Gülen (2005; 2012b) alludes to a strong passion for knowledge and search for the truth. He further emphasises that although knowledge is a value in itself, it is more important for knowledge to be a guide in life and illuminate the road towards human betterment (Gülen, 2006).

In framing Gülen's philosophy of education and his education model, attention should be given to various assumptions underlying his philosophy. Gülen works with the assumption that human beings are a combination of body, mind, feelings and spirit and God has created them as His vicegerents on Earth with the responsibility to improve human condition and to serve fellow human beings. He subsequently assumes that since human beings are the cause of and solution to the problems in the world, these problems can be addressed by studying the human being. It is further assumed that education is a sublime duty towards God (Gülen, 2006) and there can be no contradiction between religion, particularly Islam, and science as these are manifestations of the same Truth. It is subsequently assumed that in an ideal education model, religious ethics and modern sciences can be reconciled. Such an ideal education should take care of the human body, mind, feelings and spirit in order to raise the "ideal human" who is to be equipped with intellectual, spiritual and moral high standards to tackle the ills of the time. In Gülen's education model the educator not only has an exalted role and holy status (Gülen, 2012b) but should set an example regarding the values she or he wants to impart. It is thus assumed that the educator should rather *represent* than simply present such values. Gülen further points to a distinction between teaching and education and emphasises that school curricula should include culture and education in addition to the teaching of subjects (Gülen, 2012k).

This exposition of Gülen's philosophical ideas was aimed at gaining an informed understanding to enable a (re)construction of his philosophy of education to serve as the theoretical framework of this study. As such, the theoretical framework I developed was based on the most common themes of Gülen's educational philosophy, as found in the literature and Gülen's writings (cf. 2.3). The structured version of Gülen's philosophy of education is presented in Figure 2.1 below. The two basic aspects of the philosophy are the aims of education as associated with Gülen's educational philosophy, and secondly, the particular educational processes grounded in this philosophy. These two themes are furthermore informed and supported by perspectives and values that are central to Gülen's philosophy (cf. 2.3). In this study, I used the theoretical framework as a lens to read and interpret the data generated through document analysis (cf. Chapter 5) and semi-structured interviews (cf. Chapter 6). By implication, the theoretical framework assisted in my exploration of the extent to which Gülen's philosophy of education manifests in the HET schools in South Africa.

Figure 2.1: Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy



2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced Fethullah Gülen as a person, his thoughts on education and my reconstructed version of his philosophy of education. Gülen is an Islamic scholar, the founder of the HM and the inspiration for volunteers taking part in HM projects. Against a discussion of the influences that shaped his philosophy, I highlighted how his philosophy of *hizmet* (service in Turkish) gave rise to the HM with its focus on education and the establishment of schools worldwide. In this chapter, I introduced four major themes that occur more dominantly in Gülen's thought, namely his views on knowledge, learning and teaching; reconciliation of religion and science; distinguishing value-focused and moral education from the teaching of value-free subject material; and teaching by example (*temsil*). As noted, Gülen's is an Islamic scholar, and in the second part of the chapter, I briefly discussed Gülen's ideas against the broader discourse of Islamic philosophies of education. Gülen's position on education is parallel to most of the scholars and proponents of Islamic education, albeit with notable differences in practical matters such as the Islamisation of knowledge and Islamic education. As my study was focused on the HET schools in South Africa, I included in my discussion a brief exposition of Gülen's ideas in relation to the African philosophy of *ubuntu*. I contended that such a discussion would be helpful for my consideration of the relevance of Gülen's philosophy for the broader context of the HET schools. There exists no agreed-upon education module or philosophy by Gülen. To explore the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools, I had to construct his philosophical ideas in a more structured version to serve as the theoretical framework for this study. Drawing on Gülen's ideas in his writings and highlighted by other scholars, and the positioning of thereof within the broader context of Islamic philosophies of education, enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of his philosophical ideas on education. In-depth knowledge of Gülen's views led to the (re)construction of his philosophy of education as the theoretical framework that informed this study. This chapter is concluded by a figure in which the theoretical framework is visually depicted.

In the next chapter, I introduce an overview of the *Hizmet* Movement with a specific focus on its activities in South Africa.

Chapter 3: The *Hizmet* Movement

3.1 Introduction

As the focus of this study is on the manifestation of Gülen's educational philosophy in the policies and practices of the HET schools in South Africa, I deemed it necessary to provide, for the sake of contextualisation, a brief overview of the *Hizmet* Movement and its affiliated schools, both internationally and in South Africa (cf. 1.4.2). The historical and contextual background of the HM constitutes the circumstances under which the movement came into existence, and sketches the context of the fields of activities undertaken by the HM. I contended that a brief overview of the HM would assist in preventing potential reductionist and misunderstood deductions about the movement. While I provide information on the structure of the HM, globally and locally, I also include a brief reference to recent developments in Turkey that resulted in significant changes in terms of the movement's presence and activities both in Turkey and abroad. The chapter concludes with an introduction of the HET schools in South Africa.

3.2 The *Hizmet* Movement: a historical overview

In this section, I introduce how the HM emerged and expanded into various fields in which the volunteers of the movement are engaged. In particular, I refer to various areas associated with the HM, such as education, dialogue and other fields pertaining to publishing, media, outreach, business and finance. For the benefit of simplicity, I present this section in three parts, namely education, dialogue and other fields. Since education and dialogue are more prominent, I discuss them in more detail and only give an overview of the rest of the activities.

3.2.1 Education

The HM started as faith-inspired community initiatives in education around the middle of 1960s in the western city of Izmir. Over time the movement transformed into a transnational network of affiliated institutions in areas of education, dialogue, media, finance, health, and community outreach with participants of broad backgrounds (Çelik, 2010; Çetin, 2010).

The very early initiatives of the movement emerged around the middle 1960s when Gülen was posted to Izmir on the western coast of Turkey and was tasked with administering a student boarding facility attached to a mosque for students from different schools. In addition to modern sciences that the students covered at their respective schools, Gülen taught students Islamic sciences and moral values in the evenings and over weekends. The aim of these additional classes was to reconcile modern sciences with religion. Such reconciliation forms one of the central tenets of his philosophy (cf. 2.3.2). Gülen also organised summer camps for students where they were taught school subjects, as well as Islamic and moral teachings. These camps served as the first projects undertaken by Gülen and the students who have been on these camps, were the first products and initial building blocks of the HM (El-Banna, 2013). These camps were financially supported by local businessmen (Ebaugh, 2010).

Since his arrival in Izmir in 1966, Gülen got to be known by his congregation and the wider public for his well-educated, engaged and activist nature. He gave talks on Fridays and held evening programs where people had the opportunity to ask him a variety of questions ranging from Islamic history, Islamic law, Qur'an, basics of faith to contemporary social matters (Çelik, 2010; El-Banna, 2013). He also attempted to mobilise the people who valued his views to be involved in more structured efforts and projects. These projects included formal institutions such as schools and dormitories, as well as informal initiatives such as local reading groups and student home projects (Çelik, 2010). Gülen also encouraged people to establish homes where students could stay and pursue their studies at high schools and universities. While the students stayed at these homes, they would read Islamic writings with an emphasis on Said Nursi's collection (cf. 2.3). During the 1960s, the Turkish society witnessed deep ideological divisions and extremism, which often led to violent clashes among the Turkish youth. Gülen, in particular, raised concerns about these trends and believed that such division and extremism could be countered by teaching the youth traditional moral values (Ebaugh, 2010).

In 1970, Turkey experienced a military coup and Gülen was detained and held in prison for six months. After his release, he remained as a state preacher and travelled western region of Turkey where he continued to organise summer camps

and facilitated the establishment of student dormitories. While these facilities served as spaces for students to learn about Islamic and moral values, they also served as safe spaces for parents who wanted their children to continue their education but feared assimilation, politicisation and radicalisation (Çetin, 2010). According to El-Banna (2013), the students, who stayed at student homes and attended summer camps, spread the message of service and played a pivotal role in expanding the movement's activities. The first university preparatory tuition centre was established in Manisa when Gülen was posted there in 1974 (El-Banna, 2013; Çetin, 2010).

While the projects of student homes and dormitories expanded to other regions in Turkey, the participants of the movement established private schools in Izmir in 1982 (Çetin 2010). The students in the HM institutions were exposed to the philosophy of *hizmet*, which is the philosophy of serving people as serving God (cf. 2.3). While some of these students chose to dedicate their lives to this ideal of service, and others chose professions such as teaching, they all were serious about spreading the discourse of *hizmet* (Çetin, 2010). Gülen started building a following among these students and in the community who attended his talks and discussions. Due to the availability of human and financial resources, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the establishment of HM's student homes as informal mobilisation structures, student dormitories, university preparatory tuition centres and private schools throughout Turkey (Çetin, 2010; El-Banna, 2013).

Following the dissolving of the Soviet Union in 1991, Gülen encouraged people who bought into his philosophy of *hizmet* to travel to the newly established Turkic Republics and research ways of serving those countries. He used a rhetoric, which focused strongly on the blood link between the people of Turkey and the people of those former Soviet countries (Mohammed, 2013). From 1992 onwards, the establishment of HM schools in Central Asian Republics paved the way to the HM transforming into a transnational movement. The HM volunteers started to establish private schools in other countries when the opportunity arose, and resources were available. Since there is no central registry, it is not possible to establish the exact global picture of all HM schools. The first HM school was opened in 1999 in South Africa (Mohamed, 2013).

In sum, education is the main activity of the HM (cf. 2.3). Over approximately five decades, the HM has become a transnational movement with affiliated schools around the globe. These schools were all built upon Gülen's educational philosophy according to which it is assumed that problems of our time can be adequately addressed only by re-assessing the human being and implementing an education model, which treats the human being as a harmonious combination of body, soul and intellect (cf. 2.3.2).

3.2.2 Dialogue

Given the political, ideological, ethnic, and sectarian division of the Turkish society (Çelik, 2010; Çetin, 2010), efforts on dialogue are regarded as an important and necessary field for the HM. Gülen criticised polarisation and the subsequent violent confrontations, which *inter alia*, led to the military coup of 1980 (Çetin, 2010; Çelik, 2010). In his earlier talks, he encouraged the youth to focus on their education and to stay away from ideological divisions. Çelik (2010) claims that the HM and the state had a symbiotic relationship and as a result, Gülen and the HM were perceived to be leaning more toward the state; thus right of the political spectrum and having nationalist tendencies. Although Gülen never positioned himself in opposition to others or as a political role player, the HM had its share of state's wrath when members were imprisoned, and institutions were targeted (Çetin, 2010).

In 1994, Gülen pioneered establishing the *Journalist and Writers Foundation* (JWF), which advocated tolerance, dialogue and non-violence as the only viable way of dealing with differences (Çetin, 2010). Çelik (2010) posits that establishing dialogue and building peace is part and parcel of proper expression of the Islamic way of life. Çelik (2010) further claims that all activities of the HM are aimed at educating human beings. Gülen postulates that fulfilling prophetic tradition from an Islamic perspective is only possible through love and by establishing dialogue with followers of other religions. The foundation subsequently hosted events where people of opposing ideological positions came together and started talking to one another. These efforts were welcomed by many parts of society, and Gülen himself met with the leadership of religious minorities, as well as with the Pope in the Vatican in 1998 (fGulen.com, 2010).

Internationally, institutions with a similar mission to that of the JWF were established in many countries, promoting dialogue and social cohesion. As emphasised by Aydin (2011), one of Gülen's stated aims for education was to bring about a peaceful coexistence among peoples of the world. While such an ideal may be imparted in the educational program and practices of a school, it can also be spread among the public through work of institutions like JW. The HM's activities in the fields discussed above are ultimately linked back to Gülen's philosophy of *hizmet* because it relates to serving people through creating peace and harmony as a common good for the people (Çelik, 2010).

3.2.3 Other fields of Hizmet Movement activities

Topal (2012) who categorised the HM as a form of cultural Islam as opposed to political Islam, suggests that the HM set out as a humble quest to achieve piety in modern life, but ended up with immense presence, influence and power, almost enough to create an alternative public sphere. The influential expansion of the HM also included, in addition to education and dialogue, fields such as publishing, media, outreach, business promotion and finance.

In 1979, the HM started to publish a monthly Turkish magazine, *Sızıntı*. Articles included in the magazine related to science and religion and primarily attempted to indicate that these fields were not incompatible (Çetin, 2010; El-Banna, 2103). In later years, the movement published other journals focusing on Islamic sciences, environment, literature and children, as well as magazines in other languages such as English, Arabic and French (Barton, 2007; Turkishinvitations, 2012). Gülen's articles and talks were also compiled and published in book format, with some translated into several other languages (Çelik, 2010, 57). HM participants also established publishing houses to print books of various focuses such as Islamic resources, Nursi's collection, Gülen's books, schoolbooks, children's books, other research and current affairs books. These efforts played a key role in spreading the philosophy of *hizmet* to the broader public. HM volunteers consisted of people who are active players in institutions such as teachers and business people who offer financial support (El-Banna, 2013). In addition to these publications spreading Gülen's ideas and news about movement activities, Çetin (2010) states that they

were also instrumental in countering misunderstanding on the HM by offering further information.

In 1986, a newspaper called *Zaman* was established. *Zaman* grew over time into a daily newspaper and had the highest circulation (Çelik, 2010) until it was seized and closed down by the government in 2016. *Zaman* was followed by the establishment of an international news agency, a weekly news and current affairs publication and, an English daily, namely Today's Zaman. *Yayincılık* (Broadcasting) PTY was another media company, which housed eleven television channels and three radio stations, broadcasting with different focuses ranging from general entertainment to 24-hour news channel, to cultural and religious channels (Çelik, 2010). *Samanyolu* TV was established in 1993 and has been the face of the HM in visual media until it was closed down in 2016 by the government (Viscusi, Hacaoglu, and Courcoulas, 2016).

Following an earthquake in 2004 in Istanbul, Turkey, volunteers established an NGO named *Kimse Yok Mu?*⁹ (KYM). The mandate of this NGO was to collect and deliver aid to victims of the earthquake. The project, however, did not stop after the earthquake and developed further into an international aid organisation. Similar institutions were also established in other countries, which formed partnerships with KYM to take aid to other countries (Berg, 2012).

Another field of activity of HM volunteers is business networking. To assist business people in expanding their business and provide an opportunity to network, various business associations were established in almost all provinces of Turkey and abroad by business people in the HM (Berg, 2012). Founders and members of these business associations also sponsored HM projects such as schools. The success of these businesses is important for the HM as they play an imperative role in providing financial support for HM activities. The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (*TUSKON*) was established in 2005 as an umbrella organisation for all the associations in Turkey (Çelik, 2010; El-Banna, 2013). In addition to business associations, some business people in the HM also established commercial enterprises such as Bank Asya (an interest-free bank) and Kaynak Holding which

⁹ Isn't anyone out there?

comprised of logistics, publishing, travel, insurance and retail food outlet companies, all of which were closed down in 2016 by a state of emergency decree in Turkey (Viscusi, Hacaoglu, and Courcoulas, 2016).

When considering the array of HM activities, it becomes easy to understand why literature often refers to HM as a loose network of institutions (Balci and Miller, 2012; Park, 2008; Shroff, 2009; Ebaugh, 2010; Çelik, 2010; Çetin, 2012). The worldwide HM-associated institutions are not officially connected as the kinds of institutions vary and are, in most cases, determined by the availability of opportunity and resources in a country. While countries mostly house educational and dialogue institutions, these institutions have their internal structures, and one cannot refer to a hierarchical structure among them (Balci and Miller, 2012). Although it is difficult to establish the exact number of countries where there are HM institutions, countries often communicate and cooperate on a project basis. While Gülen referred to around 160 countries in which HM institutions are active in his weekly talks published online, uncertainty regarding the extent and exact number of countries is further exacerbated after a failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016. Not only did the Turkish government blame Gülen and his followers for this attempt, but a crackdown on the HM led to the closing down of all affiliated institutions, the dismissal of public servants who are believed to have a link with the HM and the imprisonment of approximately 50 000 HM members (SCF, 2017). In addition, the Turkish Government also pursued HM members and institutions abroad. Foreign governments were pressurised to close down HM institutions and deport HM members (Weise, 2017). Due to great strain on HM members abroad, the HM schools in some countries were closed down. In South Africa, however, schools still operate, and any closure does not seem imminent. In the next section, I introduce the *Hizmet* Movement's presence and historical background in South Africa with specific reference to Horizon Educational Trust schools.

3.2.4 Critique against the *Hizmet* Movement

In addition to persecution by the Turkish government, Fethullah Gülen and the HM have come under criticism at various points in time. Since the emergence of the movement, its objectives, motives, structures, activities and strategies have been

questioned and critiqued (Alam, 2019). A significant portion of the critique has been informed by ideological and political orientations and critics' suspicion of the movement's religious nature. According to Kuru (2009), strict secularism resulted in suspicion against religious activities. Such suspicion, however, often fails to recognise the nuances in religious communities' demands, beliefs and ambitions. Ignorance of such nuances feeds into a generalised perception of all Islamic movements wanting to establish Islamic governance. Harrington (2011) categorises the criticism against the HM into four aspects, namely its aim to turn Turkey into a religious state by infiltrating the military, police and the government; lack of transparency due to the atypical nature of not having formal organisation structures; being a cult-like movement that brain-washes people; and an agent of a foreign entity or government such as the CIA, China, Saudi Arabia and Papacy. The author (Harrington, 2011) claims that most of the critique against the HM is driven by a paranoia rather than by reality, and suggests that part of the problem is the secularists' poor understanding of Islam and its varieties such as the Sufi movements that lack typical hierarchical structures.

Alam (2019) has written an extensive analysis of the HM and summarised critique against the movement and Gülen himself in terms of three problematic sources. According to Alam (2019), the criticism firstly derives from a western social science approach that adopts a framework that prioritises power relations. In the second instance, criticism seems to flow from a conspiracy discourse on the assumption of the existence of a so-called 'deep state' that is believed to control the state – in this perception, the HM is regarded as one of the clandestine structures of control. Thirdly, Alam (2019) Muslim scholars' reservations on Gülen's Islamic scholarship and the perception that his rise was conjectural and due to support by a Turkish deep state. While critics such as Hakan Yavuz and Bayram Balci claim that HM activities in inter-faith dialogue and education serve as covers to attain power, Alam (2019) reminds of the existence of other non-powered, service-oriented religio-social and political movements inspired by people such as Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. Hendrick (2009)'s main criticism against the HM falls within Alam's categorisation of a critique that adopts a power relations framework - he claims that all HM's efforts are geared towards the attainment of greater power. Although critique of the movement will continue to attract attention, it seems that it is mostly in

the form of a suspicious questioning of the movement, and the motives and objectives of the participants (Alam, 2019). While further elaboration and analysis of such criticism are beyond the scope of this study, it should be stated that there is no extensive and balanced critique of Gülen's philosophy of education and its implementation. Rather, Gülen's ideas on education have been presented in comparison with well-known educationists such as Dewey, Montessori, Vygotsky, Piaget and Bloom (Gage 2014). I do, however, believe that the scope of this study, namely the exploration of Gülen's philosophy of education and its implementation in the HET schools, has the potential to provide knowledge, perspectives and insights that could contribute to discussions on Gülen's philosophical ideas.

3.3 The *Hizmet* Movement in South Africa

The most notable HM institutions in South Africa include two education trusts (Horizon Educational Trust and Fountain Education Trust), a dialogue institution (Turquoise Harmony Institute), and a mosque (The Nizamiye Mosque), which was built in Midrand, Johannesburg in 2012 (Shinn, 2015; Nkosi, 2018). While the Horizon Education Trust runs non-religious schools, the Fountain Education Trust runs Islamic schools. The Turquoise Harmony Institute is an NGO, which operates to promote dialogue and social cohesion (THI, 2018). Since this study is concerned with the HET schools, other HM institutions in South Africa are outside the scope of this study. Hence, in the rest of the thesis, I only deal with the HET schools and their associated projects.

The Horizon Educational Trust was established in 1998 in South Africa by Turkish people living in South Africa and there are currently HET schools in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria. The first school was established in 1999 in Cape Town and a second campus was added in 2016. The second HET school was established in Johannesburg in 2000 and the third in Durban in 2002. In 2012, the last HET school was opened in Pretoria. In addition to these schools, the HET also operates tuition centres in Polokwane, Johannesburg and Cape Town. These centres operate independently from the schools and offer additional tuition in science and mathematics. Students from various schools attend the centres for additional

support in preparing for schools' examinations and the official South African National Senior Certificate Examination.

The HET schools are all registered as private schools with the respective provincial Education Departments and follow the national *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements* (2011) of the South African Department of Basic Education. In addition to the official curriculum, the Turkish language is offered as a school subject until Grade 11 (Mohamed, 2013). HET schools employ both Turkish and South African teachers - Turkish teachers teach science, mathematics and technology and the South African teachers teach languages, commercial and social sciences. Given the HM's affiliation with the HET schools and the expectation that such schools should align with Gülen's ideas, it can be expected that the school would employ teachers who are followers of Gülen. To understand the employment of Turkish teachers, who are followers of Gülen, the Gülean conception of the reconciliation of religious knowledge with sciences and the inclusion of value education to complement the subject teaching (cf. 2.3.3). According to Agai (2003), one of the roles of a teacher in Gülen's thought is to fill sciences with wisdom so that it can be useful to society. Since Gülen followers are mainly Turkish teachers employed by the HET (cf. 1.3), it is more likely that they teach sciences so that the vision of the reconciliation of religion and sciences can be fulfilled. The practice of Turkish teachers teaching science and mathematics and local teachers teaching languages are common in the HM schools in Central Asian countries and Indonesia (Incetas, 2014). Incetas (2014) reports that the perception exists that language proficiency is not imperative in science and technology classes, hence the rationale for native speakers to teach languages and other subjects in the HM schools. The argument is that sciences classes do not need to be taught by teachers who are not native speakers. The HET operates as a non-profit organisation, and the schools cater for the middle class and underprivileged learners. Although the schools charge competitive tuition fees similar to fees charged by public schools and more affluent Islamic schools, scholarships are offered to academically successful students from poor backgrounds (Mohamed, 2013). Mohamed (2013) further reports that the schools pride themselves for upholding high academic standards and providing individual attention to all learners by highly qualified teachers. Not only have the schools obtained recognition and awards at numerous international competitions, especially in science and

mathematics, they are also highly successful in the annual matriculation examination (HET, 2020).

While the HET schools in South Africa are connected via the curriculum they implement and the expected implementation of Gülen's philosophy of education, they have distinct differences. The schools differ in terms of demographics, language, racial and religious composition, operational strategies, and policies. Understanding the context in which the research is situated is significant in qualitative research (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). This context can be the physical as well as social, and they both impact on how people's perceptions of their reality. My research focused on the HET schools in four different locations in South Africa. While the majority of the students in Johannesburg school are black African, those in Durban are predominantly Indian and in Cape Town mainly Coloured. Similarly, while the Cape Town school has a majority of Muslim students, other schools are either predominantly Christian or mixed in terms of religion. Although the schools teach basic Turkish language as a third or fourth language, they have very few Turkish students. Due to ethical concerns, no particulars were included that could compromise the identities of the schools and the participants. I subsequently used codes to refer to the schools and participants in this study (cf. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). It was more important to understand that the HET schools are secular and that students of all backgrounds are admitted without a selection process.

In line with the general characteristics of HM institutions globally, the HET schools in South Africa never carry the name of Fethullah Gülen or any explicit reference to the *Hizmet* Movement (Shinn, 2015). What connects the HET schools to the HM is that they have been established by people who are inspired by Gülen's philosophy of education (Shinn, 2015, Mohamed, 2013). An essential point of relevance to this study is that the fact that the HET schools in South Africa offer secular education complemented by an accompanying moral value education (cf. 2.3.3). Therefore, one can expect that aspects such as reconciliation of science and religion would not be an explicit aim and practice in these schools (cf. 2.3.2). A religious perspective would instead manifest as an emphasis on morality and spirituality. Inspired by Gülen's understanding of human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit (cf. 1.5.1) and his view of holistic education as a combination of value-free

subject teaching and moral value education (cf. 2.3.3), the HET schools are expected to promote morality and spirituality in their policies and practices. The relevance of Gülen's philosophy to the HET schools is expected to take a form in which religious indoctrination and infusion of religious views should be absent and replaced by an emphasis on moral values and spirituality. Such practices would align with Gülen's call for social consensus among people of different backgrounds instead of the assimilation of some by the others. Gülen (2008) emphasises that an agreement is only possible through accepting everyone as they are while searching for common ground. While this can potentially be related to the ideal of social cohesion in South Africa, secular schools seem a viable way of reaching out to people of all backgrounds to transmit a message of acceptance and consensus. As a result, despite Gülen being an Islamic scholar with deep roots in, at times quite orthodox, Islamic tradition (Alam, 2019), his philosophy of education could be adapted to a secular school environment which applies to this research. Gülen's philosophy of education is expected to manifest in the HET schools as a distinguishing characteristic. Since the HET schools' affiliation with the HM is at an inspirational and philosophical level, such an affiliation is not made explicit, either in documents or in practice. Hence, my interest was to investigate how Gülen philosophy influences the schools and how it manifests in practice.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, a brief overview of the *Hizmet* Movement is offered with regard to its historical background and its activities inside and beyond Turkey. This exposition serves as a brief background to an overview of the current HM institutions in South Africa, specifically the HET schools, which constitute the subject of this research. In the next chapter, I present the research methodology in which this study was couched, and justify in more detail my choice for the research methods used in this study.

Chapter 4: Research methodology and methods

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I presented a brief exposition of the rationale for the research design as well as methodological underpinnings and choice of research methods (cf. 1.5). In this chapter, I give a more elaborate exposition of the research approach and the underpinning research paradigm. I also explain why it was most appropriate to conduct a single holistic case study. In line with a qualitative methodology, I expound how this methodology influenced the choice of research methods and other particulars related to data generation and analysis. I conclude this chapter by highlighting ethical considerations and steps I took to mitigate certain risks associated with a qualitative study, and by implication, to ensure the integrity of the study.

4.2 A qualitative research methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy in the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 1.4). By implication, my research interest centred on gaining an understanding of how the functioning of the HET schools are influenced by role-players' interpretation of Gülen's philosophy of education. I contended that such an influence would find expression in school policies and practice. According to Nieuwenhuis (2012: 53), qualitative researchers are interested in how "humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings". The appropriateness of a qualitative approach for this study subsequently lies with the meaning various role-players involved in the HET schools, give to policy and practice. Within the context of this study, a qualitative methodology subsequently allowed for multiple interpretations of Gülen's philosophy of education, which, in turn, could lead to numerous manifestations of the philosophy in policy and practice.

Although a qualitative methodology seems to be most appropriate to assist in understanding the perceptions and subsequent manifestations of Gülen's philosophy, heed should be taken of the disadvantages of qualitative research. In this regard, experts draw attention to the emphasis on researcher subjectivity, bias

and the failure to offer generalisable findings beyond the situation studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Thomas, 2011; Willis, 2008). However, whilst personal experiences, beliefs and value-laden narratives are subjective and biased, qualitative research accepts them as true for those who lived through these experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2012; 2016). On this, Yin (2011) states that experienced qualitative researchers recognise that true neutrality does not exist. Although Flyvbjerg (2006; cited in Willis, 2008) claims that qualitative methods are better at avoiding subjective bias, Willis (2008) cautions against being too comfortable ignoring this issue. As an inductive process, qualitative research is not aimed at deductively testing a theory as in a positivist approach. Rather, as Merriam (2009) indicates, it is about generating data to build concepts and to contribute to the building of theory with information generated through interviews, observations and intuitive understanding. However, as a qualitative study is informed by some discipline-specific theoretical framework and never undertaken with a blank mind, such a framework is not tested deductively but guides the research process (Merriam, 2009). My research is therefore not about testing Gülen's philosophy of education, but rather about gaining an understanding of how role-players in the HET schools give meaning to the philosophy and the extent to which such sense-making ultimately reflects in policy and procedural practice.

Ratcliffe (1983; cited in Merriam, 2009) reminds that in any research, someone interprets findings, and it is not possible to observe a phenomenon or event without changing it. As such, the findings of any type of research are therefore never the reality, but representations thereof. This understanding is consistent with assumptions of qualitative research, which regard reality as holistic, multidimensional and ever-changing (Merriam 2009) and that our claims to knowledge about educational matters must always be approximate (Scott, 1996). In this study, I did not seek a fixed and objective phenomenon or reality. In other words, my research includes an approximation of Gülen's educational philosophy based on the methods used for data generation, including my interpretation of his writings combined with that of Turkish teachers. Therefore, the combination of a series of interpretations had the potential of resulting in multiple interpretations of Gülen's philosophy.

4.2.1 A qualitative study informed by the interpretivist paradigm

Given the focus of qualitative research on the natural settings in which interaction occurs and how people attribute meaning to their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Mertens, 2010; Edwards and Holland, 2013; Dean, 2018), it could be argued that all qualitative studies entail some form of interpretation. Nieuwenhuis (2016), however, warns that qualitative research should not be equated with interpretivism. The two concepts cannot be used interchangeably. While qualitative research is more concerned with data generation methods that could enable an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, a research paradigm relates to a researcher's ontological stance (cf. Edwards and Holland, 2013; Dean, 2018; Donmeyer, 2006). At a philosophical level, interpretivism is influenced by hermeneutics (understanding and interpretation) and phenomenology (subjective interpretations as the point of departure in understanding a phenomenon) (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). In this study, I was particularly interested in the meaning people involved in the HET schools, embed in texts and the meaning the research participants attribute to their experiences of working at a HET school. It should be noted that the HET schools in South Africa do not openly declare their affiliation with the HM, nor are all the teachers required to be familiar with Gülen's philosophy (cf. 3.3). As such, texts (policy documents) and the experiences of the participants alluded at times directly and indirectly to the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education.

Given my focus on an interpretive understanding, I regarded interpretivism as an appropriate paradigm to inform the philosophical assumptions that underpinned my study. Proceeding from the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed, involving multilateral interactions (Dean, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2016), I worked with the assumption that the contents of documents and the perspectives of the research participants are authentic reflections of collective (documents) and individual (interviews) sense-making of experiences within the context of the HET schools. Nieuwenhuis (2016) notes that reality can only be understood from within; the participants in a study can subsequently be regarded as experts on the subject. I contended that such experiences would not only directly and indirectly allude to

interpretations of Gülen's philosophy, but could lead to multiple interpretations and subsequently, multiple manifestations of the philosophy.

Informed by interpretivism, I worked with the epistemological assumption that knowledge is socially constructed. As such, knowledge cannot be collected; rather, it is generated and constructed. This assumption foregrounds the production of knowledge through multilateral interactions between the researcher, the participants, the social context and the nature of the interaction among them (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Josselson, 2004; Dean, 2018). In alignment with the aim of this study, document analysis and semi-structured interviews allowed me to generate data through experiences embedded in the text and the experiences of the participants. The analysis of such data entailed the reading thereof through a subjectively (re)constructed philosophy of education (cf. 2.4.3). The reconstruction of Gülen's philosophy served as the theoretical framework for the interpretation of the findings of the study. Inevitably, my insider voice with an HM background had the potential to cloud my analysis and interpretation of the data. Although from an interpretivist perspective the researcher and the researched remain interlocked in an interactive process (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Mertens, 2010), Dean (2018) reminds that one of the criticisms against interpretivism is an excessive preoccupation with the self. To mitigate the risks associated with the insider voice of the researcher (cf. 4.2.4), I engaged in reflexive practices. I continuously maintained an awareness of the risks associated with my insider status.

As my research question centred on the understanding, interpretations, perceptions, experiences and the conducts of various role-players in the HET schools, it made sense to adopt a qualitative approach informed by an interpretivist paradigm. Arguably, a qualitative study informed by interpretivism involves a cycle of interpretations and subsequent varying degrees of understanding. In this study, an interpretive analysis of data generated through document analysis and semi-structured interviews enabled multiple perspectives on the functioning of the HET schools, and by implication, on the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education.

4.2.3 A single holistic case study

Experts identify various types of qualitative studies and a few of the most common ones are ethnographic, phenomenological, grounded theory, critical theory, biographical, narrative analysis and case study researches (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). As my study was situated within a qualitative approach, and following the aim of the study, I concluded that a case study was the best option in addressing my research questions.

Literature offers extensive commentaries on what is understood to be as a case study. Yazan (2015) argues that despite the case study is one of the most utilised qualitative research methodologies; there is no consensus among methodologists on its design and implementation. However, it seems to be commonly understood that a case study concentrates on one thing or unit, which is called the case (Thomas, 2011). This one 'thing' can be an individual, a group, a programme, a policy and procedural, an institution, a phenomenon or an event. A distinguishing characteristic of a case is that as there are boundaries around it, and it can be contained within limits (Merriam, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, 2010). A case study offers an in-depth description and analysis of the unit of study, which is regarded as a strength (Ary *et al.*, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Starman, 2013; Ashley, 2012; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Thomas, 2011). Another characteristic of a case study is the use of multiple sources of data for a comprehensive and trustworthy analysis (Robson, cited in Ashley, 2012; Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Patton, cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2011). Data generation in a case study should be in real-life situations and not in an artificially constructed experimental settings (Yin, 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2012; Starman, 2013; and Simons cited in Thomas, 2011). Another distinguishing characteristic of a qualitative case study is that it seeks to understand the case from the perspective of the participants (Stake, 1995).

Various types of case studies are distinguished, including intrinsic case studies, instrumental case studies and collective case studies (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006; Ary *et al.* 2015). Intrinsic cases are relevant when the researcher has an inherent interest, instrumental case studies are investigations where the focus is on an issue and not the case, and collective case studies are

undertaken over multiple cases. As I have an intrinsic interest in the case of the Horizon Education Trust and since it is possible to study a single holistic case with embedded units or multiple cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008), I decided to treat my case as a single holistic case with embedded units. In my case study, the schools that are operated by the HET in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town, were treated as embedded units in a single holistic case.

My aim with this study was to explore if and how Gülen's educational philosophy manifests in HET schools in South Africa. In alignment with an interpretivist paradigm, I was interested in foregrounding multiple interpretations and manifestations of Gülen's philosophy in the policy and practice of the HET schools. I subsequently decided to work with a case in which the embedded units are diverse, as I believe that such diversity could enrich my data. In line with my understanding of what a case study entails, I treated my study as a single holistic case with the different HET schools as embedded units (cf. 1.5.2.3). Researching each unit helped to create an overall picture of the case, which, in turn, enabled me to explore the degree to which Gülen's educational philosophy is traceable at the HET schools in South Africa.

4.2.4 The role of the insider's voice

Since qualitative research aims to understand the real-life situation from the perspective of the insider, privilege is given to the voice of the insider (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Merriam, 2009). In a qualitative study, the researcher can, therefore, never be separated from the researched. Arguably, it can be an advantage for the researcher to be familiar with the experiences and circumstances of the participants. In the case of this study, I regarded myself as an insider in that I am a follower of Gülen's philosophy, I am familiar with the HM, and work closely with the HET. I did not, however, work directly with any of the participants involved in this study.

Mercer (2007) argues that an insider-outsider dichotomy is in fact, a continuum with multiple dimensions and researchers move along it continuously. In this regard, Mercer (2007) in particular, cites the incapacity of an outsider to comprehend alien groups, cultures and societies. I believe that the HM is an example of such an alien

case as often the movement does not conform to definitions of a modern, often contentious, social movement, nor does it fit a contemporary/traditional Islamic movement definition (Ergene, 2009; Çetin, 2010; El-Banna, 2013). Most modern Islamic movements that arose in the Muslim world have some political dimension and have implicit or overt political vision and aspirations (Ünal, 2014). In the western context, Islamic movements have been primarily reactionary in claiming to preserve Islamic identity (Kepel, 1997). al-Banna (2013) argues that there is no Islamic culture or subsequent identity; rather, Islam shapes and gives rise to cultures. Hence, an outsider researching the movement might tend to interpret his/her observations within a framework of either of the above and might overlook important dynamics within the HM. Also, Çetin (2012) claims that classical protest movement studies and political understanding may result in reductionism in the sense that partial and or unsatisfactory explanations are offered which may omit or distort certain aspects of a movement and its history. One of the characteristics of the HM, which renders it different to other social movements, is the adoption of culturally innovative and philanthropic practices, which may be interpreted as politically subversive (Çetin, 2012). Another distinctive aspect of the HM is the enthusiasm of the community to establish secular institutions serving people of all faiths and nationalities with a willingness to reconcile spiritual and worldly instead of remaining isolated (Yilmaz, 2007).

Although an insider status can contribute to the establishment of mutual trust between the researcher and the participant (Arthur *et al.*, 2012; Baxter and Jack, 2008 and Yin, 2011), I had to be mindful of assuming meaning based on what I perceived as assumptions by the interviewees. By relying on my own assumptions, I could easily avoid sufficient elaboration explanation by the participants. In this regard, Adler and Adler (1987; cited in Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) list three membership roles of qualitative researchers; namely that of a peripheral member; an active member without fully committing to members' values and goal; and the complete member who participates in activities and is fully committed to the values and goals of the movement. I regard myself as an active participant of HM activities and am committed to the values prominent in HM institutions. Given my involvement in the HM, I had to take note of Dwyer and Buckle's (2009) caution that a closer awareness of one's personal biases and perspectives can reduce potential concerns

associated with insider membership. Disciplined bracketing and detailed reflection on the subjective research process is important within the context of insider membership. Of equal importance, is Rooney's (2005) reference to issues such as the researcher's tacit knowledge, politics, loyalties, hidden agendas, morals and cultural standpoints that might lead to subconsciously distorting data or making false assumptions or missing important information. For Rooney (2005), the researcher's biases are a more significant concern than the mere status of the researcher. However, my study does not aim to justify or refute Gülen's philosophy, as one would do in critical research. I was rather interested in exploring the manifestation of the philosophy. As a consequence, the risk of distorting data or making false assumptions was not the main challenge in my study. I did not, however, ignore this possibility and to deal with this potential, I took note of Rooney's (2005) recommendation to use predetermined interview questions and to debate the questions with as many people as possible.

In light of the above on the insider status of a researcher, I conclude that a research study cannot be rejected outright based on the insider status of the researcher. However, there are risks associated with such status. I believe that I utilised my position to my advantage in conducting this research, and consequently, I was able to generate rich, accurate and trustworthy data. I further attempted to minimise biases associated with my status in my analysis.

4.3 Research methods

In this study, I used two research methods as instruments to generate data, namely document analysis (cf. 1.5.3.2) and semi-structured interviews (cf. 1.5.3.3). In pursuit of the research aim, I considered both these methods relevant to explore the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools.

4.3.1 Document analysis

Bowen (2009) suggests five functions of document analysis, namely the offering of data on the context of the research setting, contributing to producing interview questions, generating supplementary data, providing means to track change, and the development and verification data. Various documents are regarded as suitable for

document analysis such as advertisements, minutes of meetings, brochures, letters and memoranda, application forms, organisational reports, public documents, and popular cultural documents such as the Internet and visual documents (Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009), documents are good sources of data as they offer useful information that is generally stable and would also save time in generating as opposed to other data-generating methods such as interviews and focus group discussions.

I considered document analysis most appropriate to explore the extent to which Gülen's philosophy is embedded in the policies of the HET schools. As the aim of the study was to explore the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy in both policy and practice, document analysis was in particular helpful to gain an understanding into the thinking of those responsible for compiling the documents. I subsequently opted for document analysis, as I perceived it as a viable method to find clarification on the potential manifestation of the philosophy (cf. Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Baxter and Jack, 2008). As such, document analysis was an appropriate method to pursue the subsidiary question on the extent to which Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy is embedded in the policies of the Horizon Educational Trust schools, whilst simultaneously directing expectations (cf. 1.3.3). In addition, document analysis also served as a complementary strategy for interviewing.

4.3.1.1 Analysis of the documents

In this study, I analysed documents from the HET schools to understand the dominant philosophy and to gain more in-depth insight in how the philosophy is expected to manifest in the schools' day-to-day operations (cf. 1.3.3). I classified the documents into three categories, namely, foundational documents, policy and procedural documents, and operational documents. Foundational documents, such as the Trust Deed of the HET and the constitution of the schools, provide broad guidance on the establishment and running of the schools, and give in general, a layout of the expectations for the respective schools. Policy and procedural documents include among other things, the codes of conduct for students and teachers, operational policies and admission policies, and offer direction to the schools on how to conduct their affairs and operate internal systems. The operational documents include newsletters, minutes of the meetings, scripts of the

speeches and miscellaneous letters used to describe and brief parents on the schools' daily operations. The analysis of these documents had the advantage of offering content, which were constructed without my intervention and for purposes for other than the current research (cf. Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009). In addition, the analysis of the documents also served as a useful departure point for the design and formulation of the interview questions (cf. Chapter 6). While the documents spell out, explicitly and implicitly, how the philosophy is expected to manifest in the daily running of the schools, the interview questions were designed to explore the extent to which school practices reflect what is contained in the documents.

I used the theoretical framework for the analysis of the data generated from the documents. In drawing on Gülen's philosophy of education, the analysis of the documents was informed by the aims associated with Gülen's educational philosophy and the particular educational processes grounded in the philosophy (cf. Figure 2.1). These two themes are informed and supported by perspectives and values that are central to Gülen's philosophy. In the case of each theme, I have highlighted some corresponding key points that shed light on the understanding thereof in terms of Gülen's philosophy. The documents obtained from the schools were classified and coded according to these aspects of Gülen's educational philosophy. By implication, and to explore the possible manifestations of the philosophy, I looked for explicit or implicit references to the dominant characteristics of Gülen's philosophy in documents. I contended that the manifestation of the philosophy in the documents could be translated into expectations for practice. Thus, if Gülen's educational philosophy informs the official documents of the HET schools, it is expected that the philosophy will also manifest in school practices.

Upon receiving the documents, I organised them in folders on my computer and assigned codes to each document. I then designed an excel sheet and placed the themes on the left column while placing the codes of the documents on the top row. As I analysed the documents, I copied relevant sections as direct quotations into the corresponding cells in the excel sheet (cf. Appendix E). In this way, I was able to populate relevant quotations for each theme, and I could see the relevance of each document for the identified themes. This method of analysis enabled me to

determine in which documents a theme or themes feature, and to identify recurring themes, which are not listed in my framework for analysis, but informed my findings.

The analysis of foundational documents, policy and procedural documents, and operational documents relating to the schools' daily operations had the advantage of offering content, which was constructed without my intervention and for purposes for other than the current research (cf. Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Also, the analysis of the documents provided insight into meanings made by the HET and those who are responsible for compiling various documents.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

As one of the central assumptions of a qualitative study is the existence of multiple interpretations (Yin, 2011; Patton, 2015), Stake (1995) claims that qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying multiple views of a case. In this regard, Stake (1995; Yin, 2011) continues to assert the use of interviews as the main road to multiple realities. Conducting interviews with multiple people does not only offer rich data but provides the opportunity to crystallise the contents of the interviews. However, since the purpose of a qualitative case study is to obtain a rich description of the case, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) and Stake, (1995) recommend semi-structured interviews that allow for some flexible predetermined questions. Gill *et al.* (2008) support the value of semi-structured interviews by referring to the shortcomings of structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews entail predetermined lists of questions, and although they are easy and quick to administer, no opportunity is provided for follow-up questions. By implication, the very nature of structured interviews limits an in-depth understanding of the case. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, give the opportunity for in-depth understanding, but they are challenging to manage, time-consuming and cumbersome to maintain the focus of the research. These shortcomings can be overcome using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide for the opportunity to stay focused but also allow the freedom to ask follow-up questions for clarity and a deeper understanding.

I opted for the use of semi-structured interviews in this study, to explore and understand the perceptions and interpretations of the teachers about Gülen's philosophy, as well as specific practices at the school. Using semi-structured interviews and informed by interpretivism, I was interested in gaining insight into how the schools are run on a daily basis, and how the teachers interpret their responsibilities. I was in particular interested to understand how perceptions and practices are directly and/or indirectly influenced by Gülen's educational philosophy, and how it might continue to influence the perceptions of graduates from the HET schools.

4.3.2.1 Participant selection

As my study was aimed at seeking specific knowledge and experience regarding Gülen's educational philosophy and the practices at the HET schools, I used specific criteria for the selection of the participants. Drawing on a purposive selection (cf. Cohen *et al.* 2007; Merriam, 2009), I decided to include three categories of participants, namely teachers, members of the school management and graduates. The first criterion was that all participants must be involved in a HET school, be it as a teacher, a member of the support staff or a former student. I wanted to have participants with varying degrees of familiarity with Gülen's educational philosophy and the HM. While some of the local participants had no familiarity, others, especially the Turkish participants, were actively involved in and committed to the values of the HM (cf. 1.5.2.2). For the teachers and administrative staff members, the length of time spent at the HET schools was also another criterion. I contended that a teacher with greater familiarity with the philosophy could offer insight into the influence of the philosophy on the practices at the school. In contrast, others could offer insights as being positioned as observers or recipients of this philosophy. I was interested in discovering multiple interpretations (cf. 1.4.2.1) of Gülen's educational philosophy, and possibly multiple practices thereof. I also assumed that the participants' years of experience would yield different data regarding the potential influence of Gülen's philosophy on school practices. I also intentionally included Turkish and South African teachers. This choice follows from the assumption that Turkish teachers are expected to be HM participants. Hence, their understanding could play a more dominant role in the schools, as Gülen's philosophy would presumably, filter through their perspectives. However, it must be mentioned that being a participant of the HM

is not exclusively a Turkish phenomenon; it is possible that some teachers from other countries might have attended a HM high school and is now teaching at one of the HET schools. I also included South African teachers with a lack of or varying degrees of familiarity with Gülen and the HM. It was important to explore their perceptions, as they are more neutral observers of the philosophy, and I contended that they could comment on the relevance of HET schools practices in the South African context. By implication, participants' familiarity with Gülen's philosophy of education defined their insider and outsider status. Hence, while the perceptions of the Turkish teachers offered the insider voice as followers of Gülen and the HM, local teachers and graduates served as outside observers. In addition to working with school management members and teachers at the HET schools, I was also interested in gaining an understanding of a potential impression that the education offered at a HET school, had on graduates. As such, I selected former students from these schools who are now teaching at one of the HET schools. I worked with the assumption that these graduates are now positioned as teachers who could impart what they received as students. In Chapter 6. I give, in alignment with the criteria for participant selection, an overview of the selected participants (cf. Table 6.1).

4.3.2.2 Data generation

In line with the characteristics of qualitative research and semi-structured interviews, I intended to offer an in-depth description of the multiple interpretations of the participants in this single holistic case (cf. 1.5.2.1). To explore the participants' perceptions to derive implicit and explicit traces of Gülen's influence, I devised interview schedules. It is, however, necessary at this point to note that the document analysis served as a useful departure point for the design and formulation of the interview questions (cf. Chapter 6). While the documents spelt out, explicitly and implicitly, how the philosophy is expected to manifest in the daily running of the schools, the interview questions were designed to explore the extent to which school practices reflect what is contained in the documents.

The interview schedules were devised for all three categories of participants (teachers, members of school management and graduates), and the questions varied accordingly (cf. Appendix F). The first set of questions for the members of the school management was focused on particular aspects regarding the management

of the school. The same questions were asked to the other participants, regardless of their familiarity with Gülen's philosophy and the HM. The aim was to solicit the participants' views on the schools' policies and practices such as in-service training of the teachers and the management's expectations of the teachers. The second set of questions was designed for the teachers who are neither a principal nor a deputy principal. I did not regard a head of department or subject head as a management position as their areas of responsibility relates to subject teaching and not so much the broader management affairs. The questions were designed to gain insight into the teachers' views and interpretations of the school's policies and how they practise them. I also intended to explore their views on general issues such as the aims of education, the role of a teacher, the role of a school, and the mission of their schools. I wanted to find out how the teachers, who are familiar with Gülen's philosophy, interpreted it, which I expected would influence the way the teachers envisage and fulfil their responsibilities at the schools. The interviews with the teachers were necessary as the teachers are the ones who are in continuous contact with the students, and they implement the schools' policies in practice. Finally, the third set of questions was set for the graduates. The aim was to learn if the schools explicitly teach about aspects of Gülen's philosophy during the day-to-day practices of the schools. In addition, I was interested in determining if the graduates' views and observations are infused with Gülen's educational philosophy and HM practices.

The three interview schedules were further refined into three sub-categories. The first sub-category related to the participants' personal background, their teaching experiences, and exposure to and familiarity with the HM and Gülen's philosophy of education. The second group of questions focused on participants' views on general topics on educational matters and interpretation of Gülen's educational philosophy. Some questions were directly related to their familiarity and interpretation of Gülen's educational philosophy. Other questions were related to their views on matters related to the schools such as the role of education and teacher to investigate if their views resonate with those of Gülen and/or influenced by being at the HET schools. The third group of questions focused on practices at the schools. These questions related to the day-to-day running of the schools and if these practices are infused with Gülen's educational philosophy.

I devised questions beforehand to guide the interview process, but allowed for flexibility so that I could pursue discussions not planned for but relevant to the study. In designing and wording the interview questions, I paid particular attention to the use of words that made sense to the interviewees and reflect their worldview. Merriam (2009) reminds that careful attention to terminology could improve the quality of data. Drawing on al-Banaa's (2013) experience of conducting interviews in Turkish during her study of two HM affiliated institutions in London, I decided to conduct my interviews with Turkish teachers in Turkish and then translate them for analysis. While al-Banaa (2013) claims that the use of common language increased confidence and trust during the interview process, it was essential to conduct my interviews in a comfortable setting that would contribute towards a conducive environment to fruitful interviews (cf. Arthur *et al.*, 2012; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). Thus, by conducting the interviews in Turkish, the Turkish participants were able to express their views more comfortably in their home language. I also included interviews with local teachers and graduates as they served as outsiders to Gülen's philosophy and the HM. I contended that their observations on the practices at the schools could offer valuable insights. The interviews with the local teachers and graduates were conducted in English. The interviews, which lasted between 25 to 50 minutes, were conducted at the schools in a space allocated to me. At the beginning of each interview, I asked the participant if he or she was comfortable with the setting. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by myself for analysis. I also translated the interviews with Turkish teachers into English.

4.3.2.3 Data analysis and interpretation

Analysis of qualitative data is essentially the process of making sense of the data and answering the research question (Merriam, 2009). Although Yin (2011) states that there is no universally accepted routine in analysing qualitative data, Merriam (2009) prompts that the generation and analysis of qualitative research data should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. The most common strategy of qualitative data analysis seems to be coding, which, according to Merriam (2009), has mystified the already mysterious process. Coding is simply the assigning of some kind of symbols and words to various aspects of the data. According to Yin (2011), most qualitative analysis follows a five-phase cycle, namely compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and concluding. For Merriam (2009),

making sense of data involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting. Both authors (Merriam 2009 and Yin 2011) emphasise that there is various computer software, which may assist in qualitative data analysis. Still, it is the researcher, who has to do the thinking and the analysis.

In line with these recommendations and precautions, I started transcribing the interviews while I was still busy conducting more interviews. It was essential to transcribe while the discussions and circumstances were still fresh in my mind. This simultaneous approach enabled me to make notes on specific observations and relevant details during the actual interview process at the schools. When I completed the interview process, I had to go through the transcripts to refine and finalise the transcribing process. Yin (2011) recommends listening to the interviews as a more relevant activity rather than just reading. Therefore, during the analysis, I listened to some of the interviews again, together with the notes I made. Since the interviews with the Turkish participants were conducted in Turkish, I had to translate and transcribe them simultaneously. I then compiled all the responses of the participants into one Word processing file (cf. Appendix G). On the file, I entered the interview questions followed by the participants' responses. I then reorganised them according to the interview questions to see all the responses to a specific interview question. This was useful in identifying certain strings of responses to a certain question by different participants.

Once I had finalised the spreadsheets, I started with the coding of the data. In line with Merriam's (2009) recommendations, I identified 'bits of data' as certain words, expressions, comments or observations in the data. Yin (2009) calls this process disassembling. Working through this process, I reassembled the bits of coded data into newly created themes. The themes that transpired from the data analysis are responsive to the purpose of the study, and I considered them as 'exhaustive', 'mutually exclusive', 'sensitising', and 'conceptually congruent' (cf. Merriam 2009). During this process, I took heed of Merriam's (2009) opinion that there should be minimum un-assignable data once the data is re-organised into themes.

Once the data were re-organised into themes, I started the process of interpreting and making sense of the data by reading them through my understanding of Gülen's

educational philosophy (Chapters 2 and 3) and the document analysis (cf. Chapter 4). Merriam (2009) states that in qualitative data analysis, the basic strategy is inductive and comparative. Hence, my analysis involved deriving themes out of my data and comparing them with the literature and other sources of data to enable a discussion of the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy in the HET schools. Since my research was a case study, it was important to offer a description of my case.

I subsequently worked through the themes and attempted to interpret them in light of the literature and the body of data I generated. Yin (2011) describes the process of interpreting as giving one's meaning to the data and creating a new narrative while acknowledging that a comprehensive and useful interpretation has no set definition. In alignment with Yin's (2011) recommendation, I attempted to achieve completeness, fairness, empirical accuracy, value-addition, and credibility.

4.4 Ethical considerations and integrity of the study

Farquhar (2012) summarises the governing principle of research ethics as to 'do no harm', either to the research participants or to the broader world of research and the community of researchers. In all research, there is some risk of harm, and the researcher has to devise a strategy to minimise harm and make sure that harm must never exceed benefits (UFS, 2014). Also, Merriam (2009; Garg, 2008; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006) claims that the validity and reliability of research depend on the ethics of the investigator and that actual ethical practice ultimately relates to the researcher's values and ethics.

As research ethics should inform every stage of the research, I took various steps to ensure that my research is conducted in an ethical manner. As per the requirement of the University of the Free State, I applied for and was granted permission by the institution's ethics committee to undertake this study (cf. Appendix A; UFS-HSD2018/1282). In addition, I obtained permission from the HET (cf. Appendix B) and the management of the various schools to conduct my research at their institutions (cf. Appendix C). The University of the Free State grants permission only if all the necessary precautions are put in place to ensure an ethical research process. All participants were required to sign in writing an informed consent form

(cf. Appendix D). This form briefly lays out the aim of the research and how the information provided by the participant will contribute to this aim. The consent form also informed the participant of their right to refuse to participate and/or to decide to pull out at any stage. I ensured the confidentiality of the participants' identity and views. Participants were consulted when and where to conduct the interviews so that they felt comfortable with the place and timing. The risk of harm mentioned above involved physical, psychological and mental harm. Such a threat was minimal in my study, as the content does not involve controversial issues. However, I do admit that the participants could raise uncomfortable issues, and I ensured that the identity of the participants could not be derived from the research report. My study did not include overt conflicts of interest, but in cases where an overly negative or positive comment was raised, I probed to gain an understanding of the motivations for making such a comment. I did not offer any payment to the participants, and with the permission of the school management, interviews were conducted during the participants' free periods during school hours. In this way, the study did not have an impact on teaching time, nor on the personal free time of the participants.

In addition to ensuring an ethical process in working with the human participants, it was important to ensure that the integrity of the study was not compromised, I had to consider possible threats and ways of preventing or mitigating potential risks in my research. It has been noted that researchers and readers who are mostly used to quantitative research in which the data are more numeric and aim to offer statistical findings (Yin, 2011; Atkins and Wallace, 2012), are often sceptical about the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Shenton, 2004). In ensuring the trustworthiness of the study, I paid attention to issues such as researcher subjectivity, participant bias, rigour, risks associated with data generation, and ethical standards. In the subsequently sub-sections, I indicate the practical steps I took to mitigate potential challenges that could threaten the integrity of the study.

4.4.1 Researcher subjectivity

Arguably, the most critical issues that threatened the trustworthiness of my study was researcher subjectivity. As noted, generated data in qualitative research is filtered through the researcher's particular theoretical position and biases (Merriam,

2009; Willis, 2008; Mertens, 2010). It is therefore accepted that since qualitative researchers are interpreters of research participants' interpretation of real-life situations (Usher, 1996; Nieuwenhuis, 2016), and while subjectivity cannot be eliminated, the possibility of researcher subjectivity clouding the data remains a highly probable risk (Brink, 1993; Sullivan, 2002). Any research based on a researcher's preconceived conceptions and misconceptions can indeed threaten the credibility of the generated data and subsequent interpretations drawn in the sense that a deviation from the primary purpose, i.e. to understand a phenomenon from a participant's perspective, becomes a possibility.

To mitigate the risks posed by my subjectivity and bias as the researcher, I took various precautions. From the onset, I clarified my research interest regarding my involvement with the HET and the HM (cf. 1.5.2.2). As an insider voice informed this study, and since I have a keen interest and a particular understanding of Gülen's philosophy, I had to mitigate the risk of merely affirming my preconceived understandings and loyalty to the HM. According to Willis (2008; also Ary *et al.*, 2010; Given, 2008), all research is prone to be at risk by this tendency as a researcher's subjective perspective has the potential to construct opinions about participants beforehand and lead the interview under the influence of such positions. In an attempt to ensure that my pre-existing knowledge and opinions did not influence my interpretation of the data, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by myself to the best of my ability. My interpretation of the data was shared with the participants, with people who have been in the movement, some who researched the movement previously. In addition, given my knowledge of the various units in my case study, i.e. the different schools' contexts and environments, I decided to spend additional time at the schools to achieve rapport with the participants. I visited the schools previously on different occasions, and I introduced myself. To make my study as transparent as possible, I acknowledged the various roles I adopted during the research process, namely researcher, transcriber, translator, an ex-principal of the schools and a fellow HM participant. In addition, I intentionally sought during interviews, data, which could challenge my pre-existing knowledge and assumptions.

Another challenge in a qualitative study is the fact that the researcher cannot adopt a single role (Walford, 2001). Throughout the research process, the researcher adopts different roles, and any confusion of roles, especially in the case of an insider researcher (Atkins and Wallace, 2012), may result in low-quality data, which could subsequently cloud the credibility of the research. As I declared my research interest and involvement with the HM and the HET from the onset, my status as an insider and follower of Gülen's philosophy worked to my advantage in terms of access and having open conversations. I observed an openness and comfort, especially from the Turkish participants who were willing to share their views as they regarded me as a fellow HM volunteer. Only one participant (C3) was initially not comfortable talking while being recorded. He later agreed to be recorded after I re-explained the process to reassure him that the recording was not going to be shared with third parties, and his identity would be kept confidential. While awareness of one's personal biases and perspectives can reduce the risk posed by the insider status, I attempted to ask the questions as neutrally as possible and not to lead the participants in their responses. I did not enter the study with a blank mind – I inevitably, brought my experiences with the HM, and experiences as a teacher and manager at the HET schools to the study. Since researcher subjectivity and bias can compromise the integrity of a study, I had to remain cognisant of my previously held views and not impose them on either the participants or let them influence the analysis of the findings. When a participant's response challenged my personal opinion, I attempted to solicit further insight from the participant for greater clarification. I also shared my interpretation of the data with the participants and with people who could critique my interpretations.

4.4.2 Participant bias

Another concern during the undertaking of this study was participant bias. Due to the nature and history of some participants' involvement with the HET and the HM, their views could have been shaped by their past experiences negatively or positively. In order to address the risks associated with the participants, I applied various strategies. Since my research significantly depended on data generated through interviews, I selected participants who can offer greater knowledge and insight in terms of Gülen's philosophy and experience in the HM schools. However, in an

attempt to ensure that power relations had no influence on the decision of the participants to participate in the study, and to gain the participants' trust, I spent a few days at the schools. I asked the people that I already knew such principals and teachers, to introduce me to the potential participants. In this way, I got the opportunity to explain my background and the reason why I was at the school. It was important to get to know potential participants so I could decide on whom to approach for interviews. I also explained that the research was independent of the schools and the HET. Although my analysis and the completed thesis will be submitted to the schools and HET, the identities of the participants will not be compromised. It was important to mention here that none of the participants raised any concern about participating in the study. When I asked about the weaknesses of the schools, they were comfortable to offer comments without showing any signs of concern for an adverse reaction from the schools.

Once I selected the participants, I explained the aim of the study in-depth, both verbally and requested written consent (cf. Appendix D). The participants were told they could change their mind and withdraw from the interviews without giving any reasons. Interviews with the Turkish participants were conducted in Turkish to ensure clarity of the questions and enhance the participants' ability to express their own understanding and interpretations. I paid attention to the settings where the interviews were conducted, and I asked them if they were comfortable with the settings before the interviews commenced. It was important for the participants to feel comfortable and not pressured by time, surroundings, people around or the tone of the interview. After I recorded and transcribed the interviews that I had done, I shared the transcriptions with the respective participants for comments. I asked questions for clarity where the data were silent or vague and interviewed three of the participants to validate their original opinions expressed. As noted, I intentionally looked for challenging data and consulted and re-consulted the data and relevant sources where I have observed such contradictions or discrepancies.

Given my background with the HM, some participants might have felt pressure in responding to some questions such as, how they interpret Gülen's educational philosophy as they might have thought I was looking for a correct answer. To deal

with that, I indicated openly that I was not looking for correct answers but I was interested in what they thought and what their interpretations were.

4.4.3 Rigour

Bleich and Pekkanen (2015) point to the issue of transparency in research production and analysis and claim that a lack of transparency can result in the data not being trusted. Inadequate transparency also creates a credibility gap. Transparency relates to the methods utilised, participants of the research as well as data generation and analysis. Transparency also involves informing the reader of every step of the study by providing as many details as possible. Atkins and Wallace (2012) further state that rigour and compliance with ethical principles ensure the integrity of a study.

To ensure the integrity of my study, I had to pay attention to conducting the research in a rigorous manner. An important precaution was to ensure linguistic clarity by sharing my pre-determined questions with a language teacher and with a Turkish language teacher. For clarity of content and to ensure that the questions were context-relevant, I discussed the questions with someone familiar with the HM. These steps helped me to ensure that the questions would make sense to all the participants. It was also helpful to pilot the interview questions to familiarise myself with the interview process and to observe how the questions were received. As part of the strategy to describe my experience and the interview and observation process, I kept detailed notes during the time I spent at schools. This assisted me to note the progress of the study. To ensure the authenticity of the data, I took note of Hancock and Algozzine's (2006) suggestion to confirm the results of a qualitative case study. I not only shared it with the participants but had discussions in instances where they had objections and/or corrections. To eliminate my preconceived ideas, I asked the participants to clarify their ideas and the concepts they raised to rely not on my own interpretations only. In addition to all these strategies, I constantly took note of my personal background and possible biases during the different stages of this research undertaking. I held discussions with members of the school community around issues that came up and were relevant to the research process. I further ensured transparency by including detailed information about the participants, such as their

gender, their positions at their schools, the teachers' experiences at the corresponding schools, their familiarity with the HM and a rationale for selecting each participant (cf. Table 5.1).

4.4.4 Risks in data generation and analysis

Garg (2008) discusses legitimate and illegitimate data and adds what is referred to as 'borderline illegitimate data', namely data generated during non-consented time periods. The use of such data, however, requires justification and the obtaining of consent from the relevant participant. In this regard, I paid specific attention to what was included as data to ensure that it was generated during the consented periods only. I did not include any observations made outside of such period. Recording of the data is also an issue discussed among experts (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008) and the dominant view is to audio record the interview and listen attentively during the interview by taking notes on visual aspects such as mimics, facial expressions and other contextual details.

To mitigate the risks associated with data generation and analysis, I adopted various strategies. I developed a plan of action, which guided the research process from identifying participants to the analysis of data. I worked carefully on conceptual clarity surrounding the research questions and consistency among the research paradigm, methodology, methods used and the data generation processes. I have endeavoured to ensure that the selected participants were representative of my case as much as possible. I spent sufficient time at the schools to ensure that the interviews took place in a natural process and was not rushed, which could threaten the quality of the data. I re-interviewed three participants to ensure consistency in their views.

To further ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this study, I used crystallisation as a multi-dimensional approach to provide clarity on a case through the use of multiple data sources (cf. Bowen, 2009; Ellingson, 2008; Tobin and Begley, 2004; Tracey, 2010). I subsequently worked with the assumption that data generated through documents combined with other sources, has the advantage of minimising the risk of bias in interpretation. I contended that the data generated from

the document analysis would provide the opportunity to compare it with data generated through semi-structured interviews. Although the data are different, it is complementary, and using the crystallisation of the generated data, I was able to identify discrepancies to ensure that the findings were trustworthy and credible. Also, crystallisation enabled the checking for consistency of the data and the writing of more coherent text. To further increase the credibility of the study, I shared my interpretations with officials from the HET to explore if they made sense and were acceptable. Consequently, the use of more than one method of data generation allowed me to provide a multidimensional description of the case, which in turn, contribute towards deeper clarity and understanding of Gülen's educational philosophy and its manifestations at the HET schools in South Africa. As reflexive practices are frequently recommended for research integrity, I continuously reflected on the data generation and analysis process.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I presented my rationale for using a qualitative case study (cf. 4.2; 4.2.3) underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. In alignment with interpretivism, I foregrounded the ontological and epistemological assumptions that guided this study (cf. 4.2.2). I also presented my research as a single holistic case study (cf. 4.2.4), and clarified issues around my insider status by referring to the relevant literature on the debate around insider status of a researcher and related challenges.

My choice of methods was informed by the research question (cf. 1.5.2.1) and interpretivism as the research paradigm. While interpretivism constituted the philosophical underpinnings of my study, a qualitative approach gave guidance in terms of the methodological choices I made for the undertaking of this study. To answer my research question on the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education at the HET schools, I decided to generate data through document analysis (cf. 4.3.1) and semi-structured interviews (cf. 4.3.2). With regards to document analysis, I gave a rationale for the relevance of document analysis and presented an overview of the analysis of the documents. With regards to my decision to generate data through semi-structured interviews, I gave an overview of the criteria for participant selection (cf. 4.3.2.1), and issues related to data generation (cf. 4.3.2.2),

data analysis and interpretation (cf. 4.3.2.3). This chapter is concluded with an exposition of ethical considerations and steps taken to ensure the integrity of the study (cf. 4.4).

In the next chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the data generated through document analysis.

Chapter 5 Documentary analysis: Manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter was to explore the expectations of the Horizon Education Trust for the HET schools by analysing relevant documentation. In particular, I was interested in exploring the extent to which Gülen's educational philosophy manifests in written materials such as the school's constitution, codes of conduct, policy documents and any other relevant operational documents (cf. 1.4.3). Within the bigger context of this study and given my intention to explore such manifestation, this chapter is considered imperative on two accounts. On the one hand, document analysis, as a first strategy for data generation, afforded me the opportunity to make inferences on and comparisons between the ways in which Gülen's educational philosophy found expression in the policies and practices of the various HET schools. On the other hand, the findings of the document analysis enabled me to draw up the schedules for the semi-structured interviews (cf. Chapter 6). Key to this chapter, was the use of the theoretical framework, thus Gülen's education philosophy, as the lens to make sense of the data generated through document analysis.

In alignment with the objective of this chapter, I first give a clarification of the documents analysed in my attempt to understand the dominant philosophy and its manifestation in the HET schools' day-to-day operations. Against this background, I present the findings that emerged from the document analysis. I conclude the chapter with a comparison of the findings.

5.2 Document clarification

In this study, I analysed various documents I obtained from the HET schools. As indicated in Chapter 4 (cf. 4.3.1), I classified the documents into three categories, namely foundational documents, policy and procedural documents, and operational documents. While foundational documents provide guidance on the establishment and running of the schools, policy and procedural documents pertain to the operation of internal systems. Operational documents describe and brief parents on the daily operations of the schools.

For the sake of clarity, I herewith give an exposition in Table 5.1 of the various documents I analysed and the associated abbreviations I use to refer to the specific documents. The foundational documents and policy and procedural documents are generic for all schools and a single analysis applies to all schools. Therefore, in the list of documents, these documents appear only once. I did request, however, the operational documents from the various schools as they pertain to the unique operational circumstances of each individual school. The first column indicates the document type, namely foundational, policy and procedural and operational documents. The second column shows the schools from which the documents were obtained. The third column refers to the document codes. As mentioned, the foundational, policy and procedural documents are generic to all schools, and therefore the document code is only a letter (F: Foundational documents; P: Policy and procedural documents) and a number. However, the operational documents are school-specific, so they are coded with a letter, which indicates the school and the document number.

Table 5.1: List of documents

Type ¹⁰	School	Document codes*	Name of the document
F: Foundational documents	Generic to all schools	F1	Trust Deed of Horizon Educational Trust
		F2	School Constitution
		F3	NQF Principles and South African Constitutional Values and Implementation at Star College
		F4	Vision and mission
		F5	HET Profile
		F6	School Logo
P: Policy and procedural documents	Generic to all schools	P1	General School Policy and Code of Conduct
		P2	Code of Conduct for Learners
		P3	Recruitment, Appraisal and Development Policy
		P4	Staff Development Plan
		P5	Code of Conduct for Teachers
		P6	Learner Support Policy
		P7	School Code of Conduct
		P8	General Code of Conduct-
		P9	Constitution Letter
		P10	Homework Policy
		P11	Staff Monitoring Development Tool
		P12	Scholarship Policy

¹⁰ First letter indicates the type (F: Foundational, P: Policy and procedural, O: Operational) and second letter indicates the school

O: Operational documents	Relevant for all school principals	P13	Parent Advisory Committee Constitution
		O1	Principals Board Meeting (PBM) March 2016
		O2	PBM May 2016
		O3	PBM 25 Feb 2018
	School A	OA1	Staff Appraisal Report
		OA2	Parent-Learner Contract
		OA3	Minutes No 3 2018
		OA4	Minutes No 6 2018
		OA5	Minutes No 8 2018
		OA6	Minutes No 20 2018
		OA7	Concert Speech
		OA8	Welcome To Star College
		OA9	Principal's Matric Message 2016
		OA10	2018 Graduation Speech
	School A	OB1	Minutes 2017 Newsletter
		OB2	Minutes 2017 January 16
		OB3	Minutes 2017 March 13
		OB4	Minutes 2017 May 15
		OB5	Minutes 2017 October 23
		OB6	Minutes 2017 October 30
		OB7	Minutes 2017 October 16
		OB8	Minutes 2017 Term 3 Planner
		OB9	Minutes 2018 January 29
		OB10	Minutes 2018 February 19
		OB11	Minutes 2018 March 12
		OB12	Minutes 2018 May 14
		OB13	Minutes 2018 Term 2 Planner
	School C	OC1	Minutes Strategic Plan 2018
	School D	OD1	Minutes 16-01-2018
		OD2	Minutes 06-02-2018
		OD3	Minutes 08-03-2018
OD4		Minutes 26-04-2018	
OD5		Minutes 19-07-2018	
OD6		Minutes 17-10-2018	

5.3 Presentation of the findings

In drawing on the theoretical framework, the two major themes of Gülen's educational philosophy (i.e. aims of education and educational processes) together with their sub-themes served as the section headings in the exposition of the findings. In my report on each theme, I make reference to the extent to which the respective key points are alluded to in the various documents. While I have classified the documents into three categories (cf. Table 5.1), I analysed the documents separately, albeit in reference to the specific themes and associated key points. Throughout the presentation of my findings, I offer commentary on how each theme

and associated key points feature in the different types of documents. In this regard, it was my intention to foreground how a particular theme filters through from foundational documents to policy and operational documents. As the foundational documents outline the expectations for the HET schools and were formulated during the early stages of the establishment of the schools, I was, on the one hand, interested to see the extent to which these expectations are influenced by Gülen's educational philosophy. On the other hand, I wanted to explore how these expectations find expression in the operational documents. As the latter documents refer to the day-to-day running of the schools, the inclusion of key points could by implication, be considered as manifestations of the philosophy in practice. Foundational and policy and procedural documents are generic to all the schools and operational documents offer cases of actual operational situations in different schools.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Aims of education

Historically, philosophies of education have been informed and shaped by the general philosophies of their founders (cf. 2.3). The aims of an educational project would be expected to be infused with the philosophy that inspires it. In the same vein, Gülen's educational philosophy is informed by his philosophy of *hizmet*, his understanding of human being and his interpretation of the events and circumstances. Since the establishment of the HET schools in South Africa is inspired by Gülen's philosophy, it is expected that the aims of the schools should resonate with this philosophy.

In the exposition of the theoretical framework, I indicated five key points that can be associated with the aims of education as inspired by Gülen's educational model (cf. Figure 2.1). These points include the raising of a golden generation, the elimination of ignorance, the development of a sense of purpose and higher identity, the promotion of dialogue and intercultural acceptance, and the reconciliation of religion and science (cf. 2.2.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3). Any reference to these five key points would thus be an indication of the documents being infused with Gülen's conception of the aims of education.

5.3.1.1 Raising a golden generation

Gülen's educational philosophy is geared towards raising a golden generation of ideal human beings who must be holistically equipped (cf. 1.5.1) with the tools of science, faith and moral values to solve future problems (cf. 2.3). Other terms used by Gülen to refer to a golden generation include inheritors of the earth, architects of the future, people of thought and action, people of heart, devotees of our time and people of ideal (cf. 2.3). According to Gülen, such a generation must be holistically developed as a harmonious combination of mind, body, spirit and feelings (cf. 1.5.1). When considering these attributes, including the multiple dimensions of being human, holistic education seems to be central to the raising of such a golden generation.

In my analysis of the documents, I did not encounter any explicit reference to the raising of a golden generation, or any of the above-mentioned related terms. However, the analysis revealed several references to the notion of a holistic approach to education and other associated concepts, such as a balanced education. Although I provide a more detailed exposition of how education at the HET schools is informed by a holistic approach in section 5.3.2.1, I mention it briefly here to bring to the fore, implicit reference to a golden generation. The schools' logo displays words *ruh*, *akıl*, *beden*, which mean soul, mind, body respectively. The *Vision and Mission* document (F4) clarifies the vision of all HET schools "to offer all children, a quality education with [a] holistic approach of nurturing and encouraging each child's moral, physical and educational wellbeing/well-being irrespective of race, religion or background". Given the centrality of a holistic educational model in the raising of a golden generation, it can be assumed that by implication, the foregrounding of holistic education alludes to Gülen's perception of a golden generation as individuals with a holistic outlook (cf. 2.3). I subsequently suggest that an emphasis on holistic education can be interpreted as an indirect reference to the raising of a golden generation.

5.3.1.2 Eliminating ignorance

According to Gülen, ignorance is one of the three major ills of today – that is in addition to disunity and poverty (cf. 2.2.3). In his early talks and writings, Gülen focuses on challenges that faced Muslims and builds on Nursi's assessment of

ignorance as a major social concern (cf. 2.2.1). Gülen's main contribution in relation to Nursi's thought is the transformation of his ideas into societal actions such as schools (cf. 2.2.3). Eliminating ignorance has therefore become a central pillar of his educational philosophy. Despite the importance placed on the elimination of ignorance in Gülen's educational philosophy, I could not find any explicit reference to this notion in the documents. However, Gülen attaches great value to knowledge, learning and teaching others and perceives them as an integral part of true living (cf. 2.3.1). He further argues that learning and teaching are the purposes of human creation, hence education being a primary activity of the HM. While no explicit reference is made in the documents to the elimination of ignorance, the focus on learning and the subsequent gaining of knowledge may be regarded as an implicit reference to the countering of ignorance. I believe references to knowledge, learning and teaching are implicit indications of Gülen's influence.

While the documents emphasise learning, teaching is also regarded as an important endeavour. The *Vision and Mission* (F4) document indicates, "Star College is committed to empowering learners to achieve their goals and realize their true potential". By implication, the value and role of the schools are brought to the fore in that the HET schools are premised on the assumption that teaching contributes towards students achieving their goals and realising their true potential. The *Code of Conduct for Teachers* (P5) describes teaching as a noble calling and calls for teachers to acknowledge that. As a foundational document, the *Vision and Mission* (F4) emphasises learning as one of the key concepts in the mission and vision of the schools. In introducing the ethos of the schools, the document starts by stating that the "[e]thos at Star College is formed on a desire to learn, to participate, to compete at the highest levels and fulfil one's potential" (F4). The *NQF¹¹ Principles and Constitutional Values and the implementation at Star College* (F3) indicates that "Star College strives to develop a love for learning". The *HET Profile* (F5) foregrounds the aim of the schools "to inculcate a desire to learn, to participate and to compete at the highest levels to fulfil one's potential". The *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1), also places the emphasis on learning by describing the

¹¹The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievement are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring an integrated system that encourages life-long learning (WCED, 2018).

school as “a centre of learning” and informs parents and students that “Star Colleges strive to develop a love for learning that goes beyond school”. Responsibilities and commitments that are expected of the students are listed and the first of them is to undertake “to learn”. The perception of the school as a place where knowledge, skills and values are transferred, alludes to Gülen's view that correct decision-making is dependent on logic and reason, which can be illuminated by knowledge and wisdom (cf. 2.3.1). For Gülen, ignorance is a deficiency of reason (cf. 2.3.2), and fostering reason has been regarded as a major aim of education by most of the Western philosophers (cf. 2.3.1). Reason is considered to be one of the tripartite foundations of turning to knowledge by Gülen. Although it can be argued in a more critical analysis that learning is a major function of a school and any school could be expected to make it a priority, I think the interpretation of learning as an antidote to ignorance resonates with Gülen's influence in the HET schools.

As Gülen considers poverty as one of the three major ills of his time, poverty alleviation is an important aspect of Gülen's philosophy (cf. 2.2.3). Although not stipulated as a direct aim of the educational enterprises of the HM, poverty alleviation forms the basis for the HM movement's establishment of non-governmental organisations (NGO) to provide aid to the poor and the needy. Also, business people in HM establish business networking institutions and commercial enterprises to generate funding for HM projects (cf. 3.2.3). The HET *Trust Deed* (F1) is the primary foundational document that offers guidance and direction to all future activities of the schools established by the HET. One of the aims of the HET is

to promote efforts for development and poverty alleviation through the reduction of unemployment by encouraging, organising and supporting self-help projects among the youth, women and the rural and urban people (F1).

Prioritising poverty alleviation as an objective can indirectly be seen as an attempt to address ignorance, specifically in the South African context where poverty is often a barrier to access to educational opportunities. The phenomena of poverty alleviation and countering ignorance are interrelated objectives within the HM network. Since most HM institutions are run as non-profit organisations, volunteers work actively within the movement's institutions to develop strategies to generate funds for *inter*

alia, outreach programmes and scholarships for students pursuing education who may not have financial means of support (cf. 3.2.3). Although the operational documents do not mention the elimination of ignorance as an educational aim, the availability of scholarships contributes towards poverty alleviation. Through enabling students to pursue their education, they can emancipate themselves and, by implication, their families out of poverty.

5.3.1.3 *Developing a sense of purpose and a higher sense of identity*

In Gülen's thought, a sense of purpose is developed in that education provides people with knowledge of their environment, and guidance in their relationship with their environment (Aslandoğan and Çetin, 2006). In my analysis of the foundational and policy and procedural documents, I could not find any direct references to the relationship between education and the students' environment. However, in a *2017 Newsletter* (OB1) of School B, which is an operational document, reference is made to school camps as opportunities to develop an awareness of one's environment and to achieve self-realisation. It is stated that

[f]or students, stepping outside your normal routine and breaking away from everyday life means getting outside your comfort zone (how to be comfortable with the uncomfortable) which can emancipate their [sic] self-realisation and self-concept (OB1).

It can be assumed that such self-realisation could assist students in their relationship with their environment. In the same newsletter, it is reported that a group of students were awarded the first place for a social project that was aimed "to enhance on a social issue and how to develop the community at large" (OB1). The importance of the relationship between students and community is indirectly brought to the fore with the comment that

[w]ith poor motivation, guidance, and support from their community, many students give up on their dreams and leave school and end up leading lives that are harmful to them and those around them. ... The lack of education may also lead to the destruction of the natural environment (OB1).

It seems that a sense of purpose is built around the relationship between the environment in which education is taking place, and the students. In addition, the minutes of a meeting held on 26 April 2018 at School D (OD4) reports on a “slipper day” where students are allowed to donate R10 to wear a slipper to the school. The money was donated to a charity. An activity like this contributes to students developing a greater awareness of their surroundings and the sufferings of others. Such awareness can also contribute towards the building of a sense of community in solidarity with others. In the same meeting, staff members were reminded of a team building exercise - an initiative to forge a sense of unity, purpose and support among the staff members.

Gülen believes that education can also be a vehicle of eliminating ignorance and developing a higher sense of identity so that the divisions and frictions can be overcome (Aslandoğan and Çetin, 2006). From this point of departure, it seems the purpose of such a higher sense of identity is for the people to unite around that identity. As the HET schools operate in the South African context, nation building and South African patriotism have relevance in the development of a higher sense of identity to unite on. The divisive legacy of Apartheid and resulting inequalities in the South African society are obstacles to mutual understanding and the building of a cohesive nation. Addressing “issues of equity, redress, transformation and access to education” are listed as part of the mission of the schools in a document titled the *Constitution Letter* (P9). Attempts to tackle obstacles to dialogue and tolerance resonate both with Gülen's thought and the South African realities.

The *Vision and Mission* (F4) of the schools refers to national representation by stating that one of the missions of the schools is to “to develop individuals qualified to compete in international arenas and who could successfully represent the Republic of South Africa”. The *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1) highlights that “Star Colleges attempt to share the expertise and skills with all groups who share common aspirations for the greater good of the country and its people, and where possible”. This extract explicitly pronounces the schools' belief in and intention to create an overarching identity, which is expressed as the common good of the country. Such a common good can be interpreted as a higher identity around which people can unite and overcome divisions. The Apartheid's legacy of dividing

the population into racial groups and preventing them to integrate has posed a challenge for nation-building in post-1994 democratic South Africa. In line with Gülen's vision to overcome divisions through constructing a higher sense of purpose and identity, constructing a South African identity to encompass all groups to build a cohesive nation, seems relevant in the South African context.

5.3.1.4 Promoting intercultural dialogue and acceptance

In addition to ignorance and poverty, disunity is perceived by Gülen as one of the three ills of today (cf. 2.2.3). Gülen's position on dis-unity is that differences are perceived as the cause of conflicts and clashes. In alignment with Gülen's perception of dis-unity, HM volunteers initiate activities to build bridges across differences by promoting unity, tolerance and interfaith understanding (cf. 3.2.2). While volunteers of HM establish institutions to counter disunity, the HM schools also serve as bridge-builders in countries with religious, cultural and ethnic diversity (Aslandoğan and Çetin 2006). One of the stated aims of education in the HM is to bring about a peaceful coexistence among peoples of the world (cf. 3.2.2).

The document analysis revealed content related to this aim in foundational, policy and procedural and operational documents. Firstly, the HET *Trust Deed* (F1) acknowledges the existence of diverse cultural, religious and racial groups and introduces the aims of the Trust to among other things, "support all kinds of social, educational services irrespective of race, colour, religious convictions, or cultural groupings". In the *School Constitution* (F2), one of the aims and objectives of the schools is identified as "[t]o inculcate and develop the noble sense of justice, peace, tolerance and respect". These extractions not only indicate mindfulness around the issues of diversity and reaching out across differences, but also seem to be in line with HM schools' practices in other countries (cf. 3.2.2). Mindfulness of diversity supported by an emphasis on tolerance can encourage students to build healthy relationships with their environment, and assist them in overcoming conflicts that may arise out of diversity.

The *Vision and Mission* (F4) of the Star Colleges emphasises "fostering a good relationship between South Africa and Turkey in the educational, cultural and social fields". The HET schools' origins are from Turkey as they are part of the HM, which

emanated from the philosophy of Fethullah Gülen. Strengthening relations with South Africa is regarded as necessary, given its position as a host country. However, no clear guidance is given on how such relations should be fostered. The schools are situated in different locations in South Africa, and Turkish and South African teachers work together in teaching students of diverse backgrounds (cf. 3.3). Such a composition offers a platform to promote cross-cultural understanding among the teachers and students. Building bridges and promoting understanding among different communities in South Africa is a relevant aim for the HET schools and is in line with HM educational projects in other parts of the world.

Although attempts by Gülen and the HM institutions to maintain good relations with the state was interpreted as nationalist at times (cf. 3.2.2), I believe the better concept to describe Gülen's and the HM's attitude might be that of patriotism. The value of patriotism seems to be implied in the *School Constitution's* (F2) emphasis on the representation of South Africa with a patriotic angle by stating that one of the objectives of the schools is "[t]o develop individuals qualified to compete in international universities and [sic] who could successfully represent the Republic of South Africa in the field of science". The *Vision and Mission* (F4) also repeats the same aim as one of the missions of the school. The *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1) informs "Star Colleges' attempt to share the expertise and skills with all groups who share common aspirations for the greater good of the country and its people". The *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2) requires students to "take part in patriotic events".

The *Parent Advisory Committee Constitution* (P13), a policy document to be implemented by all HET schools, calls for its committee members to "[p]ractise positive racial relations and religious tolerance and respect". Earlier research conducted in one of the HET schools in South Africa, mentioned that tolerance and integration into modern society are among the social virtues prevalent at the schools (cf. 2.3.3). In addition to the parent body, the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2) encourages practising tolerance by stipulating, "students undertake to practise tolerance i.e. racial, cultural and religious tolerance and to respect the personal convictions of all". As a policy document relevant to all the HET schools, students are explicitly required to practice tolerance. While encouraging students to exercise

tolerance on the one hand, the same document lists “racism” and “inciting act of intolerance” among acts, which may result in suspension and possible expulsion on the other hand. Such tolerance would tacitly imply diversity at the schools and calls for diversity not to be regarded as divisive. In the spirit of Gülen's thought of true religion promoting tolerance, the HM attempts to promote tolerance, intercultural and interfaith understanding through secular education (cf. 2.3). In a similar manner, the HET schools also allude to Gülen's educational philosophy in foregrounding these virtues.

At operational level, schools organise social events where people are brought together to assist in building bridges among the participants in these events. In a speech delivered at graduation in 2018 at the School A (OA10), it is emphasised that students must be cared for so they bloom with a sense of “citizenship”. The *Concert Speech* (OA7) at the same school refers to the students as “building blocks of the strong nation”. The HET *Profile* (F5) on the website points out that the HET offers “holistic and high standard of education in a free and democratic South Africa”. Dinners during the Muslims' fasting month are also occasions where people of different religions are invited to share a meal and to talk about their beliefs and cultures. Discussion of such a dinner is recorded in the *Minutes of Meeting* of School A (OA5) held on 7 May 2018: “Traditional *Iftaar*¹² dinner [at] Star College in the Hall, Educator's families to attend on the 25th of May”. Similar dinner events for parents of different grades, the HET staff and graduates are mentioned in the *2017 Newsletter* of School B (OB1) (“At Horizon High School we have had the privilege to host four separate Iftaars”).

Desirable tolerance requires knowledge and appreciation of the other. It becomes challenging to practice tolerance when people are ignorant of the other, and HM institutions facilitate such an exchange to enable people to overcome divisions through engagements and learning about the others (cf. 3.2.2). Eliminating ignorance, knowing each other and achieving a higher sense of identity, provides an alternative perspective and opportunity to bypass divisions and unite around a common identity. The document analysis offers insight into the existence of such an

¹² Dinner which Muslims have at the end of a fasting day

intention and effort by the HET schools on foundational, policy and operational levels.

5.3.1.5 Reconciliation of religion with science, mind with spirit and intellectual with spiritual

Gülen is firstly an Islamic scholar, and therefore his thought and actions are rooted in religion in general and in Islam in particular (cf. 2.4). He regards religion as the primary source of knowledge and wisdom, and further advocates that true religion promotes values and practices that lead a person to virtue and perfection (cf. 2.3.2). Natural phenomena, which are the subjects of natural sciences and the Qur'an are perceived as the source of religion and the manifestations of God's attributes. For Gülen, the Qur'an is the primary source of knowledge and wisdom, and does not need to be subjected to scientific verification (cf. 2.3.1).

Gülen advocates for a middle way where science and religion are reconciled. While he believes that extreme modernity and fundamentalist Islam are not compatible, a middle way is possible where religion and science may come together (cf. 2.3.2). Although a direct reference to religion and its relationship with science is missing in the documents, I believe Gülen's perspective on science and religion manifests in the form of holistic education and in raising balanced individuals (cf. 5.3.2.1). Raising balanced individuals through holistic education underpins a middle way where religious and scientific thought as well as intellectual and spiritual are reconciled. Emphasis on sciences combined with moral guidance can be interpreted as an outcome of Gülen's idea on the reconciliation of science and religion, where religion manifests in morality and spirituality.



Reconciling religion with science, mind with spirit and intellectual with the spiritual follows from Gülen's understanding of the human being and his conception of education. As human beings are perceived as a harmonious combination of mind, body and spirit, education is a holistic process in which the transfer of knowledge and skills is

accompanied with moral guidance (cf. 2.3.3). Although no explicit reference to reconciliation of religion and science could be found in the documents, it should be noted that the logo's reference to soul, mind and body (*Ruh, Akil, Beden*) signifies the vision of the HET schools. Indirect references to an implied reconciliation of different aspects of human being were found in the *NQF Principles and Constitutional Values and their implementation at Star College* (F3) and the *Constitutional Letter* (P9). According to these documents, students are required to be involved in "academic, sporting, cultural and spiritual life of the school and its community" (F3), albeit through the encouragement of a holistic educational model, which nurtures "each child's moral, physical and educational wellbeing" (P9). The phenomenon of holistic education encompasses reconciliation between concepts such as mind and spirit. Specific mention of reconciliation between religion and science is absent. However, as the HET schools are not faith-based schools and given the diverse context in which these school operate, lack of explicit reference to religion is understandable. In the section on holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.1), I elaborate on how the schools use a holistic approach as a means to accommodate various aspects of being human.

The HET schools in South Africa are secular in their curriculum and policies. In the documents that I analysed, I did not come across any explicit reference to the schools being secular. The schools do not teach any religion, but the *HET Trust Deed* (F1) acknowledges diversity in the country and aims to offer education to all, irrespective of religious differences (cf. 5.3.1.4). Although the schools attempt to offer moral guidance as part of their holistic education, they do not ascribe such moral values to any religion. The adoption of a secular education approach seems appropriate for the promotion of intercultural acceptance, diversity and the reaching out to all communities in South Africa.

With regard to the aims of education, the key points that I identified in respect of Gülen's educational philosophy are reflected in the documents of the schools in various ways and degrees. Despite not mentioning it directly, documents touch on the role and value of education, the dynamics of raising a golden generation, albeit in reference to holistic education. Eliminating ignorance is incorporated through promoting learning and emphasising the value of knowledge. Developing a sense of

purpose through mindfulness of the students' environment and using education to create a higher sense of purpose to overcome frictions that may be caused by diversity and the legacy of apartheid, are implicit in the documents. The documents acknowledge the diversity of the South African society and require the school community to practice tolerance. Reconciling mind, body and spirit resonate with the notion of raising a golden generation and alludes to the concept of holistic education.

In the next section, I present my analysis in respect to educational processes associated with an educational model informed by Gülen's philosophy.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Educational processes

Gülen's educational philosophy relates to certain themes that shape educational processes in education, which are holistic and entail a combination of mind, body and spirit (cf. 1.5.1). In addition, distinguishing education as moral guidance and character development from academic teaching; *temsil*, namely teaching by example; the cooperation of the stakeholders; emphasis on academic achievement and high quality of education and emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods are other themes that influence educational processes (cf. 2.3) at the HM schools.

In this section, I present my findings on how the six themes regarding educational processes feature in foundational documents, policy and procedural documents and operational documents. Dealing with the documents in a particular order enabled me to determine whether Gülen's philosophy is inscribed in the foundational documents, and the extent to which such inscription influences planning, policy construction and the operations (practice) of the schools.

5.3.2.1 A holistic approach

One of the major factors that shape Gülen's educational philosophy is his understanding of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit (cf. 2.3.3). Satisfying only the intellectual needs of the student would thus be incomplete and the development of the person would be deficient. Hence, the phenomenon of holistic education speaks to the core of Gülen's educational philosophy (cf. 2.3.3). Holistic education encompasses addressing the development

of all aspects of the human being in a balanced manner including moral development supported by *temsil* rather than just imparting knowledge and skills to the students. By assumption, one would expect the adoption of holistic education as a major approach in the HET schools.

The logo of the schools, with reference to mind, body and soul (cf. 5.3.1.5), reminds that a Gülenian understanding of being human is shared by the founders and administrators of the HET schools in South Africa. The *Vision and Mission* (F4) of the schools states that the schools are “committed to empowering learners to achieve their goals and realize their true potential through [a] holistic approach, universal values and quality education”. This commitment is further strengthened as the vision of the schools is introduced as “to offer all children, a quality education with [a] holistic approach of nurturing and encouraging each child’s moral, physical and educational wellbeing irrespective of race, religion or background” (F4). The schools’ vision spells a holistic approach in addressing each child’s multiple needs on moral, physical and educational needs. In this case, I interpret educational as intellectual needs, which refer to the teaching and learning processes at the schools. Schools are thus expected to offer a holistic educational model, which seems to resonate with Gülen’s outlook.

The vision for the HET schools is further foregrounded in the document titled *NQF Principles and Constitutional Values and their implementation at Star College* (F3), which summarises Star Colleges’ commitment to the implementation of NQF principles and South African constitutional values. In alignment with the aim of this document and in alluding to the notion of a holistic approach, the idea of all-roundedness is foregrounded in that students are encouraged to “involve themselves in the academic, sporting, cultural and spiritual life of the school and its community” (F3). Gülen’s educational philosophy encourages the raising of a golden generation that will be equipped with tools of science, faith and moral values so that they can tackle today’s problems (cf. 5.3.1.1).

Whilst the vision for the HET schools includes the importance of a holistic approach, it seems that this vision also informs policies and procedures. In the *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1), the vision for Star Colleges is articulated as the

commitment “to empowering learners to achieve their goals and realize their potential through holistic approach, universal values and quality education”. The adoption of a holistic approach is centralised as a vehicle for the delivery of quality education and the realisation of students’ potential. Drawing from Gülen’s understanding of the human being as a combination of mind, body, and soul, students’ potential would therefore encompass various human aspects. The inclusion of different fields of study and human interests such as arts and sports in the HET schools, is subsequently aimed at creating spaces for empowerment in different fields. Quality education is thus perceived as education that addresses different dimensions of being human in an efficient manner. In the *Constitution Letter* (P9), which outlines the ethos for Star Colleges, a holistic approach to education is implied through reference to “a balanced education that enables learners to be challenged, extended, and motivated in many facets of life”. Reference to “many facets of life” implies that a balanced education would assist the students to achieve a balance between different fields of learning, interests, and activities. A holistic approach to education would prioritise the development of multiple skills towards achieving a balance among multiple facets of human activity.

From the foregoing exposition, it has become clear that Gülen’s perception of a holistic approach to education features in foundational, policy and procedural documents and it also filters through to schools’ practices. School C for example, in the *Strategic Plan* (OC1) document, introduces their strategic goals for the period of 2018 – 2020. These goals include priorities on academic, sports, marketing, capital development, as well as staffing matters, all of which are aimed to “produce well-rounded learners”. A well-rounded student would subsequently be encouraged to excel in various subjects such as languages, mathematics and sciences, as well as in sports, arts and in moral and development. On the issue of moral development, the document details the notion of well-rounded students by placing the focus on moral development and community involvement. The school’s aims for 2019 include that “classes need to get involved in community work as a class” and the aims for 2020 read, “community upliftment must be a priority”. Establishing ways of engagement with the community can develop students’ sense of belonging and construct a sense of purpose to cooperate with and serve the community. Such engagement could assist in building bridges among the schools and the wider

society creating a higher identity to deal with differences more smoothly and overcome divisions (cf. 5.3.1.3). It is pointed out that in the past, form [class] teachers conducted weekly moral talks with the students and they were still being conducted in 2018. The *Minutes of the Staff Meeting of School B* (OB6) mentions a talent show held on 27 October 2017 – an acknowledgement of multiple talents and potentials of the students. This event could assist in bringing out skills of students in fields such as arts and music instead of focusing purely on academic achievements. These aims would require a holistic perspective on education aimed at the well-rounded development of students.

The minutes of meetings from different schools indicate variety of activities, which offer a range of opportunities for students to improve their skills and realise their potential in multiple fields. The minutes of a staff meeting of School A held on 19 March 2018 (OA4), record discussions on “excursions”, “a career expo”, “Matric [study] camp”, “sports day”. School B’s minutes of meetings also reflect on a variety of activities such as club activities (OB2), debates (OB4) as well as number of international events competitions (OB3). The School D on the other hand took students on a leadership camp (OD1). The schools offer activities in various fields, which have the potential to address different needs and develop various aspects of the human being in line with Gülen’s understanding of human being.

As noted, one of the pillars of Gülen’s philosophy is his understanding of the human being as a combination of mind, body and soul. An education model in such an understanding would thus adopt a holistic approach. From the foregoing findings of the document analysis, it seems that this common aspect of Gülen’s educational philosophy plays a guiding role in the HET schools in South Africa. The importance of a holistic approach is visible in foundational documents and seems to filter through to policy and operational documents. The emphasis on holistic education seems to indirectly resonate with raising of a golden generation as envisaged by Gülen (cf. 2.3).

5.3.2.2 Distinguishing education as moral guidance and character development from pure academic teaching

Gülen makes a distinction between teaching and education where the former is about transferring knowledge in a value-free manner, and the latter refers to the holistic development of the student where moral guidance accompanies teaching of subject content at school (cf. 2.3.3). Since most of the HM schools are secular, religion is absent in the curricula and the schools rather focus on moral guidance. Nursi, who is one of the most significant influences on Gülen, argued that science without religion leads to atheism and religion without science leads to fanaticism (cf. 2.2.3). Since religion is absent in the schools, moral guidance fills the gap in that the teaching of sciences is accompanied by moral guidance.

In line with a holistic approach as a characteristic of educational practices at Star Colleges, emphasis is placed on the upholding of moral standards by the staff and students. The *Code of Conduct for Teachers* (P5) requires teachers to be “teachers to all pupils at all times; be committed to teaching ethics and character formation”. Teachers are not only expected to preach the moral values to the students, but they are also expected to practise them and “set a positive example” for the students (P4). A *Parent Learner Contract* (OA2) of the School A states that

[a]t Star College we aim to graduate pupils of good characters, high morals and courage, who have confidence in their own potential, to walk proudly into the society. We hope to instil these core values into the fabric of your child's life whilst at Star College[:] integrity, commitment, self-discipline, respect, compassion, perseverance.

The projected outlook for the graduates of the schools indicates a broad vision in terms of the qualities that are envisaged for the graduates. They are not only expected to develop their potential intellectually, but also to become holistic individuals. This is an indication that the schools adopt education as moral guidance in addition to teaching, moral and character development.

In a document named *Welcome to Star College* (OA8) of the School A, it is stated that

[e]ducation is not merely an acquirement of facts but also of values, which help us improve the different facets of mankind. It ensures that we leave the world a far better place than we found it. A pivotal role of education lies in shaping the personality of a child into a healthy mind and happy soul, who is not only equipped with 21st century skills and aptitude required for academic excellence but helping him [sic] face the challenges of life in a balanced and harmonious way.

Education is described as academic progress combined with moral and character development in a harmonious way. Such moral and character development is possible by imparting certain values and discouraging behaviour and habit, which are undesirable. In the next two sections I present my findings regarding these values and undesirable habits and practices.

a. Promotion of hard work and altruism

Alongside the teaching of the subjects, HM schools adopt certain values that do not necessarily represent a single faith or culture. Hard work and altruism are values common to HM schools (cf. 2.3.2).

Within the conception of holistic education, teachers are required to not only teach their subject contents, but to also engage in initiatives that will address other needs of the students. In the *Homework Policy* (P10) it is claimed “perseverance, self-discipline, conscientiousness and motivation are essential elements of success”. During a staff meeting held on 6 February 2018 at the School A, the principal discussed the importance of hard work (OA3). In a speech delivered at the school concert of the School A (OA7), the principal alluded to hard work by pointing to teachers’ “sense of commitment, sacrificial service, immense patience, and responsibility”. At the same school, the principal emphasised hard work in his speech to the graduating students (OA9):

My advice would be: in whatever field they [sic] choose, adopt the same kind of work ethic: work hard; focus on their goal; know that the hard work will bear fruit.

The underlying concept of HM is *hizmet*, which means service and it entails taking this service to all humanity without discrimination. Altruism is by its very nature a

prerequisite for such an ideal of selfless service. Due to the nature of the concept, I looked for manifestations of altruism rather than only explicit reference. The HET *Trust Deed* (F1) explains its aim as that of the sponsorship (cf. 5.3.2.3), which in turn, is an altruistic position. The nature of the Trust is to be an “independent, non-profit making, charitable organisation” (F1). Additional training for students to assist them in taking part in extra activities and competitions is a sign of altruism by the teacher preparing them. The *Learner Support Policy* (P6) mentions that for excelling students are given “extra work for enrichment”, and they are taken through “study camps and coaching for national and international Olympiads and competitions”. In a staff meeting at the School B on 13 March 2017, “Matric [study] camp” is discussed and it is stipulated that “all teachers [are] to attend the camp” (OB3). The *Minutes of Meeting* held at the School D on 19 July 2018 (OD5), reports on an outreach project which involved an altruistic initiative: “[o]ur school has put together parcels to hand out [to] the communities in the [an underprivileged area] and surrounding areas”. In the same meeting, it is also recorded that a soccer tournament would be held for the underprivileged students to commemorate Mandela Day. These additional efforts undertaken by the schools are indicative of the schools’ commitment to altruistic practices.

b. Non-tolerance of undesirable habits and practices

When discussing moral development, one key point is the habits and practices that are regarded as undesirable. While desirable habits and actions are encouraged on the one hand, undesirable habits are discouraged and can even be punishable on the other hand. During the early days of Gülen's activities, he raised concerns about undesirable acts that included violent clashes stemming from ignorance of the others and ideological divisions among the youth (cf. 3.2.1). With the times changing, the challenges that are facing the youth may also change and educating the youth's mind, body and spirit would take on different forms. If the HET schools in South Africa were influenced by Gülen's philosophy, one would thus expect to find content relating to some form of reference to undesirable acts and habits in the school documents.

In the HET schools' documents, certain undesirable habits and actions are explicitly mentioned. The *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2) which applies to all of the HET

schools, outlines student' rights and responsibilities, parents' responsibilities, disciplinary procedures, dress code for students, merit and demerit system and the possible disciplinary actions that the schools would take leading up to suspension and expulsion. The schools implement a merit and demerit system, which envisages merit points for commendable actions and demerit points for undesirable behaviours and actions. Behaviours, which earn merit points include "neat and tidy school work", "full mark in a test", "sports achievement", and "medals in national and international Olympiads" (P2). Each behaviour is awarded points ranging from two merit points up to 16 merit points. When students accumulate a certain number of merit points, they get rewards which can range from a "cool drink" up to "[m]erit certificate and a 5% discount on the school fee for the following year" if 200 merit points are accumulated.

The *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2) also lists undesirable behaviours and relevant corrective actions. Undesirable behaviours are listed as 58 undesirable actions, including, among others, behaviours such as "late coming", "combing hair in class", "disobeying a prefect", "swearing" and "deceitful and dishonest behaviour" (P2). Demerit points are assigned to each of these actions, ranging from one demerit point up to five demerit points. Similar to the merit point system, students face disciplinary actions when they have accumulated a certain number of demerit points. The lightest disciplinary action for demerit points starts with detention in the case of students who accumulate ten demerit points. When a student earns 150 demerit points, he or she faces "possible expulsion at the discretion of disciplinary committee" (P2). The document lays out behaviours in 18 bullet points that may lead to "suspension or possible expulsion. Such behaviours include "fighting, violence, bullying, ... attempting to cause physical injury", "possession, using, providing, selling or being under the influence of drugs, alcohol or intoxicants", "vandalism", "stealing", "obscene acts or indulging in intimate and illicit behaviour or engaging in profanity or vulgarity", "racism, harassment, threats, intimidation" and "[a]ny conduct that impinges on the dignity of staff members" (P2). I have quoted from both the merit and demerit systems in order to reflect the general policy of the schools on student behaviour. As merit points cancel out the demerit points, students are motivated to practise positive behaviour.

Foundational and policy and procedural documents indicate a firm position taken with regard to student behaviour. Such firm attitude is also supported by the content I came across in the operational documents. The *Parent Learner Contract* (OA2) of School A, includes a clause to be signed by parents that if “the pupil [is] found to be in possession of or using or found to be responsible for carrying into school habit forming drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and undesirable literature ... [he or she] will face the risk of expulsion”.

A meeting of the principals of all HET schools held on 28 May 2016 reminded the principals that

[d]iscipline in general is not a point of concern. However, even if everything is under control substance abuse (smoking, alcohol, etc.), bullying, internet abuse, electronic addictions etc. should be a continuous item in the agenda (O3).

Minutes of a staff meeting at School B on 19 February 2018 (OB10) recorded that “stealing must be addressed; bullying, punish boys involved with community service [sic]”. Another meeting at the same school on 12 March 2018 (OB11), referred to “[a]nother child [was tested] positive on drug and [a] 6-week clean-up [programme will be implemented]”. *Minutes* of meetings at this school include many references to disciplinary issues, including smoking, fighting, cheating, stealing, bullying, and drug abuse. The *Minutes* of the meeting held on 14 May 2018 (OB12), indicating that a student “has been transferred to another school” and another student’s “prefect badge has been taken away for cheating”. The school seems to have issues with student behaviour, and the minutes indicate that the school is attending to them firmly by taking actions against those students who transgress the code of conduct. A firm stance against undesirable behaviour resonates with HM schools’ approach to undesirable acts reported in the literature (cf. 2.3).

5.3.2.3 *Temsil*

Temsil, thus teaching by example, is a central concept in Gülen’s educational philosophy and in the HM schools in general (cf. 2.3.4). By definition, *temsil* relates to the personal behavioural standards of the teachers and implies that they are not just agents of rote learning of school subject contents. Instead, teachers are

expected to uphold a high level of morality, integrity and good behavioural standards and must model such standards to be emulated by the students (cf. 2.3.4). *Temsil* is subsequently an important component of holistic education as it combines the teaching of school subjects with promoting moral values through the examples of the teachers. This concept also relates to distinguishing between rote content teaching and moral education.

Despite *temsil* being a key concept in the HM schools, I could not find any explicit reference to teaching by example in my analysis of the foundational documents. *Temsil* relates to the teacher's conduct and the practicing of the values that the schools aim to uphold. It concerns an exchange between the teacher and the student. Silence in explicit reference to *temsil* in foundational documents is problematic in the sense that its inclusion could provide weight and currency to the concept, especially in light of the documents' guiding role for policy and procedures. However, the emphasis on concepts such as holistic education could, by implication, allude to *temsil* (cf. 5.3.2.1). Moral development is an integral part of holistic development and morality is, in essence, a concept that can only be taught through example and not through a mere intellectual process and verbal instruction. The analysis of policy and procedural documents foregrounds an emphasis on *temsil* as teachers are expected to be role models and to set an example and good standards. The HET *Trust Deed* (F1) alludes to the acknowledgement of the diverse cultural, religious and, racial groups by indicating that one of the aims of the Trust is to among other things, "support all kinds of social, educational services irrespective of race, colour, religious convictions, or cultural groupings".

The policy document *Code of Conduct for Teachers* (P5), foregrounds the schools' expectations of teachers to teach by example through modelling "integrity, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, and respect for all persons". To strengthen this, the *General Code of Conduct* (P27) stresses "[e]ducators and employees in academic posts are also expected to set a positive example for their learners". Teachers are expected to "encourage the development of strong spiritual and moral values in the pupils, and display these values themselves" (P5). The analysis of the *Code of Conduct for Teachers* subsequently creates the impression that teachers are recognised as people of good character who are expected to "act in a proper and becoming way

such that their behaviour does not bring the teaching profession into disrepute” (P5). This document also links the quality of education to the conduct of the teachers: “the attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training, and conduct of the teaching profession [sic] determine the quality of education” (P5). As the quality of education is associated with a holistic approach (cf. 5.3.2.1), it can therefore be accepted that balanced education aimed at well-rounded students will, by implication, require teachers who set good examples for their students. The effective teaching of various subjects and the moral and physical development of the students require a dedicated teacher with a positive attitude and self-discipline as a role model for the students. Therefore, to raise the golden generation (cf. 5.3.1.1), teachers must model the values and qualities they teach and train their students in modern sciences at the same time as it would be demanded by a holistic approach (cf. 5.3.2.1).

The operational documents are unique to each school and present cases of actual practices at respective schools of how *temsil* manifests in individual schools. School A's *Staff Appraisal Report* (OA1) refers to maintaining a “high standard of decent and courteous language in and outside of the classroom”. Reference to practices outside the classroom signifies the school's expectation that the practice of moral standards goes beyond mere classroom spaces. In a concert speech (OA35) for example, the school principal acknowledged the important role of teachers:

Dear teachers, undoubtedly your sense of commitment, sacrificial service, immense patience, and responsibility, play a key role in our growth. Undoubtedly, you are our role models.

In another speech, which appears to have been delivered at a parent-teacher meeting the principal said: “more importantly they [students] will have us [teachers] as role models and a plan for success for their future”. Linking the setting of moral standards to the quality of education is also referred to in the *Minutes* of a meeting (OA10) held at School A on 6 February 2018: “educators are to set a good standard that enhances professionalism and the quality of education at Star”. Given the emphasis on academic achievement and moral values, good standards include both moral and academic standards. This is also supported by a *Strategic Plan* document of the School C (OC2), which cited producing well-rounded students as one of the academic goals, which manifests as moral guidance in practice. Gülen's

understanding of the education process foregrounds the holistic development of the child where moral guidance accompanies the transmission of knowledge through school subjects (cf. 2.3.3). This holistic perspective is a significant indicator that suggests the infusion of Gülen's ideas in the schools not always in direct and explicit quotations or references but in the form of manifestations in practice.

Learning and teaching that lead to illumination is also foregrounded in the concept of *temsil* as it involves the teacher setting an example as a holistic human being hence leading to the student not just acquiring knowledge in value-free manner but emulating the wisdom and its practical manifestation in the teacher. An awareness of *temsil* is stressed through the notion of moral guidance and the subsequent modelling of values by teachers. The foregrounding of teaching by example on operational and practical levels signals an influence of Gülen's educational philosophy.

5.3.2.4 Cooperation of stakeholders

Cooperation among stakeholders in education is another dimension of Gülen's educational philosophy (cf. 2.3). Such cooperation alludes to the involvement and support of teachers, family, sponsor and other people who have an interest in the education process at the schools. However, it should be noted that although Gülen did not elaborate on the issue of partnership with specific reference to the educational context, the literature suggests that involvement of and cooperation among various stakeholders are common trends among the HM schools with specific emphasis on tripartite cooperation among the school, the sponsors, and the parents (cf. 2.3). Within the context of this study and in reference to the HET schools in South Africa, sponsors are trustees of the HET who are Turkish individuals living in South Africa (cf. 1.2). The *Trust Deed* (F1) elaborates on the establishment of the Trust and how the operation thereof would play out. The document makes it clear that the Trustees are the ultimate decision-makers and they appoint various bodies and individuals to realise the Trust's aims. In addition to being the highest decision-making body, the Trust positions itself and the Trustees primarily as supporters of various educational projects and one gets the impression that this support is mainly in the form of sponsorships. In introducing the aims of the Trust it is recorded that "[t]he sole object of the fund is to provide funds for charitable and educational

institutions of a public character". It is made clear that the Trust's funds will be spent on educational projects, and the Trustees cannot receive any benefits through the activities of the Trust. One of the stated aims of the Trust reads: "to run economic projects and investments with the purpose of supporting the aims and objectives of the Trust". Within Gülen's educational philosophy, the cooperation between different role-players is expected to contribute towards the elimination of ignorance and the raising of a generation. This golden generation is then expected to uphold a higher sense of purpose and identity, build cohesive communities and reconcile mind, body and spirit (cf. 5.3.1). A coordinated collaboration among the stakeholders has the potential to contribute towards the creation of an environment where the schools' ethos and values are practised collectively through an institutional atmosphere of *temsil*.

My analysis of various documents indicates the acknowledgement of different partners in the education process. In the *School Constitution* (F2) an objective of the schools is stated as "to enhance co-operation and sound relationships between parents, educators, learners and non-teaching staff at all times". While education is the primary function of a school, the cooperation among a wide variety of stakeholders is acknowledged as instrumental in the education process. Cooperation in this regard alludes strongly to Gülen's conception of consultation and collective awareness as one of the attributes of the golden generation (cf. 2.3). Some degree of consultative decision-making is referred to in The *School Constitution* (F2): "the decisions of the organisation shall be taken by consensus". A policy document, the *Staff Monitoring Development Tool* (P30), outlines the criteria for staff monitoring in that the teacher is expected to "[c]onsult stakeholders and communicate effectively with them".

After an explicit emphasis on a broad stakeholder involvement of teachers, parents, professionals and the community, policy, and procedural documents prioritise the involvement of parents as partners in the education of the student. The *Code of Conduct for Teachers* (P5) requires that "an educator recognises the parents as partners in education and promotes a harmonious relationship with them". In addition, The *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P7) devotes almost two pages to parental responsibilities and suggests "a positive and constructive partnership

between the school and a pupil's parents or guardian is essential to the fulfilment of the School's mission". *The Policy Document on Homework* (P29) elaborates on active parental involvement by stating that:

Every parent must have:

- i) A copy of their child's class timetable
- ii) A copy of the term program/ planner to serve as a reminder of termly events at school
- iii) A copy of their child's exam and test timetable

Parents are also expected to "physically check that the relevant school work for the day has been done", they have to sign the child's diary and must remind "the student of events, tests and activities" (P29). These documents suggest that parents are considered as active partners in education and are not seen as secondary support structures. In addition to parental involvement, the *Learner Support Policy* (P23) encourages the involvement of "professionals in supporting the learners". Although not specified, it can be assumed, given the educational nature of schooling, that professionals could, *inter alia*, be third parties outside of the school such as educational psychologists.

It seems from the analysis of foundational and policy and procedural documents that collaboration between various partners is regarded as important and desirable. In these documents, an emphasis is placed on parent involvement. Since the two most significant entities that are present in a child's life are home and school, the school's emphasis on such involvement is understandable. Furthermore, it should be noted that the HET schools are private schools, and the parent-school relationship may be seen in the context of service provider–customer relationship. While such business concerns may apply to both public and private schools alike, private schools are more prone to parent behaviours and choice. As such, the schools' willingness to form a close partnership with parents should be considered within this unique context.

Following the encouragement for stakeholder involvement in the foundational and policy and procedural documents, the operational documents offer contents, which point to the efforts to realise stakeholder involvement. In his speech at the

graduation ceremony in 2016 (OA41), the principal of School A associated cooperation between students, staff, parents, and community with a thriving school by claiming that “[t]he foundation of a successful school is the cooperation between students, staff, parents and community”. He further stressed parents’ role by saying, “[e]ducation is a joint venture between school and home” (OA41). In addition, schools organise social events where parents are invited, and these events are discussed at staff meetings where planning takes place. The *Minutes of Staff Meeting* held at School A on 6 February 2018 (OA10) reports that the principal asked the teachers if “they have any suggestions to improve or maintain parent relationships and that his office is always open for suggestions”. The minutes of the same meeting also refer to a discussion on a class *braai*, which was expected to happen every alternative Saturday during the first school term. Such social events bring parents and teachers together and contribute towards the building of a positive relationship, which would ultimately translate into collaboration on the education of the student.

Another interesting observation is that at a meeting of the principals of all the HET schools on 14 February 2016 (O1), a resolution was passed that each principal is expected to keep direct communication with the district office of the relevant department of education, with five parents, five graduates, and with the principals of the five neighbouring public or private schools. Cooperation and integration with other stakeholders and role players are seemingly regarded as important and while the impact of such broad relationships and cooperation on the actual educational process may not be conclusively claimed, such partnerships could encourage institutional engagement and development. However, the nature and aims of such engagements are not explained elaborately. Although the literature on Gülen's educational philosophy only introduces tripartite cooperation of the school, parents and the sponsor (cf. 2.3), cooperation with the wider community is relevant to Gülen's broader philosophy of promoting dialogue and building bridges between various role players in society (cf. 3.2.2). This notion of a broad-based dialogue and cooperation among a greater number of stakeholders is also supported by efforts to create a higher sense of purpose that can help resolve frictions (cf. 5.3.1.4).

Two other interesting observations transpired from the document analysis. The analysis did not reveal an explicit reference to sponsors or the Trust and its trustees. It seems as if the overt role of the Trust stops at the drawing up of the foundational documents and offering the initial support for the establishment of the schools. Although it is clear that HET holds the authority on the schools in the institutional structures, it is curious to note the absence of any indication of existing mechanisms of oversight of educational processes by HET. It seems that the process of education is left to schools' management structures. Another observation is that although Gülen's own writings do not elaborate on the issue of partnership in the education context, the practice of stakeholder involvement and corporation has evolved to become a common trend among HM schools. However, such a practice is not surprising considering HM's activities on dialogue (cf. 3.2.2) with people of different backgrounds. Education in Gülen's thought is also expected to contribute to bringing about peaceful co-existence among peoples of the world (cf. 5.3.1.4). This conception also parallels with nation building and the forging of social cohesion among racial groups (cf. 5.3.1.4). While the HM established institutions to promote such an agenda, the schools also can impart such an ideal through their educational programmes and practices. Therefore, the tendency of the schools towards interacting with other segments of the society and attempting to communicate and cooperate are rooted in Gülen's vision.

The document analysis offered insight into schools' perspectives on and practice of stakeholder involvement in the educational process. Parents are regarded as the most prominent partners in education and partnership is extended to involve non-teaching staff (F2), community (P3; OA41), professionals (P23), department of education's district office (OA25) and graduates (OA25). According to the *School Constitution* (F2), one of the primary objectives of the schools is "[t]o enhance co-operation and sound relationships between parents, educators, learners and non-teaching staff at all times". The *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1) acknowledges "the supportive involvement of our parents and the community at large". In his speech at graduation in 2016, the principal of School A said "[t]he foundation of a successful school is the cooperation between the students, staff, parents and community". A management meeting of School B held on 23 October 2017 reported "neighbourhood dialogue was a success. +/-130 people attended

[sic]". Details of this event are not specified but it is understood that the school initiated some form of dialogue with the neighbouring institutions, as well as with residents living in close proximity to the school. Such initiatives could contribute to building bridges and a sense of cooperation in community, thus giving rise to a common identity and purpose, which in return can assist to overcome divisions. The findings of the document analysis bring to the fore the schools' ambition to be centres of engagement among various stakeholders.

5.3.2.5 *Emphasis on academic achievement and high quality of education*

HM schools have been considered successful with specific reference to their focus on science and mathematics (cf. 3.3). Gülen's focus on efforts to reconcile modern sciences with religion has resulted in establishing institutions, which are well-resourced and successful. This success is often related to academic achievement in school subjects, in competitions and academic Olympiads. The success of the schools also relates to their achievements in high school leaving certificates and placements at universities. The *School Constitution* (F2) introduces developing "a generation with deep knowledge of science and technology" as one of its secondary objectives.

Policy documents contain ample content, which emphasises a variety of academic achievement. The *General School Policy and Code of Conduct* (P1) introduces in a section titled "Academic Progress", various procedures concerning student progression, assessment and training for examinations and competitions. The document states, "[w]e will be conducting an intensive study programme for Grade 12 learners throughout the course of the year. It is compulsory for every matriculant to attend all the study programme/tuition in every learning area" (P1). It further adds, "besides school lessons, the school pays great attention to national and international Olympiad studies and project competitions" (P1). The competitions and events attended by the schools are introduced in separate sub-sections such as "Math Olympiads", "Natural Science, Physical Science and Biology Olympiads", "Computer Olympiads", "English and world knowledge Olympiads", and "Project competitions". The explicit reference to "[p]articipation in the National Science Olympiad (SAASTE) is compulsory for every learner (Gr. 8 - 11)", implies that the schools place special importance on the fields of science of mathematics and sciences.

At policy and procedural level, schools have a detailed incentive and award policy and procedural that is spelt out in the *Recruitment, Appraisal and Development Policy* (P8). Award criteria range from achievement in the matric examination to achievement in international Olympiad and introduce cash rewards for teachers for the achievements of their students. For example, “[f]or each distinction in [the] matric exam, subject educator will be paid R200, (but for LO R100 per distinction) with the condition of no one failed in the particular subject”. The teachers of students, who achieve high positions in international competitions, are awarded with greater cash rewards. The highest rewards are allocated for achievement in international Olympiads such as Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Olympiads: “for bronze medal: R10000, silver medal: R20000, gold medal: R30000”.

Schools also award scholarships to high achievers. The *Scholarship Policy* (P12) introduces academic performance scholarships in the form of discounts on school fees and greater scholarship incentives for international Olympiads achievements. Schools also award achievements in national and international language Olympiads, such as English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Turkish. The awards for gold, silver and bronze medals in international Olympiads in languages are lower than the awards for achievements in science and mathematics. The focus of the schools on fields like mathematics and natural sciences over languages and social sciences, however, does not align well with the notion of holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.1).

At the operational level, the emphasis on academic achievement is further strengthened by the *Parent Learner Contract* (OA2): “no learner may repeat a grade. Parents would need to find alternative school”. According to School B’s intervention plan for Term 3 of 2017 (OB8) and the *Minutes* of the staff meeting on 29 January 2018 (OB9), the school implements various interventions such as extra classes. The minutes of the meeting of principals of all Star Colleges held on 25 February 2018 (O3), foreground the emphasis on commitment to academic success by providing a lengthy list of international competitions and Olympiads that the schools can attend. Almost every meeting of principals records a discussion on the preparations for international events. School B’s *2017 Newsletter* (OB1) refers to the achievements obtained, including one of the teacher awarded as “the top mathematics teacher” in the district, and the school achieving “2nd top independent school for 2016”. School

C's *Strategic Plan 2018* (OC1) prioritised academic achievement by striving "to achieve 100% Matric pass and 100% Bachelor pass" and "[i]mproved results in Science/Maths Olympiads".

The importance attached to academic achievement is clearly visible as it filters down from the foundational documents to operational documents. The findings of the document analysis create the impression that academic achievement, specifically in the fields of sciences and mathematics is a major agenda of the schools. This approach resonates with one of the attribute of the golden generation being armed with tools of science. However, the attributes of the golden generation in Gülen's thought require a holistic education, equipping them with the tools of science, faith and moral values. The holistic education requires that a balanced approach be adopted to various fields of study as well as the development of the students in the fields such as arts, social sciences, languages and sports. The over-emphasis on achievement in natural sciences and mathematics is problematic as it implies certain subjects are of a higher order than others are. While the HET schools' emphasis on modern sciences relates to Gülen's emphasis in this regard, the lack of a balance between other fields seems to be contradictory to the claims of holistic education.

5.3.2.6 *Emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods*

Although Aslandoğan (2006) claims that Gülen's educational model is not a product of modern theories of learning, the latter support practices within Gülen's educational model. Studies on HM schools worldwide report that these schools produce good academic results (cf. 1.2) and offer secular education with an emphasis on value education, while implementing contemporary pedagogical methods in a holistic manner (cf. 2.3). The major methodological approach in the HET schools is a holistic combination of the teaching school subject content coupled with moral guidance (cf. 5.3.2.1). My analysis of the documents offered some indication that emphasis is placed on teaching methods and strategies. According to the *Code of Conduct for Teachers* (P5), teachers are encouraged to "maintain a high degree of subject knowledge and keep abreast of educational trends and developments". While policy and procedural documents mention educational trends and developments, operational documents place an emphasis on the use of technologies in teaching processes.

The *Strategic Plan 2018* of School C (OC1), recommends inviting “motivational speakers twice a year to speak [to the teachers] on the current trends in teaching”. Inviting experts alludes to the ambition of making educational practices relevant to contemporary trends. Such an approach also links with the establishment of cooperation with professionals in the community (cf. 5.3.2.3), which could possibly refer to experts in the field of teaching. This reflects the willingness of the schools to scrutinise their practices and update and revise them where necessary, while strengthening cooperation and engagement with the stakeholders in the field of education. The notion of pedagogical methods does not feature in the schools' documents prominently as recorded in the literature (cf. 2.3) about HM schools worldwide.

5.4 Discussion of the findings

Worldwide the HM schools have been inspired by Gülen's educational philosophy and practices and the assumption is that these schools are expected to be grounded in his philosophy of education. The HM institutions in general, are defined as a loose network of institutions and the HET schools in South Africa are part of the HM's global educational network (cf. 3.3). However, the documents of the HET schools in South Africa, do not outright pronounce their alignment with the HM. I subsequently had to look for direct and indirect references to the key points in order to identify implicit and explicit manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the various documents (cf. Table 5.1). In addition, literature on Gülen's educational philosophy divulges certain perspectives and values that can set certain expectations for the HET schools.

The HET schools seem to have a comprehensive set of policy and procedural documents, which outline the expectations for the processes of education and how they are expected to play out in schools (cf. 5.3.2). The foundational document of the HET schools, namely the *Trust Deed of Horizon Educational Trust* (F1), does not clarify, however, the philosophy of the schools' founders. Although reference is made to racial, cultural and religious diversity, the document is silent on the fundamental concept of holistic education. Rather, the document lists specific aims, which relate to practical processes (cf. 5.3.2.4). The *School Constitution* (F2) is also silent on any

foundational philosophy and focuses on the legal status of and aims pertaining to the operational circumstances of the schools. This lack of elaboration of the philosophy in foundational documents makes it difficult to derive expectations for the schools created by the philosophical underpinnings. However, various other documents gave some indication of the potential expression of Gülen's philosophy.

It could be expected, by definition, that key points such as holistic education, the elimination of ignorance, the development of a sense of purpose, cooperation with stakeholders, an emphasis on academic achievement and pedagogical methods would traditionally be included in the general aims and processes of any educational system. Arguably, it is not possible to infer conclusively that standards and practices in the HET schools are due to Gülen's philosophy only. Rather, the specific, intentional and consistent emphasis on these key points might potentially be indicative of Gülen's influence. For example, while stakeholder involvement may take place in any school, the HET schools place an explicit emphasis on diverse stakeholder involvement, ranging from parents to neighbouring institutions (cf. 5.3.2.4). The emphasis on cooperation, including community involvement, is an integral part of the HM schools worldwide. The HET schools' constant emphasis in the documents on academic achievement creates the expectation that these schools are focused on high academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.5). While the emphasis on academic achievement may be common to most schools, the HET schools' insistence on it may arguably be an expression of Gülen's perspective on academic achievement and quality education (cf. 2.3).

Other key points such as raising a golden generation, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, the reconciliation of religion with science and the intellectual with the spiritual, the distinction between teaching and education as moral guidance, and the emphasis on *temsil* are more likely to be unique to HM schools, and by implication, to Gülen's philosophy. The notion of a golden generation is certainly unique to Gülen, but no explicit reference to such a generation and specific attributes are made in the documents (cf. 5.3.1.1). While explicit references in the documents to the golden generation could have provided more weight to Gülen's direct influence, indirect influence can be observed through the foregrounding of holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.1). The emphasis on holistic education as an educational process is an

expression of Gülen's perspective on the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and soul, as well as his perspective on the reconciliation of religion and science (cf. 2.3.2; 5.3.1.5). The link between the golden generation and holistic education is premised on Gülen's assumption that the golden generation must be raised holistically; thus in a balanced manner (cf. 2.3).

Holistic education is central to Gülen's educational philosophy (cf. 2.3.3), and the findings from the document analysis foreground the significance of a holistic approach to education in the HET schools (cf. 5.3.2.1). The foregrounding of holistic education in foundational documents such as the *Vision and Mission of the Schools* subsequently creates the expectation that all the HET schools must promote holistic education, which is premised on the recognition of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body, and spirit. However, despite the reference to a holistic approach in the documents, an emphasis on positive sciences¹³ seems to be placed over other fields of study (cf. 5.3.2.5). While a strong emphasis on positive sciences resonates with practices in HM schools worldwide (cf. 1.3), it signals a misalignment with the notion of holistic education. This misalignment could be indicative of a wider problematic of HM schools, but this discussion is beyond the scope of my study. It is however, interesting to note that at the policy and procedural level, such an imbalance becomes visible when investigating the schools' emphasis on academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.5). In particular, the offering of greater awards for achievements in the fields of science and mathematics foregrounds this imbalance (cf. 5.3.2.5).

Reconciling science with religion is an important perspective associated with Gülen's educational philosophy (cf. 2.3.2). Although no explicit reference to religion could be found in the documents, the emphasis on a holistic approach includes aspects such as spirituality (cf. 5.3.1.5) and moral guidance (cf. 5.3.2.2). In addition to students being expected to be involved in academic, sporting and cultural activities, various foundational documents call upon the students to be involved in the spiritual life of the schools (cf. 5.3.2.1). While the schools' logo signifies the vision of accommodating and reconciling the soul, mind and body (*Ruh, Akil, Beden*),

¹³ In alignment with Gülen's (2004:232) writings, modern sciences such as mathematics and natural sciences are referred to as positive sciences.

foundational documents highlight the importance of imparting morals and ethics, and by implication, the requirement of teachers to become role models with high morals and courage (cf. 5.3.1.5). It subsequently seems that Gülen's understanding of the human being as a harmonious combination of mind, body and spirit and education as the nurturing of the whole child with both cognitive skills and moral values (cf. 1.3), finds expression in the documents. Following from such expression, the expectation is created of the HET schools to encourage the moral, physical, and educational well-being of all students. Hence, schools need to invest in efforts in their educational programmes and projects, which prioritise moral and spiritual development in addition to intellectual and physical development. While the foundational and policy documents include an emphasis on the promotion of values such as altruism and hard work (cf. 5.3.2.2.a), documents on operational level refer to these values in speeches and features in outreach projects, but lack clear references in support of sustainable programmes. Although there is no direct reference to the reconciliation of religion and science in the documents – probably due to the secular nature of the schools – schools are by implication expected to reconcile the intellectual, physical, and spiritual aspects of the human being. However, it should be noted that the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2), which is a comprehensive policy document on student discipline, details undesirable behaviours and relevant disciplinary actions (cf. 5.3.2.2.b). The exposition in the document creates the impression that the schools' approach to discipline is more punitive than corrective. The expectation of punitive practices does not align with the notion of moral guidance and *temsil*, which pertain to the practising of the values and morality that the schools wish to impart. In imparting moral values through setting example (*temsil*), one expects a compassionate attitude, which is an important notion in Gülen's philosophy (cf. 2.3.2).

Promoting intercultural dialogue and acceptance are significant values in Gülen's educational philosophy and feature as one of the aims for HM schools worldwide (cf. 3.2.2). It seems that the HET schools in South Africa find resonance with this observation as the founding document of the schools, *HET Trust Deed*, values and acknowledges cultural, religious and racial diversity. Reference to points such as being a charitable organisation (cf. 5.3.2.2.a); the rendering of social and educational services irrespective of race; none discrimination based on colour, religion and

culture (cf. 5.3.1.4); poverty alleviation (cf. 5.3.1.2); and cooperation with organisations that have similar aims (cf. 5.3.2.4) speak to the high premium placed on mindfulness around diversity and intercultural dialogue. The importance of the value of religious, cultural, and racial tolerance filters through to policy documents such as the *Parent Advisory Committee Constitution* (P13), the *General School Policy* (P1) and the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (P2) (cf. 5.3.1.4). The awareness of and emphasis on diversity create the expectation that the HET schools must establish platforms to facilitate dialogue and promote tolerance. The emphasis on intercultural acceptance is one of the strong aspects of Gülen's educational philosophy (cf. 2.3.2). The extent to which the documents expound on the expectation to create and act on an awareness of intercultural exchange and the promotion of tolerance points to a potential influence of Gülen's philosophy on the HET schools. However, further evidence is needed to conclusively argue that this expectation is met sufficiently as the document analysis revealed information only on initiatives such as *iftaar* dinner events (cf. 5.3.1.4), and not on strategies and efforts to strengthen the realisation of this expectation.

The foundational and policy documents seem to be infused with Gülen's perspective that ignorance is a deficiency of reason (cf. 2.3.2) and that knowledge, learning, and teaching others are integral parts of true living (cf. 2.3.1). The documents indirectly allude to elimination of ignorance by describing the schools as centres of learning and by prioritising the development of a love for learning (cf. 5.3.1.2). Although efforts on operational level to enhance academic achievement may be seen as an attempt to meet the expectation of promoting Gülen's emphasis on knowledge and learning, the promotion of a general culture of learning might be curtailed by a skewed over-emphasis on competitions (cf. 5.3.2.5). The actual process of learning seems to receive little attention itself, while a competition-centred approach is foregrounded.

The foundational and policy documents do not contain any direct references to the development of a sense of purpose and identity, which is associated with values such as patriotism and loyalty to the country (cf. 5.3.1.3). It is therefore not possible to derive what is expected from the HET schools in this regard. However, references to school camps and outreach projects where students could achieve self-awareness

and an awareness of their environment, as well as others' conditions (cf. 5.3.1.3) might reflect some traces of these values. However, traces are not strong enough to conclude Gülen's influence. An emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods is also subtle and vague in the documents, but the expectation is created that teachers must keep abreast of educational trends and developments (cf. 5.3.2.6). Apart from inviting motivational speakers to speak on the current trends in teaching, documents do not reflect additional practices to meet these expectations. Subsequently, the documents do not offer sufficient content to infer that the development of a sense of purpose and identity as well as the emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods are foregrounded in Gülen's educational philosophy only.

The document analysis subsequently revealed that key points such as the elimination of ignorance (cf. 5.3.1.2), developing a sense of purpose (cf. 5.3.1.3), and emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods (cf. 5.3.2.6) are subtly present or very vague in the documents. Key points such as the promotion of intercultural dialogue (cf. 5.3.1.4); the reconciliation of religion with science, mind with spirit and intellectual with spiritual (cf. 5.3.1.4); holistic approach (cf. 5.3.2.1) which supports the raising of a golden generation (cf. 5.3.1.1); distinguishing education as moral guidance and character development from pure academic teaching (cf. 5.3.2.2); *temsil* (cf. 5.3.2.3); cooperation of diverse stakeholders (cf. 5.3.2.4); and emphasis on academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.5) stand out as more recognisable connections with Gülen's educational philosophy.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the document analysis and a discussion thereof as informed by the literature review and my understanding of Gülen's philosophy. The findings of the document analysis revealed that the documents contain traces of Gülen's educational philosophy, of general practices of HM schools worldwide and subsequent expectations. These traces are rather implicit than explicit. Foundational documents explain the founding principles of the schools and offer some degree of insight into the philosophy of the founders, which offer some understanding into the subsequent expectations. Analysis of these documents revealed content in which Gülen's influence is discernible. More specifically, such

influence is visible in aspects such as promoting intercultural dialogue (cf. 5.3.1.4); reconciliation of mental, physical and spiritual aspects of human being (cf. 5.3.1.5); holistic approach (cf. 5.3.2.1); and emphasis on academic achievement specifically in positive sciences (cf. 5.3.2.5). The policy and procedural documents on the other hand, outline procedures at the schools in line with the expectations created by the foundational documents and they contain content that are couched or implicitly grounded in Gülen's philosophical ideas. In order to realise the expectations by the foundational and policy and procedural documents, the operational documents offer clarity on the operation of schools on a daily basis.

In the next chapter, I give an exposition of the research methodology and related key issues as a background for the presentation and discussion of the findings generated through the semi-structured interviews in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Perceptions of teachers and graduates: Manifestation of Gülen's philosophy

6.1 Introduction

This study centred on an exploration of the extent to which Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education finds expression in the policies and practices of the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 1.3). In Chapter 5, I undertook an analysis of various policy and other school-related documents to foreground the manifestation of the philosophy and to highlight potential expectations stemming from the documents for the schools. Teachers are arguably the most important implementing agents of a philosophy of education and their perceptions on a particular philosophy will determine if and how that philosophy is implemented. Hence, the objective of this chapter was to explore the degree to which teachers' educational perceptions and practices, administrative staff's reflections, as well as graduates' perceptions are influenced by Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 1.4.4; Figure 2.1). Informed by an interpretivist lens, I worked with the assumption that the participants will have varying experiences to which they attribute divergent meanings (cf. 4.2.2). While I was interested in the subjective experiences of the participants, my objective was not to judge such experiences against a normative set of themes. Instead, the objective was to use the theoretical framework to seek for traces of Gülen's influence in the understandings, perceptions and sense-making of the participants in this study.

In this chapter, I first give a concise overview of the particulars of the research participants (cf. Table 6.1), followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings that emanated for the interpretive analysis of the data.

6.2 Research participants

In Chapter 4, I gave an overview of the criteria used for the selection of participants (cf. 4.3.2.1). In Table 6.1 below, I give an extensive exposition of various aspects regarding the participants who took part in this study. In the table, I indicate the participant code, which I used in the research findings, the gender of each participant, their respective positions at the schools, and their teaching experience. In alignment with my criteria for participant selection, I also include the level of

familiarity with the *Hizmet* Movement and my rationale for including each participant. In my reporting of the findings, I indicated the position of the participants where I deemed it relevant.

What is also important to note is the composition of the HET schools. While the School B is only a high school for boys, the other schools have co-ed primary schools and gender-segregated high school sections. Schools D has boys only, and the Schools A and C have two streams and separate campuses for boys and girls (cf. 3.3). A purposive participant selection subsequently enabled me to obtain a comprehensive and balanced picture of the schools through the experience of the selected participants.

Table 6.1: Exposition of participants

Participant code	Gender	Familiarity with HM *	Position	Years spent at a the HET school	Rational for selection
School A					
A1	F	2	Teacher, Head of department	10	Local, served at two different HET schools and took part in a number of HM activities
A2	F	2	Teacher	5	Local, actively involved in school activities.
A3	F	0	Teacher	2	New local teacher at the school.
School B					
B1	M	2	Graduate	5 as a student	1st year university student and graduate from the school.
B2	M	3	Teacher	5	Turkish teacher and follower of Gülen's philosophy.
B3	M	2	Graduate and teacher	5 years as a student 1 year as a teacher	A graduate from the school and currently a teacher at the same school
B4	F	2	Deputy Principal (school management)	7	Local, served at the school for a long period and can offer insights on the progress of the school
B5	F	0	Teacher	3	An experienced local teacher.
B6	M	3	Guidance coordinator (school management)	4	Turkish, In charge of the guidance programme at the school
School C					
C1	M	3	Principal (school management)	9	Turkish, involved with the HM since an early age, served in various capacities in other countries and in South Africa
C2	M		Graduate and teacher	2 as student 2 as teacher	A graduate from the school and currently a teacher
C3	M	3	Teacher	5	Turkish, HM participant for a long time, served in many capacities in other countries and South Africa
C4	M	0	Graduate and teacher	5 as student 1 as teacher	A graduate from the school and currently a teacher.

Participant code	Gender	Familiarity with HM *	Position	Years spent at a the HET school	Rational for selection
C5	M	3	Teacher	3	Turkish, involved with the HM since an early age; served in various capacities in other countries and in South Africa, had personal contact with Gülen early in his career
C6	F	2	Deputy principal (school management)	14	Local, actively involved in the school and described as a key person in the school's operation
C7	F	2	Office administrator (school management)	17	Local, serves as a non-teaching administrative staff member since the opening of the school
C8	M	2	Graduate and mentor	5 as student 3 as hostel mentor	Graduate from another HET school, serves as a mentor for university students
C9	F	3	Teacher	10	Turkish, a HM participant for a long time
C10	M	2	Deputy principal (school management)	5	Local, actively involved with the school, speaks highly of Gülen and the HM philosophy
C11	M	3	Olympiad coordinator	6	Turkish, a HM follower and in charge of Olympiad training
School D					
D1	M	1	Teacher	6	Local, teaches arts at the school
D2	M	3	Teacher	8	Turkish, a HM participant
D3	F	1	Deputy principal (school management)	3	Local, has limited knowledge of the HM. Can comment on her perspective as an observer
D4	M	3	Deputy principal (school management)	11	Non-Turkish HM participant who studied in a HM high school in another country

* HM Familiarity: 0- No knowledge; 1-heard the name, but no knowledge of the HM philosophy; 2- Fair knowledge of the HM

6.3 Themes that arose from the data

Researchers have written on Gülen's philosophy of education and the HM schools worldwide. While some of the studies pertain to theoretical expositions, some research reports are on empirical research. However, despite various studies, the existing body of research on Gülen's philosophy of education remains inconclusive in formulating a common model applicable to all HM schools (cf. 2.3). The HET schools in South Africa are part of HM's global network of schools established by people inspired by Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 3.3). In the absence of a well-defined educational model, the consideration of the influence of Gülen's philosophy of education on the HET schools in South Africa relies on dominant themes in his philosophy of education (cf. 2.3). By implication, I make use of the interpretation of my findings on the same dominant themes that I used in my document analysis (cf. Figure 2.1). To make sense of the data, I read the transcriptions of the interviews several times to identify key words and phrases related to the literature and/or the findings of the document analysis. After eliminating repetitive words and phrases, I limited the list to dominant points and expressions. These include aspects related to *inter alia*, parent and community interaction (cf. 5.3.2.4), relations among the staff members, outreach projects (cf. 5.3.2.2), value education (cf. 2.3.3; 5.3.2.2), *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4; 5.3.2.3), teacher motivation (cf. 1.2), views on an ideal teacher (cf. 2.3.4), personal goals of teachers, school success (cf. 3.3; 5.3.2.5), academic emphasis (cf. 5.3.2.5), religion (cf. 2.3.2), discipline (cf. 5.3.2.2.b) and cultural and religious diversity (cf. 3.2.2; 5.3.1.4).

To refine my analysis, I re-organised the findings into four themes, namely, communication within the school context and beyond, *rehberlik*¹⁴programme, the perceptions of the ideal teacher, commitment and sacrifice, and the perception of the school as an institution. In this chapter, I present the findings of my analysis in terms of these four themes. In Table 6.2 below, I provide a refined version of how the key points were grouped together to constitute each theme.

¹⁴ A generic Turkish term which literally means guidance and is used for the guidance programmes implemented in HM schools

Table 6.2: Emergent themes

Communication	Rehberlik (Guidance) Programme	Perceptions of the ideal teacher: commitment and service	Perceptions of the school as an institution
Staff relations	Value-free teaching versus education as moral guidance	A sense of commitment	Decision-making, related challenges and student discipline
Student–teacher relations	Teachers' perceptions of value education	A sense of service	Academic emphasis and school success
Relations with parents and parental involvement	<i>Temsil</i>		Schools' mission
Graduate relations	Strategies for the implementation of the <i>rehberlik</i> programme		Diversity and identity
Community relations and outreach programmes			

However, before I discuss the findings in more detail, I first give a brief rationale for the themes in relation to the bigger context of my study.

Concerning the first theme, namely communication, it is important to first highlight that the main objective of the HM schools is to serve the people, which presumes an effective communication with those to be served. Serving the school community and the wider society through communication relates to Gülen's philosophy of *hizmet* (cf. 2.3). The findings from the document analysis revealed that within the context of the HET schools, smooth communication within the school community and with the outside community (cf. 5.3.2.4) is considered as necessary for the fostering of dialogue between people of different backgrounds (cf. 5.3.1.4) and for achieving holistic education as projected by Gülen (cf. 2.3.3; 5.3.2.1). Also, it was foregrounded that the schools regard their relationship with the surrounding communities and other organisations as important (cf. 5.3.2.4). Central to the establishment of such relationships is adequate and effective communication between teachers, students, staff members and the community.

Gülen makes a distinction between the value-free teaching of school subjects and value-focused and moral education (cf. 2.3.3). In drawing on the perception of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit, it is argued that the holistic development of the student should involve the transmission of value-free

subject knowledge accompanied by moral guidance. The findings from the document analysis revealed that the HET schools place a strong emphasis on a holistic approach to education (cf. 5.3.2.1). In various documents, reference is made to notions such as “a balanced education”, and “the well-rounded development of students”. In alignment with a holistic approach to education, the document analysis also referred to the teaching of moral values and setting a positive example to students (cf. 5.3.2.2). Although not specifically foregrounded as a guidance programme in the findings from the document analysis, such a programme is regarded as one of the strategies of value education in HM schools (cf. 2.3.3). Referred to as *rehberlik*, the guidance programme is considered an important part of the holistic approach to education. Within the context of this theme, I draw on the participants' understanding of a value education approach, *temsil*, relevant strategies for guidance and the vision of the ideal graduate.

The third theme centres on the teacher who is regarded as one of the most important role players in the implementation of a philosophy of education. The teachers are also my primary source of data as they give me a picture of the schools. The document analysis revealed that the HET schools attach considerable significance to the role of teachers in upholding the teaching profession as a noble calling (cf. 5.3.1.2) and by complementing subject teaching with moral guidance by acknowledging all students at all times and by remaining committed (cf. 5.3.2.2). Under this theme, the findings are presented in terms of the background of the teachers, which shapes their commitment and dedication, the characteristics that they are expected to possess and the role they play in the school context. I also discuss what motivates teachers in their professional lives, their professional and personal development and their familiarity with and interpretation of Gülen's philosophy. This enabled me to seek traces of Gülen's influence on the teachers' thinking and their practices.

The document analysis revealed that the quality of teaching and academic achievement are perceived as important characteristics of the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 5.3.2.5). The priority given to high quality teaching and academic achievement in various school-related documents, leads to particular expectations for the actual operation of the HET schools. While the document analysis alluded to

the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy on paper, the question remains as to whether the implicit expectations evoked by and through the documents are translated into practice. The fourth theme subsequently includes findings that relate to the school as an institution. The document analysis revealed that decision-making by the schools are expected to be done by consensus (cf. 5.3.2.4), to foster positive relations among diverse communities (cf. 5.3.1.4) and forge a shared school identity (cf. 5.3.1.3). By drawing on the participants' experiences and perceptions, I present findings concerning institutional matters, including the emphasis on academic achievement, the school's mission, and the schools' take on diversity and identity.

6.4 Findings and discussion

In the subsequent sections, I present the findings according to the four identified themes. I contend that a structured presentation of the findings is useful to foreground traces of the philosophy in the daily experiences of the participants and the general working of the schools. For the sake of clarity of presentation and since I worked with the participants' subjective experiences and interpretations, I have decided to use colour coding when quoting directly from the participants. I use **blue** coding for the direct quotations of the Turkish participants and **green** for quotations of South African teachers.

6.4.1 Communication

Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education is premised on the concept of *hizmet*, which means service to people, regardless of their identities and backgrounds (cf. 2.3). While the promotion of understanding and cooperation between people of different backgrounds is one of the general aims of HM, Gülen's philosophy of education specifically aims to establish multi-dimensional interactions between various role players in the school-related context (cf. 1.5.2.1). By implication, it can be assumed that interaction and communication amongst people is regarded as essential for service to the people (cf. 2.3). Thus, if guided by Gülen's philosophy of education, one would expect the HET schools to establish positive working relations with various stakeholders. The documents of HET schools explicitly acknowledged various stakeholders in education that include, among others, parents, graduates, professionals in community and Department of Education, and encourage interaction

and cooperation with them (cf. 5.3.2.4). In order to foreground the potential manifestation of Gülen's philosophy, I discuss findings that relate to the schools' communication, interaction, and cooperation with various stakeholders at different levels.

6.4.1.1 *Staff relations*

Staff at the HET schools include a mixture of South African teachers and non-South African teachers, majority of whom are of Turkish origin (cf. 1.3). Turkish teachers are responsible for the teaching of science, mathematics and technology, while other teachers are assigned to the teaching of languages, commercial sciences and social sciences (cf. 3.3). Although the HET schools are not explicitly linked with the HM, teachers of Turkish origin are expected to be followers of Gülen's philosophy (cf. 1.3). By implication, the staff at HET schools reflect diversity in terms of the teachers' training and more specifically, in terms of teaching philosophies. As indicated in Table 6.2, the research participants' familiarity with the HM varies from having no knowledge, to having some knowledge, to being very knowledgeable about the HM. Cooperation among staff members, and more specifically communication that strengthens staff relationships, is imperative for the effective implementation of the schools' programmes.

Given the diverse staff composition and their differing levels of familiarity with the HM, I was curious to learn about how the local teachers blend in and work with the Turkish teachers. A1, a South African teacher who worked at two different HET schools felt that "it is a difficult question because my personality is really adaptive ... they are so welcoming and open-armed". A2, a local teacher with 5 years teaching experience at the same school, was also positive about the culturally diverse backgrounds of the staff: "I love the fact that there's a whole different culture. I think it is fantastic. I think it is educational and [a] learning experience". In a similar vein, A3 said: "I feel there is no divide [between local and Turkish teachers]. I think we all get along so well". She also pointed to the unity among staff, "here everybody knows everybody and there's a unity that's not normally seen in other schools". Talking about her school's unique aspects she pointed to "unity among staff and students".

D1 alluded to some of the challenges for the establishment of relationships in a diverse context. As a South African teacher, he has become close with all the teachers due to his teaching experience of 6 years at the school. He has noticed, however, that

if you are a new teacher coming in a year or two into the process, there is a distance between the two [Turkish and local teachers] ... we have not really established a type of common ground .. we are not in the same places. Some teachers here, some teachers there. That kind of separation.

Failing to reach a common understanding, especially regarding the school's philosophical approach, can be detrimental for the effective implementation of the educational programme. D2, a Turkish teacher, pointed to how the relationship between teachers can be hampered by the challenges relating to language:

so we speak Turkish among us and the locals speak Afrikaans and this creates a bit of distance between us.

While commenting on the language challenge, D2 also raised the negative impact of the growth of the school: "In the past we were a lot closer to each other but when the numbers go up, Turkish [teachers] stick around among themselves and the others stick around among themselves". B4, however, perceives his school's slow growth in terms of student and staff numbers as a positive factor in forming close relationships: "because the numbers are small, we are able to form close relationships." School C has experienced a substantial increase in student numbers and in this regard, C7, a non-teaching administrative staff member who has been at her school since its opening, mentioned that

over the years the school growing to such a huge extent, having so many learners and so many staff members, I think we've lost that individual contact with the staff and parents.

Although the findings revealed some challenges for the establishment of sound staff relationships, there are attempts made by individuals and the schools to strengthen relationships. With regard to efforts made to build positive relations among the staff members, D2 indicated that "we normally do this individually. We invite them [local colleagues] home to build better friendship". C9, who is a HM participant, recalled how her school supported a social trip to another HM school in a different province

“so they [Turkish and local teachers going on the trip] can go and spend time together ... to win people's hearts and to be able to tell them more about HM”. The document analysis revealed that the HET schools in South Africa do not explicitly pronounce an alignment with HM (cf. 4.4), yet these schools were established by people who were inspired by Gülen's philosophy (cf. 3.3). In addition, it can be assumed that Turkish teachers, including the school principal who is always Turkish, bring with them HM sentiments and values¹⁵. Although the HET schools implement the South African *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement*, the schools' affiliation with the HM, albeit on inspirational and philosophical level, constitutes the context in which staff relationships are established. While local teachers are not expected to be followers of HM and Gülen's educational philosophy, informal exposure seems to be encouraged. Participants from School B spoke about the extent to which local teachers have become involved in the *rehberlik* programme, which is inspired by the HM values at the school:

B4: “... two class teachers [for each class], one local and one Turkish. They share duties”.

B6: “... some of the classes don't have a Turkish class teacher ... I believe that in most aspects the local teachers could do a lot better than Turkish teachers. Because most of our [Turkish] friends have a language problem”.

The *rehberlik* programme is an important distinguishing aspect of the HET schools and the sense of corporation among staff reflects a positive relationship.

Gülen's aim for education to bring about peaceful coexistence among people through the promotion of dialogue and social cohesion (cf. 3.2.2) holds significance for the establishment of good staff relationships through the creation of peace and harmony as a common good. Attempts by Turkish individuals and by the schools to create opportunities for social interactivity, speak to efforts to establish dialogue and positive relationships. The document analysis disclosed overt emphasis on stakeholder engagement by the schools. Some schools reported cases of emphasis on building good relations among staff members through team-building activities, motivational talks and social events (cf. 5.3.1.3; 5.3.2.4). As noted, strong staff

¹⁵ HM Participant refers to individuals who are followers of Gülen's philosophy and take part in HM activities and adopt HM's values.

relations, which stems from and leads to strengthening dialogue and social cohesion, are imperative for the effective implementation of school programmes.

6.4.1.2 *Student-teacher relations*

Another aspect of the schools' communication approach is the establishment of sound student-teacher relations. Regarded as the main implementing agents of the philosophy of education and the custodians and implementers of the curriculum teachers play a critical role in the realisation of the holistic education model (cf. 1.4.4; 2.3.4). Teachers are expected to teach school subjects in a value-free manner, but to also impart certain values by setting an example in practising those values (cf. 2.3.4; 5.3.2.3). The findings from the documents analysis revealed that the schools seem to adopt a punitive perspective on discipline by prescribing penal measures for a wide range of undesirable behaviours, but imparting values through example demands a compassionate approach (cf. 5.4). A positive relationship between teachers and students can potentially have a positive influence on students' attitudes towards being receptive to the teaching and education process.

B3, who is a graduate and is now teaching at one of the HET schools, described the teachers' openness and attitude to encourage as "fairly moderate. I think it's okay. There are some teachers that you can see they take the next step". However, in drawing from his experience as a student at the school, he alluded to some strained relationships, which also seem to align with an earlier observation regarding the divide between local and Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1). In this regard, he indicated that

maybe the main teachers who were especially Turkish, there was always a gap that had to be bridged. I am one of the students that would take initiative, say 'hey let's have a chat'. But not everybody's is like that.

C2, who is also a graduate and a current teacher, recalled a different experience. For him, student-teacher relations were during his time as a student

... so great. Because we would think that the teacher is our friend. It was amazing. It was great. Because they used to buy us food, took us for study until late, we played soccer together. We had fun together. We travelled together. It was great.

The document analysis revealed that the schools create many opportunities for establishing good student-teacher relationships. Students are taken on camps and opportunities are created for other social activities, all of which in turn, can assist in building a school identity through the establishment of sound relationships (cf. 5.3.1.3). Creating a common identity and uniting the school community around such an identity has the potential to not only facilitate better communication, but also to address differences of identities (cf. 5.3.1.3).

The interviews revealed that a common practice among the HET schools is the house visits by the teachers. Class teachers visit the students' homes. According to C8 the purpose of the house visits is to get to know the students closely and observe if the student's circumstances are conducive to studying. A2 also confirmed "the class teacher visits homes to see how they study. Do they have a lot of distractions? Is everything conducive to studying?". B6 alluded to a different aim of these house visits which was to offer information and have a smooth communication:

We visit the students' parents ... at least once a year ... sometimes when we have additional matters we also visit [parents] ... to inform the parents about the school and the child's condition. And also to introduce ourselves and to inform the parents about school's activities. And after we know parents better then we become close with the students.

According to the interviews, the teachers are on average, positive about the student-teacher relationships at their schools. B4, a deputy-principal who has been working at the school for 7 years, described student-teacher relations as "better than anywhere I saw. Here students are open, friendly, can communicate with teachers". For her, an open student-teacher relationship where students are addressed by their name is important for upholding discipline: "I know every learner by name. Pass them in the passage, you address them by name. They are known here. They feel important." I asked B4 why she thinks student teacher relations are important and she said, "for discipline". She believes having positive relations with students can improve discipline at the school. Document analysis revealed that the schools' approach to discipline seemed punitive (cf. 5.4). However, this teacher proposes that building close relations with students contributes to student discipline at their school, which has 293 students. The student discipline is discussed in more detail below (cf.

6.4.4.4) but it is relevant to state here that B4's perspective reflects a rather constructive outlook unlike the punitive approach reflected in the documents. As noted by B4, the deputy principal at the school: "because numbers are small, we don't go more than 25 or 26 in a class, we are able to form relationships. But in a public school, you sit with 40 in a class". She also highlights "unity among the staff and learners" as a unique feature of the school. Although School B is a fairly small school, other HET schools are, despite the growth in student numbers, moderate-sized compared to public schools. It is a practice in all HET schools to keep the number of students per class to around 26. It can be assumed that the small teacher:student ratio serves as a contributing factor in the establishment and maintenance of close relationships with the students.

The importance of acknowledging individual students by getting to know them, was also highlighted by C9, a Turkish teacher who feels

as a teacher, we need to know them well so that we can educate them well. If you consider a subject, say mathematics, if the child does not understand it and if I know the child well, I think I can diagnose his problems better. Every student is motivated differently.

Although registered as private schools and non-profit organisations, the HET schools cater for middleclass students, and for underprivileged students by offering scholarships to successful students from poor backgrounds (cf. 5.3.1.2). C8 alluded to the poverty gap among students to illustrate how teachers went out of their way to help those who "would come and say 'I don't have taxi money'. They become more than teachers". The participant also mentioned that although other teachers have a similar approach, "mostly people who took part in this were actually our Turkish teachers". While this example alludes to the notion of compassion, C10 draws the attention to the importance of passion: "I believe there's one more type of teacher that [sic] is passionate about children and teaching. If you can win the love and confidence of your children [students], teaching is nothing".

It seems from the findings that the teachers consider the establishment of good relations between students and teachers as important. The document analysis revealed holistic education as a school priority (cf. 5.3.2.1). While a holistic outlook emanates from Gülen's understanding of human being as a combination of

intellectual, spiritual and physical aspects (cf. 2.3.3), teachers are, by implication, expected to appeal to different dimensions of being human. The HET schools extend their mission of the transmission of school subject content to include imparting values and developing holistic individuals, whom Gülen refers to as the golden generation (cf. 5.3.2.1). For the students to be receptive to the values that the teachers aim to impart, good communication couched in a compassionate and caring approach and sound student-teacher relationship remain a prerequisite.

Although it seems the teachers believe in the value of building a close relationship with students, D1 cautioned against getting too cordial with the students:

we also have some [teachers] where they [sic] are very cordial and friendly with the learners. For some [teachers] it works and for others it does not. Learners sometimes try to take advantage of them and they interact with their teachers like a friend.

In a similar vein, D2 noted that

sometimes, when trying to do guidance, we lose the balance. Students may not be able to observe the balance. They see us as a [sic] friend ... sometimes they would be disrespectful to other teachers thinking that they are very close to us.

The issue of language as a challenge in the establishment of relationship was also foregrounded by some participants. D3, a deputy principal at her school, indicated that

there is definitely a language barrier for Turkish teachers and also a culture thing ... For instance, the emphasis on the matric dance. It is something that the Turkish staff might not understand why our boys are so into it. It is a rite of passage for our boys. So that cultural difference. And then the noise for example ... our boys are very loud and it is also different.

Despite these differences and challenges, D3 felt that teacher-student relations are "fairly good. It is healthy ... I want to believe that there is good communication". Language as a barrier in the establishment of relationships was also alluded to by a Turkish participant B6: "I believe that in most aspects the local teachers could do a lot better than Turkish teachers. Because most of our [Turkish] teachers have a

language problem". From the findings it became clear that some teachers perceive language as a barrier in the establishment of relationships between staff members at a school (cf. 6.4.1.1), and in terms of student-teacher relationships. As indicated, Turkish teachers are responsible for the teaching of science, mathematics and technology. When asking D2 if the language problem also relates to classroom teaching, he said: "I don't think so. I don't think there is a language problem". D2's observation might be informed by the perception that the teaching of positive science is more about subject-related terminology than about a general fluency in English (cf. 1.3). It seems that teacher-student communication takes place within two different spaces, namely communication in the classroom where teaching takes place and interaction regarding matters other than subject teaching. While language does not seem so much of a barrier in terms of classroom teaching, conversations about values and ordinary conversations outside the classroom seem to be more of a challenge. This observation aligns with the comment that local teachers have become more involved in the *rehberlik* programme, often because of the language challenges experienced by Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1).

The findings revealed that challenges concerning student-teacher communication primarily arise out of language and cultural differences. English is a second language for Turkish teachers and they mostly learn English at university or when they travel to a country like South Africa after graduation. Challenges emanating from language and cultural differences could have a negative impact on fostering dialogue among teachers and students, and can in turn, influence the achievement of holistic education. HM schools in other countries serve as bridge builders and facilitate fostering peaceful coexistence (cf. 3.2.2). Lack of smooth communication can result in lack of mutual understanding, which in turn, may undermine peaceful coexistence. Smooth communication between teachers and students is critical, both in terms of subject teaching and the transmission of moral education and values (guidance programme). Academic progress may be satisfactory, but if character development and value education becomes secondary due to language challenges, Gülen's vision of raising the golden generation through a holistic approach to education, may be hampered.

6.4.1.3 *Relations with parents and parental involvement*

The tripartite relationship among the teacher, parent, and sponsor is considered as important among HM schools worldwide (cf. 2.3) and is also identified as one of the dimensions of Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 2.3). The emphasis on the establishment of good relationships with parents and subsequent parental involvement would therefore be considered as an indication of a resonance between the HET schools and Gülen's educational philosophy. The policy documents of HET schools such as the *Parent Advisory Committee Constitution*, the *Parent-Learner Contract*, and the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (cf. 5.2.3; 5.3.2.4) foreground expectations regarding parent involvement and the operational documents clarified parental involvement in and in school meetings and events (cf. 5.2.3; 5.3.2.4). The document analysis also revealed that the *School Constitution* specifies enhancing cooperation with parents, who are regarded as partners in their children's education and expected to be actively involved by regularly monitoring the student's progress (cf. 5.3.2.4).

In order to explore parent involvement at the schools, I asked specific questions regarding the relationship between parents and the schools, and about parental involvement (cf. Appendix F). While some questions were directed at members of the school management, I was also interested to explore the parental involvement through the experience of graduates.

As some of the participants were graduates from the HET schools, they were best positioned to recall what they observed regarding their parents' involvement while they were students at the school. B1, a graduate, was of the opinion that the school

tried their best to get parents involved. For example, we had *iftaar* during *Ramadan*. There was always a parent dinner. And every couple of months, they [the school] selected a grade and they invited all the parents of that grade to come and meet with the teachers. Main thing is that if the parent wanted to get involved, [the school] was open to that.

C4, a graduate and a current teacher at the school, recalled very little contact between his parents and the school, pinpointed his parents' involvement as "[o]nly at the parent(s)' meetings". On the other hand, C8, another graduate and university

student who currently serves as a mentor at the school hostel, indicated that his parents

... were very involved. Because remember these house visits also form teacher and parent relationships. When a teacher invades your home space, he [sic] is actually inviting himself as a friend already.

It seems that the graduates recall that during their time as students at the school, a lot of emphasis was placed on strengthening the school's relationship with the parents.

In addition to parents' meetings, teachers conduct home visits to gain an understanding of their students' home circumstances. These home visits are discussed in greater detail below as part of the schools' guidance programme (cf. 6.4.2.4). D3 confirmed that one of the benefits of house visits is "building relationship with parents. It just gives you another idea of where the kid comes from and to get to know the parents". D2 commented on teacher-parent relations and pointed to the home visits:

We try to do parent visit at least once a year ... in general [teacher-parent relations] is good. Especially the class teachers [have good relations]. Whenever there is a problem or even when there is no problem, we can call them easily.

D2 also believes that good relations with parents can contribute to the education of the students as "the students act more prudently ... [i]t [close relationship between the teacher and the parent] creates a bit of a pressure on the student to learn and practise good [behaviour]". D4, a deputy principal, also mentioned the house visits and added, "every year Grade 8 parents are invited for breakfast. We also invite them [parents] for fast breaking dinners¹⁶ to the homes". Fast breaking dinners featured repeatedly in the document analysis and seem to be a common practice among the HET schools as part of their efforts to establish intercultural dialogue and acceptance (cf. 5.3.1.4).

The findings of the interviews indicate that the school as an institution and at least some of the teachers, make an effort to build good relationships with the parents.

¹⁶ Fast breaking dinners refer to dinner events where people are invited to share the dinner, regardless of their faiths.

The deputy principal, D3, however, laments that in the high school there is less parent involvement: “If you look at the first parent meeting with grade 8s, lots of parents. And then it declines slowly and then if they come to grade 11, you almost have to call them to really see them”. In order to overcome this challenge, she adds that the school creates occasions to attract parents to the school: “we have like father's day, mother's day, events like entrepreneurs' day, heritage day. So they could come and participate”. Another challenge in establishing parental involvement is highlighted by A2:

there is this PAC, the parent advisory committee. I think they meet once a month and they discuss what the school needs ... They discuss to raise funds but there hasn't been anything that I can see ...I think it is not so much the school, but I think the teacher has to push [for engagement].

As mentioned, parental involvement features well in the documents of the schools (cf. 5.3.2.4) and by implication, reminds strongly of the tripartite relationships that are common among HM schools worldwide (cf. 2.3). Considered as active partners in the education of the students, parents are required to monitor the progress of their children regularly through their diaries and timetables, and are expected to attend events and meetings at the school (cf. 5.3.2.4). The schools appear to be playing the leading role in initiating parental involvement and the findings signal that engagement with parents is aimed at soliciting their cooperation and support. Both the document analysis and the findings from the interviews revealed that the schools consider their relationship with parents important and they utilise different ways to enhance parental involvement. It seems from the findings that parental involvement is more aimed at cooperation and support, than at decision-making in the running of the schools.

6.4.1.4 *Graduate relations*

Graduates are the products of the schools and they serve indirectly as the schools' contribution to society. One can assume that the profile of the graduates of a school should to some extent, reflect some attributes that were enforced by the schools. The document analysis indicated that the HET schools expect graduates from the schools to embrace and uphold certain values and to become holistic people (cf. 5.3.2.2). This is an expectation that resonates with Gülen's philosophical idea of the

holistically educated golden generation (cf. 2.3.3). During the formative period of HM's emergence in Turkey, the graduates of the schools and other formal or informal HM institutions played an important role in spreading the philosophy of *hizmet* (cf. 3.2.1). While the document analysis foregrounded the manifestation of a sense of service (*hizmet*) in the form of a spirit of altruism (cf. 5.3.2.2.a), I was interested to find out if the graduates of the HET schools were introduced to and adopt a sense of *hizmet* during their years at the school.

While the document analysis revealed that the HET schools recommend that contact be maintained with their graduates (cf. 5.3.2.4), the findings of the interviews indicate that the graduates are involved in different ways with former fellow students and with the schools. C8 indicated that

I'm actually in charge of the gatherings for my [former] class. So I would say I have a strong relationship with my class of 2015. I still have a strong relationship with [the school] because the current principal was actually my counsellor at [his school].

C2, a graduate who is currently teaching at the school, explained his involvement with the school as first working as “a tutor. As an employee, I started last year”. C4 was also involved in the school prior to his teaching appointment: “I was helping out with students who are going to Olympiads and doing projects ... and that's when they offered me a teaching post”. B3, however, refers to lack of involvement with his former classmates: “my friend from school came here because I am teaching here. But he would never come randomly or call me when I'm home and say that he was at [his school] the other day”.

The findings also revealed that the schools make an effort to keep contact with former students. The seriousness with which some of the schools approach such contact is reflected in D3's comment that at his school

we have one teacher specifically who keeps in touch with them [graduates], at least once a month. They have soccer nights and he goes out to have coffee with them. And they come here.

Schools also seem to consider graduates as a form of advertisement for the HET schools, as noted by C10:

We must never lose contact with each other. Because he [sic] is our product. We can use him [sic] in some sort of advertisement when we have functions. For example, when we have grade 9s choosing subjects for grade 10, I can invite him to come and speak to them.

There is also an expectation that the graduates contribute to society, either financially or with their labour. As indicated by C2 above, he was assisting the school as a tutor before he was offered a teaching position. C4 was assisting students who “are going on Olympiads and doing projects.” In response to my question about the kind of social responsibility he expects of the graduate, D4, a deputy at his school, said the “most logical one [expectation] is to be a successful person so he can offer scholarships”. It seems as if hard work and altruism, and by implication *hizmet*, is expected of the students. The sentiment of C8, who is a graduate and mentor at the school hostel, reflects a case of adopting the philosophy of *hizmet*. He said, “I feel obliged to change a life the same way he [his former teacher] has changed my life. Even after he has done all of this [things his teacher did for him], he still calls me if I'm all right and if I need anything”. The approach of this teacher resonates with the principle of *temsil* in Gülen's philosophy and the expectation of the documents for the teachers to uphold and practise the values that they wish to impart (cf. 2.3.4; 5.3.2.3). Since the teacher showed the embodiment of the notion of *hizmet*, the student (C8), also decided to adopt this value and serve others.

Although the schools seem to try to maintain contact with the graduates, it appears that they are mainly involved with tutoring, motivational speeches and a few meetings, and annual dinners. The contact with the graduates is mostly through personal contact by some of the teachers and there seems to be no institutionalised graduate relations in the form of an alumni association. Consistent and a broad-based contact with the graduates is important for spreading the *hizmet* discourse (cf. 3.2.1). Losing contact with graduates and an inability to solicit their service to humanity can be problematic for assessing the long-term success of the schools regarding its advocacy of the *hizmet* philosophy.

6.4.1.5 *Community relations and outreach programmes*

In the previous sections, I presented findings on the schools' approach to communication with those who are directly connected to the school, namely staff members, students and parents. In this section, I concentrate on findings regarding the schools' relations with the community and beyond - suppliers of goods and services to the schools, neighbouring communities and institutions such as *inter alia*, the Department of Education and higher education institutions.

The document analysis revealed that the schools prioritise engagement with the wider community (cf. 5.3.2.4); a priority that resonates with Gülen's thought on building bridges and promoting dialogue (cf. 3.2.2). According to Gülen, one of the ills of our time is disunity (cf. 2.2.3) and in response to this, HM institutions worldwide prioritise the building of good relations among people of different backgrounds. The document analysis of the HET schools' documents also places an emphasis on cooperation with stakeholders, which extends to community members and other organisations. While stakeholder relations focus primarily on parental involvement, the schools also concentrate on their communication to build community relations through outreach programmes (cf. 5.3.2.2.a). As noted in the findings of the document analysis, the building of various relationships is aimed at building cohesion among members of the community (cf. 5.3.2.4). These practices of the HET schools seem to align with the tendency of HM volunteers worldwide to establish specific institutions to promote good relations among diverse people in society (cf. 3.2.2), and HM schools' promotion of intercultural dialogue (cf. 3.2.2). In addition, it should be recognised that since the schools are independent, the establishment of sound relations with the community might also be perceived as a form of advertisement for new enrolments.

With regard to community relations, C1, who is a school principal, listed people with whom the school builds relationships:

outside the school, we try to introduce ourselves to everyone we work with. It could be copy machine suppliers, the people we buy papers from, or it could be a shop where we buy things, shops where we buy our vegetables for the kitchen, and the butcher.

For C1, the building of relationships seems to be informed by the aim to introduce the school and the philosophy to others as stated in the above quote: “we invite them all in Ramadan. We try to introduce them to our school and sometimes to the teachings of Gülen”. Introducing others to the school, HM, *hizmet* philosophy and Gülen's ideas is especially an unofficial common aim of those participants who are Gülen followers. C9 also alluded to the importance of introducing *hizmet* to others when she discussed a social trip organised by the school to another province (cf. 6.4.1.1).

C10, who is part of the school management, highlighted the school's positive approach towards sharing expertise and experience with others:

school principals from around the school, they come [to] visit us. Teachers from disadvantaged schools come and watch how we teach. ... We have a program called matric intervention program, we have 25 learners from the disadvantaged learners in our case. They come here in April, June and September ... we prepare them [for the final exams].

D4, a deputy-principal, also confirmed his school's relationship with other schools:

we have good relations with the neighbouring schools especially those which are feeder schools for us. We visit them and we do a soccer tournament. Their principals were taken on a trip to Turkey and we invite them to [our] fun days and science expo.

In addition to being involved with surrounding schools and disadvantaged learners, the schools are also willing to make their sports facilities available to the community. While C10 indicated that “[t]hey [community members] use the astro turf [soccer field]”, B1 recalled when somebody from the community saw the volleyball court at the school: “she spoke to one of our teachers ... and they decided that they would have monthly tournaments ... [their] squad would come to school and play matches”.

The schools implement the national *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* of the Department of Basic Education (cf. 1.3), and as independent schools, the relationship with the Department of Education is important. According to C10, “the department officials are here once a week because they are so impressed with our school”. One of the deputy principals of School D, D3, described the school's

relationship with the Department of Education as “just a normal relationship” and reported that the school has

established a good relationship with them [the neighbouring university]. For example, Dr X comes and visits. This year he invited our learners for a camp at the university, offering bursaries to our grade 12s and that relationship is now getting stronger.

The foregoing analysis of the interviews revealed a resonance with the expectations created by the documents of the HET schools regarding broad stakeholder involvement. The documents extended the stakeholder involvement to graduates, the community, professionals and other institutions (cf. 5.3.2.4). The interviews also revealed actual cooperation and communication with organisations and individuals. These efforts resonate with Gülen's emphasis on building relations among different communities and contributing to intercultural acceptance (cf. 2.3.2; 3.2.2).

From the document analysis, it became clear that the schools are also involved in outreach projects, which seem to arise out of altruism (cf. 5.4). The findings of my interviews confirm that such involvement is not only foregrounded on paper, but is also realised in practice. It has already been indicated that some of the schools involve learners from underprivileged communities. Charity-related activities seem to be part of the schools' activities. B4, a participant who serves in school management, linked outreach projects with the mission and values of the school:

teaching something valuable is important besides schoolwork. Morals, values, you need to be kind, you need to help poor, all of those things. Giving, helping everyone. Every term we come up with some sort of a fundraiser to assist. In term one, we wanted to help the local SPCA. In the second term, it was a winter drive. Anything you had at home; hats, scarves, socks or things for winter. Canned food to make soup ... So every term it is [a] different [charity drive].

A2 also mentioned that at her school, they conduct a charity drive for children with cancer and when asked about the dominant values at the school, she said, “compassion, empathy, care for the poor, the old [and] the sick”. Caring for the poor seems to be a common value of the schools. C7 mentioned “[i]t is not just our own

[students'] parents that we involve. It is the external [parties, such as] old age homes, children's homes. And, you know, the food parcels we do”.

As already mentioned, *iftaar* dinners (fast breaking dinners) seem to be a common practice used by the HET schools to build and strengthen bonds between the schools and communities (cf. 5.3.1.4). School B hosts *iftaar* dinner for homeless people around the school as one of their outreach initiatives:

Once I was assisting with the preparations [for a dinner at the school]. The teachers themselves, in fact Mr [teacher's name] went into the streets of [the suburb name]. As dangerous as [the suburb name] is, he was just inviting people. He was literally saying 'come for dinner. Anyone on the street, come for dinner' (B1).

B1 also related an experience when they were invited to a Turkish household for dinner:

there was a lot of food left over. So we packed up everything [and] put them in containers. We walked down the road ... where the people were sleeping. So we gave that food to them.

The findings from the interviews seem to point to a few common types of community engagements. While some schools work with neighbouring schools and assist disadvantaged learners with preparations for examinations, most engagements seem to be charity-related, and involve dinner and event invitations. Fast breaking dinners and *iftaar* during the month of Ramadan are the most common and consistent events that the HET schools host. The document analysis also revealed similar engagements such as food parcel distribution (cf. 5.3.2.2.a) and *iftaar* events (cf. 5.3.1.4). These dinners primarily speak to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, a religious practice that is open to people of all religions and not only Muslims. Although the document analysis did not reveal much detail about the content of these events, the interviews foregrounded the purpose thereof as opportunities to introduce the schools and their philosophy to the event participants. While some form of outreach programme inspired by values such as altruism and hard work is undertaken by the schools (cf. 5.4), each school adopts an individual approach. While food parcel distribution may be more prominent in one school, the hosting of

events and invitations to people from different backgrounds might be considered as an important practice at another school.

6.4.1.6 *Discussion of the findings*

Given the diversity in the student and staff composition of the schools, communication among a wide range of stakeholders is critical to tackle challenges relating to language and cultural differences (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2), the poverty gap (cf. 6.4.1.2) and the growth of schools (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2). Diversity at the schools includes ethnic, racial and cultural differences pertaining to the South African reality and some teachers being Turkish due to the establishment of the schools by people of Turkish origin. From the findings, it seems that challenges regarding diversity pertain to a divide between local teachers and Turkish teachers. While the issue of language as a challenge was acknowledged by several participants, examples were also mentioned of efforts made by students and teachers to bridge the distance between local teachers, students, and Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2). As advocated by Gülen (cf. 3.2.2), intercultural understanding is promoted by HM schools worldwide (cf. 2.3.2). The document analysis revealed that members of the school community are encouraged to cooperate with a broad range of stakeholders (cf. 5.3.1.4) and to create a common identity to bridge possible gaps and differences through good communication (cf. 5.3.1.3). In alignment with the expectations created in the HET documents, the schools as institutions and some individual teachers make an effort to establish and improve communication among the staff and other stakeholders (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2). These efforts seem to be more intensively focused on student and parent relations in the form of taking care of the needs of the students and keeping in touch with the parents via home visits and other social occasions (cf. 6.4.1.2; 6.4.1.3).

The schools' efforts to enhance communication seems to point to one common trend among their engagement with students, graduates, parents and the broader community, namely the hosting of social events such as dinners, breakfasts and other social occasions (cf. 6.4.1.3; 6.4.1.4; 6.4.1.5). Such events seem to serve as platforms where attendees are introduced to the schools, their ethos and to the schools' underlying philosophy of *hizmet* (cf. 6.4.1.5). Spreading the message of *hizmet* resonates with HM's practices of the earlier days when students were

regarded as primary avenues of expansion (cf. 3.2.1). I attempted to explore the extent to which *hizmet* is infused in school practices (cf. 6.4.4). As Gülen's philosophy is based on the notion of *hizmet*, which also emphasises teaching and learning (cf. 2.3.1), educational projects of the HM also focus on learning (cf. 5.3.1.2). This practice in the HET schools as reflected in the interviews aligns with the efforts encouraged and recorded in the documents of the various schools (cf. 5.3.2.4). Although these initiatives could assist the schools in building a cordial relationship with stakeholders, the possibility exists that it can also contribute to the educational process in that home visits and spending time with students grant teachers some insight into students' personal and family circumstances (cf. 6.4.1.2). It seems from the data that building good communication with students is important for earning students' trust and for diagnosing students' challenges. Regarding parental relations, a *Parent Advisory Committee* seems to exist at the schools as indicated in the documents (cf. 5.2.3), but I could not get any detail on how they operate. Only one participant (A2) commented on the committee at her particular school, being not very active and functional (cf. 6.4.1.3).

The schools value the establishment of sound relationships with students (cf. 6.4.1.4). The HET schools place a high premium on holistic education and by implication, on academic achievement accompanied with the moral development of students (cf. 5.3.2.1; 5.3.2.2; 5.3.2.5). The documents of the schools emphasised the importance of holistic education, but over-emphasised academic achievement in positive sciences and placed a lesser focus on development in social, arts and sports (cf. 5.4). This imbalance was, however, not foregrounded during the interviews.

The importance of having good relations with stakeholders seems to be appreciated by the schools, although efforts towards the establishment of sound relations seem to be driven by rather individual teachers than being well-coordinated and systematic efforts. According to the data, the teachers who are inspired by the HM and are followers of Gülen felt compelled to take initiatives such as inviting others to their homes and introducing their local colleagues to *hizmet* (cf. 5.3.1.1). It seems that the schools have not established systems and practices that are overtly rooted in *hizmet* philosophy. The practices, which distinctly allude to HM influence such as *iftaar*

dinners and other social events for stakeholders are recorded in the operational documents. However, foundational and policy documents are not sufficiently explicit on foregrounding them in Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 5.3.1.4; 5.4.). Maintaining contact with graduates is also undertaken by individual teachers (cf. 6.4.1.4), as the schools have not established institutional platforms to coordinate such contact with the graduates in a consistent and efficient manner.

The findings revealed that the schools' communication with various stakeholders reflects a trend of positive efforts, although accompanied by challenges. Challenges seem to be language-related and allude to the relationship between local teachers and Turkish teachers. A degree of determination to establish good relations is visible in the schools' efforts and good communication is critical in achieving such relations. However, it must be noted that the avenues of engagement with the stakeholders seem to be limited to few common types of events and it is unclear how efficient these platforms are in terms of the intended outcomes.

6.4.2 *Rehberlik*

As stated above, *rehberlik* is the Turkish word for guidance and teachers who are HM participants, use it as a generic term for referring to activities that promote the moral, ethical and character development of the students. Within the context of Gülen's philosophy of education and in order to ensure holistic education, subject teaching must be complemented with a moral development of students (cf. 2.3.3). The documents of the HET schools prioritise holistic education and place emphasis on the moral, intellectual and physical development of the students (cf. 5.3.2.1). The approach to holistic education alludes strongly to what is referred to as a comprehensive *rehberlik* programme. With regard to intellectual development, the schools follow the standard syllabus stipulated by South African Department of Education. In order to achieve holistic education, the schools implement the *rehberlik* programme, which complements the subject teaching with moral guidance. However, it must be noted that the documents of the HET schools and the English speaking South African teachers use the term guidance. *Rehberlik* is only used by Turkish teachers as a generic term common to the HM participants. The term was subsequently not observed in the documents that were analysed. Due to its

prevalence among teachers who are Gülen followers, and the extent to which it emerged during the interviews, I decided to refer to *rehberlik* instead of *guidance*.

Before I present the findings, it is noteworthy to mention that despite requesting relevant documents and plans from the schools, I could not obtain any document that lays out the *rehberlik* programme. Instead, I received a computer folder containing resources such as articles, posters and links to online audio-visual material to be used in the *rehberlik* programme. One sub-folder was named *Term-III-Week-2-Selfishness*, another is named *Moral Values* and they contained documents on values such as truthfulness, honesty, sharing, love, and humility. The unavailability of annual plans could be attributed to the fact that the materials are drawn up by guidance counsellors, given to teachers to use in their *rehberlik* session, and not integrated into the school's other official documents.

The primary aspect of a *rehberlik* programme pertains to the distinction between value-free subject teaching and moral guidance (cf. 2.3.3). This distinction was revealed in the document analysis as the strong emphasis on academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.5) on the one hand, and the character development (cf. 5.3.2.2) of the students on the other. The inclusion of value education in the schools' programme not only complements subject teaching, but alludes strongly to Gülen's conception of a holistically educated golden generation who can address the ills in society (cf. 1.5.1). Following the presentation of my findings regarding the participants' perceptions of the distinction between subject teaching and value education, I focus on how values play out in the teachers' philosophies and whether the expectations highlighted in the document analysis to impart values (cf. 5.3.2.1; 5.3.2.2) inform school practices and the envisioned attributes the graduates would possess. Inserting values into the schools' programme requires teachers to impart values while teaching their subjects. Teaching values is not an intellectual process *per se*, but it is rather a process of imparting values through setting example, i.e. *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4; 5.3.2.3). While teaching subjects requires certain pedagogical strategies, imparting values too requires specific strategies. Hence, the schools' documents referred to activities such as student camps, outings and leadership camps, which might serve as platforms for value transmission (cf. 5.3.1.3; 5.3.2.1). Gülen's ideal human being has certain characteristics (cf. 2.3) and if teachers at the

HET schools are inspired by his philosophy, one can expect teachers' expectations of the graduates to resonate with attributes of the golden generation. The documents of the HET schools evoked the expectation that the ideal student must acquire attributes such as good character, high morals, courage, altruism and hard work (cf. 5.3.2.2). In the subsequent sections, I present my findings in terms of five sub-themes, namely teaching versus education in terms of an emphasis on academic work and the character development of the student (cf. 6.4.2.1); value education which specifically looks at the dominant values at the schools as perceived and commented on by the participants (cf. 6.4.2.2); the practice of values through *temsil* (cf. 6.4.2.3); strategies adopted by the schools; and individual teachers in implementing the *rehberlik* programme (cf. 6.4.2.4). The discussion of the findings through these themes is done with the aim to seek resonance with the expectations foregrounded in the document analysis, and by implication, with aspects of Gülen's philosophy of education.

6.4.2.1 *Value-free teaching versus education as moral guidance*

The HET schools focus greatly on academic achievement and on science and mathematics in particular (cf. 5.3.2.5). C10 agrees with this perception:

it is a school of academics. So there is a lot of focus on life science and physical sciences. ...And we are always very successful ...for two years in a row in 2018 and in 2017 we came out the first ...among the independent schools in [their province]. In South Africa [we] came 4th.

Although the schools take pride in their students' academic success and achievements in international Olympiads ("There is a group that is going in October to India for an English Olympiad from our school" – C10), the findings of the interviews show an interesting trend. The document analysis indicated an excessive focus on areas of science and mathematics, especially concerning preparations for participation in national and international Olympiads. The schools offer awards for achievements in science and mathematics, which are higher than for the achievements in other fields such as Olympiads in languages (cf. 5.3.2.5). In contrast to such emphasis by the documents, when asked about the role of the school, the participants hardly mentioned academic progress and placed more focus on the personal, character and moral development of the individual:

- C11: "If the school is not offering guidance, then the school is not doing its job. As an educator, *rehberlik* comes to my mind first".
- B5: "... it is not always about the subject. We are actually teaching the child how to behave, how to add to the society and the difference between right and wrong".
- D4: "Firstly, because the school's biggest contribution is to bring the child to a certain level academically, but academic only does not really work ...we have to give them certain universal values".
- B3: "... it is like indirect parenthood. It is not just about sharing knowledge or promoting knowledge. But it is about development of the child. That is paramount".
- A2: "... role that we can play is to nurture the children ...when they leave here, you want them to leave with values".

Given the HET schools' existing emphasis on academic achievement, it is possible that the participants assumed academic learning is a core function of a school and rather raised other aspects. While the documents of the schools foregrounded academic emphasis, reference to values as an accompaniment to subject teaching was specifically highlighted in the *Code of Conduct for Teachers* as ethics and character development (cf. 5.3.2.2). The stressing of moral and character development subsequently aligns with the expectation of teachers' behaviour outlined in the code of conduct. The participants' reference to the role of character development through the inculcation of values also aligns with the Gülenian distinction between the teaching of subject content and education aimed at moral and character development (cf. 1.5.1). The approach to teach students good behaviour and a sense of judgment between right and wrong resonates with Gülen's view that knowledge should be a guide in life and illuminate the road towards human betterment (cf. 1.5.1). This resonates with Gülen's belief that in order to transform characteristics such as faith, love, idealism, and selflessness into action, they should be combined with science and knowledge (cf. 2.3.2).

While the reconciliation of religion and science is an important aspect of Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 2.2.3), the perception is that religion should guide sciences (cf. 2.3.1). Although the HET schools are secular schools, religion seems to

manifests in the form of holistic education and an emphasis on morality and spirituality (cf. 5.3.1.5). While it is possible to argue that the schools make an effort to include teaching of sciences and moral and character development, it is difficult to argue that there is a sound integration of morality and spirituality with subject teaching, apart from teachers practicing the values (*temsil*). In addition, the hierarchical relationship between sciences and religion, i.e. morality and spirituality in this case, is not discernible, except perhaps for the teacher who claimed that if the school does not offer guidance, the school is not fulfilling its mission. Hence moral development and subject teaching seem to remain as separate affairs creating a possible dichotomy with regard to holistic development which ideally would require an integration of these aspects.

6.4.2.2 Teachers' perceptions of value education

The literature review indicated that the incorporation of so-called universal values in the affairs of HM schools is not only regarded as imperative, but such values should be embodied by teachers (cf. 2.3.3; 2.3.4). The document analysis revealed that the schools are expected to produce graduates of good character and high morals (cf. 5.3.2.2). Subsequently, the *rehberlik* programmes of the schools are aimed at imparting certain values, and teachers are expected to practice these values rather than merely teaching them (cf. 1.5.1; 5.3.2.3). C3 summarises the role of teachers as “to give them [students] values which belong to the humanity”.

The notion of value education regularly emerged during the interviews. Although I discuss the system and strategies employed by teachers and schools in sub-section 6.4.3.4, it is relevant to mention here that the *rehberlik* programme seems to be value-oriented. Various participants described the *rehberlik* system in relation to values:

- B6: “... we have a universal value that we cover with each class on a weekly basis. For example this week, our value is friendship and the next week's value is respect for parents”.
- C1: “... the aim of the *rehberlik* programme is ‘to equip the child both morally and scientifically. For example our teachers have an annual plan of the values that we want to impart”.
- C4: “I think it's the whole value system that the school instils”.

A1: "... we use this idea of a value period ... we have once a week where we dedicate time ... to discuss moral compass. The idea is that we are not just worried about your [sic] academics but we are worried about your moral fibre".

During the interviews, the participants referred to a variety of values to be inculcated in students at their respective schools. For the sake of a brief summary, Table 6.3 below presents a list of these values.

Table 6.3: Values highlighted by the participants

Participant	Dominant values highlighted
A1	Tolerance, respect, responsibility
A2	Compassion, empathy, caring, honesty, being responsible
A3	Respect, empathy, perseverance, giving up bad habits, giving back, charity
B1	Forgiveness, respect, sense of humanity
B3	Empowerment, ethical values, discipline
B5	Respect, how to speak to grown-ups
B6	Universal values, good morals, good character, truthfulness, not stealing, honesty, friendship, respect, cleanness
C2	Respect for other people's religions
C4	Excellence in education, kindness, loving
C8	Honesty, trustworthiness, respect
C9	Sacrifice
C10	Ubuntu, knowledge, tolerance, patience, consciousness, discipline, commitment of teachers, high level of professionalism of teachers, preparedness by the teachers
D1	Good work ethics, sense of discipline, morality
D2	Respect, friendship
D3	Caring, commitment, hard work, loyalty, discipline
D4	Honesty, hard work, perseverance, respect, responsibility, appreciation

Common values foregrounded by the participants were tolerance, respect, responsibility, empathy, caring, honesty, perseverance, discipline, morality, friendship, commitment and hard work. It is noteworthy to indicate that the document analysis revealed the promotion of respect (cf. 5.3.1.4), tolerance (cf. 5.3.1.4), discipline (cf. 5.3.2.2), morality (cf. 5.3.2.3), perseverance (cf. 5.3.2.2) commitment (cf. 5.3.2.2) and hard work (cf. 5.3.2.2.a) in the HET schools. By implication, it seems there is an intersection between the values foregrounded in the documents and those that the participants regard as important.

Arguably, according to the participants, the universal values must include those values they listed as dominant at their respective schools. A careful consideration of these values reveals a relatability to all people; thus a universal appeal. Gülen also places an emphasis on the adoption, practice and transmission of universal values, which are acceptable to people of all faiths and cultures (cf. 2.3.3). The HET schools in South Africa are non-religious schools that have identified respect, co-operation, tolerance and integration into modern society as important social virtues, and remaining devoted to one's faith at the same time (cf. 2.3.3). While these virtues were highlighted in the schools' documents, there seems to be a will to incorporate them into the affairs of the schools and the conduct of the teachers in the form of the *rehberlik* programme. Although overt religious teaching is absent in the HET schools (cf. 3.3), the schools focus on the promotion of assumed universal values such as morality which replaces religion in HM schools (cf. 5.3.1.5). The adoption of secular education complemented by value education (the *rehberlik* programme) aligns with Gülen's preference for non-sectarian secular education supported by moral guidance (cf. 2.3.3; 2.3.4). This approach is foregrounded in the holistic education, which is expected to raise the anticipated golden generation advocated by Gülen (cf. 2.3).

As the importance of value education is highlighted by the participants, it can be assumed that these values also allude to a perception of the ideal graduate. I was subsequently curious to explore such perceptions. The participants mentioned various ideas of the ideal graduate:

B6: "... those values that we give them in the five years [at the school], we expect them to guide the graduates for the rest of their lives".

C9: "... whatever he [the graduate] does, even if he is very successful academically, he must be honest and true for the [sake of] humanity".

A1: "If you [sic] are able to balance yourself academically and ... socially, that for me is a perfect graduate".

C2: "... to me, [he or she] is a person who has knowledge, that is academically very strong ...and at the same time ...respecting other people".

It seems from the findings that an ideal graduate should be characterised by a balance between academic success and moral development. C3, a Gülen follower and in charge of the *rehberlik* programme at his school, highlights this balance, but also brings in the notion of *temsil*: "to be the best in what he or she does ... own and

support universal values ... [and] set an example". It can be concluded from the foregoing that teachers' perceptions allude to Gülen's 'golden generation' whom he expects to be holistically educated (cf. 2.3). Hence the teachers' aspirations regarding their students allude to this golden generation resonating with Gülen's philosophy of education.

6.4.2.3 *Temsil*

One of the significant findings of the interviews is that the teachers who are followers of Gülen's philosophy expressed that their first encounter with the HM was through a teacher personifying the *hizmet* ideals. B6 recalled:

I wanted to become a teacher when I saw the example of my teachers at the tuition centre [in Turkey] ... they had always been role models for me ... In all aspects. With their behaviours. The way they lived. The quality of their teaching. They always impressed me. So I wanted to be like them.

The notion of teaching by example is an important expectation of teachers who teach at the HET schools. In this regard, the *Code of Conduct for Teachers*, which is implemented at all HET schools, stipulates that teachers should teach by example (cf. 5.3.2.3). Referred to as *temsil*, teaching by example, seems to be adopted by teachers at the HET schools:

- B6: "... more than preaching about these values, we try to set an example ...we do a *rehberlik* program with them [5 to 6 students] and we expect them to set the example for other students".
- B3: "... the teacher should be an example. Teacher cannot just speak about certain values. They have to ...be those values".
- C9: "... as educators we can explain to them both in words and actions that stealing is not good".
- C11: "... if I tell a child that smoking is bad but the child sees me smoking during the break, that is not going to be good".
- C4: "The teachers set a good example. They do not drink, don't smoke. There is no drugs [sic]. I think in some other schools, the teachers do not realise that students know what the teachers do. So by example, they pick up the same things".

In Gülen's educational thought, the educator is given an exalted role and status, and is expected to set an example with respect to the values he or she wants to impart. The educator should rather represent than simply present (cf. 1.5.1). While the views of C11 and C4 allude to the possibility of students emulating teachers' undesirable behaviours, the participants highlight that not only teachers are expected to set an example but students are also expected to set an example for other students. Values and moral behaviour can thus be transferred through practice, rather than mere speaking. In this regard, C11's comment has significance: "I think one reason that our school is one step ahead of the others is because they [teachers] set example on the values that they preach". Although academic success is often cited as a distinguishing aspect of the HET schools, this participant thinks *rehberlik* supersedes academic success.

A sound teacher-student relationship also seems to be important within the context of teaching by example. C1 alludes to the relationship between *temsil* and communication: "first we expect them [teachers] to practise those values. It is the concept of *temsil* ... He or she must spend time with the student so the student observes these behaviours in the teacher". Students' observation of teachers practising values seems to be an important aspect of *temsil* (cf. also 6.4.1.2). D4 pointed to the notion of citizenship and setting example and then mentioned the contribution by the graduates, "Since he is a citizen of this country, we expect him to set an example and help the community and the country as much as he can". C10 also alluded to an ideal graduate who is a role model for other students "in being good and doing good".

Although *temsil* is a central concept in Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 2.3.4), the concept of teaching by example is not unique to Gülen; it is rather a common idea within the context of education. Gülen's own intellectual development was influenced by the way Said Nursi's followers lived by practising his (Nursi's) teaching (cf. 2.2.3). However, the intersection of Gülen's emphasis on *temsil*, the expectations created in the HET schools' documents and the views of the participants, remind strongly of Gülen's position that knowledge should be a guide in life that influences one's conduct in practice (cf. 1.5.1).

6.4.2.4 Strategies for the implementation of the *rehberlik* programme

The findings revealed that the HET schools have certain generic activities, which they implement to achieve the objectives of their respective *rehberlik* programmes. According to B6, there is a parallel syllabus for value education “which we draw up at the beginning of the year ... a guidance schedule on what to teach in each grade on a weekly basis”. Guidance counsellors from the HET schools get together for a general meeting to determine “which values to teach in each grade” (B6). Several participants confirmed the existence of an annual plan:

A2: “Every teacher is given a value to discuss with the learners”.

C1: “Our teachers have an annual plan. In that are the values that we want to impart”.

C3: “There is an annual syllabus that we follow. Every class follows it separately”.

D2: “They give us certain themes and topics and we cover them with the students”.

Although the schools seem to have some kind of an annual plan, I was not able to obtain a copy from any of the schools. As mentioned, I obtained a computer folder containing resources to be used in the *rehberlik* programme (cf. 6.4.2). B6's exposition of how the *rehberlik* programme works, helps to explain the absence of a single document, which is integrated into the schools' official documents:

once we reach an agreement on these values ...we work towards implementing these values ... teachers know which value to focus on every week and we give them the necessary materials like videos or material.

The findings revealed that the implementation of the *rehberlik* programme at schools is the responsibility of the class (form) teachers – “A Turkish and a South African. We have two form teachers for each class” (C1). While the class teacher is responsible for the implementation of the *rehberlik* programme, the process is monitored by a guidance counsellor who is always a Turkish individual with experience in HM philosophy. *Rehberlik* is a HM practice, hence the requirement for the guidance counsellor to be experienced in HM practices. B6, a Turkish guidance counsellor, explains: “I meet with each [class] teacher one-on-one ... we sit down and do a plan for each student on what kind of activity we can do or we visit the

parents". Although not necessarily trained in counselling, the guidance counsellor oversees the implementation of the *rehberlik* programme and provides the necessary materials needed in covering the relevant topics and values.

Although one would expect the *rehberlik* programme to be run by Turkish teachers who are followers of Gülen, it is, however, interesting to note that the assigning of both a local and a Turkish teacher to a class implies the sharing of responsibilities:

- B4: "[a]ll get involved. Two class teachers; local and Turkish. They share duties".
- B6: "mostly Turkish teachers [are class teachers] but because we don't have enough [Turkish] teachers ... we get support from local teachers".
- C11: "local teachers also contribute to the guidance program. Each class has one or two guidance teachers. One Turkish and one local ... The two class teachers conduct *rehberlik* programme together".
- D4: "on Wednesday mornings ...there's a guidance period [conducted by] the class teachers, one Turkish and one local".

D4 further explained that although the *rehberlik* programme is carried out by Turkish and local teachers, the actual planning of the programme stems from meetings held with Turkish teachers only. During the weekly "*istişare*¹⁷ [meeting with Turkish teachers] ... we discuss mostly the guidance, because the other matters about the school are discussed in the staff meeting". The weekly meetings also account for the absence of no official school document on *rehberlik*.

C5, who has worked in many HM schools in and outside Turkey, and who has personally met Gülen on many occasions, offered a reason for the involvement of both local and Turkish teachers in *rehberlik*. According to him, it is a matter of transparency:

I believe he [Gülen] recommended this. I did not hear it personally but ... it is something that he said that there should be a local teacher too [to implement the *rehberlik* programme] so that it is done in collaboration. This way, they [the local teachers] can see what we do and they don't think we are doing something in secret.

¹⁷ A Turkish word for meeting of collective decision making (Banna, 2013).

While the practice of a local and Turkish teacher in class might be informed by a practice of transparency, it could arguably also assist in mitigating the language challenge. Turkish teachers are trained in subjects such as mathematics and natural sciences, and while they are familiar with the subject-related terminology, they might have a lesser command of English (cf. 1.3; 6.4.1.2). The teaching of values requires discussion and broader vocabulary, and in this regard, it can be assumed that local teachers can contribute towards better communication and a more efficient implementation of the *rehberlik* programme.

On a more practical note, I was interested in the practices the schools adopt to implement *rehberlik* as a general guidance programme. From the findings, it seems that each school dedicates a specific time or period for the guidance programme. In School D, on “Wednesdays there is a class teacher session. There are topics identified for those classes. Plus, the guidance service also has group meetings” (D4), and in School A, “every teacher has two values which they must cover in the value period on a Monday” (A3). In addition to these dedicated times, class teachers organise their classes into smaller groups with which they engage on a more regular basis:

D2: “... we [class teachers] divide the class into groups of four or five students. With each group, we spend about 10 minutes every week and we have discussions ... about a subject [or] ... a value. The school has a guidance period on Wednesdays before the school starts. They give us certain themes and topics and we cover them with the students”.

B2: “... we cover values on a daily basis with a group. I have four groups ... we watch videos and discuss what we should learn from it. We try to go over the values in a systematic manner”.

Working with students in smaller groups aligns with the HM practice of *sohbets*¹⁸. C8, a graduate for a HET school, recalled three experiences with guidance:

We had individual *sohbets* ... Maybe in a month you would sit one on one [with the teacher]. And then there were group *sohbets* ... this was every

¹⁸ *Sohbet* is a Turkish word that refers to a gathering, conversation and communication on a certain subject. This practice was developed among HM followers who seek advancement on religious and social knowledge, usually in local circles where informal education of HM followers takes place (Banna, 2013).

week ... it happens with a different group daily. And then the third thing was house visits ... they would come and visit your home ... to find out what background is the students from ... [so] they would come up with a solution on how to improve your personal character. So if maybe you come from ... [an] underprivileged [background where] there is no place to study, then they would advise your parents to enrol you into the dormitory or give a bursary.

However, some participants foregrounded a practice of working with certain groups on a more exclusive level. D2 indicated:

I have a special group that I selected. I call them Group A. Especially those who do not have academic or behaviour problem. ... We do the same thing with other groups, but I want this group to feel special.

In a similar manner, B6 who teaches at a different school, mentioned that

[w]e already do some guidance with every student in our class at a certain level. In addition to that, the *rehberlik* programme that we do with five to six students is at a higher level. The others are not ignored completely at all. ... with them [the exclusive group] we form a sort of team which is a better and stronger and ... we expect them to set the example for other students.

Although the rationale for working with the students in smaller groups addresses the “difficulty of reaching out to every student” (B6), the formation of exclusive groups can be problematic in that it can lead to adverse sentiments in those students who are excluded from these ‘special’ groups. In addition, the possibility exists that exclusive groups can limit the interaction and a sense of trust and solidarity among the students between those who are chosen and these groups and those who are not. An important aspect of Gülen's philosophy of education is to bring about peaceful coexistence (cf. 3.2.2), and any practice that can result in adverse sentiments would be a misalignment with Gülen's philosophy.

The schools' efforts to establish communication with parents were covered earlier (cf. 6.4.1.3), in alignment with the document analysis (cf. 5.3.2.4) and literature on worldwide HM schools (cf. 2.3). Teachers claimed that if they know the students closely, they could diagnose students' problems more efficiently and offer better solutions (cf. 6.4.1.2). According to B6, “we spend time with them from 7:00 a.m. in

the morning until 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon ... having spent time together we know more or less what the character of each student is". C9 also underscores that "[w]e try to get to know each of them closely. Then by meeting their parents we try to build good communication and build a tripartite relationship of parent, student and teacher". Having a good understanding of the student's environment can potentially assist the teachers in designing and applying effective approaches in value education. The *rehberlik* programme is about imparting values, therefore gaining insight into students' background, existing values and cultural norms can assist in developing appropriate strategies in which the existing cultural sensitivities are respected and the targeted values are built upon them. Home visits are significant in assisting teachers to gain such an insight into the students' circumstances as well as building good communication with the parents and the students (cf. 6.4.1.2). Having an understanding of the students' circumstances can also assist in formulating suitable interventions to problems - "If the child [student] has a problem, by knowing his or her parents we try to adopt an approach accordingly" (C9).

Gülen's conception of education as a holistic development of the individual by means of a combination of the teaching of school subjects and moral guidance (cf. 2.3.1), seems to inform the schools' inclusion of a *rehberlik* programme. However, the findings suggest to some extent that subject teaching and *rehberlik* are separate activities. A lack of integration of the *rehberlik* programme into the teaching can potentially create a dichotomy between academic knowledge and values imparted during assigned periods. As it stands, it is also a misalignment with Gülen who advocates for the reconciliation of science and religion. As the schools are secular and do not include religion in their curriculum, such reconciliation manifests in the imparting of morality and spirituality (Gage, 2014; cf. 5.3.1.5). Reconciliation of science and religion, i.e. morality and spirituality, creates an expectation for a meaningful incorporation of values into classroom teaching and other daily affairs of the schools. Failure of such a meaningful incorporation may result in students regarding academic teaching and moral value education as separate endeavours, while failing to recognise ethical and moral challenges associated with doing science.

6.4.2.5 Discussion of the findings

The HET documents envisage a holistic education model, which combines the intellectual and physical development of students with moral guidance. The document analysis foregrounded a holistic approach to education as a harmonious combination of the academic progress and moral and character development (cf. 5.3.2.2). During the interviews, the participants brought to the fore the importance of intellectual development and moral guidance. Both Turkish and local teachers seem to perceive the role of the school as a balancing act between the academic programme and the inculcation of values (cf. 6.4.2.1). The balance between teaching and education as a perceived core function of a school is not unique to the HET schools. It is generally accepted within the context of the educational landscape, that schools are responsible for teaching content and imparting values. However, the *rehberlik* programme and the way in which it is conducted in the HET schools foreground a particular perception of teaching versus education.

The findings revealed that the participants place a high premium on the role of values in education, both in terms of what they perceive as universally accepted values (cf. 6.4.2.2; Table 6.2), and with regard to strategies for the implementation of the guidance programme in the schools (cf. 6.4.2.4). Some of the common practices of the HET schools are the prominent role of Turkish guidance counsellors in the planning of the *rehberlik* programme and the assigning of both a Turkish and a local teacher to a class. The findings revealed that Turkish guidance counsellors are responsible for making decision about which values to assign and provide the necessary material for the introduction of such values. The *rehberlik* programme is strongly associated with the HM practice of moral and character development, and aligns with Gülen's distinction between the teaching of subjects and education as moral development (cf. 2.3.3). The pertinent involvement of Turkish guidance counsellors in the planning of the *rehberlik* programme supports the link between the HET schools' guidance programmes and the notion of a holistic approach to education, which involves universal values. Imparting values that are relatable to humans in general, thus values with an assumed universal appeal, foreground two implications for the *rehberlik* programme. Although the programme stems from HM practices, there is no need to solely assign the implementation of the programme to Turkish teachers who are familiar with HM practices and followers of Gülen's

philosophy of education. Local teachers, who are often not familiar with the HM and Gülen's ideas (cf. Table 6.1), play a supporting role in the implementation of the guidance programme and it is possible that their assistance helps to mitigate the language challenges experienced by Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.2.4; 6.4.1.2). Although the *rehberlik* programme can be regarded as a strong influence of Gülen's philosophy of education, the involvement of local teachers seems to be a matter of transparency - the programme is about imparting universal values and not about religious indoctrination (cf. 6.4.1.2). While local teachers contribute towards value education, the exclusion of local voices in the planning of the *rehberlik* programme could mean that indigenous values, such as African communitarianism and Ubuntu are neglected. For Gülen, the promotion of universal values can lead a person to virtue and subsequently, towards the creation of a better world based on positive activism, altruism, interreligious and intercultural dialogue (cf. 2.3.2). However, the exclusion of local voices and the lack of infusion of the programme with indigenous values contradict HM's project of building bridges (cf. 2.3.3) and the recognition of diverse cultures as expected by HET documents (cf. 5.3.1.4).

It could be argued that Gülen's ideas on the important role of universal values in moral and character development manifests in the *rehberlik* programme and foregrounds the assumption that the implementation of universal values is not context bound. In addition to the lack of local voices, setting a positive example that only relates to universal values can also ignore the importance of indigenous values. The findings revealed that both local and Turkish teachers perceive teaching by example (*temsil*) as important (cf. 6.4.2.3). *Temsil* is a central notion in the HM practices and the emphasis placed on teachers being an example to the students and students being an example to other students (cf. 6.4.2.4), align with Gülen's advocacy of setting an example through modelling moral values (cf. 2.3.4). If teachers only set an example of universal values and exclude indigenous value systems, the relevance of the *rehberlik* programme, hence Gülen's philosophy of education, for the South African context becomes questionable. Such a state of affairs is particularly problematic in the South African context where the education is historically perceived to be westernised. Ignoring local voices and local value systems can counteract the call for the inclusion of and a greater role for African philosophy and indigenous value systems in educational theory and practice (cf.

1.1). In light of foregoing, another question arises: can a programme, which is primarily drawn up by Turkish followers of Gülen, simply be replicated for implementation in an entirely different context?

From the findings it became clear that *rehberlik* programme conducted at HET schools are run as a complementary aspect to the subject teaching (cf. 6.4.2.2). The allocation of a dedicated period for value education creates the impression that subject teaching is treated as a separate educative activity. Gülen's educational philosophy seeks to reconcile theological, spiritual and scientific knowledge, through the teaching of universal values and modern sciences alongside each other (cf. 2.3.2). A designated period for the *rehberlik* programme as a complementing activity, aligns with Gülen's distinction between teaching as the transfer of scientific knowledge as a purely intellectual process and moral guidance infused with universal values (cf. 2.3.3). Although such a distinction appears to be almost contradictory to a holistic approach to education, it seems to be informed by Gülen's perception of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit. Holistic education in the Gülenian sense, is not about the integration of teaching with value education *per se*, but rather as holistic development where moral guidance accompanies value-free subject teaching (cf. 2.3.3). The fusion of the intellectual, physical and moral development of the students into a multi-dimensional interaction seems to be indirectly promoted through *temsil*. Teachers who embody intellectual competence, physical health and moral standing are subsequently best positioned to enhance students' holistic development. While the distinction between value-free education and moral guidance constitutes holistic development, *temsil* serves as the vehicle for such development. In conclusion, the way in which the *rehberlik* programme is framed and conducted in HET schools, signals a strong influence and subsequent manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education.

6.4.3 Perceptions of the ideal teacher: commitment and service

Teachers are the most important role players in implementing a philosophy of education (cf. 1.4.4). Due to teachers' central role in the education process, under this theme, I focus on attributes of the teacher and their perceived roles as it emerged from the data analysis. Turkish teachers at the HET schools are Gülen

followers and it can therefore be anticipated that their perceptions of education, their commitment to the profession and the way in which they conduct themselves, would be infused with and be reflective of aspects of his philosophy of education. Arguably, the implementation of Gülen's philosophy of education will be driven by the Turkish teachers. Although South African teachers are not required to be followers of Gülen or to have any knowledge of HM, assigning both a Turkish and a local teacher to a class creates a space for informal exposure to Gülen's philosophy and HM sentiments. The findings presented in this section centres primarily on Turkish teachers' perceptions of the ideal teacher, which include ideas regarding the role of the teacher, teachers' commitment and their expectations concerning the delivery of service. The focus on Turkish participants enabled the foregrounding of the influence of Gülen's ideas in their approach to actual practice in the HET schools. In addition, drawing on the views and experiences of some local teachers and graduates added support to a possible indirect influence of Gülen's philosophy of education.

6.4.3.1 *Sense of commitment*

Gülen believes that education is a sublime duty towards God (cf. 1.5.1). According to him, the teacher has an exalted role and holy status and should set an example by living according to the values he or she wants to impart (cf. 1.5.1; 6.4.2.2). This perception constitutes for Gülen, the ideal teacher model and teachers at the HM schools commit themselves to this ideal. One of the important characteristics of the HM schools is the dedication of teachers (cf. 1.2; 2.3.4). In alignment with Gülen's view on holistic education, teachers are required to be facilitators of students' physical, intellectual, and spiritual development, *inter alia*, by setting an example (cf. 2.3.4). Within the context of the HM schools, the accomplishment of this expectation, requires the possession and maintenance of a high level of commitment to responsibilities (cf. 1.2).

The findings of the interviews revealed that the participants perceive good subject knowledge, command of pedagogical methods, a holistic and caring approach, sacrifice, the ability to maintain a firm and compassionate discipline, and a passion for the profession as important attributes of the ideal teacher. For C9, it is important that the teacher should [“understand the child and child psychology ... academically, the teacher must be well prepared ... and an ideal teacher must love what he or she](#)

does". While C10 expects the teacher "to be passionate about his job", A2 states, "first of all, teacher must have a good knowledge of their subject and good delivery [methods]". D4 combined subject knowledge with classroom management: "firstly, I must know what to teach ... Discipline is very important ... and classroom management". D1 expects an ideal teacher to be even-tempered: "I think [it should be] somebody [who is] even-tempered ... [and] have a lot of patience with the kids". C11 points to the teacher's attitude toward the profession in that "he or she must love the children and he or she must love his job". C1 argues that a teacher "cannot do without sacrifice".

In the previous sections I referred to the participants' perceptions of value education (cf. 6.4.2.2) and *temsil* (cf. 6.4.2.3). The HET schools' *Code of Conduct for Teachers* expects teachers to acknowledge teaching as a noble calling and requires commitment to teaching ethics and character formation (cf. 5.3.1.2). Expecting the teachers to be committed to the profession by setting good example emerged as a common perception among the participants in the interviews:

- A3: "your [sic] responsibility is to show them and to be that person [who practices the values that are taught]".
- B3: "I think the teacher should be an example. Teacher cannot just speak about certain values they have to show. They have to be those values".

Since Gülen's philosophy of education is indirectly expected to be driven by Turkish teachers, I now present these participants' perceptions in order to foreground a potential institutional outlook on commitment influenced by Gülen.

Commitment for the Turkish teachers stems from their early introduction to and induction in the philosophy of *hizmet* either when they were at high school or at university. For the participants, commitment to *hizmet* and their concomitant commitment to serve as a teacher seem to allude to insights gained from teachings and mentoring in tuition centres and/or their stay in student homes. While tuition centres are official institutions where qualified teachers serve to teach and carry out *rehberlik* for the students, student homes are informal structures supported by the *hizmet* community, (cf. 3.2.1). B6 was introduced to the HM in high school through both a tuition centre and a student home, and recalled the impression the teachers at

the tuition centre made on him: “In all aspects; with their behaviour, in the way they lived, and in the quality of their teaching, they always impressed me. So I wanted to be like them. And that's how I made my choices”. This participant's observation alludes to the *hizmet* principle of recruiting students into the HM by teaching through example (*temsil*). Living according to the *hizmet* philosophy, implies conducting oneself as a teacher by setting an example. C8, who is a graduate and mentor at a HET school hostel, attests to the influence of a role-model: “I feel obliged to change a life [the students with whom he works] the same way he [his former teacher] has changed my life”. Setting a good example seems to imply one's character and conduct infused with values. While the HET schools' documents encourage the practice of values (cf. 5.3.2.3), the participants foregrounded value education as an important aspect of school practice (cf. 6.4.2.1; 6.4.2.3). This emphasis can be traced to Gülen's notion of *temsil* as a good practice of *hizmet* values, which prioritises service to all (cf. 2.3).

Graduates interpreted their teachers' commitment in different ways. B1 reflected, as a graduate, on the possible motivation for his Turkish teachers' commitment and dedication:

I don't want to say it is religion ... Maybe that is because they are Turkish, but I also know other Turkish people ... maybe the whole *hizmet* movement ... is something that plays a big role.

It is, however, interesting to note how, C2, a graduate and local teacher with no knowledge of HM, could not point to any certain impetus for Turkish teachers but he predicted, “If I am not mistaken, they are motivated by their religion”. The findings revealed that the Turkish teachers themselves, regard their commitment and willingness to sacrifice as a direct consequence of *hizmet* and Gülen's philosophy of education.

In addition to having a certain level of commitment to their profession, maintaining their commitment and motivation, seems to be an important aspect of engagement in *hizmet*. In this regard, two main activities emerged from the data. One is a sleepover programme over few days at the end of each school term and the second one is a weekly evening gathering, which is perceived as a spiritual evening. The sleepover programmes are

for personal development. We read books, we read Qur'an and we perform prayers. We have discussions around certain topics [and] watch video-recorded talks of Gülen ... these programs are occasions of recharging so that they [teachers] can start fresh in the new term (B6).

Turkish teachers also meet once a week for spiritual and intellectual rejuvenation. B2 reported that they have a “[s]piritual evening on Thursday evenings, pray for school, country and humanity”. C9, a female teacher, elaborated further on these evenings where they

learn the meaning of a chapters in the Quran. Then, we have a principle or a virtuous act for the week, which we try to practise. She [guidance counsellor] identifies few *sunnahs*¹⁹ for the week and we try to implement them during the week. We also identify a topic for the week and then we find what is said about it in Said Nursi's books, the Qur'an and *hadith*²⁰ ... we then have a discussion about it.

According to B6, these evenings are also occasions when “we pray for our students. ... This is a two to three-hour program. Instead of doing this at school, we try to do it at the teachers' homes”. The focus of these evening gatherings seems to be religious and they are informal gatherings which the teachers attend voluntarily as none of these are part of the schools' official programme.

Although the participants primarily referred to the influence of the HM and Gülen on their sense of commitment, and it should be noted that Gülen is foremost an Islamic scholar whose teachings are thus rooted in Islam (cf. 2.4). Hence, the findings revealed a religious mindfulness among the Turkish teachers, which is presumably strengthened during the evening programmes where the teachers come together to read and discuss religious matters.

Despite secular education being offered at the HET schools (cf. 5.3.1.5), a strong religious motivation seems to filter through the Turkish teachers' conduct concerning their daily practices, including their relationship with others. As noted by C1:

¹⁹ A tradition of Prophet Muhammad, which Muslim people strive to practice in their lives.

²⁰ Sayings of Prophet Muhammad.

we love the created because of the Creator. If we had to punish everybody according to our faith, God would have done it already. They [people of other faiths] are also created by God. We love entire humanity.

Despite being strongly rooted in their faith, the Turkish teachers' religious commitment does not feed into the adoption of an exclusivist attitude towards people who follow different faiths. The promotion of inclusion was foregrounded in various school documents, such as the *HET Trust Deed*, which advocates against discrimination and in favour of positive racial relations, tolerance, and acceptance (cf. 5.3.1.4). The teachers' commitment and acts of inclusivity allude to *temsil* and seem to be in line with expectations created by the school documents, and are, by implication, manifestations of Gülen's teachings to build bridges across differences and to practise positive racial relations (cf. 3.2.2). This willingness to build bridges also manifests in the schools' efforts to establish communication with diverse stakeholders (cf. 6.4.1).

6.4.3.2 Sense of service

In addition to the teachers' commitment to the teaching profession, the aims and expectations of the participants who are followers of Gülen were also explored. I was curious to see to what extent their expectations of their role as teachers, are premised on Gülen's position that serving people is serving God (cf. 2.3). I subsequently wanted to determine if their thinking is influenced by the notion of selfless service as embedded in the *hizmet* philosophy.

The participants agreed on not having a worldly expectation, but rather an expectation to gain the pleasure of God. Gaining the pleasure of God is accepted as the highest status a Muslim person aims for (cf. 2.3).

C1: "... teaching requires a lot of patience. It is a very difficult profession ... But if you don't have expectations, then it's an easy profession".

B2: "No expectation for this life. To do something good before I go. As a Muslim, [I expect] nothing apart from God's pleasure. I don't want anything else".

The participants also foregrounded representing Islam (*temsil*) as a way of life. D2 described his overall aim in life as

only to represent [practise his faith, *temsil*]. I try to live a prudent life [attempting to practise his faith to the best he can] ... the pleasure of God, nothing else [and] to achieve salvation in the hereafter.

At the HET schools, local teachers are not required to be followers of the HM, or to be Muslim. Given the presence of Turkish teachers, who are Muslim, and their pertinent role in the schools, I wanted to know how they relate earning God's pleasure to serving people of other religions through secular education.

D2: "I do not think gaining pleasure of God is only through spreading religion. We do not talk about religion here ... Students most probably do not know that I perform daily prayers ... I think without really talking about religion, to represent a good human being is also service".

B2: "I will not convert them to Islam but I can tell and show them about the values I believe. We also need to care for them ... I can only do what I believe is good".

The notion of aiming for the pleasure of God aligns with Gülen's understanding that service to people is in essence, service to God (cf. 2.3.2). The findings revealed that for the participants, service does not have to be overtly religious, but can be in the form of practising what is good; thus an embodied good human being. D4 reiterated that he has no expectation in this life, but "[t]o show the good side of Islam with practice ... at least we show a Muslim person to students who may have never seen one. Because Islam's image is not good". While the participant seems to assume responsibility to contribute towards countering the current negative image of Islam, his perception of living by example alludes strongly with the idea of *temsil*. Gülen in his earlier years, advocated for establishing modern schools instead of opening mosques. In a similar vein, integration into modern society while remaining devoted to one's faith, has been identified as one of the virtues of the HET schools (cf. 2.3.3).

The findings revealed a pertinent interconnection between the Turkish teachers' understanding of *hizmet* and their willingness to sacrifice:

C9: "I feel like this [the school] is my home ... Everything comes down to sacrifice. This is what I have seen in *hizmet*".

- C1: "I work until 15:00 for my salary ... I'm trying to be productive and useful for the people. Whatever I do after 15:00, I regard as a service to humanity. We learn from Gülen's thought that service to people is service to God".
- D2: "... the sacrifices that we make come from Gülen's philosophy. We are not just ordinary employees here. I want to spend more time with the students and take care of them, warn them in a proper manner about their mistakes. All this comes from his [Gülen's] philosophy".

Commitment and sacrifice were among the dominant values highlighted in the school documents (cf. 5.3.2.2; 5.3.2.3) and mentioned by the participants during the interviews (cf. 6.4.2.2). Sacrifices made by the participants allude to making extra effort and using personal time to assist the students and to establish good relations with students, parents and other stakeholders (cf. 6.4.1). B2 believes, "[i]f a child calls in the evening or over weekends, they [teachers] would help without hesitation". Arguably, a sense of sacrifice in this context, points to the Turkish teachers' commitment as a direct consequence of the *hizmet* philosophy and Gülen's philosophy of education. As such, commitment and sacrifice are premised on the assumption that to serve people is to serve God (cf. 3.2.1).

Although my focus is placed on Turkish teachers as explained (cf. 6.4.3), it was important to consider the extent to which the graduates' aims in life allude to a sense of service and purpose. I argued that such aims might be an indirect reflection on their exposure to their former teachers' sense of commitment and purpose. B1 articulated a strong sense of purpose and service:

I want to ... build something for myself and my family and future generations to come ... I want to be remembered that he [sic] did great things. I want to help people as well ... I'm not even speaking about people who are poor and so forth, but people who are well off but ... never were exposed to anything in life. They just ended up living [without purpose]

C4, who has never heard of Gülen or the HM, wants "to improve technology ... my aim is to build technological devices, robotics, smart phones etc. ... technology has the ability to improve so many things that I feel like it's the best way to improve

people's quality of life". Although it is not clear whether the participant's ambition arises out of a sense of service or a personal passion, it has an element of assisting people. Among the graduates, C8 had probably the clearest vision for service and he explicitly expressed that his sense of service is inspired by his teacher at the school:

looking at my life and in my past, I actually feel obliged to change a life or two. Because my life has been changed. My life has been transformed. So anything that will put me in a position to change a life, I will gladly do it ... I feel obliged to change a life the same way he [his teacher] has changed my life ... this is the type of person I want to be.

This participant's experience foregrounds how *temsil* aligns with the Gülenian perception that the embodiment of universal values can lead to the development of a sense of service. In particular, C8's experience reminds of Gülen's position on holistic education according to which the teacher plays a role in the spiritual progress of the student by taking an interest in his or her intellectual and physical development (cf. 2.3.4; 2.3.3).

Under this theme I discussed the participants' perceptions regarding commitment and service. An ideal teacher is expected to possess certain skills and character traits as well as a passion for what he or she does. In line with Gülen's position that the teacher is ascribed an exalted status and concomitant responsibility (cf. 1.5.1), the participants expect the teachers to do more than just teaching their subjects (cf. 6.4.2.2) and impart values geared towards achieving holistic education (cf. 2.3.4). *Temsil* features strongly among the expectations from the teachers, which calls for greater sacrifice grounded in religious motivations (cf. 6.4.3.1). Despite religion's seemingly strong role in the Turkish teachers' motivation, they seem to adopt an inclusive attitude in rendering their service (6.4.2.2). This deep sense of service and sacrifice alludes to the Turkish teachers' experiences when they were first introduced to HM. The influence of either their teacher or a mentor played a role in shaping the teachers' perception of service and passion for their jobs (cf. 6.4.1.1).

6.4.3.3 Discussion of the findings

Arguably, commitment and sacrifice from teachers are not peculiar to Gülen and the HM as these expectations are intrinsically related to the role of teachers in general.

However, what renders commitment and sacrifice unique in the context of the HET schools, is how the Turkish participants link it with a particular sense of service. As followers of HM, inspired by Gülen as an Islamic scholar, the participants foreground service to people as service to God (cf. 6.4.3.2). Although this perception aligns with Gülen's understanding of *hizmet*, it should be noted that two related perceptions transpired from the findings. Universal values and Islamic values are not in conflict with each other, and the teaching and modelling of universal values is an acceptable service to people, and to God (cf. 6.4.3.1). Turkish teachers at the HM schools are all Muslim who seems to be strongly inspired by their religious consciousness. The findings refer to various activities such as spiritual evenings and a sleepover programme where they keep themselves spiritually and intellectually rejuvenated (cf. 6.4.3.1). Despite their strong religious orientation, they work at secular schools where they engage in secular education. Value education or the *rehberlik* programme at the HET schools are not about religious indoctrination, but about imparting universal values to students of different religions (cf. 6.4.2.3). In addition to value education, the setting of an example, living according to the values was highlighted as important by both Turkish and local teachers (cf. 6.4.2.2; 6.4.3.1). The participants indicated that students might not necessarily be aware of how religious their Turkish teachers are. As such, universal values and Islamic values are not perceived as in conflict and the notion of service through secular modern education seems to filter down to the Turkish teachers' thoughts and conduct in the form of a belief that serving people of all backgrounds and sacrificing constitute a religious act (cf. 6.4.2.2; 6.4.3.2). Service through secular and modern education strongly alludes to Gülen's interpretation of secular and modern education as a way of service according his interpretation of Islam (cf. 1.2). Arguably, prioritising secular, inclusive and modern education resonates with a concern to integrate into modern society. The emphasis that the participants place on value education, the importance of teaching by example and in the last in instance, their commitment to service, resonate with a disposition to engage in secular modern education for the holistic development of their students, while consciously promoting positive relations among people of different backgrounds. The schools' inclusive efforts to establish good communication and corporation with diverse stakeholders (cf. 6.4.1) can be regarded both as a religious service and a way of integrating into modern society. Within the context of the HET schools and the way in which the Turkish participants perceive

their teaching as service to people in a secular school setting, attunes to the idea of integration. Such integration is first achieved at the philosophical level where religious beliefs and practice and engagement in modern life are reconciled and not seen as mutually exclusive (cf. 2.3.3) The Turkish participants seem to be strongly influenced by Gülen's response to modernity, which cuts across a binary framework of religion versus modernity. His philosophy of education aims to raise a generation which are rooted in faith while being engaged in modern world also seem to have influenced him (cf. 2.3). Thus, while the Turkish participants foreground their strong religious orientation as Muslim, they remain committed to the embodiment of universal values as a contributing factor to the holistic development of students, albeit in a secular school setting.

Perhaps one of the most distinguishing aspects of HM educational model is the commitment and passion of the teachers, which manifest as sacrifice (cf. 6.4.3.2). Both local and Turkish teachers seem to agree on passion as a characteristic that the ideal teacher is expected to possess. The expectation of passion and commitment was alluded in the operational documents of the schools, but not in the foundational and policy documents (cf. 5.3.2.2). The impression is subsequently created that the schools rely on teachers' informal and personal willingness to sacrifice as it is not set out as pertinent expectations at the policy level. As reflected in the interviews, Turkish teachers seem to believe that the pleasure of God is their ultimate goal and that their sacrifice at the schools by serving diverse students will earn them their goal (cf. 6.4.3.1). Mechanisms such as informal special evenings and holiday programmes are utilised to maintain the Turkish teachers' motivation by engaging in prayer and discussion. These activities are exclusive, they are of spiritual nature and do not form part of activities such as team building exercises aimed at strengthening a sense of unity and purpose amongst the staff at the HET schools (cf. 5.3.1.3). The teachers seem to see no conflict between being deeply committed to their faith, which is strengthened by engaging in prayer and discussions in these evening and holiday programmes and working in a secular environment practising and promoting values that are universally relatable (cf. 6.4.3.1; 6.4.3.2). This disposition alludes to Gülen's position regarding the kind of activism that favours establishing secular schools over building mosques (cf. 2.3.3) and complementing secular teaching with spiritual and moral development through

rehberlik programmes (cf. 2.3.2; 6.4.2). It seems that the strengthening of the Turkish teachers' religious sentiments feed into their sense of commitment to teaching, which in turn, they see as a service to diverse students, and in the last instance, as a service to God.

6.4.4 Perceptions about the school as an institution

In alignment with the focus of this study on the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools, I present findings that relate to the school as an institution as well as some of the institutional approaches and practices. In drawing on the document analysis, I worked with the assumption that perceptions about institutional matters such as decision-making, day-to-day operations, student discipline, the schools' mission and matters around diversity and school identity might offer insights on Gülen's influence.

From an organisational perspective, the HET is the founding legal entity and the HET trustees are the ultimate decision-makers. The *School Constitution*, however, calls for the school management to drive decisions relating to day-to-day operations through consensus (cf. 5.3.2.4). The document analysis revealed that the schools have comprehensive policy documents on school discipline, which seem to be more punitive and less corrective (cf. 5.4). In sub-section 6.4.4.1, I explore the participants' experiences with the decision-making process and their views on implementation of student discipline. In addition to decision-making and discipline issues, the schools' approach to academic achievement is a critical issue that needs to be explored within the institutional context. A strong academic emphasis featured dominantly in the schools' documents, and in particular, an overemphasis on positive sciences was foregrounded (5.3.2.6). The strong focus on positive science was identified as a misalignment with holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.5; 5.4). Hence, in Section 6.4.4.2, I explore how this emphasis plays out in school practices, and how it is perceived and justified by the participants.

Gülen attaches a central role to the school as an institution and describes it as a nest, which governs every aspect of a person's life (cf. 2.3). Subsequently, it was important to explore the participants' understanding of the role and mission of the

school. Given the potential influence of Gülen's philosophy through the founders of the schools (cf. 1.3) and Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.3), I was curious to explore if the participants' views resonate with that of Gülen and the school documents. In order to determine if the schools teach and promote Gülen's philosophy explicitly or implicitly, I subsequently asked the participants about their knowledge of the philosophy, albeit indirectly at times. One of the aims of the HM schools is bringing about peaceful coexistence between people of different backgrounds (cf. 3.2.2). The document analysis revealed efforts to establish dialogue between various stakeholders (cf. 5.3.1.4) and in Section 6.4.1, I discussed the schools' efforts to establish good communication with various role players. In the last section of this theme, I present the participants' perceptions around the notion of intercultural dialogue. I was specifically interested in determining the extent to which the schools create a school identity that aims to establish a united school community, which bridges racial, cultural and linguistic gaps (cf. 5.3.1.3).

6.4.4.1 Decision-making, related challenges and student discipline

As noted, the HET documents call for collective decision-making via consensus (cf. 5.3.2.4). While the HET trustees hold the ultimate decision-making power as the founders of the schools, the operational realities of a school require decisions to be made on a daily basis. Gülen believes that decision-making based on logic and reason, will illuminate knowledge and wisdom (cf. 2.3.1). A participatory and efficient decision-making requires the sharing of knowledge and personal perspectives on issues under decision. The foundational documents do not delve into details of policy and practices, but do call for consensus, which in turn, foregrounds the consultative process of decision-making. Consultative decision-making is a fundamental HM concept (cf. 6.4.2.4), which is referred to as *istişare* in Turkish. By definition, *istişare* necessitates that everyone is sufficiently consulted and all participants in a meeting are given a platform to contribute towards decisions.

It is subsequently expected that an institution that operates in alignment with the HM principles, will engage in an inclusive decision-making process, which aims to seek consensus. In order to explore if *istişare* is practised at the HET schools and to determine a possible alignment with a HM principle thereof, I asked the teachers about their experiences with the decision-making process at their respective schools.

It is important to first note that at the HET schools, the principal is always a Turkish individual and there usually are Turkish and local deputy principals. Heads of departments can either be Turkish or local. Among the participants, I have interviewed four local deputy principals and two Turkish deputy principals (cf. Table 6.1). The current management structures of the schools seem fairly balanced in terms of Turkish and local involvement. From their managerial position, the participants reported that while some of the administrative decisions are made at the management level, the staff are also involved to enable a collective decision.

- D4: “We discuss in management meetings but when there is something concerning teachers we discuss this with the teachers”.
- B6: “The main topics where decisions are needed are identified and then discussed with all the teachers. ... this school does not belong to one or two people but everyone's”.
- C10: “Oh yes. We depend on our teachers. So we treat them well. It [decision-making] is not prescriptive”.

Participants who are not in a managerial position, corroborated the inclusion of all staff members and foregrounded a dialogical space where teachers can participate in the decision-making process:

- B2: “It is like everyone is in the group. There is respect for my opinion”.
- D1: “... the principal generally has an open door policy where you can come and make a suggestion and most of the time things can be implemented as teacher's suggest. There's some influence that everyone has”.
- C5: “There are certain things which the management comes and declares, but there are some of them regarding the practice and we make decision together”.

Various examples were cited by participants to illustrate their positive experiences with regard to decision-making and with the management structures at their school (“... if you are dedicated enough and you are prepared ... they would support you” (A1); “We [management] decide on something ... they [teachers] can say it's not good for [reasons] A, B, and C, and then we can make a decision from there” (B4)).

Although it seems that decision-making at the HET schools is experienced as an inclusive process where the opinions of staff members are respected, A2 pointed to the fact that

[b]ig decisions are usually made by the principal and the management... writing exams until the last day of the term is something I would never have done ... we were just told that it's going to run until the last day ... they could have consulted us.

A3, who teaches at the same school, however, articulated a different experience:

I think that's something that's very nice here. In our staff meetings, the principal brings up an issue ... they [management] ask if what they want to do is okay with everyone.

Decision-making on school level is, however, not without challenges and D3 referred to the problem of not having a local deputy previously, which resulted in a gap between the Turkish management and the local staff:

[t]his year I was made deputy [principal]. I have worked here for six years and have seen how things are happening. It has been a one-sided thing. Now I'm also here [as a deputy principal] ... it makes the gap narrow. There was a gap between the Turkish management and the South Africans.

Exploring how the decisions are made at the HET schools was important to trace resonance with HM principles. As mentioned, another pertinent issue, which is extensively dealt with in the school documents, is the schools' approach to student discipline (cf. 5.3.2.2.b). It is arguably a common reality that student discipline is an issue that every school has to face and address. In the case of the HET schools, a comprehensive set of discipline rules are contained in the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (cf. 5.3.2.2.b). This document foregrounds a punitive approach to discipline, which does not align with a holistic development approach informed by caring and compassion (cf. 5.4). The findings from the interviews revealed a mixed discipline approach, ranging from punitive measures to a more compassionate corrective approach. According to D3, the school's discipline approach "is quite good and healthy ... The class teacher tries to give some advice but usually it does not work ... we usually just hand it [the case] over to [the schools'] discipline committee". The teachers seem to be concerned about the well-being of the learners and want to

enhance good relationship by giving advice. C8, a teacher graduate, recalled: “they would do the counselling part and talk to you and then monitor your behaviour ... They would always try and find a solution before they could actually take any action”. D2, mentioned that teachers “issue demerits. If it is repeated, we write an incident report and send them to the deputy principal or the discipline committee. If it is not something too serious, we just warn them”. C6, a deputy principal deems discipline of great importance: “I think if you're disciplined, everything else falls in place ... I would not say we do not have discipline issues, we have. But our discipline is more corrective than punitive”. While some schools' approach to discipline is experienced as more lenient and corrective, A2 is concerned about the lack of transparency at her school:

... [sometimes] I do not know why a learner is not in class. Then I found out they wrote something rude in a book [and he is suspended] ... this is a boys' school and ... It doesn't require such a big outcome.

Although A2's response may allude to a stereotypical gender-based approach to discipline (because they are boys, they should be allowed room for minor transgressions), it foregrounds a lack of communication between the teachers and management. Such a communication gap was also alluded to by B3, who indicated “a gap between the Turkish management and the South Africans [teachers]”. Earlier findings on staff relations (cf. 6.4.1.1) also revealed cases of challenges in staff relations, which were linked to a language barrier and lack of interaction between Turkish and local staff. It was illustrated that Turkish teachers speak Turkish and local teachers speak Afrikaans among themselves (D2) and D3 added, “there is definitely a language barrier for Turkish teachers”.

The document analysis indicated that an emphasis on moral and character education, and the modelling of a positive example requires a compassionate approach (cf. 5.4). A compassionate approach aligns with a sense of service and a subsequent willingness to commit and sacrifice (cf. 6.4.3). Taking care of students without expecting anything in return, not only signals selflessness, but constitutes a compassionate act, which ascribes to Gülen's philosophy of gaining the pleasure of God through service to others (cf. 6.4.3.1). The practice of offering advice and counselling to students who transgress a rule, coincides with the HET schools'

understanding of the *rehberlik* programme as a means to inculcate values that would contribute towards the development of a sense of judgement between right and wrong (cf. 6.4.2.1). C5 recalls situations where Gülen was personally consulted on matters of discipline at schools where he taught: "...everything was student-centred. He never approved that a student is expelled. He believed each student must be taken care of individually". Offering counselling and advice in a situation of a discipline offence alludes to a compassionate approach to discipline, which subsequently challenges the punitive approach embedded in the documents.

The interviews revealed that the decision making at the schools seem to be fairly participatory and the teachers feel they can influence decisions. However, there seems to be cases of decisions being made at the management level and not sufficiently being communicated to the staff. The involvement of local deputy principals in a Turkish dominated management structure seems to serve as a bridge between management and local staff. The participatory decision-making process and involvement of local teachers in the management resonate with the concept of *istişare* and the school documents' expectation for decision-making by consensus (cf. 5.3.2.4).

The documents of the schools stipulate a punitive approach to student discipline and suggest the issuing of demerit points and the sending of students to the disciplinary committee (cf. 5.3.2.2.b). However, the findings revealed disciplinary practices that lend towards tolerance and compassion. Counselling and advising of students as corrective strategies before resorting to disciplinary action, allude to a compassionate approach. Adopting compassion is foregrounded in Gülen's view that true religion promotes tolerance, open mind, and compassion (cf. 2.3.2). The *rehberlik* programme aims to impart values and strengthen the character of the student (cf. 6.4.2.2), and can indirectly and proactively mitigate discipline issues at the schools. This alludes to Gülen's teaching of taking care of each student. The findings, however, point to an apparent lack of coherence among different schools. While some schools practice greater tolerance and compassion, others seem to prefer the implementation of the prescribed measures of the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (cf. 5.3.2.2.b).

6.4.4.2 *Academic emphasis as school success*

The HET schools pride themselves in their academic success (cf. 3.2.3) and the school documents also created the impression that significant emphasis is placed on academic achievement, with special prominence given to positive sciences (cf. 5.3.2.5). The participants also foregrounded the HET schools' commitment to a strong academic focus: “[the] school is primarily an academic institution. There is no limit [to] how far the school goes in order to drive the academic accomplishments of the students” (B3). In Gülen's thought, both the Qur'an and the universe are God's creation and while the universe is the subject of study, the positive sciences are the tools (cf. 2.3.1). Since he aspires to reconcile religious and scientific thought, which alludes to holistic education, any religious or scientific knowledge production is embraced. The strong emphasis on positive sciences in the school documents (cf. 5.3.2.5) can thus be attributed to Gülen's influence. I was subsequently curious to understand how the emphasis on positive sciences plays out in the HET schools and how it is perceived and experienced by the participants. From the findings it was clear that the participants generally perceive the schools as academic in nature, albeit with a strong focus on science and mathematics:

- C3: “... it is more an academic school and this is the reason why most people prefer us. Because we are good in science and mathematics ... Sometimes when we engage in other activities, the parents object and say that they sent the children to this school because of science, maths and physics. Investment is done according to demand”.
- B6: “It is not just a science and maths school. Just that there is more emphasis on science and mathematics. Other subjects are there”.
- C10: “... it is a school of academics. So there is a lot of focus on life science and physical science ... [this focus manifests in the form of] attending international Olympiads. And we are always very successful ... [science and maths are so important because of] the way the world is moving”.

The participants explained the rationale for the emphasis on positive sciences in varying ways. B6, a Turkish teacher gives an encompassing explanation:

the reason we emphasise science and mathematics is that most prestigious universities or job opportunities are based on these fields ... everything in life develops according to the demand. The people who

show interest in Star College, have academic achievement and good education as their priorities.

The justification for the emphasis seems to be market driven. D1 justifies the emphasis on positive science as a way “to offer a broad spectrum of choices when a learner gets to university, to be able to get into engineering, architecture, mathematics, medicine”. D4 alludes to economic reasons: “they [the students] decide according to what pays well. And the professions that pay well, are mostly the ones, which require science and mathematics”.

The overemphasis on positive sciences holds certain implications for the day-to-day practices of the schools, which are not positively experienced by all participants. B5 notes how “some subjects get more periods than the others ... That causes a problem because that is not the two subjects you [sic] have to pass only”. D1 links discipline issues to the underachievement of students in the fields of science and mathematics, “there are also a lot of learners who are weak academically. So that gives us some discipline issues ... Some of them should really focus on social science and humanities”. A1 is for example concerned that parents might expect academic success only and disagrees by implication, that school policies are based purely on the demands of the parents.: “I think we need to let our parents know that this is education and it is never just science and mathematics ... we mustn't let the parents dictate to us how to do things”. D3 is more practical in her consideration of the natural sciences and mathematics emphasis: “I don't really think in South Africa our focus is science and mathematics. But it's more entrepreneurship. I think we should also start moving skills-based, rather than science and mathematics”. It seems that this participant is more attuned with the South African reality as she expressed her wish for “those who do not really have the ability [to go to university], to really go for [technical] skills”.

In order to achieve the desired academic achievement, the schools put in extra efforts. In addition to allocating more teaching time to natural sciences and mathematics, the Turkish teachers who are responsible for the teaching of these positive science (cf. 1.3), “have Saturday tuitions. These are free classes ... we

support them to take part in national Olympiads" (B6). C1 mentions study camps for the students:

We don't want to drown the children in academic fields. We try to make it fun. We try [to include] different activities ... this helps them to socialise as well. Parents say ... 'if he was at home, he would spend time playing games, on social media and with their devices'. But in this way, the child is taken away. They play games, sit and talk".

The extra classes are offered at the schools: "we do one-on-one tuition with the weaker students. We have tuitions every Saturday, open to all our students. All our colleagues are here until about 5pm in the weekdays, offering tuition" (C11).

While the emphasis is on natural sciences and mathematics, the other aspects such as other subjects and activities are not ignored in the HET schools. A2 refers to a shift towards a more balanced curriculum:

when I arrived at Star College, I thought the learners who were not coping with maths and science, were at a disadvantage. They introduced maths literacy, history ... geography so the choice of two social science subjects to do ... There's a religion studies. There is a lot of choice at the moment.

C11 explains how the school would intervene in cases where the parents expect their child to pursue a career that requires mathematics. If the student does not achieve or have the ability in sciences and mathematics, the school would try to convince the parents to consider other options so that the student does not, "waste his or her capacity. He or she is good in social sciences, so why does he not become a lawyer?". D4 noted that "English is the first criterion Yes, we say a science and maths school, but primarily, the first thing is English".

The responses of the participants revealed that the schools place a strong emphasis on academic achievement with a specific focus on positive sciences. Although the schools offer other subjects, the policy remains biased toward positive science (cf. 5.3.2.5) and the subject offers of the schools at least partly, seem to be driven by a competitive outlook (cf. 5.4) as well as the demand from the parents. This resembles a pragmatic position on education. Gülen's philosophy of education advocates a strong passion for learning and the search for truth as an integral aspect of being human (cf. 2.3.1). While a Gülenian understanding perceives knowledge as a guide

in life (cf. 1.5.1), the HET schools adopt a more instrumentalist approach by taking into consideration career opportunities and financial returns.

6.4.4.3 *The schools' mission and promotion of HM and Gülen*

The stated vision of the schools is “a quality education with holistic approach of nurturing and encouraging each child's moral, physical and educational well-being irrespective of race, religion or background” (cf. 5.3.1.1; *Vision and Mission*). The mission of the HET schools subsequently prioritises the development of individuals who are skilful, innovative, respectful to human rights, competitive, knowledgeable of mathematics, sciences and technology, and conscientious to address issues of equity, redress, transformation, and access (cf. 5.3.1.1). By implication, the vision and mission require the schools to offer holistic education through ensuring academic achievement, physical development and value education. Due to the HET schools' affiliation with the HM, Gülen's vision for a school can also be expected to filter down to the schools' documents and the perceptions of the teachers.

In drawing on my understanding of the mission of the HET schools, I was curious to compare the participants' perceptions thereof with the stated mission, and to explore a potential resonance with and influence of Gülen's philosophy of education.

The analysis revealed an interesting difference in the responses of the Turkish teachers and the local teachers. The Turkish teachers' perception of the mission of the school is strongly linked to the values and value education:

- B2: “to gain good morals ... not drinking alcohol ... not smoking ... not taking bribes”.
- D2: “I think students and [non-Muslim] teachers will see Muslims and they will see that they don't do anything wrong”.
- D4: “introducing universal values ... the Turkish teachers are Muslim. So they set [positive] example ... about 6 years ago, we had a student ... He asked me if I was Muslim and I said yes. And the student said but the Muslims are terrorist. I mentioned other [Muslim] teachers' names to him and he said but they are different”.

The local teachers, however, seem to be more concerned with a holistic approach that aims at raising well-rounded students:

- A3: “To produce whole, well-rounded kids.... sports ... [student] clubs ... values ... that of being well-rounded. So it's not just about schoolwork. The camps ... focus on emotional issues”.
- B4: “Education first. As much as [sic] fun to have braai and play sports, the fact that we teach learners is important. Besides schoolwork, [it is also important to focus on] morals, values, kindness, helping the poor, giving and helping everyone”.

The Turkish teachers' status as Gülen follower has already been established (cf. 4.3.2.1), but local teachers usually have little or no familiarity with Gülen and the HM (cf. Table 6.1). In an attempt to trace the influence of the HM in the perceptions of the participants as a potential influence from Turkish teachers, I subsequently asked the local teachers if they are familiar with Gülen, his philosophy and the HM. Some of the participants indicated how they gained knowledge about Gülen, mainly in an informal manner through engagement with Turkish teachers and by reading books. B1 recalls as a former student, how he “spent a lot of time talking to Turkish people and visiting. I saw his name on the books in the libraries. He wasn't like taught to us as a subject ... They never wanted to force anything onto anyone”. C8, also a former graduate, corroborated that “[the school] didn't teach about Gülen. as I was reading some books ... out of interest, I would ask about the author. That is how I found out about him”. Some of the graduates also got the opportunity to travel and was introduced to the HM movement (“So I got to meet ... some of the people who sponsored the schools. I got to understand that this is part of a global movement ...” (B3); “... been to Turkey [around] 2013/4 with the school. The principal took us. We heard a lot about it [sic] when we were there” (B4)). It is clear from the findings that the schools do not introduce or force Gülen's teachings; rather, local teachers gain information on the HM in different ways. The importance of occasions for local and Turkish teachers to gather and interact must be noted as significant platforms where learning about Gülen and the HM takes place such as local and international trips (cf. 6.3.1.1; 6.3.4.3). C10 gained knowledge during an *iftaar* dinner. Based on his understanding of Gülen being the reason for “Turkish (HM) schools ... when we have interaction with parents, we talk about him ... from an educational perspective not

religious". This participant feels strongly that although "[w]e are not telling the learners now you should follow his teachings ... But they should know about his teachings. There is nothing wrong about them ... It [sic] only brings out the good in people". While C4 indicates that he has no knowledge of Gülen ("No"), D1's limited understanding is that Gülen "is supposed to be the enemy of the State [in Turkey]. I know they have this principle of understanding and openness of Islam with the other people in other religions outside of the community. I know that the trust [HET] is related to the movement".

Although the local teachers have a varying degree of knowledge about Gülen and HM, it appears that their perception of the school's mission is somewhat infused with what they gain from their Turkish colleagues. A1 recognises the concern to serve regardless of religious background:

for me the biggest lesson ... is the idea of 'we do the things we do for the others and so we can see the joy it brings to all' ... his [Gülen] ideology is very similar to that of Nelson Mandela ... moving out of your country to serve others is beautiful. I think that is something I actually respect, regardless of being Muslim or whatever.

B1, a graduate, recognises that the "*hizmet* movement ... I think it was something like an organisation or a system put in place to share education ... the "value system that the [Turkish] teachers uphold is because of their affiliation with the HM ... I think it does play a huge role". C8 articulates how he was influenced as a former student, by his teacher who practised *hizmet* values: "He guided me ... he liked my character in a way. I would say he was trying to understand where I come from, why I was the person I was". C10 deems Gülen's philosophy as valuable and beneficial, because "I believe it's educationally sound, morally good and it can do good to our entire universe".

The Turkish participants also explained how they do not indoctrinate students, but rather use *temsil* as a method of introducing HM principles: *It's more about practising than telling about his [Gülen's] teachings. Our friends show his teachings in the form of practice and that's how an atmosphere is created here*" (C1). It seems *temsil* is instrumental, not only in teaching the values but also in introducing Gülen and the HM to others, hence becoming a broader life principle rather than a strategy for

imparting values. B6 indicates that when there is an interest, “[w]e describe him [Gülen] as a thinker who contributes to the development and salvation of humanity through education and establishing institutions like these”.

The findings revealed that despite an observable difference between Turkish and local teachers' opinions, they do not limit the schools' mission to subject teaching only. Reference to value education aligns with Gülen's vision for complementing subject teaching with value education (cf. 2.3.3). The findings also indicate that the schools and specifically Turkish teachers, prefer transmitting values through organic engagement. The strategy of personifying values and establishing trust before introducing such values, can stimulate an interest to learn more about the motivation behind the values and the people embodying them. This practice seems to align with the Turkish teachers' experiences of their own introduction to HM by their former teachers and mentors (cf. 6.4.3.1).

6.4.4.4 Diversity and identity

The documents of the HET schools promote an open-minded and inclusive approach to people of different backgrounds by practising racial, cultural and religious tolerance (cf. 5.3.1.4). Gülen believes true religion promotes tolerance, open mindedness, compassion, hard work, peace, and other universal values and practices that lead a person to virtue and perfection (cf. 2.3.2). The acknowledgment of pluralism has been identified as an important concept on which Gülen's philosophy of education is based (cf. 1.3). For the teachers who are Gülen followers, religion is a major source of motivation (cf. 6.4.3.1), and their adoption of an inclusive approach is in line with the values of respect, co-operation, tolerance, and integration into modern society (cf. 2.3.3; 6.4.3.1). Due to being situated in South Africa, it can be assumed that the HET schools adopt and practise inclusivity through the recognition and modelling of the plurality of South Africa's religious and cultural traditions. I was subsequently interested to explore how schools with a Turkish origin promote diversity and establish their identity within the South African context.

The local teachers seem to perceive the Turkish teachers as “welcoming and open-armed ... understanding” (A1), and the bringing of a different culture as an “educational and learning experience” (A2). Although the Turkish influence is strong

due to the originators of the schools being Turkish and having Turkish principals and teachers, the local teachers do not regard the schools as Turkish institutions. D3 disagrees that the school is Turkish (“No. I don't think so”), and A1 states that “I don't want to affiliate [sic] it officially as a Turkish School ... I think it [calling them Turkish schools] would be very biased because I don't see it that way”. For A2, her school is “definitely a South African school introducing Turkish culture”. Although C2, a former graduate testifies that “[t]hey did not force me to become Muslim ... they do respect other people's religions ... I am Christian”, cultural differences do exist between teachers and students. B6 indicates that it is important to “ensure mutual respect for these differences ... we try to spend time with the students ... so that we understand them and they understand us better”. Dinners were identified as one of the major events that the schools host as part of building good relations with people of other religions (cf. 5.3.1.4). B4 attests to how the school invites “people from the area ... from the fire station, from the [surrounding institutions] ... of all races and religions to build relationships”.

B3, however, raises a concern that the school missed certain cultural element. He illustrates in reference to students' behaviour at the events hosted by the school:

I think with that the whole education style of [his school] has missed on a cultural element. As soon as a boy steps out of the school, it is done. ‘I don't have to report to any teacher. I am free now, I can go and do whatever I want to do and behave in a certain way when I am back at school’. The missed culture could be anything. Songs cries, group cries, those kinds of things that have a cultural identity of some sort. ... You know that cultural oneness.

This participant juxtaposes what is expected by the school, and life outside the school and relates the problem to the fact that the school does “not explicitly teach somebody how to believe in the greatness, goodness of all those things. Not explicitly. It is just a subtle thing” (B3). An interesting example of cultural difference surfaced when the school management did not want to allow for a graduation dance, known as the matric dance in the South African context. The school management dominated by Turkish staff objected to the idea of male students attending the dinner with female partners, but after talks with local teachers and students, common ground was reached: “I was very fortunate that the principal at the time was open to

options. I said we can't [sic] take away the South African culture ... So they were open enough so listened" (A1). While local teachers were concerned about the absence of typical South African culture, C1, a Turkish teacher, believes that the school does not create a new culture; rather "[t]hey [students] practises their culture ... There's no such thing as a new culture here". Despite cultural differences, this participant perceives the school's success as a uniting element because the students are "proud of carrying the school's logo ... when they speak of success, we can feel the students are feeling the pride ... I think they are happy to be with Star College" (C1).

Turkish teachers who are Gülen followers are perceived to be welcoming and understanding by their local colleagues, who in turn, object to the schools being referred to as Turkish schools. The findings revealed that there is no experience of indoctrination. Within the HM tradition, establishing dialogue forms part of a proper expression of the Islamic way of life. Gülen argues that fulfilling the prophetic tradition is only possible through love and by establishing dialogue with followers of other religions (cf. 3.2.2). As reported in the documents (cf. 5.3.1.4), the schools have made it a common tradition to host dinners aimed at gathering people of different religions and cultures to promote understanding. The expressed intentions and the content of these dinners seem to be indicators of Gülen's influence and resonate with a general HM practice of establishing dialogue with people of different backgrounds (cf. 3.2.2; 6.4.1.3). The findings indicate that although cultural difference can pose challenges, attempts are made to negotiate and resolve such matters. The HET schools subsequently prioritise dialogue across cultural and religious boundaries. The schools' strong academic approach and success seem to be regarded as a school identity and as a unifying factor.

6.4.4.5 Discussion of findings

Findings relating to the management style and the decision-making process revealed that although day-to-day decision-making seems to be participatory at the schools, the process is not without challenges (cf. 6.4.4.1). Participants in managerial positions, namely a principals and deputy principals, and ordinary staff members, both Turkish and local, indicated and illustrated by means of examples, how decision-making is inclusive and collective. In broad terms, decision-making at the

HET schools aligns with *istişare* as a consultative decision-making mechanism. The principals of the HET schools are always Turkish but the management structures can include a mixture of Turkish and local staff. Despite an influential presence of Turkish staff, the schools ought to function in the South African context, for the benefit of South African learners. A gap between Turkish members of school management and the local staff, which can presumably be attributed to language and cultural differences, was brought to the fore. Language has been identified as one of the factors that create a gap between Turkish teachers and local teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1), and is in some cases, a barrier for Turkish teachers, which in turn, may impact on student-teacher relations (cf. 6.4.1.2). When the issue of language is coupled with a lack of sensitivity towards South African cultures, the gap between a Turkish management and local teachers can be widened and become problematic for the smooth functioning of the schools. The findings, however, indicate efforts to bridge the divide, *inter alia*, through a participatory management approach based on consultation, and a willingness to revise decisions if necessary (cf. 6.4.4.4). Although one participant expressed a concern about the HET education style not being aligned with what he perceives as a specific cultural (presumably South African) identity, the local teachers do not regard the HET schools as Turkish institutions (cf. 6.4.4.3). Nor do Turkish staff members aim to introduce a new culture and to indoctrinate students and local staff to become followers of the HM (cf. 6.4.4.4).

The influence of a Turkish presence in schools seems to be twofold. On the one hand, the influence is informal and subtle in terms of introducing staff and students to Gülen, his philosophy and the HM, rather than indoctrinating them. Local staff's familiarity with the HM ranges from information gained through interaction with Turkish colleagues, to the reading of books, to no knowledge (cf. 6.4.4.3). There seems to be no structured and formal teaching about Gülen and the HM, but the availability of Gülen's books at the schools and circumspect strategies such as invitations to *Iftaar* dinners and travels to Turkey indicate that the schools are not secretive about their HM affiliation. On the other hand, the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education seems to stem from a strong presence and influence of Turkish staff. A management style based on discussion, consultation and consensus aligns with the HET *Trust Deed's* expectation of the schools' operations based on consensus in decision-making (cf. 5.3.2.4). In turn, this stipulation aligns with

consultative decision-making as a fundamental HM concept, and with Gülen's belief that true religion promotes universal values such as tolerance, open-mindedness, hard work and compassion (cf. 2.3.2). It has been established that the Turkish teachers are strongly motivated by religion as a way of life that should rather be modelled than indoctrinated (cf. 6.4.2.2). The Turkish participants' perception of the school's mission is strongly aligned with value education (cf. 6.4.4.3), and by implication, with the notion of *temsil* and the *rehberlik* program as strategies to model and inculcate universal values (cf. 6.4.2.2). The emphasis on value education seems to be a manifestation of Gülen's understanding of the teacher's role as an expert in subject teaching and a mentor who imparts those values by which he or she lives (cf. 2.3.2). Another manifestation of the Turkish teachers' attunement with Gülen, is the emphasis on both positive sciences as a manifestation of their engagement with modernity, and the practice of universally relatable values that depicts a selfless good human being. Gülen believes that in order to transform attributes such as faith, love, idealism, and selflessness into action, they should be combined with science and knowledge (cf. 2.3.2). The findings revealed that the Turkish teachers who are responsible for the teaching of positive sciences, are willing to offer Saturday tuition, free classes, one-on-one assistance and study camps (cf. 6.4.4.2). This willingness to sacrifice personal time has its roots in Gülen's position that serving people is serving God (cf. 1.1; 6.4.2.2).

It has been established that the schools' *Vision and Mission* document sets a vision for quality education in the form of a holistic approach to education (cf. 5.3.1.1) and both Turkish and local teachers perceive the role of the school as a balance between the academic programme and value education (cf. 6.4.2.5). An emphasis on academic success (cf. 6.4.4.2) and representing Islam (6.4.3.2) allude to Gülen's position on the reconciliation of modernity and religion through *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4), which in turn, opposes extreme modernity and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam (cf. 2.3.2). The findings, however, indicate that quality education seems to be interpreted in a narrow sense as academic achievement, specifically in positive sciences (cf. 5.3.2.5). Both Turkish and local teachers foregrounded the idea that the HET schools are known for academic excellence in science and mathematics (cf. 6.4.4.2). This finding resonates with a previous study on the HET schools, which concluded that the schools pride themselves for high academic standards and

providing individual attention to students (cf. 3.3). The emphasis on and bias towards positive sciences in the schools seem to comply with parents' demands and a concern for enabling students to opt for well-paying professions, which in turn, often require higher marks in positive sciences (cf. 6.4.4.2). A typical manifestation of greater emphasis on positive sciences is the allocation of more teaching time on the timetable, a practice that is criticised by mostly the local teachers who do not teach positive sciences. The local teachers seem to be more concerned about students having options in terms of their ability, and a skills-based approach as more relevant for the South African context. The participants' views of the mission of the schools pointed to a desire for greater balance between positive sciences and other subjects as well as other social and sporting activities. Gülen's desire for holistic education that balances intellectual, physical and spiritual development (cf. 2.3.3) seems to manifest in these teachers' views.

It has been established in the document analysis that the HET schools' *Code of Conduct for Learners* lays down a comprehensive set of discipline rules, which seems to be rather punitive than corrective (cf. 5.3.2.2b; 4.4). Arguably, a punitive approach neither aligns neither with Gülen's vision of service to all, nor with taking care of each student as a religious act (cf. 1.1; 1.5.2.2; 6.4.4.1). The findings revealed mixed responses to student discipline at the different HET schools and point to a lack of coherence among the different schools' interpretation of the *Code of Conduct for Learners*. While the participants from Schools B and C reported tolerant practices, the teachers at Schools A and D created the impression that counselling and advice are not efficiently utilised in their schools, resulting in the implementation of the more rigid rules set out in the *Code of Conduct for Learners* (cf. 6.4.4.1; 4.4). According to the document analysis, School B seemed to have more discipline issues, which were regularly discussed in staff meetings (cf. 5.3.2.2.b). However, there seems to be a degree of tolerance and compassion with the implementation of disciplinary matters at the schools. Giving advice to students, involving counselling and having a tendency to rather correct than punish resonates with a HM approach of developing moral and character education through *rehberlik* (cf. 6.4.2).

An interesting finding was the difference between Turkish and local teachers' perceptions of the mission of the school. The local teachers seem to perceive the mission of the school to deliver well-rounded students (cf. 6.4.4.3). Positive sciences are perceived to be the major academic focus of the schools - in the literature (cf. 1.3), in the documents (cf. 5.3.2.5) and in the participants' perceptions of the academic success of the schools (cf. 6.4.4.2). Yet, the Turkish teachers regard the mission of the school as value education (cf. 6.4.4.3), a perception which is indicative of a strong influence of HM and Gülen's philosophy of education in the form of holistic education and *rehberlik* (cf. 6.4.2.2). According to Gülen, a holistic education model comprises moral guidance accompanying the transfer of knowledge (cf. 2.3.3). Hence, the existing academic emphasis on positive sciences, supported by the value education would lead to well-rounded students. Therefore, one can argue that both local and Turkish teachers share indirectly, a common perception of the mission of the schools. By implication, this perception can be perceived, in the case of the Turkish teachers, as a manifestation of Gülen's perception of human being as a harmonious combination of mind, body, and spirit (cf. 2.3.3). The local teachers' emphasis on balanced education, seems to indirectly align with Gülen's notion of holistic education as a form of education that addresses different faculties of human being.

From the findings, it seems some of the Turkish participants are concerned with a negative image of Muslims. Countering a negative image of Islam seemingly depends on setting a positive example and integrating with modernity and people of different background (cf. 6.4.3.2), which in turn, has its roots in the concept of *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4). In addition, and of importance for this study, is Gülen's notion of engaging with modernity, while remaining religious (cf. 2.3). As such, Gülen advocates for the adoption of a middle path between the materialistic view of extreme modernity and fundamentalist view of Islam (cf. 2.3.2). Rather than having to choose between one of the two extremes of rejecting either religion or modernity, Gülen proposes the reconciliation of spirituality and worldly affairs (cf. 1.5.2.2). The teachers' objective of countering a negative image of Islam alludes to practising such a middle way by the reconciliation of Islam and modernity and the demonstration of such reconciliation in their conduct.

6.5 Summary

In Chapter 6, I presented the analysis of the data generated through semi-structured interviews. The interviews offered insight into the thinking and practices of the teachers and graduates, which enabled me to seek traces of Gülen's philosophy of education. My questions and discussion points for the semi-structured interviews were informed by the document analysis (cf. Chapter 5) and the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3). I analysed the transcripts of interviews, translated, where necessary, responses from Turkish to English and identified common keywords and phrases. The repeated phrases were categorised into four broad themes, namely the participants' perceptions of communication, *rehberlik*, the ideal teacher, and the school as an institution. The identification of these themes was primarily based on the data analysis but informed by the analysis of the schools' documents (cf. 4.3) and their relevance to Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 2.3; 6.4).

Despite challenges, the HET schools seem to make efforts to build good communication through home visits (cf. 6.4.1.2) and various social events (cf. 6.4.1.2; 6.4.1.3). While the challenges experienced by the schools mostly relate to language and cultural differences between Turkish and South African members of the school community, the schools seem to attempt to bridge such differences via consultation (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2). The prominence of a guidance programme in the schools was foregrounded as the mechanism for the implementation of value education (cf. 6.4.2.2). This practice is strongly aligned with the HM, the practice of *rehberlik*, and Gülen's understanding of holistic education as academic work accompanied by value education (cf. 2.3.3). Although the findings revealed that there is some consensus on the nature of the *rehberlik* programme and the way in which it is implemented among the Turkish teachers, I could not obtain a written document that spells out the detail of the programme. The infusion of the *rehberlik* programme with local values seems to be a challenge, and African values such as Ubuntu and communitarianism did not feature among the dominant values identified by the participants (cf. 6.4.2.5). Although *rehberlik* is a strong link between the HM and the HET schools, adapting to local settings and achieving local relevance, seems to remain a challenge and raise questions about the relevance of a *rehberlik* programme drawn by Turkish individuals in different contexts.

A strong sense and awareness of service, sacrifice, and commitment are common, especially among Turkish teachers who seem to have adopted Gülen's position that serving people is serving God (cf. 2.3). These participants expressed a personal aim that relates to earning the pleasure of God as a Muslim through serving others (cf. 6.4.3.2). This aim seems to be the main impetus behind their commitment and sacrifice and indicates that religion plays a significant role in their lives and motivation as teachers. However, service is not limited to overtly religious acts but includes actions such as secular teaching (cf. 2.2.3). Despite a strong religious awareness in the personal lives of the Turkish teachers, the schools do not indoctrinate or impose religion on the staff and students (cf. 6.4.2.5).

The processes of decision-making and approach to student discipline are two important institutional traits that reflect the schools' philosophy. At the HET schools, decisions seem to be taken through consultation. However, there seems to be potential miscommunication between Turkish and local staff, particularly when there is no local person in the management teams (cf. 6.4.4.1). The schools' documents project a punitive approach to student discipline, but this was contradicted by the views of the teachers and graduates who reported that counselling and advice are usually preferred to immediate disciplinary action. There seems to be an apparent incoherence among different schools in the implementation of discipline rules –some schools practise greater tolerance and others seem to adhere more strictly to the rules set out in the *Code of Conduct for Learners*. Another finding revealed an imbalance regarding academic influence and holistic education in favour of positive sciences (cf. 6.4.4.2). This skewed emphasis on positive science seems to be informed by demands by parents and students who chose to study fields with greater prestige and financial returns, which require positive sciences as an entry requirement. Although this strategy could indicate an influence of local demands, it is a misalignment with Gülen's belief that knowledge should be a guide in life, rather than an instrument for material gain (cf. 1.5.1). The teachers, however, seem to believe in achieving a balanced education for their students and the importance of value education is recognised as the primary mission of the schools (cf. 6.4.4.3). While the teachers' views seem to be aligned with Gülen's emphasis on holistic education as a combination of subject teaching and value education (cf. 2.3.3), the schools tend to rather adhere to parents' and students' pragmatic demands (cf.

6.4.4.2). Despite language and culture-related challenges, the schools seem to maintain good level of dialogue between local and Turkish teachers and promote intercultural relations (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.4.4). Academic success seems to give a sense of pride and belonging for the students, and serves as a strong unifying factor (cf. 6.4.4.4).

Chapter 7: Comments, suggestions and reflection

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the manifestations of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education in Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa (cf. 1.4). These schools are part of the *Hizmet* Movement's international network of schools inspired by Islamic scholar, Fethullah Gülen. In order to realise this aim, my study pursued of specific objectives (cf. 1.4). In this chapter, I first unpack how the various chapters of this thesis followed a logical sequence in order to justify my final comments on the research findings in order to make suggestions regarding the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools. I conclude this chapter with a reflection on the strengths of this study and the challenges I experienced during my research endeavour. I also highlight the limitations of the study and comment on how these perceived limitations, open up opportunities for further research and knowledge production. As I have been involved in this study for a number of years, I also reflect on my scholarly and personal growth.

7.2 Overview of the study

This study emerged out of my concern for a greater and more systematic understanding of Gülen's philosophy of education and its manifestation in the policy and practice at the HET schools in South Africa (cf. 1.2). In order to achieve this aim, my study unfolded through five chapters, each built around a specific objective, and all contributing to a greater coherence towards answering my research question.

While Chapter 1 served as a general orientation of my study, Chapter 2 constituted the theoretical framework, which informed the analysis of data generated from documents (cf. Chapter 5) and semi-structured interviews (cf. Chapter 6). In drawing on a variety of literature on Gülen and Gülen's own writings, I considered the historical developments, which I deemed relevant to his life and growth (cf. 2.2.1). It was my contention that his training, including his intellectual and spiritual development, served as contextual background that informed his educational philosophy. In coupling Gülen's writings with the work of various scholars, I was able to foreground four basic themes that allude to his educational philosophy (cf. 2.3).

Although Gülen himself did not offer a structured model of education, he is an Islamic scholar whose ideas have relevance for the broader discourse of Islamic philosophies of education (2.4.1). By positioning Gülen's ideas within this broader discourse, I was able to gain a more in-depth understanding of his philosophical ideas. To further increase my understanding, I also considered his ideas in relation to the *ubuntu* as an African philosophy of education (cf. 2.4.2). The latter was done to assist in offering a lens to explore the relevance of Gülen's philosophy of education in the South African educational context. Based on the insights drawn from this chapter, I gave structure to Gülen's philosophy of education by (re)constructing it to serve as the theoretical framework (cf. Table 5.1) for the analysis and sense-making of school documents and data generated from the semi-structured interviews. As such, this chapter served as the realisation of the first objective of my study (cf. 1.4.2).

Before I undertook the analysis of the empirical data generated in this study, I contextualised the HET schools as part of an international movement (cf. Chapter 3). Although the focus of the research was on the HET schools in South Africa, it was essential to position these schools within the broader HM network. Establishing the affiliation of the HET schools with the HM, assisted me in gaining an understanding of the institutional management structures of the HM schools, and by implication, an understanding of the nature and extent of Gülen's influence in the HM and the HET schools. In addition, by framing the HM in the South African context, assisted to establish the link between the HM and the HET schools in South Africa. By implication, this chapter contributed toward the contextualisation of the study and the realisation of the second objective (cf. 1.4.2).

This study was qualitative and interpretive in nature, and in Chapter 4, I revisited and strengthened the methodological considerations that informed this study. Attention is given to particulars related to interpretivism as the underpinning paradigm and the philosophical assumptions on which the study was premised (cf. 4.2.2). Informed by a qualitative approach (cf. 4.2.1), the choice for the research methods (cf. 4.3) are motivated, and particulars regarding participant selection, data generation and analysis explained. I also elaborated on how I ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process and the findings, and the steps I took to mitigate potential risks and biases associated with qualitative data generation and analysis (cf. 4.4).

In Chapter 5, I used the theoretical framework as a lens to explore if and to what degree the documents of the HET schools are infused with Gülen's philosophy of education. The categorisation of the documents was helpful to map a picture of connections with Gülen's education philosophy on a broad base. While foundational documents, which are generic to all the HET schools, introduced the Turkish founders' expectations of the schools, the policy and operational documents assisted in discovering the schools' efforts to realise these expectations. The use of the theoretical framework subsequently helped me in gaining insight into the schools' settings and to some extent, into their operations through, among other things, the analysis of minutes of meetings. While the findings of the document analysis allowed me to explore traces of Gülen in the documents of the schools, they also assisted in the formulation of the interview questions. Themes stemming from the document analysis such as among other things, *temsil* (cf. 5.3.2.3), holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.1) and values education (cf. 5.3.2.2) served as points for productive discussions and opportunities concerning Gülen's philosophy of education. This chapter assisted in the realisation of the third objective of the study (cf. 1.4.3), and constituted the first step in the attempt to answer the research question.

In Chapter 6, I presented and discussed the findings of the data that was generated through semi-structured interviews. The interpretation of the data was informed by my document analysis (Chapter 5), which, in turn, was based on the theoretical framework (Figure 2.1). While the theoretical framework enabled me to gain an understanding of the influence of Gülen's philosophy of education, primarily on paper in the form of foundational and policy documents, it also provided a peek into potential manifestations in the operational practices of schools. Data generated through the semi-structured interviews, however, enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants' experiences of the HET schools, can be linked, directly and indirectly, to Gülen's philosophy of education. Informed by an interpretivist paradigm, an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants was critical to foreground the manifestation of the philosophy and to strengthen and challenge the findings that emerged from the document analysis. Chapter 6 was subsequently aimed at the realisation of the fourth objective (cf. 1.4.4) of my study and contributed along with the findings from chapter 5 to answer the research question.

The preceding exposition of the logical sequence of the chapters illustrates how the unfolding of this study gradually led to this final chapter. Before I make comments and suggestions regarding the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools, I give a summary of the findings that emerged from the data analysis.

7.3 Summary of the findings

In this section, I present a summary of my findings from the document analysis and data generated through the semi-structured interviews.

7.3.1 Findings from the document analysis

The document analysis revealed that the HET schools seem to have a comprehensive set of policy and procedural documents, which outline the expectations for the processes of education and how such processes are expected to play out in the schools (cf. 4.3.1).

One of the main findings is that the foundational documents do not offer clear guidance on the dominant philosophy of education of the schools. Despite the lack of clarification of the philosophy of education, Gülen's influence is implicitly traceable in the specific, intentional and consistent emphasis on certain themes that resonate with Gülen's philosophy of education, most notably as holistic education. For example, while there is no explicit reference to raising a golden generation, the emphasis on holistic education resonates with Gülen's perception that a golden generation of individuals must be holistically educated. References to holistic education in the documents seem to be informed by Gülen's perception of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and soul, as well as his notion of the reconciliation of religion and science (cf. 2.3.2; 5.3.1.5). The findings also revealed that an over-emphasis on positive sciences by the HET schools aligns with the standard practices at HM schools globally, but seems to be misalignment with the notion of holistic education (cf. 5.3.2.5).

A holistic approach to education manifests in the documents in reference to encompassing spirituality (cf. 5.3.1.5) and moral guidance (cf. 5.3.2.2). While this

observation aligns with the secular nature of the HET schools (cf. 3.3), it also alludes to the reconciliation of religion with sciences through the complementing science teaching with values education. The foundational and policy documents include an emphasis on the promotion of values such as altruism and hard work (cf. 5.3.2.2a). The promotion of such values seems to be driven by the individual efforts of teachers. There is no clear guidance in any of the documents on sustainable programmes for the promotion of values. The promotion of intercultural dialogue and the embracement of diversity are essential aspects of Gülen's philosophy of education. The foregrounding of both aspects in the documents (cf. 5.4; 5.3.1.4) show resonance with Gülen's endorsement of intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding (cf. 3.2.2).

In my analysis of the documents, I came across content that does not align with Gülen's vision. While one would expect a compassionate, caring and restorative approach towards the students as part of the value education, the documents seem to prescribe a punitive approach for the transgression of the code of conduct (cf. 5.5). The documents describe disciplinary actions in detail but are silent on restorative practices. A restorative process would have been more aligned with the emphasis on the inculcation of moral values. Another contradiction is the over-emphasis of positive sciences, which does not align with holistic education (cf. 5.4). Despite such inconsistencies, the document analysis revealed implicit links with Gülen's philosophy of education, namely the elimination of ignorance (cf. 2.2.1; 2.2.3; 5.3.1.2), the development of a sense of purpose (cf. 5.3.1.3), and an emphasis on contemporary pedagogical methods (cf. 5.3.2.6). For example, the documents indirectly allude to the elimination of ignorance by describing the schools as centres of learning and by prioritising the development of a love for learning (cf. 5.3.1.2). No direct connection is, however, made to the elimination of ignorance as a possible aim of the schools.

In sum, the findings revealed the following notable traces of Gülen's philosophy of education: the promotion of intercultural dialogue (cf. 5.3.1.4); the reconciliation of religion with science (cf. 5.3.1.4); a holistic approach to education (cf. 5.3.2.1); distinguishing education as moral guidance and character development from pure academic teaching (cf. 5.3.2.2); *temsil* (teaching by example) (cf. 5.3.2.3);

cooperation with diverse stakeholders (cf. 5.3.2.4); and an emphasis on academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.5). In conclusion, the analysis of the documents revealed explicit and implicit traces of Gülen's philosophy.

7.3.2 Findings from the interviews

I have interviewed twenty-four participants consisting of Turkish and local teachers, as well as graduates of the schools. The findings of the generated data analysis foregrounded an attunement with some of the aspects of Gülen's philosophy of education but challenged some of the conclusions of document analysis.

Regarding the status of communication among the school community, language seems to be a challenge between Turkish and local members of the school community. While several participants indicated this challenge, they also reported on efforts made by students and teachers to bridge the distance between local teachers, students, and Turkish teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2). The schools' efforts to enhance communication seem to point to some common trends and initiatives among students, graduates, parents and the broader community. These initiatives include activities such as the hosting of social events, dinners, breakfasts and other social occasions (cf. 6.4.1.3; 6.4.1.4; 6.4.1.5). It should, however, be noted that the avenues of engagement with the stakeholders seem to be limited to a few common social types of events. The findings revealed that these events also serve as platforms where attendees are introduced to the school, the school's ethos and the underlying philosophy of *hizmet* (cf. 6.4.1.5). While the notion of service (*hizmet*) is not mentioned in the documents, Turkish teachers who are followers of Gülen, indicated that they discuss *hizmet* with the attendees at the events.

The over-emphasis in the documents on academic achievement, especially in positive sciences and a lesser focus on development in social sciences, arts and sports (cf. 5.4), was not foregrounded during the interviews. Teachers generally seem to believe education should be balanced between the development of different human faculties, namely intellectual, physical and moral development (cf. 6.4.2.1; 6.4.2.5). It seems, however, that the schools have not established systems and practices that aim to foster the holistic development of their students. While the

teachers' views foreground holistic education as strong academic teaching supported by the *rehberlik* programme, the documents lack clear guidance enforcing tangible policies to ensure holistic education. The foundational and policy documents are not sufficiently explicit on specific practices such as *iftaar* dinners and other social events associated with Gülen's philosophy (cf. 5.3.1.4; 5.4.).

One of the clear links between the HET schools and the HM is the value education programme referred to as *rehberlik* (cf. 6.4.2). According to the participants, Turkish guidance counsellors are responsible for devising and implementing the *rehberlik* programme. While both local and Turkish teachers are assigned classes to implement the value education (cf. 6.4.2.5), local teachers often play a supporting role in the implementation of the guidance programme, and their assistance may help mitigate language challenges (cf. 6.4.2.4; 6.4.1.2). The involvement of local teachers may also be seen as a matter of transparency to demonstrate that the programme is about imparting universal values and not religious indoctrination (cf. 6.4.1.2). The *rehberlik* programme seems to be run reasonably methodically in the schools. The inclusion of value education can be perceived as a significant manifestation of Gülen's emphasis on value education, and it highlights a strong link with the HM. There are, however, critical shortcomings with regards to the programme. Although there seems to be a common understanding among the teachers about the *rehberlik* programme and strategies for implementation, there is no policy to guide coherent implementation, and the evaluation of the processes and outcomes. The findings revealed that indigenous values and local voices are not included in the planning of the *rehberlik* programme. *Temsil* is a significant concept in Gülen's philosophy of education, and it calls on the teachers to practice the values that you wish to impart (cf. 6.4.2.3). Setting a positive example that only relates to universal values could also be limiting the appeal in the local context. Both local and Turkish teachers perceive teaching by example (*temsil*) and living according to the values as necessary (cf. 6.4.2.2; 6.4.2.3; 6.4.3.1). A significant point about the *rehberlik* programme to emphasise is that it is complementary to the subject teaching (cf. 6.4.2.2), a practice that is in line with Gülen's understanding of holistic education.

The participants foregrounded the view that service to people is service to God, despite being involved in secular education (cf. 6.4.3.2). The teachers seem to see

no conflict between being committed to their faith and working in a secular environment practising and promoting universally relatable values (cf. 6.4.3.1; 6.4.3.2). Sacrifice is seen as one of the most distinguishing aspects at the HM schools (cf. 6.3.3.2) and both the local and Turkish teachers at the HET schools believe that passion is a characteristic of an ideal teacher. The Turkish teachers who are responsible for the teaching of positive sciences offer Saturday tuition, free extra classes, one-on-one assistance, and study camps (cf. 6.4.4.2).

As institutions, the schools are quite efficiently run through participatory decision-making processes. Although it seems that day-to-day decision-making is participatory at the schools, it is not without challenges (cf. 6.4.4.1). While decision-making aligns with *istişare* as a consultative decision-making mechanism, a gap between the Turkish members of the school managements, and the local staff was highlighted (cf. 6.4.4.5). Such a gap has been bridged in some schools by appointing local teachers to the school management team.

Despite the schools being affiliated with the HM, local staff's familiarity with the HM varies (cf. 6.4.4.3). The schools do not teach about Gülen and the HM formally. Although the schools are not assertive about their HM affiliation, Gülen's books are available at the schools, and individual initiatives such as social events and trips indicate that the schools do not attempt to hide their HM affiliation either. The Turkish participants' perceptions of the school's mission is strongly aligned with value education (cf. 6.4.4.3), *temsil* and the *rehberlik* program (cf. 6.4.2.2).

An emphasis on academic success (cf. 6.4.4.2) and representing Islam (6.4.3.2) came out in the interviews and alludes indirectly to the reconciliation of modernity and religion through *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4). The parents' demands seem to influence the schools' choices of subjects and emphasis and consequent bias towards positive sciences (cf. 6.4.4.2). Finally, the findings revealed mixed responses to and a lack of coherence among the different schools' interpretation, implementation of student discipline and relevant policies (cf. 6.4.2).

In conclusion, the HET schools do not explicitly pronounce their affiliation with the *Hizmet* Movement, nor do they foreground Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education

as the underpinning philosophy. From the findings of this study, various examples alluded to implicit and explicit convergence with Gülen's philosophy of education. The manifestation of Gülen's philosophy in the policy and practice of the HET schools is most evident in the emphasis on holistic education, *rehberlik*, and *temsil*. I conclude that the prominence given to these three critical Gülean notions provides sufficient support that the HET schools can be identified as affiliates of the HM.

7.4 Comments and suggestions

Based on my understanding of Gülen's philosophy of education (cf. 2.3), the emergence, development and structure of HM (cf. Chapter 3), the analysis of the HET schools' documents (cf. Chapter 5) and the perceptions of teachers and graduates (cf. Chapter 6), I make two broad suggestions:

- a well-articulated pronouncement of the HET schools' philosophy of education is needed; and
- a *rehberlik* policy should be designed to guide the refinement of the *rehberlik* programme in terms of clear objectives and strategies, and the integration thereof in the broader school programme.

7.4.1 Articulation of the schools' philosophy of education

The HET schools do not outright pronounce their affiliation with the HM (cf. 3.3). Rather, Gülen's philosophy of education is scattered in his writings, and there is no agreed-upon educational model that applies to all HM schools (cf. 2.3). In the literature, I identified dominant themes, which I considered as being constitutive of Gülen's philosophy of education. I used these themes to explore the manifestation of aspects of his philosophy in policy and practice in the HET schools. The findings of the study revealed that the alignment with the key themes of Gülen's philosophy is mostly implicit. In addition, the different, divergent and sometimes contradictory practices at the schools, further challenged the task to establish the manifestations of such themes.

Despite an emphasis in the school documents on holistic education, certain school practices appeared to be contradictory to what is perceived as Gülen's notion of a

holistic education model. Quality education, which is claimed to be holistic, is promised by the schools and emphasised in some documents (cf. 5.3.2.1). The schools introduce a variety of activities such as excursions, club activities, debates, sports days and study camps, which can assist in achieving holistic education. Still, there is no uniform approach amongst the schools. Despite an implied balance of different fields of development in a holistic approach, a skewed imbalance in favour of academic achievement, especially in positive sciences, was foregrounded (cf. 5.4; 6.5). The imbalance at the HET schools in favour of positive sciences seems to be grounded in a narrow interpretation of quality education as academic achievement (cf. 5.3.2.1) and promotes a competitive outlook advantaging high achievers, while possibly neglecting academically weak students, especially in positive sciences (cf. 5.4; 6.4.4.2). Such a competitive outlook may potentially be perceived as glorification of high achievement in these fields and result in the schools being seen as elitist in the academic sense (cf. 3.3). This image is detrimental to an institution whose mission is to raise a golden generation of noble attributes and to serve all (cf. 6.4.3.2).

While the document analysis revealed a punitive approach to student discipline (cf. 5.3.2.2.b; 5.4), the interviews revealed corrective practices at some schools, such as intervention by class teachers, counselling, and advice to students with behavioural issues (cf. 6.4.4.1). Although the schools adopt the same policy document, different schools apply the code differently, resulting into different practices. While some schools prefer to adopt and implement a restorative approach, others implement the rules in a more rigid manner (cf. 6.4.4.1). In a Gülenian understanding of holistic education, moral development should accompany subject teaching (cf. 2.3.3) and be supported by *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4). It is thus expected that such an educational model would prioritise a corrective approach to student discipline informed by compassion (cf. 2.3.2).

The HM schools promote intercultural understanding among people of different backgrounds (cf. 3.2.2) and the HET schools also host various activities such as fast-breaking dinners that have a similar aim (cf. 5.3.1.5; 6.4.4.4). Yet, there seem to be challenges in establishing smooth communication within the school community, primarily resulting from issues related to language (cf. 6.4.1.6). There are efforts by

individual teachers to bridge the gap between Turkish teachers and local teachers, between teachers and students, and to build relationships with students, graduates and the community. However, these efforts do not seem to be structured and systemic, but are rather individual efforts (cf. 6.4.1.6).

The foregoing exposition alludes to incoherent practices in the HET schools, which I attribute to a lack of a common understanding of the schools' founding philosophy of education. I contend that a clear and shared understanding of the schools' philosophy of education should guide policy formulation, which, in turn, would influence school practices. The HET schools are affiliated with the HM, and since Gülen was the inspiration behind the HM (cf. 1.1), it is expected that his philosophy of education, or at least aspects thereof, should guide policy and practice. As stated, my analysis explored the resonance between Gülen's philosophy of education and the HET schools, albeit in implicit ways (cf. 5.4; 6.5). Although the admission of such an affiliation with the HM may not be a necessity, it is important that the Horizon Educational Trust, as the founding body of the schools, articulate the aims and objectives of the schools more explicitly in terms of a structured understanding of Gülen's philosophy of education. The document analysis revealed the existence of a comprehensive set of policy and procedural documents, which seem to be a set of rules and regulations guiding school practices (cf. 5.2.3). However, the philosophy of education that underlies these rules and regulations is not described clearly, which subsequently feeds into little or no understanding of the rationale behind policies and activities (cf. 6.4.1.1), and result into divergent practices among the schools (cf. 6.4.4.1).

A philosophy of education can be described as educational elaborations, reflections and a vision on the life-long intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural development of the human being (cf. 1.1). A holistic approach to education stands central to Gülen's philosophy of education, and by implication, serves as the core of elaborations, reflections and the vision for the intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural development of the students at the HET schools (cf. 5.3.2.1). Given the centrality of Gülen's perception of the human being as a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit, I suggest that the foundational documents should include a comprehensive definition and philosophical elaboration of holistic education. This should be done in a systematic and coherent manner to centralise Gülen's notion of

holistic education as the point of departure in the HET schools. A philosophically acceptable articulation should frame holistic education in the dominant themes of the overarching philosophy of education. Stemming from holistic education, the distinction between teaching and education will foreground how subject teaching must be complemented by value-education (*rehberlik*) (cf. 6.4.2), and by the teaching of universal values through *temsil* (cf. 2.3.4). By placing the emphasis on the reconciliation of religion and science (cf. 2.3), holistic education contributes towards the elimination of ignorance, among other things, through academic excellence (cf. 2.3c), the promotion of intercultural dialogue (cf. 2.3a) and inclusion of perceived universal values in a secular school environment. Davids and Waghid (2019) explore teaching and learning as a pedagogical pilgrimage and attach a transcendent and spiritual dimension to teaching through the cultivation of faith, hope and imagination. They argue that pedagogy has become less inspiring and unimaginative due to the loss of spirituality. When reflecting on teaching and learning as well as the attributes of a teacher, Gülen employs spiritual and transcendent language by drawing a parallel between a school and a place of worship, likening the teacher to the master of that temple (cf. 2.3.1; Gülen, 2012b). The HET schools aim to achieve high levels of academic success complemented by a focus on value education, morality and spirituality. Although it could be argued that such a focus resembles the influence of Gülen's views on teaching and learning, I contend that a clear articulation of holistic education will constitute the aim of the HET schools as the delivery of well-rounded students that are equipped with tools of science, faith and moral values. Arguably, teaching and learning in this context have the potential to attach a spiritual level to teaching. If a sufficient articulation of holistic education as the philosophical impetus of the HET schools guides policy formulations, pedagogical practices will become more aligned with policy expectations and will result in less diverging practices. As teachers are the custodians of a philosophy of education (cf. 2.3.4), it is of critical importance that policy documents provide the directives to enable them to translate a Gülenian understanding of holistic education and the related aspects into their teaching approaches and practices. Clear pronouncement of the philosophy of education has the potential to facilitate a more coherent understanding to ensure consonance among the practices of the different schools.

Gülen's overall philosophy centres on the tackling of three major ills, namely ignorance, disunity and poverty (cf. 2.2.3). His philosophy of education aims at raising a golden generation of ideal human beings, with specific attributes such as perfect faith, love, turning to knowledge, reason, logic consciousness, free-thinking, consultation, mathematical thinking and artistic thought (cf. 2.3). Such a generation is expected to be armed with the tools of science, faith and moral values in order to tackle the problems of the future (cf. 2.3). Thus, the educational model at the HET schools and definition of holistic education should be geared towards a balance among various fields of development of the students. In line with HM practices, the schools do not necessarily have to pronounce a distinctly Gülenian concept of the golden generation, but the elaboration of the philosophy should introduce the attributes of a golden generation and expound upon them. Holistic education encompasses quality education as the efficient fulfilment of aims and objectives of an educational model supported by the multi-dimensional development of students. Thus, an elaboration of the expected attributes of the HET school graduates would help to clarify how quality education and holistic education can be integrated into the schools.

As indicated, a common understanding of the philosophy of education and policies by teachers is critical for consistent practices among different schools. There are differences of opinion in terms of a common ground among teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1), which is possibly caused by a lack of a structured introduction and training of the teachers in the philosophy and policies. Therefore, the induction of the teachers into the philosophy of the schools, with specific reference to holistic education and the way in which the policies are understood within this conception, is critical for a shared and collective understanding of the mission of the HET schools. In this manner, all teachers will gain a better understanding of the philosophy and the associated objectives and strategies of the schools. This can assist teachers to avoid trying to explore them in practice or from the few teachers who subscribe to Gülen's philosophy of education. Such a common understanding requires that philosophy of education of the HET schools is expressed outright in the foundational documents and expounded upon in policy documents. In addition, a common understanding can assist in bridging the gap which is often experienced between Turkish and local teachers (cf. 6.4.1.1). Consequently, this can enhance a more participatory and active role by the local teachers in assisting the school management to achieve

insight into local cultural practices. Cross-cultural understanding is imperative for the creation of a common ground for the school community and a shared school identity.

Lack of clarity of the guiding philosophy of education of the HET schools poses an additional challenge. In the absence of a clearly articulated philosophical orientation, it is difficult to assess school practices for consistency with regard to the philosophy and to identify areas for further enhancement. Lack of such clarification may pose difficulties in ensuring that new projects remain loyal to the founding philosophy. Currently, certain practices seem to be undertaken by individual teachers, mostly Turkish, instead of being systematically coordinated. Given the Turkish teachers' involvement in HM, one can conclude that the motivation for them to take initiative is rooted in Gülen's philosophy of education. This was visible in the communication of the schools with stakeholders such as the community and graduates (cf. 6.4.1.6). Arguably, by making the philosophy more elaborate, a clearer understanding, greater appreciation and buy-in by the other teachers who are not Gülen followers can be ushered. A common understanding across schools and staff members can feed into a more coordinated and collective implementation of programmes and strategies. Sharing the philosophy explicitly is also critical for transparency - some participants expressed a lack of transparency as a concern (cf. 6.4.2.4).

The documents of the schools, including the foundational documents, policy and procedural documents and the operational documents that record practices should be re-organised and aligned with the philosophy of education of the schools'. In addition, all other policies and activities of the schools should be infused with and foregrounded in the overarching philosophy of education. It is foreseen that a well-defined exposition of the underpinning philosophy of education in foundational documents would inform policy documents, filter down to school documents, and eventually feed into school practices. While ensuring coherence in approach and practice, a well-defined philosophy of education would also ensure that each activity and programme of the schools contribute towards achieving the overall aims and objectives of the HET schools.

My second suggestion is linked with my first suggestion but focuses specifically on the *rehberlik* programme.

7.4.2 A *rehberlik* policy

Arguably, a distinguishing programme of the HET schools that links them to the HM is the *rehberlik* programme (cf. 6.4.1.1). Gülen argued that in a holistic educational model, subject teaching must be accompanied by values education (cf. 2.3.3). Aimed at the moral, ethical and character development of students, values education, also known as the *rehberlik* programme, is subsequently perceived as an integral part of holistic education. The implementation of a *rehberlik* programme and associated activities by class teachers as complementary to subject teaching, strongly alludes to Gülen's conception of holistic education.

Although regarded as an essential component of holistic education, which runs at all HET schools, a *rehberlik* policy or a structured plan of action does not exist. In my exploration of school documents, I could only find a computer folder containing unorganised resources (cf. 6.3). Value education featured in the documents and while local teachers referred to value education, only Turkish teachers mentioned the *rehberlik* programme by name (cf. 5.3.1.1; 6.4.2.1). Turkish teachers are primarily responsible for the running of the programme and their reference to *rehberlik* can be attributed to the knowledge and understanding of the HM. However, local teachers' reference to value education in general, can be attributed to the lack of a written policy or a plan of action (cf. 6.4.2.5). In turn, the absence of a clearly articulated *rehberlik* policy can be related to no clear pronunciation of the philosophy of education of the schools' (cf. 7.4.1). The ambiguity in expressing the philosophy of education of the schools, seems to be also applicable to the *rehberlik* programme.

The findings revealed that the *rehberlik* programme at a school is compiled by the guidance counsellor in conjunction with his or her counterparts at the other HET schools (cf. 6.4.2.4). The guidance counsellors are Turkish individuals who are responsible for the planning, coordination, and the implementation of the *rehberlik* programme. In addition, in the classroom spaces where a Turkish and local teacher are co-assigned to a class, the *rehberlik* programme is primarily run by Turkish teachers and supported by local teachers (cf. 6.4.2.4). Assigning the *rehberlik* programme to Turkish teachers who are Gülen followers, supports the link between the HET schools and Gülen's notion of holistic education as subject teaching

complemented by value education (cf. 2.3.3). Local teachers are not involved in the planning of the programme and their involvement in the implementation seems to be primarily supportive. As mentioned, Turkish teachers are familiar with *rehberlik*, in contrast to local teachers who are just familiar with value periods (cf. 6.4.2.4). Although it can be assumed that Turkish teachers' familiarity relates to their induction into HM (cf. 6.4.3.2), the findings revealed that they have voluntary weekly meetings where they discuss the *rehberlik* programme (cf. 6.4.2.4). While the meetings appear to be a platform for Turkish teachers to negotiate and gain the necessary knowledge and skills for guidance (cf. 6.4.2.4), local teachers remain side-lined with regard to the programme. The exclusion of local voices means that the programme is not made relevant for local cultural settings (cf. 6.4.2.5). Rather, and in alignment with the practice at the HM schools worldwide, prominence is given to perceived universal values that can arguably be applied in different contexts (cf. 6.4.2.2). The exclusion of cultural diverse values hampers mutual understanding and impedes on creating sound relationships between Turkish and local staff, and Turkish teachers and students (cf. 6.4.1.1; 6.4.1.2).

As indicated, apart from an unorganised computer folder with resources, I was unsuccessful in obtaining a written document containing the aims and objectives of the *rehberlik* programme and directives for its implementation (cf. 6.3.2). In the absence of such a document, the schools, however, seem to have a functional *rehberlik* programme. Certain periods are assigned to the discussion of values (cf. 6.4.2.2; 6.4.2.4). Although subject teachers are required to conduct the sessions on values (cf. 6.4.2.2), the programme seems to be run as a detached and supplementary activity to the normal school programme. The seemingly supplementary nature of the *rehberlik* programme is underscored by a silence in the documents of the schools with regards to the *rehberlik* programme, its objectives and strategies. Although various values are referred to in the documents of the schools, they are scattered and there is no structured plan coordinating the implementation of a *rehberlik* programme. The Turkish participants referred to strategies they use such as home visits and group meetings with the students and their discussions on *rehberlik* (cf. 6.4.2.4), but no mention was made of an existing policy or a well-articulated plan of action. There does not seem to be any records of the activities and reports of the outcomes of the programme. Lack of a written policy, guide or

plan of the programme can account for local teachers not having any knowledge of *rehberlik*, nor of how it is positioned within a Gülenian understanding of holistic education.

In light of the above-mentioned comments and to enhance the *rehberlik* programme, I suggest the development of a *rehberlik* policy that serves as a set of guiding principles to assist schools in the designing of their *rehberlik* programmes. In alignment with my suggestion regarding the centralisation of holistic education as the philosophical impetus of the HET schools (cf. 7.4.2), a clearly defined *rehberlik* policy has the potential to strengthen a collective understanding of the guiding philosophy of the schools. Such a policy must position the *rehberlik* programme, its aims and objectives within holistic education as the key component of the philosophy of education. Arguably, a clearly articulated policy would enhance the integration of the *rehberlik* programme into the general policies and activities of the schools. By implication, such integration can address the dichotomy that transpires from the current practices whereby the *rehberlik* programme is seemingly conducted as supplementary to the subject teaching (cf. 6.4.2.4). Although Gülen makes a distinction between teaching and education, he couches holistic development in a harmonious composition of mind, body and spirit (cf. 2.3.3). Value-free subject teaching accompanied with moral guidance should not be regarded as a dichotomy, but should rather be perceived in relation to *temsil* as the link between subject teaching and moral education. Referring to teaching by example, *temsil* requires teachers to embody and subsequently practise the values they impart (cf. 2.3.4; 5.3.2.3). Arguably, the interconnection between *rehberlik* and *temsil* implies that universal values inculcated through the *rehberlik* programme, should be incorporated into subject teaching through the moral example of teachers. *Rehberlik* can therefore never be considered without the integral role of *temsil*, and by implication, *rehberlik* and *temsil* constitute an inherent component of holistic education. My argument in the previous section in favour of a well-articulated exposition of holistic education as the philosophical impetus of the HET schools is indirectly an argument for the development of a *rehberlik* policy. A *rehberlik* policy can subsequently give direction to the *rehberlik* programme as a major facet of the educational model of the HET schools. A structured programme has the potential of infusing policy and practice

with the principles and values that are perceived as essential in the context of the philosophy of education of the schools.

A written policy on *rehberlik* can strengthen the guiding philosophy of education and ensure a common understanding of the role and nature of a *rehberlik* programme in the HET schools. Turkish teachers seem to be more conversant with *rehberlik*, but their local colleagues are not familiar with the philosophy behind the programme. It could thus be assumed that in the absence of a written programme, local teachers would depend on their understanding of value education, rather than on the philosophy behind the programme. As both Turkish and local teachers are assigned as class teachers and are by implication, involved in different capacities in value education, it is imperative that they share a similar understanding of the programme. A well-articulated policy can also form the basis for an organised induction of teachers into the *rehberlik* programme. An understanding of the *rehberlik* programme would not only strengthen an understanding of the philosophy of education of the HET schools, but would assist in ensuring coherence among the different HET schools. In addition to providing clarity of the objectives of the programme, a well-articulated policy can assist in the regular evaluation of the programme, which in turn can lead to the enhancement of its content and implementation.

While the *rehberlik* policy should be accessible to all teachers, parents and guardians should have access to the programme for two reasons. Firstly, for ensuring transparency of the programme and secondly, for enabling the participation and cooperation of other role players in the planning of the programme to ensure local relevance. The focus of the *rehberlik* programme on universally relatable values should be extended to include values embedded in African philosophy of education, such as *inter alia*, communitarianism and *ubuntu*. Janz (2017) emphasises the importance of concepts having currency in a place. Infusing the *rehberlik* programme with locally relevant values would thus contribute towards giving significance to the Gülen's philosophy of education in the place where it is practised. In section 2.4.2, I indicated how the philosophy of *hizmet* alludes to the *ubuntu* perception of being available to others; thus a willingness to accept others and be comfortable to be with others. Defining the *rehberlik* programme to be locally relevant would therefore entail the re-couching of universally relatable values in a locally acceptable vernacular.

(Re)defining the *rehberlik* programme in this manner, can potentially increase support and cooperation from local teachers, and encourage students and parents to take ownership of the values embedded in the programme. The inclusion of local values combined with the perceived universal values will demonstrate and encourage greater tolerance towards different cultures. Such a plural outlook coupled with secular education, can create an accommodating environment for students with different cultural orientation. Within the South African context, such a plural outlook is especially critical in light of recent debates on decolonisation and the Africanisation of education (cf. 1.1; Janz, 2017). It is within such a context, that the interconnection between *rehberlik* and *temsil* will enhance the embodiment and practice of universal and locally appreciated values towards the holistic development of students through subject teaching complemented by value education. Supplementing subject teaching with a localised version of value education has the potential to create awareness of one's geography, thus the local context, and of what it means to be human being among other beings (cf. Olivier, 2017).

The cultivation of values of democracy is important for enabling an awareness of what it means to be a good citizen (Waghid in Davids, 2018). According to Davids (2018), education for democratic citizenship involves the inculcation of respect, compassion, inclusion, and fairness. These values are not only universally relatable but resonate strongly with the dominant values that inform teaching and learning in the HET context (cf. 5.3.2.2; 6.4.2.1). At the same time, these values are compatible with the notion of *ubuntu* (cf. 2.4.2). Central to democratic citizenship education is intercultural dialogue (cf. Waghid, 2009). The HET schools place a high premium on intercultural interaction, dialogue, collective decision-making, *istişare* and *temsil* (cf. 5.3.1.4; 5.3.2.3; 6.4.2.3; 6.4.2.4). Davids (2018) postulates that democratic ways of being cannot be taught; instead, it must be made visible in classroom practices through practical demonstrations, enactments and engagements. I contend that a well-structured *rehberlik* programme that includes a localised version of value education has the potential to enhance and strengthen democratic citizenship education through *temsil*.

The exploration of the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools enabled me to consider how a philosophy of education can be made

relevant for educational policy and practice. Although Gülen's expression of his philosophy of education lacks structure, the study revealed that the key themes that constitute his philosophy, can be traced in policy in practice, albeit in an implicit and often in a haphazard manner. A common understanding of the aims and objectives of a school, requires a well-articulated philosophy of education that has relevance for those who teach and learn. In the context of the HET schools and positioned within their connection with the HM, a clearly articulated philosophy of education that foregrounds holistic education as a major component, would enable a common understanding of how the interplay of *rehberlik* and *temsil*, albeit framed within the South African context, can influence policy and practice.

7.5 In reflection

I have been involved in this study over several years, it has become part of my life and in this section, I reflect on my experiences of my research endeavour. In reflection, I comment on what I perceive as the strengths of my study, the challenges I experienced, and the limitations of my study. In drawing on the limitations, I propose various ideas for further research. I also reflect on my personal and scholarly growth.

7.5.1 Strengths of the study

In reflection, I consider two aspects of the study as strengths, namely the (re)construction of Gülen's philosophy of education to serve as a structured theoretical framework, and the suggestions I make based on my analysis of the data generated from the document analysis and the semi-structured interviews.

There exists no agreed-upon Gülenian model of education, and it was important for this study, to give structure to his philosophical understanding of education. By drawing on other researchers' suggestions concerning dominant aspects of Gülen's educational philosophy I was able to reorganise key notions into values and perspectives, which in turn, fed into two prominent themes, namely the aims of the educational process and methodological issues pertaining to education. Giving structure to Gülen's philosophy of education, subsequently constituted the development of a theoretical framework. Although the framework was informed by

academic literature, I believe that my long time association with the HM and my consequent familiarity with Gülen's philosophical thoughts, supported by my insider status, contributed to the development of the framework. Although insider status could pose challenges relating to pre-existing biases and perceptions, I am convinced that such status was beneficial in terms of having a good understanding of the HM context. This theoretical framework not only guided my analysis of the generated data, but was imperative in enabling me to answer the main research question. By applying the framework and reading the data 'through' the incorporated key notions, I was able to explore the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET school documents and by implication, in school practices. I believe my insider status added to the strength of the study as I managed to generate good quality of data in the interviews and I could engage the participants meaningfully by diversifying relevantly through further interrogation when needed.

Another strength of my study is the set of suggestions that were derived from the analysis and by implication, my understanding of Gülen's philosophy of education. In drawing on the key notions of the philosophy, I realised that Gülen's understanding of a holistic approach to education should serve as the philosophical impetus of the HET schools. By centralising holistic education in the foundational documents of the HET, the intersection with *rehberlik* and *temsil* emerges as key components of a holistic approach. While I suggest the importance of a well-articulated pronouncement of the underpinning philosophy of education for the HET schools, especially in terms of holistic education as the key focus, a well-developed *rehberlik* policy has the potential of reframing a *rehberlik* programme to be locally relevant. As such, the suggestions made in this study are informed by the development of a theoretical framework that provides structure to the scattered nature of Gülen's philosophy of education and the elaborations thereof by different scholars.

7.5.2 Challenges experienced during the study

Personally, the greatest challenge of this study was related to the field the research. My background is in science education and as a qualified physics teacher, my dissertation for my master's degree was science education. In addition, my master's study was quantitative in nature. My challenge was subsequently twofold. First, it

was very challenging gaining an understanding of philosophy of education as a discipline, despite being familiar with Gülen and his philosophy. Although I was familiar with Gülen, I had to read relevant writings from an academic research perspective, rather than for personal and spiritual interest. Second, a change of field of study, coupled with a change from a more positivist paradigmatic orientation to interpretivism added to the challenge. However, I soon discovered that an interpretivist approach to my study was more suitable to my thinking and to this research.

With regard to a qualitative methodology, document analysis and conducting semi-structured interview were new to me and I did a significant amount of reading on these methods. I watched videos of examples of qualitative interviews and did informal practice runs with my friends and colleagues. For the sake of clarity of communication and to enhance expression, interviews with Turkish teachers were conducted in Turkish. The findings of my study brought to the fore the language challenges of Turkish participants and reconfirmed that my decision to conduct the interviews in Turkish was wise. I translated the interviews into English myself, and this was extremely time-consuming, despite using speech-text technology as assistance. I used the same technology to transcribe the interviews, which were conducted in English. Having to transcribe and translate was a daunting task, and I often had to revisit the recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and translations.

Not being able to obtain a well-developed document on *rehberlik* was both a challenge and an opportunity. While the absence of a structured exposition of *rehberlik* made it difficult to trace Gülen's influence thereof in school documents, it foregrounded the need for a well-articulated *rehberlik* policy. Turkish teachers are familiar with *rehberlik*, local teachers talked about a value period and between their conceptions, I had the challenge to generate information on value education and the implementation thereof.

Another practical challenge was to allocate sufficient time for the study as a full-time employee of the Horizon Educational Trust. Although my work allowed for flexibility, I still had various responsibilities to attend to. While finding time to engage in

voluminous reading was a challenge, having to visit schools in different provinces required a lot of arrangements and time for travel, and for conducting interviews at the various schools. Since the participants were placed in different schools, the interviews were to some extent, focused only on certain aspects, thus limiting the opportunity for more in-depth interviews. I soon realised that my initial thinking about the empirical part of the study was over-optimistic, and although I generated sufficient data, it was simply not possible within the scope of this study, to include class observations and interview more participants.

An issue that had a significant impact on me personally and by implication on my studies was the developments in Turkey. In 2016, the Turkish government launched an unprecedented clampdown on institutions and individuals associated with HM, claiming that HM had established a clandestine network and undermined the elected government. Widespread persecution followed, which resulted in the firing of tens of thousands of public servants and the detaining and jailing tens of thousands of women, elderly, children, teachers, doctors, nurses, judges, prosecutors and other people from all parts of the society. As a result, I am unable to travel to Turkey, possibly my Turkish passport has been cancelled, and I cannot get any consular services from the Turkish embassy in Pretoria. Although the Turkish government exerted its influence on some of the countries to close down or seize HM affiliated schools, the South African government has not taken any steps in this regard. However, these developments impacted adversely on securing sponsorships to embark on new projects. As a result, the project for a HET school in Bloemfontein, was put on hold and I, as the project leader, had to relocate to Cape Town. The HET schools in South Africa are currently financially self-sustained but are no longer able to recruit new teachers. The Turkish teachers in South Africa were placed in a predicament. Some had to leave South Africa and applied for asylum in other countries. The expiring of passports became a problem, while they are not allowed to extend their passports at the Turkish embassy in South Africa, they risk detainment and imprisonment if they were to go back to Turkey. This state of affairs not only had an influence on the morale of Turkish teachers but also on me and the future of my studies. I was at some stage very concerned about the future of the HET schools in South Africa, and it was uncertain if I would be able to continue with my studies. All these developments also had a significant psychological impact on me personally

and my family. I was diagnosed with diabetes and had to make adjustments accordingly, which also impacted my concentration.

7.5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Due to the scope of the study, I had to depend on the expressed views and perceptions of the participants. Interviewing other stakeholders, such as the HET trustees, parents and community members could have offered more clarity on how they perceive the educational model of the schools and other aspects they consider unique to the HET schools. In addition, working with more than one school and having to interview participants from all of the schools, limited the exploration of some experiences in greater detail. My intention was not to compare different HET schools. Focusing on two schools in close proximity to each other, could have meant more time in these schools with the possibility of getting more stakeholders involved for a deeper understanding. Although the interviews did yield rich data, spending more time at two schools would have also enabled me to interview parents and other stakeholders, which in turn could have offered a broader perspective on how the schools are experienced by parents and perceived by the community. Initially, I also planned to observe staff meetings, parent meetings, classes and other relevant gatherings. Within the scope of this study, I soon realised that this would not be practical. However, observations could have provided valuable information on the operations of the schools and on the relations among students and teachers.

The above limitations present opportunities for further research. I suggest that a study, focusing on a single school, can explore in more depth what I attempted to do across all HET schools. My study highlighted important themes and aspects pertaining to Gülen's philosophy of education. These themes can be studied individually not only for their manifestation in the HET schools, but to explore possibilities for strengthening them within the context of the HET schools. Given the importance of the *rehberlik* programme as a key component of the HM, it is important to undertake more research on several aspects relating to the programme. For example, it is imperative that a study is undertaken on the relevance and adaptability of the programme for local cultures and values. In this regard, it might be very interesting to study the philosophy of *hizmet* in relation to *African communitarianism*

and values such as *ubuntu and ukama*. Such a study could potentially contribute towards localising the *rehberlik* programme for the South African context. The possibilities for further research seem numerous. It would be interesting to conduct a study involving Turkish teachers only, focusing on their background, their induction in HM, and how their practices at the schools are influenced by their sense of commitment and understanding of HM educational models. The findings of this study could potentially open up new possibilities for further research. The structured presentation of Gülen's philosophy of education that transpired from this study, can be used as a springboard for studies on holistic education, *rehberlik* and *temsil* as key components of a Gülenian perception on education, with an emphasis on increasing their relevance at the HET schools in South Africa.

7.5.4 Scholarly and personal growth

The journey of conducting this study and completing this thesis has been a tremendously enriching experience. I acquired new knowledge, perspectives and skills, and it was intellectually satisfying and educational to engage with Gülen's thoughts. I have come to appreciate that academic work is not about mere reading and learning existing knowledge about a phenomenon at hand, but it is more about complementing existing knowledge with new knowledge gained through the critical analysis of data. I believe this is a skill I will apply in my future engagements. This was evident in that coming from a science education background and engaging in philosophy of education has been a significant challenge, but it came with invaluable growth.

I have learned to search for relevant knowledge, systematically present it and re-organise that knowledge to develop a framework for analysis. I have learned to conduct document analysis by generating data out of written material, and organising and analysing such data by applying my framework for analysis. I have populated interview content and studied them to identify dominant themes in order to do an analysis and interpret those findings against the literature and other sources of data. The topic of my research is an area, which I am familiar with and I have spoken and written about it at various occasions in the past. However, my method of speaking and writing lacked academic style and rigour. Since I started writing my thesis, I have

gained skills to conduct myself in a more academic manner. I have also learned to write according to the academic standards of writing and interpretation.

Although the subject of this study is a personal interest for me, and even though I believe in the importance of the core values of the HM, this study enabled me to fill a critical conceptual gap. My previous reflections on Gülen's philosophy and the schools have not been scholarly and systematic and without positioning it in relation to a broader theoretical and practical educational landscape. With this study, I developed skills to reflect in a systematic and scholarly manner. I have come to realise the importance of considering a philosophy of education and its implementation in relation to the specific context in which it has significance. I have also gained the insight that although HM educational initiatives are primarily driven by teachers who are Gülen followers, Gülen's philosophy of education needs to be formulated and presented to the educational and scholarly spheres, and subsequently positioned within broader educational research and debates. I believe this study can be helpful in contributing towards the gap between a HM educational model and the broader educational landscape.

On a more personal level, I am still involved in HM projects and this study enabled me to be critical of my own perspectives and knowledge, and to refine my own perspective in light of new understanding and information. Long-time association with HM has the potential to prevent seeing other broader challenges and current debates. This research reminded me that HM institutions do not operate in isolation and encouraged me to position my conceptual understanding and practical engagements in relation broader educational space and current debates. I believe I can offer valuable perspectives and make meaningful contributions to the projects that I am involved in.

7.6 Concluding remarks

I embarked on this study with the ambition to explore Gülen's philosophy of education and how it gets practised in the HET schools. Indirectly, my intention was also to produce new knowledge on HM educational activities, highlighting possible perspectives for global HM educational engagements. This study foregrounded that

Gülen's outlook on and inspiration for engagement with the modern world involves secular education in schools where positive sciences and moral and spiritual development are prioritised. The guiding role of the Horizon Educational Trust in the establishment of the HET schools, and the secular nature of these schools, confirm that Gülen's outlook involves engagement with a diversity of people in a secular environment. This outlook is further underscored by the ease with which Turkish teachers, who are followers of Gülen as practising Muslims, teach modern sciences in a non-religious school setting. Gülen is an Islamic scholar and a devoted Muslim. In my opinion, his perspective on engagement with the modern and secular world is a reflection of the universality of Islam.

This study comprised a literature review, document analysis and semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring the manifestation of Gülen's philosophy of education in the HET schools. By consulting literature on Gülen, Gülen's own writings, and also by reading 'across' the literature, common themes emerged regarding his philosophical thoughts. Although his philosophy is not articulated as a well-developed philosophy, I soon realised that the common themes and associated key notions can be used to give structure to Gülen's philosophy of education. By using my conceptual understanding of Gülen's ideas, I was able to develop a more theoretical exposition of his philosophy. While the HM was inspired by Gülen's philosophical thoughts, the framework for analysis, which I developed, provides by implication, the philosophical underpinnings, of a HM inspired education model. Using this framework for analysing school documents revealed that although the HET schools do not pronounce their alignment with the HM, it was possible to make some inferences that allude to aspects of Gülen's philosophy, and by implication to HM. Aspects of a HM education model, were foregrounded in the HET documents, although not explicitly articulated in relation to Gülen's philosophy. These aspects pertain to perceptions regarding holistic education, the importance of values and moral guidance, diverse stakeholder involvement, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, and a high premium on academic achievement. Aspects of Gülen's philosophy appeared to be indirectly recognisable in the HET school documents. The findings that emanated from the interviews revealed that the influence of Gülen's philosophy of education is visible in the emphasis on holistic education at the schools. Gülen's notion of value-free subject teaching complemented by moral

education finds significance in how the schools use a guidance programme to teach value education alongside subject teaching. The interviews offered insight into how Gülen's influence is in particular, discernible in the perceptions and actions of Turkish teachers. In particular, these teachers' sense of commitment, their willingness to sacrifice and their perception of service to people as service to God are strongly aligned with the *hizmet* philosophy embedded in the HM and Gülen's thoughts. The findings also revealed that despite a strong religious mindfulness in the personal lives of Turkish teachers, the schools do not impose religion on staff and students. Although not identified as aspects of Gülen's philosophy, practices at the HET schools allude to his understanding of secular education, where positive sciences and moral and spiritual development are prioritised, as a means to engage with the modern world.

Based on the findings of this study, I argue for a more explicit and outright pronouncement of the philosophy of education of the schools. In particular, I argue in favour of centring holistic education as the philosophical impetus of the HET schools. The practice of holistic education in the form of a *rehberlik* programme that complements subject teaching and foregrounds the importance of teaching by examples, already exists at the HET schools. It is however, important to institutionalise such a practice by formulating the underlying philosophy of education. A clearly-articulated philosophy would enhance a common understanding of the aims and objectives of the HET schools. In addition, since the *rehberlik* program offers significant contribution to holistic education but in particular towards balancing an over-emphasis on academic achievement, I argue in favour of a *rehberlik* policy. While such a policy should guide the *rehberlik* programme, it is imperative that the latter is made locally relevant by incorporating concepts and values that have significance for and enjoy vitality within the local context it is to be practised. In essence, I argue in favour of making Gülen's philosophy of education relevant for the HET schools in the South African context.

While the HET schools are indirectly guided by the HM educational model, this study provides a more structured version of Gülen's philosophy of education that could be useful for HM educational debates. The study foregrounds the importance of a well-articulated philosophy of education for coherent policy and practice. The findings of

the study revealed that the lack of a well-articulated philosophy of education leads to incoherent practices. It is assumed that coherence in policy and practice, would transpire from a common understanding of the philosophical impetus of the educational model of the school by the founders, administrators and teachers. Although this study provides a structured version of Gülen's philosophy of education, it also warns against an uncritical implementation thereof (cf. 6.4.2.5) as if it is universally applicable, irrespective of the place where it is practised.

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Appendix A: Ethical clearance – University of the Free State



Faculty of Education

17-Oct-2018

Dear Mr Aydin Inal

Ethics Clearance: **THE MANIFESTATION OF FETHULLAH GÜLEN'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN HORIZON EDUCATIONAL TRUST SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Aydin Inal**

Department: **School of Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/1282**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully



Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
Office of the Dean: Education

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Winkie Direko Building | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa
www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix B: Permission – Horizon Education Trust

Att: Mr Ilhami Demirtas

Director of Education
Horizon Education Trust
46 Wingfield Avenue,
Birdhaven, 2196

Dear Mr Ilhami Demirtas,

As per my previous verbal briefing, I hereby request permission to conduct my research at the Horizon Education Trust schools in South Africa. I have applied for and was granted ethical clearance by the University of the Free State to undertake this study (see attached letter). The research project is explained below.

I am conducting research for my doctoral study at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Education and focus on the manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education in Horizon Education Trust schools in South Africa. The title of my thesis: "The manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's Educational Philosophy in Horizon Educational Trust Schools in South Africa".

I will be undertaking the following procedures at the respective schools to generate data in order to complete my thesis:

- a document analysis of documents from the Trust and the schools, including the Trust Deed, the schools' constitutions, student code of conduct, the admission policy, minutes of meetings, newsletters, and other available written communication which might contain relevant information for my research; and
- conduct face-to-face interviews with one member of the school management team, two teachers and two graduates of the school who are legally able to give consent to being interviewed (see attached informed consent form).

With regards to the undertaking of this study at the Horizon Education Trust schools, I guarantee the following:

- the schools' confidential information will be respected and will not be divulged;
- the identity of the schools will be protected as I will randomly assign a code to each school which will be used in the final research report;
- all participants will be required to sign an informed consent form (see attached informed consent form);
- the interviews are designed to discover the perspectives and interpretations of the participants and questions will aim at further discovery and clarification.

I anticipate conducting my research during the first term of 2019 at the respective schools. I will inform the Trust of the progress, and undertake to provide you with a copy of the final research report.

Thank you for your support in this regard.

Aydin Inal
0729700778

PhD candidate at the University of the Free State

09/06/2020

Att: Mr Aydin Inal

Re: permission request to conduct research at Horizon Educational Trust schools,

Dear Mr. Inal,

We have received your request to conduct research at Star Colleges run by Horizon Educational Trust. We have considered your request and found it to be in order. We however ask that you consult the schools individually and make appropriate arrangements so that the teaching is not affected. We further request that you take necessary precautions to protect identities of our staff and students and undertake the research ensuring confidentiality of identities of the staff and the schools.

Also please note that participation will have to be agreed upon by individual teachers and we cannot force anyone into participation. We also request that a final copy of your research report be submitted to us for reference purposes.

We wish you success with your project.

Kind Regards



Ilhami Demirtas
Educational Director
Horizon Educational Trust

E-mail: dg@myhorizon.org

Tel: +27 11 447 8706

Cell: +27 825064670

Appendix C: Permission – HET schools

Date __/__/20__

The Principal
Star College _____

Dear _____

As per my previous verbal briefing, I hereby request permission to conduct my study at Star College Pretoria. The research project is explained below. I have obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Free State (see attached letter of approval) and the Horizon Educational Trust (see attached letter of approval) to conduct this study.

I am conducting a research for my doctoral studies at the University of the Free State in the Faculty of Education. My research is on Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education and how it manifests in Horizon Education Trust schools in South Africa. In order to explore such a manifestation of your school, I request permission to do the following:

- analyse the following documents at your school including the school's constitution, the student code of conduct, the admission policy, minutes of meetings, newsletters, and other available written communication which might contain relevant information for my research; and
- conduct face-to-face interviews with one member of the school management team, two teachers and two graduates of the school who are legally able to give consent to being interviewed (see attached informed consent form).

I guarantee that the school's confidential information will be respected and that the name of the school will not be divulged in the research report. The school will be given a random code to ensure its anonymity.

I anticipate conducting the research at your school during the first term of 2019 and foresee that I will spend approximately one week at your school. I also undertake to provide the school with a copy of my research findings.

Thank you for your support in this regard.

Aydin Inal
0729700778
PhD candidate at the University of the Free State

Appendix D: Informed consent form

University of the Free-State

Informed Consent form

Title of the research: The manifestation of Fethullah Gülen’s educational philosophy in Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa

Supervisor: Dr A. le Roux

Student: Mr Aydin Inal

Contacts particulars: +27729700778 or email: aydininal@gmail.com

Declaration by the participant

I, the participant and undersigned,
ID/Passport number,
Address.....

..... hereby confirm that I got invited by Mr Aydin Inal, a PhD student at the University of Free-State, to participate in a research study on “**The manifestation of Fethullah Gülen’s educational philosophy in Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa**”. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any stage without disclosing reasons. My participation or withdrawal will not have any present or future effects on my career and there are no financial costs or benefits to be accrued to me due to my participation in or withdrawal from this research.

My identity will remain confidential in the proceedings of interview. I am free to raise questions and views without any intimidation during the interview with the researcher. My dignity will be respected throughout my participation. I understand that recordings and transcripts will be made during interview and my identity will not be revealed at any point of reporting. The researcher explained to me all the information concerning the study in the language best understood to me and no pressure was exerted by the researcher to participate.

I hereby voluntarily consent to participate in an interview for this research.

Signed aton the.....20....

Signature of participant.....

Email: _____

Declaration by the researcher

I, AYDIN INAL declare that I explained the information above to the participant in the language best understood to him or her. He or she was given enough time to ask questions and freely decided whether or not to participate.

Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix E: Document analysis sample

		NQF PRINCIPLES AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES.docx	Code of Conduct for teachers.docx	CONSTITUTION LETTER.docx	MINUTES MEETING NO 3 2018.doc	MINUTES MEETING NO 4 2018.doc	4.4 MINUTES MEETING NO 5 2018.doc	4. MI 6
	Final codes	F3	P18	P28	OA10	OA11	OA12	O.
Educational processes	A holistic approach	HOLISTIC APPROACH ;; all-rounded-ness, requiring of all pupils that they involve themselves in the academic, sporting, cultural and spiritual life of the school and its community ;;;		A quality education with holistic approach of nurturing and encouraging each child's moral, physical and educational wellbeing irrespective of race, religion or background.;;;; Excellence in Education" and on the logo: "Ruh, Akil, Beden" (Soul, Mind, Body ;;; balanced education	He mentions that this weeks (Grd 8) braai has been postponed due to Athletics House activity but will be reshuffled accordingly	Educators respond well and Principal thanked all educators involved in sport and clubs.		
	Temsil (teaching by example)		attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of, noble calling of their profession.;;;; 7.6 Model integrity, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, and respect for all persons		Educators are to set a good standard that enhances professionalism and the quality of education at STAR.			
	Cooperation of the stakeholders		recognises the parents as partners in education, and promotes a harmonious relationship with them;;;	3.3 To enhance co-operation and sound relationships between parents, educators, learners and non-teaching staff at all times (SPONSOR IS MISSING)	class braais ;;; Mr _____ asked educators that should they have any suggestions to improve or maintain parent relationships that his office is always open for suggestions			
	implementation of contemporary pedagogical methods;		keeps abreast of educational trends and developments;;; 7.12 Maintain a high degree of subject knowledge and keep abreast of educational trends and developments				Data projectors will be installed soon Esp Grd 8 and 10Grd 12 smart board to be sorted soon	

Appendix F: Interview schedules

Interview schedule: School management

Relevant personal background

- 1 Introduce yourself briefly? Where did you study, previously teach, what positions have you held?
- 2 Introduce the school by touching on aspects such staff composition, student composition, school fees and how they compare to other similar schools, the location of the school, subjects that you offer, facilities at the school, and major achievements of the school.

Views and interpretations of the participants

- 3 Are you familiar with Fethullah Gülen and his philosophy of education? Explain.
- 4 Have you read any of Gülen's writings? If yes, would you describe yourself as a follower of Gülen?
- 5 Is it a priority for you to declare that this is a *Hizmet* Movement affiliated school and that the school community is made aware of Gülen, his philosophical thoughts and the *Hizmet* Movement? Explain.
- 6 How would you describe the school's educational philosophy?
- 7 What do you think are some of the characteristics of an ideal school?
- 8 What do you think makes your school unique and successful?
- 9 In your opinion what are some of the values that are important for your school? And do you promote them, how?
- 10 Describe your understanding of the mission of the school.
- 11 As the management, what are your expectations of the teachers?

Practices and implementations at the school

- 12 Do you train teachers in Gülen's philosophy of education (formally or informally)? If yes, which methods do you utilise for this and what is the content of such a training?
- 13 What are some of the unique practices that you implement at this school?
- 14 What are some unique strategies that you implement personally to achieve this mission?
- 15 Who are the stakeholders that are involved and you interact? And explain their involvement/interaction.
- 16 How do you see the role of parents in the school and how are they involved?
- 17 Do you conduct programmes such as in-service training for teachers? If yes, what is the focus of such programmes?
- 18 Do you believe the decision-making processes at the school are inclusive? Explain.
- 19 What is your vision for your graduates? What do you expect of them when they graduate?
- 20 What do you think are the points where the school can / should improve?

Interview questions: Teachers

Relevant personal background

- 1 Introduce yourself briefly - where did you qualify, where have you previously taught and what positions have you held?
- 2 What made you choose teaching?
- 3 Why did you decide to take a post at this school?
- 4 Are you familiar with Fethullah Gülen and his writing? Explain.
- 5 Would you describe yourself a follower of Gülen? If yes, why?

Views and interpretations of the participants

- 6 How would you describe the *Hizmet* Movement?
- 7 Describe your understanding of *Hizmet* and Fethullah Gülen's philosophy of education and highlight the aspects you consider as essential.
- 8 In your opinion, what should the aim of education be?
- 9 In your opinion, what are some of the characteristics of an ideal school?
- 10 How do you see your place and role in this school?
- 11 Do you sometimes think you should have chosen a different profession?
- 12 How would you assess the success of a school in general? This one?
- 13 What are the attributes of an ideal teacher?
- 14 Describe the mission of the school in your own words.
- 15 What are the five values that a school should promote?

Practices and implementations at the school

- 16 What are some of the strategies that you implement personally that can contribute to realising the mission of the school?
- 17 How do you think Gülen's philosophy of education influences your teaching on day-to-day basis? Refer to specific examples.
- 18 What are some of the strategies and policies of the school that are specifically inspired by Gülen's philosophy of education? Explain.
- 19 What are the weekly meetings that you attend?
- 20 How are decisions made at the school? Do you feel you are able to influence these decisions?
- 21 What strategies does the school implement to uphold the motivation of the teachers?
- 22 Do you believe this is an ideal *Hizmet* school?
 - a. If so, what makes it a *Hizmet* school?
 - b. If not, where is it failing/lacking?
- 23 Do you believe the processes at the school encourage participation?
- 24 What do you think are the points where the school can / should improve?

Interview questions: Graduates

Relevant personal background

- 1 Introduce yourself briefly.
- 2 When did you attend Star College?
- 3 What would you say were the reasons for choosing to attend Star College?

Views and interpretations of the participants

- 4 Are you familiar with Fethullah Gülen and his teachings?
- 5 Did the school explicitly teach you about Gülen ideas? Explain.
- 6 What is your view on the compatibility of science and religion? Do you believe there could be areas where the religious teachings may clash with what science discovers?
- 7 What do you think the role of a school should be?
- 8 How would you describe your responsibility toward your community?
- 9 What are the values that would stand out for at Star College?

Practices and implementations at the school

- 10 How would you describe the type of education implemented at this school?
- 11 What are some unique strategies that you observed at the school? Explain.
- 12 How would you describe the teacher-student relations at Star College?
- 13 How involved were your parents at the school? Describe the nature of their involvement.
- 14 How would you describe the school's approach to discipline?
- 15 Do you believe you were given sufficient support from the school to develop your social skills?
- 16 When you think about it broadly, what stands out for you about Star College?
- 17 What stands out about the Turkish teachers?
- 18 Have you observed any discrepancies between what the teachers taught you and what they practiced? Explain.
- 19 Did any of your teachers influence you in your choice of profession or field of study?
- 20 Do you still keep contact with the school? What is the nature of your contact?

Appendix G: Interview records

☒	Q. He is an Islamic scholar and you are a religious person. But here you educate non-Muslim children. How do you reconcile being a practicing Muslim and giving secular education? Isn't it better to take a Muslim child and making a better Muslim or to take a non-Muslim child and make him Muslim ☒	☒
☒	I believe all religions have the same source Christianity Judaism Islam and they're all fed by the same source. Yes within the time maybe other religious might have been distorted but in terms of the source and many a common aspects and their sources are the same. more than their children being Muslim for them to gain universal values is a primary objective for us. And as the Muslim yes I live as a Muslim I try to live like my religion expects me but I do not impose this on the other side but try and set an example by practicing this. ☒	☒ All religions the same source ☒ ☒ Universal values ☒ Temsil ☒ ☒
☒	Q you mentioned universal values what are those universal values ☒	☒
☒	TIME: 19:40 ☒	☒
☒	first of all these universal values is about having good moral and good character and the detail where we want to be of help to the students the most is this. Because most of our students at the school don't have a proper family they are they don't have their father or a mother they come from a background like that. Therefore the basic values that they are supposed to receive as their children they cannot receive them. And especially because this is a boys school what would they what they are not able to get from their parents we try to give them within this 4-5 years they are here. at the is truthfulness not stealing honesty friendship respect to the family cleanliness respect to the elders basic values like this one we try to give them. More than preaching about these values we try to set an example of these. ☒	☒ Good morals ☒ Good character ☒ Truthfulness ☒ Not stealing ☒ Honesty ☒ Friendship ☒ Respect for family ☒ Cleanliness ☒ Respect for elders ☒ TEMSIL ☒
☒	☒	☒
☒	As a school we have a guidance service. We have a guidance system which has been implemented for years and has been solidified. First and foremost we have group meetings. we have a universal value that we cover with each class on a weekly basis. for example this week or value is friendship or the next week respect for parents. What do we do about that? we come together with our students and in mostly this is in the form of dividing the class into three or four groups and we meet and we discussed around these values. and we watch motivational videos and we read and discuss articles around these values. or what can be done in practice about these values as discussed. It is usually a very nice environment. And this is done every year from grade 8 to grade 12 by improving it every year and we try to keep it fresh. ☒	☒ Rehberlik ☒ Group meetings ☒ Friendship ☒ Respect for parents ☒

Appendix H: Language editing letter

Dr Naailah Duymun-Demirtaş
PhD (Linguistics), MPhil (Education), BA (Honours)
Applied Linguist/
Language Practitioner/
Sworn Translator of The High Court of South Africa
No 17667/07
English-French/French-English
Mobile: +27795164914
Email: naailahd@gmail.com
6th of July 2020

Proofreading and editing of PhD thesis

To whom it may concern

I, the undersigned, declare that, in my capacity as a researcher/academic and an English language proofreader and editor, I have perused the PhD thesis of Mr Aydın İnal, entitled "The manifestation of Fethullah Gülen's educational philosophy in Horizon Educational Trust schools in South Africa".

After carefully scanning the whole document, in some instances, I either made annotations of comments, suggestions or recommendations, and in other instances, I went ahead and made corrections which were recorded in the comments margin.

I understand that Mr İnal will have addressed the issues I raised, which were minor and mostly syntactic and lexical.

I trust the appraisal of the written English language of Mr İnal is in order.
Do not hesitate to contact me should there be any comment or issue.

Kind regards,



Dr Naailah Duymun-Demirtaş
