

# Faith and Management at Theological Seminaries

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## Abstract

Leadership for theological training institutions has been subject to the influences of the academization of the organizations and a concurrent professionalization of the leader's role. The doctoral thesis "Leading evangelical seminaries in German-speaking Europe: A transcendental phenomenology" (Schroder, 2016) is an empirical phenomenology among lead administrators of protestant seminaries in the free-church context. It describes the participants' experiences in their lived phenomenon of leadership within the theoretical frameworks of spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and workplace spirituality. Six lead administrators voice their experiences regarding their management responsibilities and their spirituality. This article will summarize the study while focusing on findings and themes on issues of faith and management. As the most profound theme emerged the leader's spirituality as the primary source of motivation and meaning for the tasks and experiences contained within their leadership role.

Keywords: Spiritual Leadership, Servant Leadership, Workplace Spirituality, Theological Education, Phenomenology.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

"What does it mean to be you?", that is the guiding question for my doctoral thesis "Leading evangelical seminaries in German-speaking Europe: A transcendental phenomenology" (Schroder, 2016). It is an empirical phenomenology among lead administrators of seminaries in the protestant free-church context. The study's result is the essence of the experience as described by the participants in their lived phenomenon of leadership within the theoretical frameworks of spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and workplace spirituality. For reasons of access, personal familiarity, and necessary delimitation (Creswell, 2013) only theological institutions were considered that also were part of the Konferenz Bibeltreuer Ausbildungsstätten (KbA, 2014). Portions of this thesis have been already published elsewhere focussing on findings concerning the experience of diversity (Schroder & Milacci, 2017).

### 1.1 Definitions

Academization is the process where organizations become recognized as academic institutions; furthermore, its programs become academically accredited as well. This state of recognition, once achieved, must be maintained through ongoing quality management and periodical reaccreditations (Ott, 2013).

Professionalization in educational leadership is described as a leader's increasing managerial responsibility of a chief executive (Bezboruah, 2011). This is usually the result of a more structured and defined organization of the training institution (Ott, 2013).

The term lead administrator generally defines the person who assumes the highest hierarchical position within the executive structure of the organization. The lead administrator, for my purposes, was the person positioned at the top of the institution where governance, leadership, and management converge.

For this article, seminary describes an institution that provides formal theological training through an academic program format leading to recognized degrees or their equivalents. This nomenclature also conforms to the terminology employed in related literature (e. g. Ott, 2011).

The result of a transcendental phenomenology is a description of the essence of a lived experience. This term is derived from the Greek *ousia*, meaning the true being of a thing, “what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is)” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177).

### 1.2 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand leadership through the description of the lived experience of lead administrators, investigated using the empirical philosophy of transcendental phenomenology (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Husserl, 2012). However, this investigation was not a study of the leaders themselves, but the essence of their experience (Creswell, 2013). The significance of this study for this article lies in the deeper understanding and practical application of the theoretical frameworks of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002), and workplace spirituality (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010) for lead administrators in spiritually focused and religious institutions.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Five research questions guided the interview process and informed the coding analysis (Seidman, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). (1) How do participants describe what it means to be a lead administrator in their context? (2) What are the roles the participants identify as pertaining to their position? (3) How do participants describe their path of leadership development? (4) What influences on the participants’ present experiences, attitudes, and behaviours do they identify? (5) What role does personal spirituality play in the participants’ decision for leadership and their continued work as leaders?

## 2. LITERATURE

In transcendental phenomenology, the literature serves a two-fold purpose. First, it describes the phenomenon and outlines the expectation of what new knowledge might be obtained (Moustakas, 1994). Second, it establishes the body of information that needs to be bracketed out throughout the study as to let the participants’ descriptions dominate the analysis of the phenomenon (Husserl, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). The situation of theological education puts leaders in a position where theories of spiritual, servant leadership (Jones & Mason, 2010; Ott, 2013) and workplace spirituality as a subcategory of spiritual leadership apply.

### 2.1 Developments in Theological Education

The educational sector, in which the participants operate, is changing on a global scale (Ott, 2013; Steinke, 2011; Stortz, 2011; Werner, 2011). Reinalda and Kulesza (2006) observed these global shifts to include: (a) an increase of economic competitiveness in the market; (b) increasing types of adult learning; (c) the emergence of non-university institutions and programs; (d) proliferating online and distance learning; (e) innovations in collaborations between public and private entities; (f) influx of business management practices; and (g) the establishment of new private universities. Several European countries promoted these shifts by initiating the Bologna Process (European Ministers of Education, 1999).

Ott (2013) identified specific challenges for theological institutions in market orientation, the Bologna Process in Europe, and the educational needs of the global church, which are fuelled by the shift of educational structures from policy and management-oriented models to market-based and entrepreneurial models. Seminary leaders consequently face issues of quality-management, evaluation, accreditation, and other management processes (Ott, 2013).

## 2.2 Workplace Spirituality Theory

Workplace spirituality (WS) can be defined as “aspects of the workplace, either in the individual, the group, or the organization, that promote individual feelings of satisfaction through transcendence” (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010, p. 13). The awareness of spirituality at the workplace arose in response to a felt void at work (Avolio et al., 2009) caused by shifting values, an increase of social autonomy, and a renewed search for meaning (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). Subsequently WS programs are being implemented to create sustainable business models (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013) and employers develop strategies on faith at work (Alewell & Moll, 2021).

WS has been studied by both researchers and practitioners (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). It was investigated in conjunction with servant leadership (Bowden et al., 2010), workplace integration (Goldstein-Gidoni & Zaidman, 2011), occupational stress (Zellars et al., 2010), organizational commitment (Arménio & Miguel Pina, 2008), work-related learning (Dirkx, 2013), work effectiveness (Bowden et al., 2010), and organizational ethics (McGhee, 2021).

## 2.3 Spiritual Leadership Theory

Much writing on spiritual leadership refers to the theoretical groundwork by Fairholm, and by Fry and his associates in developing Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT, Fairholm, 2009; Fry, 2003). This section focuses on Fry et al.’s work. Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership “as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviours that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (p. 711).

SLT applies to leaders, followers, entire organizations, and organizational transformation (Fry et al., 2007; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013). In this broad applicability, Fry (2003) developed a theory based on a personal sense of calling, altruistic love as organizational culture, and genuine care, concern, and appreciative interest in self and others (see also Figure 1). The key processes of SLT include creating a vision in which followers and leaders find their calling, and establishing an organizational culture based on altruistic love where everyone experiences membership (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013). SLT focuses on integrating mind, body and spirit, or home, community, and self to become a more productive leader.

In the framework of SLT (Fry, 2003), effort is expressed in hope/faith and works and includes aspects of endurance and perseverance, a willingness to do what it takes, and an expectation of victory or success. According to Fry (2003, p. 713), “faith is more than hope ... it is the conviction that a thing unproved by physical evidence is true ... it is based on values, attitudes, and behaviours that demonstrate absolute certainty.” “Hope”, he continued, “is a desire with expectation of fulfilment.”



FIGURE 1: Causal Model of Spiritual Leadership (Fry, 2003, p. 695). Reproduced with permission.

The construct of reward is defined by altruistic love and includes aspects of forgiveness, kindness, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, compassion, loyalty, trust, humility, and empathy.

It is “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others” (Fry, 2003, p. 712).

Fry (2003) defined calling as “a vision of life’s purpose and meaning“ (p. 706). The term has long been used as a defining characteristic of a professional. People with a strong sense of calling believe in the value of their profession (Fry, 2003).

Membership is defined as belonging to “a community where one is understood and appreciated” (Fry, 2003, p. 706). Membership includes the cultural and social structures through which people seek to be understood and to be appreciated. Through a culture of altruistic love and a vision that gives meaning to a person’s calling, spiritual leadership provides the individual with a sense of belonging that leads to spiritual well-being (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013).

The result of SLT is an increased organizational commitment, where “people with a sense of calling and membership will become attached, loyal to, and want to stay in organizations that have cultures based on the values”, and increased productivity where “people who have hope/faith in the organization’s vision and who experience calling and membership will ‘do what it takes’ in pursuit of the vision to continuously improve and be more productive” (Fry, 2003, p. 714).

#### 2.4 Servant Leadership Theory

This theoretical treatment of servant leadership (SL) is based on the work of Robert K. Greenleaf (2002). His theory follows the assumption that every person has a natural tendency to serve. According to Greenleaf (2002), “if leaders understand themselves as servants, their followers will potentially become “healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants” (Chapter 1, Pos. 346). SL “is in essence, a way of being” (Spears, 2010, p. 13). The two most important elements are an outward focus, evidenced in genuine concern with serving those who follow, and the self-concept of the leader as being the first among equals (Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010) as they lead through servant power (Blokberg, 2021). Greenleaf (2002) himself identified nine characteristics of SL (see Figure 2).

Servant leaders practice active listening because they seek to understand the needs of others. They, however, not only seek to know, but also show empathy towards the feelings of others to foster emotional and spiritual wholeness and healing, while maintaining awareness of one another’s values, feelings, strengths, and weaknesses (Ingram, 2003). Greenleaf (2002) explained that through conscience, servant leaders transform their passion into compassion, which in turn becomes one of the foundations of their moral authority. This requires leaders to accept the persons under their leadership without qualification.

Servant leaders lead by positive influence and respectfully communicated persuasion (Ingram, 2003). In the construct of persuasion, all previous concepts are combined to establish the moral authority of the leader who does not have to rely on position and power to lead. The leader rather exercises leadership because he or she has proved to be trustworthy.

When planning, the servant leader, through conceptualization, can integrate present realities with future possibilities (Ingram, 2003). The leader intuitively makes judgments and decisions without having all the information but has a sense of the unknowable and unforeseeable (Greenleaf, 2002). Related to conceptualization is the construct of foresight, which Greenleaf defined as, “a better than average guess about what is going to happen when in the future” (Chapter 1, Pos. 468).

Servant leaders’ stewardship gives them a sense of responsibility for the people and organizations entrusted to them. They exhibit commitment towards service and the fostering of spiritual, professional, and personal growth within everyone in the organization (Ingram, 2003).

Greenleaf (2002) regarded the principle of stewardship as the measure of leadership excellence. In essence, Greenleaf's servant leadership theory redefined leadership as service and stewardship.

Studies on SL often carry Judeo-Christian overtones, but Sendjaya (2010) observed it has also found support from other religious and non-religious frameworks. Lanh of and Gldenbergr (2020) reviewed the literature on SL and found that narcissism impedes SL, an altruistic mindset leads to SL, emotional intelligence is positively related to SL and that core-self-evaluation is an antecedent to SL.

Wheeler (2012), in his comprehensive application of SL to higher education, made the argument that other styles of leadership currently present in these institutions are not sustainable. His premise includes cornerstones of "a call to serve, authenticity, humility, moral courage, and healing one's own emotional state" (p. XVI).

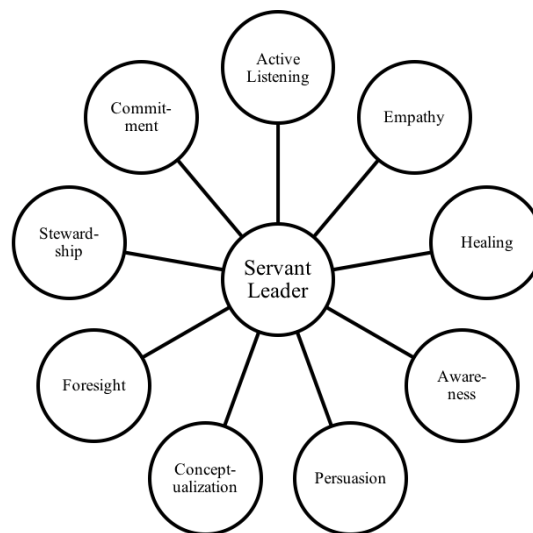


FIGURE 2: Servant Leadership Characteristics.

The theory of SL has been related to the leadership of institutions for theological training (e.g., Ott, 2013). Kessler (2022) illustrated SL as the inversion of the commonly held pyramid of power with the leader on top. Building on the writings of Greenleaf, he distilled nine facets of SL for the Christian context including among others (a) servants leading others to autonomy; (b) servants' gift of leadership is the gift of service; (c) people voluntarily follow gifted servant leaders; (d) servant leaders can lead themselves; and (e) servant leaders are open to critique. Kessler concludes that the servant leader in the Christian arena first and foremost serves God.

### 3. METHODS

This study sought to arrive at essential descriptions of the phenomenon of leadership following a transcendental phenomenological design. This design is scientific (Willard, 1984), concerned with the appearance of things (Heidegger, 1962), philosophical (Creswell, 2013), and a search for the essence of things (Husserl, 2012).

#### 3.1 The Philosophy of Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical method that goes "to the things or matters themselves" (Husserl, 2012, p. 328). It follows the assumptions that knowledge is most ascertainable through the experience of others (Willard, 1984), and that experience and behaviour are inseparable (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes intuition, imagination, universal structures. The analytical process includes epoche, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation (Husserl, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Transcendence in this context is the capacity of the mind to cognitively grasp objects that exist independent of them in all their aspects (Willard, 1984).

Husserl argued for the objectivity of knowledge through subjective knowing, which rests on three a priori assumptions: (a) intersubjectivity – a community of knowledge is possible in that many subjects can know the same thing in the same way; (b) intentionality – all acts of thinking are governed by certain laws that regulate the relationship between thoughts and things; and (c) intuition – the fact that transcendent objects can be known through repeated cognitive acts and thus enter into a relationship with the essence of the object (Willard 1984, pp. 248-249). In diverting from Husserl's ideal of pure knowledge of the essence of phenomena (Husserl, 2012), this study assumed the humbler goal to describe it "to a certain degree of depth and richness" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

### 3.2 The Practice of Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenological inquiry is a structured and rigorous approach, a descriptive science, or "the first method of knowledge because it begins with 'things themselves'" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41, emphasis in original), in search of the essences of phenomena. Transcendental phenomenology relies on sensory data and intuition, and thus perception and intention constitute the media of obtaining pure descriptive knowledge through pure reflection (Husserl, 2012).

"Our first outlook upon life ... [is] imaging, judging, willing, 'from the natural standpoint'" (Husserl, 2012, p. 50). To make sense of the natural world from this standpoint, the researcher needs to assume a stance of 'cogito'; i.e., establishing meaning by assuming a standpoint of being consciously aware of the natural world. Investigations from the natural standpoint can, therefore, never describe the meaning of things, but only portions of their appearance. To provide descriptions of essential meaning (Moustakas 1994), the researcher must leave the natural standpoint through bracketing or epoche, and phenomenological reduction.

The Greek term epoche has been interpreted to mean, "to hold back" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9). Epoche requires the researcher to lay aside as much as possible the natural attitude towards things comprised of personal biases, prior knowledge, and personal presuppositions, to enable "a new way of looking at things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Through epoche, the researcher doubts the natural attitude as a source of truth, (Dowling, 2007) and brackets it out (Moustakas, 1994). This means to refrain from judgment based on it (Husserl, 2012, p. 57). This refraining acts in two dimensions: (a) towards the theories and doctrines of the natural sciences, and (b) towards the researcher's own prejudices (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental phenomenological process of inquiry is comprised of two distinct phases. First, the researcher obtains textual descriptions of the shared lived experience (Heidegger, 1962) to describe things as they appear (Dowling, 2007). In the second phase, the researcher engages in a reflective analysis and interpretation of the data to arrive at a description of the structures and meaning of the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

### 3.3 Research Design

Knowledge is most accessibly found "in the experiences of those doing the actual knowing" (Willard, 1984, p. 25), thus the investigation was centred on capturing and qualitatively describing the lived experiences of the participants following the approach of transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 2012; Moustakas, 1994).

Participants included six lead-administrators, from a population of 17 seminaries of the KBA that fit the delimitation of accredited programming at the time the study was conducted. Data was gathered through a questionnaire, three in-depth interviews, and personal observations. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the Spirituality at Work Questionnaire (SWQ; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), the Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire (SLT; Fry et al., 2005), and the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ, Ingram, 2003), which were consolidated into one, and translated into German.

The interviews followed Seidman's (2013) three-phase approach to phenomenological interviewing. The first two phases had a semi-structured form (Patton, 2002). The final phase was the least structured allowing the participants to formulate for themselves the meaning of their lived experience (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013). Phase one focused on the historical context, phase two on the influencing context, and phase three on making sense of the experience (Seidman, 2013).

Observations concerned the participants' living-out or their role as lead-administrators in a public or private setting. I assumed the position of a non-participant observer who remained an outsider to the activity of the leader under study (Creswell, 2013). When avoiding ethnographic participation, transcripts of ethnographic field notes at best are raw data products of the researcher's observations (Emerson et. al, 1995).

The purpose of the phenomenological analysis is "to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or a group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 482). The analysis process was accompanied by a continuous application of epoche (Patton, 2002). All text-based, data including interview transcriptions, field notes, public documents, and memos were entered into the computer program MAXQDA 11 for phenomenological text analysis and coding (Saldaña, 2016).

Following Husserl's (2012) axiom "to the things themselves" (p. 328), the participants' descriptions were the main source for describing the essence of their shared experience (Patton, 2002). Through horizontalization the first coding cycle identified significant statements on how the participants experienced the phenomenon, developing a list of non-repetitive statements of equal value (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). The second coding cycle organized these statements into meaning units, which in turn were categorized into common themes (Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016; van Manen, 1990).

From the meaning units and themes, textural descriptions were developed outlining what the participants have experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Then, in reflection on textural description, structural descriptions were developed outlining how the experience happened (Moustakas, 1994). The structural description constitutes a report of the researcher's reconstruction of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The final analysis involved the integration of textural and structural descriptions to develop a representation of the meaning and essence of the experienced phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The essential or synthesis description is the result of an intuitive and reflective integration of the textural and structural descriptions and constitutes a description of the meaning and essence of the participants' shared experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). It is the most transcendent description of the essence as it reduces the experience to its most universal basic form (Husserl, 2012). A synthesis description is the "culminating aspect of a phenomenological study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 194).

## 4. FINDINGS

The participants' textual descriptions, the "what" of their experiences as leaders, included themes of spiritual, collaborative, professional, and academic leadership aspects. Structural themes described the "how" of lived experiences and included the experience of leadership as a responsibility, as something negative and positive, and as a spiritual calling. The essential descriptions were divided into essential experiences of spirituality, significance, meaning, and relationship, and essential influences of professionalization, academization, and diversification. For this article, the essential experiences provided the framework for the discussion of the findings.

### 4.1 A Holistic Integration of Personal Spirituality

The most visible essential aspect to the participants' experience of the phenomenon of leading seminaries in the protestant free-church context is the holistic integration of their spirituality into every aspect of their lives. Like an umbrella, this theme includes all subsequent themes.

Faith is connected to their personal development and identity as leaders, their understanding of calling, their leadership style and values, their leadership practice, the relationships they build and maintain, their vision and passion for life and ministry, and their private and organizational decision-making processes. The participants are spiritual people and want to be perceived as such, even in their professional and academic leadership capacities.

The participants defined their spirituality through a personal relationship with the God of the Bible. This relationship is built and maintained primarily through the study of the Scriptures, a prayer life, and living in a Christian community. One leader said that his sense of significance comes from the knowledge, that "what I do has meaning [...] for the kingdom of God" (Schroder, 2016, p. 168). Spirituality is their primary source of meaning, motivation, and identity. From it flows a sense of spiritual calling, spiritual responsibility, and their values.

### 4.2 Leading With a Sense of Spiritual Calling

The participants shared a common understanding of their current occupation as the result, or fulfilment, of their spiritual calling. Each leader, however, provided a unique perspective on how they perceived and articulated their calling.

In a general sense the concept refers to the reality of being called into a relationship with God. In a more focused sense, all participants agreed that the relationship with God was the foundation for their specific calling or commission to the full-time ministry. This calling is also experienced as a spiritual reality, and it is expressed through their leadership in the context of theological education or ministry training. At their seminaries, participants exercise their calling with a sense of accountability to the one who called them, and with the expectation of his guidance.

Being called provides for the participants a sense of meaning, motivation, inner peace, and personal vision, but also a sense of responsibility. Amidst the changes that leaders experience in their role, the question of calling becomes an important factor for motivation and focus. One participant asserted, "I am called to be here, even if it is hard at times." (Schroder 2016, p. 203).

### 4.3 Spiritual Leadership That Flows Out of Spiritual Responsibility

Each participant described himself as a spiritual leader. The participants see spiritual leadership as guiding all they do and defining how they experience their role. They identified strongly with personal faith and spiritual values, which translate into practical and spiritual values and the integration of spirituality into their leadership practice. One leader expressed this notion perhaps the clearest, "I could not separate leadership and management tasks from the pastoral dimension. For me, that belongs together." (Schroeder 2016, p. 225) As spiritual leaders, the participants assume responsibility for the mission of the school, the spiritual atmosphere at the institutions, and the spiritual formation of the students. From their sense of spiritual responsibility



also flowed the desire to lead in the community of a team of spiritual leaders, and to do so with spiritual values.

#### 4.4 Spiritual Values That Flow Out of Personal Spirituality and Life-Experience

An essential aspect of the participants' experience is their focus on values. These leadership values have a spiritual origin as they influence the lead-administrators practice and their expectations towards their teams. These values also influence the corporate culture of their respective seminaries.

Each lead administrator felt the need to promote a spiritual Christian community within their organizations. They attempted this by implementing spiritually formational elements into institutional life on student, staff, faculty, and leadership levels, but also by leading a spiritual life as an example themselves.

Predominant values included trust and freedom. Trust is the foundational attitude that finds expression in giving or experiencing freedom. One leader described his responsibility, "to help people to develop, to set free their potential, to flourish, to get ahead [...] to find joy" (Schroder, 2016, p. 169). This freedom to act, to develop, to try out, and to operate self-responsibly and autonomously needs in turn to be acted out faithfully to not betray the trust that was extended. The lead administrators described this circularity in the contexts of their development and their current leadership. While growing as leaders, they were the recipients of trust and freedom. As leaders today they continue to experience the same from stakeholders and supervisory boards, but now they also extend trust and freedom to others while expecting the recipients to act with integrity.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of this study as they relate to the theoretical framework that was applied. The participants filled out a questionnaire that combined questionnaires for each theory applied in the study. All questions were answered on a five-point Likert response scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).

### 5.1 Concerning Spirituality at the Workplace

To describe the participants from the perspective of WS the Spirituality at Work Questionnaire (SWQ, Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) was adapted. Among the three questionnaires, the SWQ (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) received the highest average scores ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $Mdn = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 0.25$ , see Figure 3). Moreover, all constructs of the theory were reflected in the findings (further detailed in Schroder, 2016).

The structural theme of experiencing leadership as a responsibility relates to the corresponding construct of responsibility. Each participant described an acute sense of responsibility. The details on what constituted this responsibility ranged from internal to external sources, from role-related to spiritually connected associations, and from personal expectations of self to feeling a responsibility for larger groups of people or institutions.

Inner life and contemplation describe spirituality as identity or being on a journey. These variables are reflected in several textural, structural, and essential themes related to spirituality. The variables of connection and community describe the inner drive for relationships. The study found that participants lead collaboratively, experience stress due to failed relationships, and see relationships as essential to their experience. Each also described the positive influence of family as central to their experience.

The variable of meaning is primarily described in the participants' essential experience of significance and meaning, which is connected to their spiritually motivated leadership. A sense of

being called, family relationships, and a sense of the significance of their role are their main motivational sources.

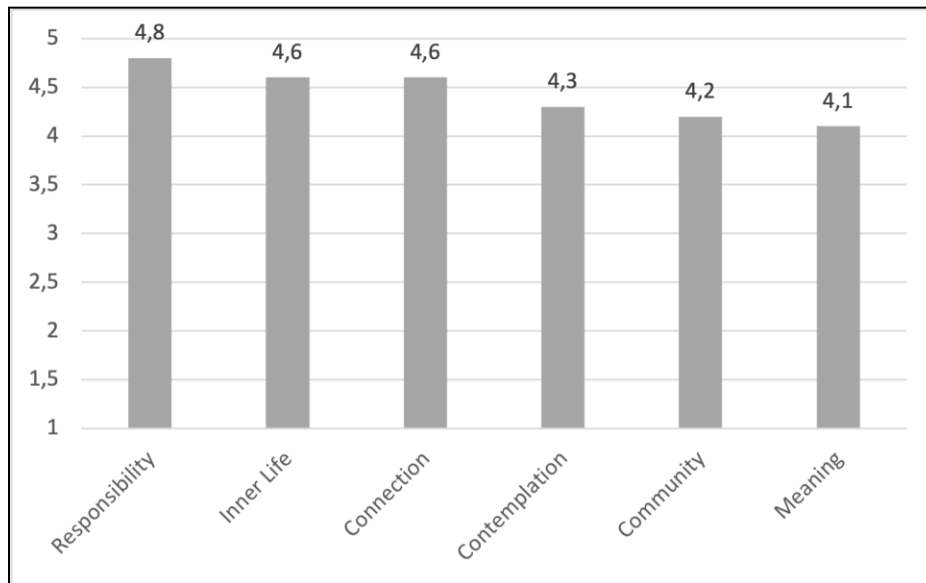


FIGURE 3: Mean Scores of the Spirituality at Work Questionnaire (SWQ).

## 5.2 Concerning Spiritual Leadership Theory

The SLT received the second-highest average score among the three questionnaires. As a general statement, the participants can be described as spiritual leaders in the sense of the SLT framework (Fry, 2003; 2013). The variables love, membership, calling, inner life, commitment, and satisfaction all scored higher than the total mean ( $M = 4.1, Mdn = 4.1, SD = 0.75$ , see Figure 4). These variables are positively describing the spiritual leadership of the participants.

During the interviews, all participants spoke about love. The word was used 34 times altogether. Membership is primarily expressed in a sense of being understood and appreciated. Four participants spoke directly about feeling appreciated and appreciating others within the organization. Several phenomenological themes in the findings are also based on community and relationship (see Schroeder, 2016, for further detail).

The issue of being called and fulfilling that calling through the organization is essential to the experience of the participants. For each participant personal faith and a sense of spiritual calling were foundational aspects in general. They were important guiding factors for their career choices and further development as leaders. The sense of being called to what they do continues to have a significant impact on the participants' current experiences.

The variable of inner life is again reflected in the textural, structural, and essential themes related to personal spirituality. The structural theme of experiencing leadership as a responsibility, and the essential subtheme of spiritual leadership that flows out of spiritual responsibility describe how the participants related to the variable of commitment. Participants expressed their satisfaction through experiencing their role as meaningful and positive.

The variables of vision and hope/faith scored lower than the total mean. These two variables seem to diminish the spiritual leadership of the participants. However, I found that the low scores in these two areas are not reflective of the participants' leadership practice and experience.

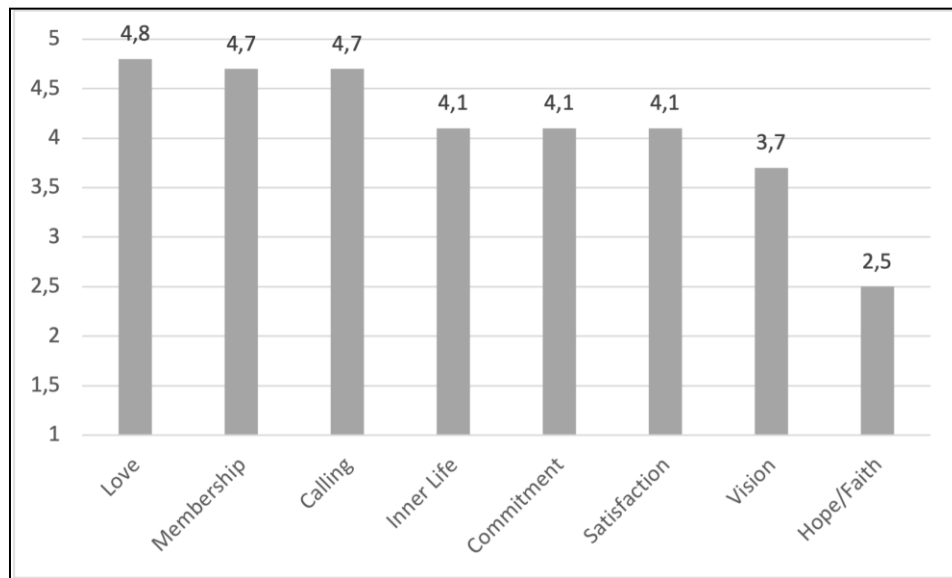


FIGURE 4: Mean Scores of the Spiritual Leadership Theory Questionnaire (SLT).

The fact that hope/faith scored considerably lower in the questionnaire seems to indicate, that the participants have a different perspective on this concept than the one espoused by Fry (2005). The qualitative analysis found that personal spirituality, based on a personal faith-relationship with God, is a central essential experience. I found that the leaders (a) are motivated to persevere and put in the extra effort because of what their seminaries stand for, (b) set challenging goals for the organization, and (c) are willing to invest themselves to succeed. All these are aspects of the hope/faith construct. However, the idea of “having faith in an organization” seemed odd to some participants. They do experience a high congruence of personal vision and the mission of the seminaries they lead, but they are not quick to use the term faith to describe this connection. Consequently, the SLT scores for hope/faith did not represent the reality of the construct in the participant’s lived experience. The aspect of vision will be discussed in the section on SLQ.

### 5.3 Concerning Servant Leadership Theory

The analysis of the participants’ results and comments on the SLQ (Ingram, 2003) indicate, that servant leadership is in some respects understood differently in German-speaking Europe than Ingram’s (2003) interpretation of the theory.

The SLQ (Ingram, 2003, see also Figure 5) achieved the lowest mean score ( $M = 3.2$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ,  $Mdn = 3.2$ ). The dimensions of acceptance ( $M = 2.9$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ), influence ( $M = 2.8$ ;  $SD = 1.21$ ), and vision ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) scored below the total mean. The participants often commented on their scoring decisions.

One participant did not respond to any of the SLQ related questions. Nevertheless, my observation of his leadership indicated that he indeed understood himself as a servant leader. His general criticism of the SLQ questions concerned their marginal relevance to servant leadership. The theoretical construct of Ingram (2003) does not conform to his understanding of servant leadership.

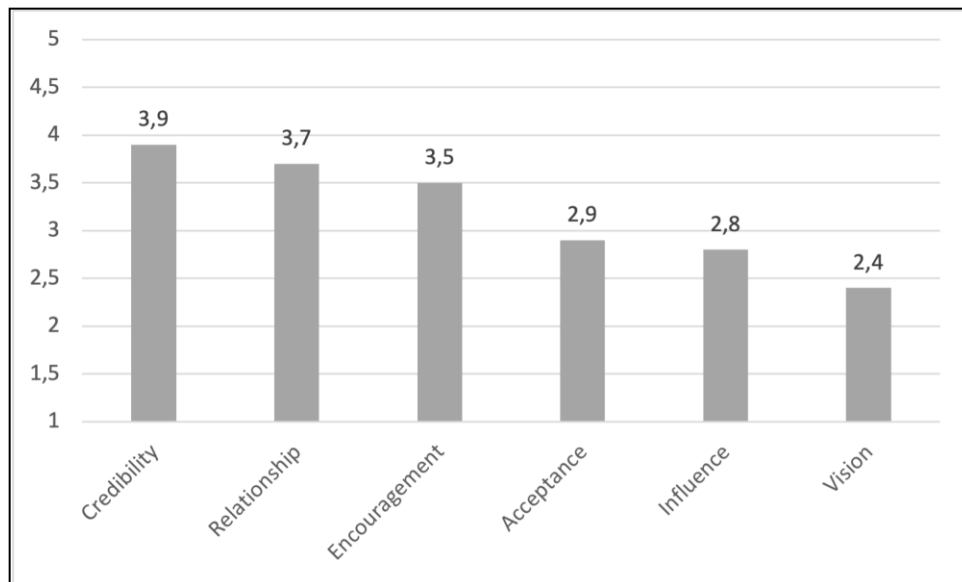


FIGURE 5: Mean Scores of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ).

Concerning the dimension of influence, another participant replied to the question, “Servant leadership means leading through persuasion rather than authority”, neither agree nor disagree and commented, “sometimes this way [i.e., with persuasion], sometimes that way [with authority]”. One pointed out a false dilemma with the question and argued, that persuasion and authority do not necessarily constitute opposites but can complement each other. Authority, as employed in the questionnaire, was juxtaposed to persuasion as the negative of the two choices. In the participants’ context authority seemed not to have that negative connotation.

Ingram’s (2003) statement, “Servant leadership means developing others to become leaders” was also challenged. One remarked, “not everyone wants to become a leader.... I agree to the following statement: servant leadership means to help others take on responsibility.” Ingram applied a value system to this question, where being a leader could be perceived as better than not being a leader. This participant would say, in contrast, it is better to achieve one’s goals responsibly. Greenleaf (2002) would have more likely agreed with my participant than with Ingram.

In the dimension of vision, one question of the SLQ (Ingram, 2003) reads, “servant leadership means having a clear vision for the organization’s growth.” It received a mean score of  $M = 2.4$ . This was also reflected in the SLT questionnaire. However, all participants work in seminaries that have a vision statement, and the participants also have clarity as to how to grow the institution. Since the vision aspect is not part of Greenleaf’s (2002) theoretical framework, the participants here possibly pointed out a 21st Century reinterpretation of the original servant leadership theory.

The statement, “servant leadership means providing the leadership that is needed,” also received a mean score of  $M = 2.4$ . One participant commented, “this is a truism that holds for all types of leadership.” The participants would not contribute this statement exclusively to servant leadership.

In the dimension of acceptance, five out of six participants agreed that “servant leadership means listening receptively and openly, without judging” (Ingram, 2003). However, the statement “servant leadership means placing the needs of others first” received a mean score of  $M = 2.9$ . One leader’s comment indicates that he considered the statement an unhelpful reduction. Even

though the needs demand much of the leader’s attentiveness and care, they are not the primary focus of leadership. The participants in this study understood the concept but disagreed with its pre-eminence for leadership practice.

SLT was generally accepted in Greenleaf’s (2002) framework, but Ingram’s (2003) interpretation and resulting questionnaire did not translate effectively into the German-speaking context.

## 6. EPILOG

This study shows, that lead administrators of free-church seminaries lead from personal spirituality, which also provides the basis for their leadership values. Integration of the three theories applied in this study paints a more complete picture of the lead-administrators’ lived experience (see Figure 6). Their values are best expressed in the context of SL. As servant leaders, however, they strive to accomplish within their organizations the goals that SLT describes best, which result in a corporate culture of intentional WS.

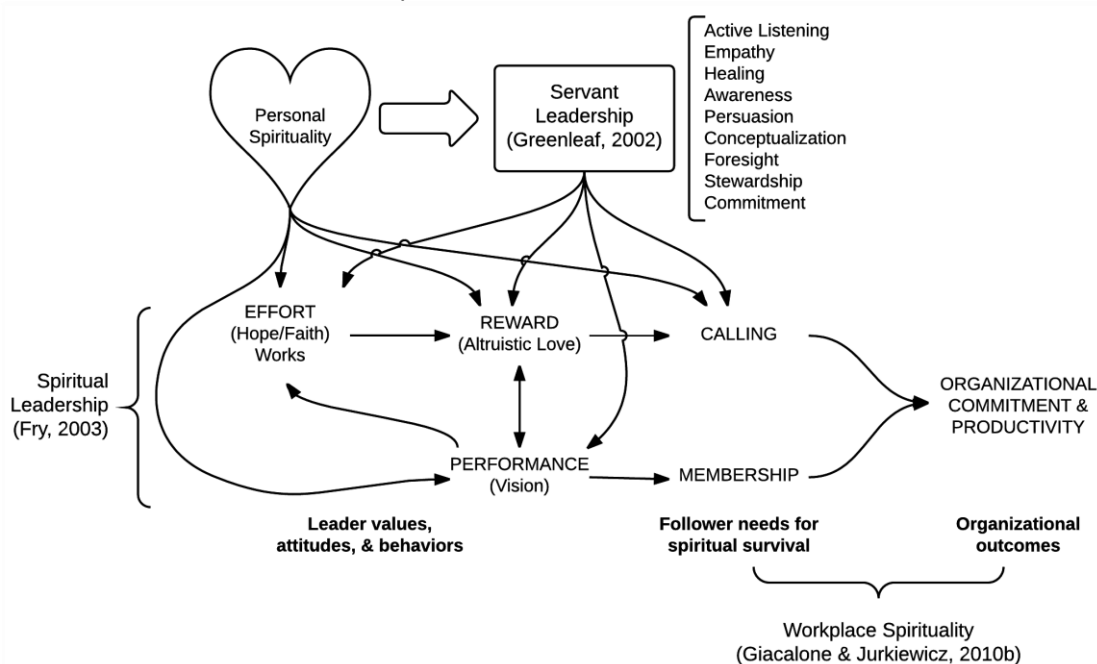


FIGURE 6: Integrating the Theoretical Framework.

Amidst the tension of roles between the pastoral and the administrative, the participants desired to maintain a high level of spiritual leadership at their institutions. Within ongoing developments, the lead administrators are challenged to determine anew how the age-old riddle of faith and reason can be resolved in the 21st century. All testified to a vibrant personal spirituality, which they sought to integrate holistically into all aspects of their lives, and especially into the seminaries they lead. However, professionalization distanced them from the student and held them more occupied with professional and academic-related tasks, so that less time is left to actively engage in shaping and developing institutional spirituality. The participants in this study each had a different approach on how to accomplish this task, and this issue will accompany the lead administrators in the coming years as well.

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