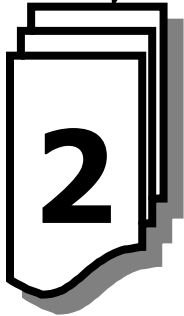


Chapter



2

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE RESEARCH ON EDUCATION MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review and assess the research literature on the professional development programmes within an international and the South African context. In this review I focus on studies that were conducted between 1994 and 2009. Although the majority of these studies (ten in total) have been conducted within a South African context, the review also includes studies conducted in Britain, the USA, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

In this chapter I undertake a critical and systematic review of those studies that have attempted to assess the effectiveness of EMDPs in relation to leadership and management practice in — mainly but not exclusively — educational organisations. While searching for empirical studies focused on this area (assessment of EMDPs), I came across a plethora of mainly opinion and/or conceptual studies which put forward what could be termed the “essential/crucial elements” of effective EMDPs or what these authors regard to

be “exemplary training programmes.” I return to this point later to demonstrate the potential problems with these kinds of studies.

Through this review I will demonstrate that the majority of studies that have been conducted with a focus on the assessment of EMDPs exhibit a number of conceptual, methodological and research design shortcomings, while others clearly lack empirical validity. While pointing out these shortcomings I fully indicate how my study differs from these previous studies and addresses these shortfalls in their conceptualisation and research design. In other words, the literature review in this chapter is conducted with a view to providing the theoretical context and the intellectual justification for my study on the leadership and management development of school principals.

I conclude this review by arguing that there is a need for not only research rigour in studies that attempt to review the impact of EMDPs, but also that ameliorating the conceptual, methodological and research design weaknesses would contribute to the knowledge base on the value of these programmes, improve their (programmes) design and therefore leadership and management practices in schools.

2.2 ...In the beginning

Initially when I conceptualised the review of the literature, the idea was to simply investigate what the different experts in the field of educational leadership and management put forward as the most critical or essential components of EMDPs and then juxtapose these claims with what the programmes that I would assess—together with the perceptions of the principals who had undergone EMDPs — contain, in order to judge their effectiveness against those essential components. I then went about searching for studies —

not necessarily empirical in nature — that fell into this categorisation. Needless to say, there were multitudes of such studies, including the classic work by Joseph Murphy (1992) entitled: Preparing tomorrow’s school leaders: Alternative designs — which is a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the problems and issues regarding EMDPs, offering both a critique of the past and current programmes in the context of the US, and a vision for how future programmes should be designed.

After careful thought and consideration I abandoned the idea of simply regurgitating expert opinions due to the fact that I found going that route to be conceptually and methodologically deficient. The decision to abandon that line of inquiry was based, *inter alia*, on the fact that these programmes had been designed not only with different sets of objectives in mind, but also for totally different contexts as many of these writings were based in developing country contexts. Moreover, what became apparent during this initial exercise was that these writings were not — for the most part — based on any empirical work, but were merely opinions of the experts.

I then turned my attention to a critical review and assessment of empirically-based studies that have assessed the relevance of EMDPs in relation to leadership and management practices in organisations, particularly but not exclusively, schools. Although these empirically-based studies were instrumental in helping shape my study by alluding to what empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between effective leadership and management development and effective leadership and management practice, a number of shortcomings were discerned from these studies. These shortcomings are discussed in the review that follows below. However, before embarking on the review of these studies, some comments on “exemplary programmes” or “essential/critical elements” in professional

development programmes — discussions whose preponderance in the literature cannot be ignored — are necessary.

2.3 Of “Exemplary Programmes” and “Essential Elements”

Despite the importance accorded education management development programmes (EMDPs) as important ingredients for effective leadership and management practice, there has been a dearth of empirical work focused on evaluating the relevance of these programmes *vis-à-vis* leadership and management practice. To be sure, most studies, particularly from the “developed world”, place a heavy emphasis on “exemplary” EMDPs for school principals with a view to transferring the (good) elements of these programmes to other (mostly “developing world”) contexts where lessons can be drawn from the design and improvement of leadership and management programmes. Amongst other things, the problem with such an approach is that what may be considered exemplary programmes may depend largely on the perception about what leadership/management is and what the “best” way is to lead/manage; what knowledge and skills do principals need to have in order to lead and manage effectively; what principals need to be able to do; to name but a few. Another critical area where these studies fall short is in their lack of focus on the key participants in leadership and management development programmes — the recipients or those individuals who have undergone professional development programmes.

There have been other studies which have explored in-service courses available to school principals with a view to “compare[ing] the content of these courses with a list of tasks and skills required of principals... identified from a survey of international literature” (Garvin, 1995: vi) (My emphasis). This issue of a “checklist” is similar to the approach of

looking at exemplary programmes or judging EMDPs against what is identified in the literature as the critical/essential components.

Although knowledge about different leadership and management programmes — particularly those adjudged to be “exemplary” — can add value to our knowledge base, what complicates matters about these writings are questions of whether Western theories and practices can be exported to non-Western contexts or cultures without any problems. As Huber (2004: xvii) has argued, “The school leader’s role has to be seen in relationship to the broad cultural and educational contexts in which the school is operating.” So, context does matter. Recently, Miles Bryant (2003) has eloquently shown in the case of Native American communities how many assumptions of most Western leadership thinking can be called into question.

It is for that reason that, rather than simply looking at what the literature says are the critical components in exemplary programmes and then judging current programmes against those indicators, my study transcends this simplified trend. Put differently, given the fact that there are different perceptions of leadership and management, and therefore different perceptions of what will provide appropriate professional development in the most effective manner (Bennett *et al.*, 2003), the present differs from the common and narrow exercise of assessing EMDPs against “essential/critical components” or “exemplary programmes” as perceived by experts.

2.4 EMDPs: The empirical studies

There are a number of studies which have, in one way or another assessed the relevance of different leadership and management programmes — not just for principals — in relation to leadership and management practice. Worth noting is that two of the studies included in this review fall outside the field of educational leadership and management — one is in the area of Information and Library Science Education, while the other examines a professional development programme in the health services. These two studies have been included in this review because of the fact that their general orientation and designs were found to be similar to and quite instructive for my current study.

It should also be mentioned that one of the studies in this review is an evaluation of a Distance Education programme. It was included because, like the present study, it also deals with the question of the extent to which the professional development programme (a module in a programme, in this case) met the students' needs and expectations. What follows below is the critical review of these studies.

2.4.1 Imants, van Putten and Leijh (1994)

Imants *et al.* (1994: 7) report on a study they conducted in The Netherlands looking at an evaluation of two short-term (five days) school management development programmes, with a particular focus on “the question [of] whether the impact of these programmes on both principals and teachers [could] be demonstrated by changes in the sense of efficacy of these principals and teachers.” In this study the efficacy of the school management professional development programmes is judged against what the providers have put forward as the aims of their programmes — the underlying assumptions and the theoretical underpinnings of the programmes. These postulations are then juxtaposed with

what the principals and teachers who have undergone professional development programmes see as their value in terms of their practices in school. In other words the efficacy of EMDPs is assessed on the basis of the meanings that the participants give to their experiences.

Among the things that are innovative (and rare in a number of studies of this nature) in this study is the fact that it did not only focus on principals' efficacy, but also on the teachers' as well.

Commendable as the above aspects of this study are, there are a number of problematic issues with the Imants *et al.* (1994) study. In terms of its research design, the use of the quantitative approach (questionnaire) limits the extent to which the researchers could probe deeper into the participants' sense of their efficacy. Also, the fact that the summative evaluation on which the findings of this study are based, was done about three months after the professional development programme had been concluded, is problematic. As clearly indicated in the study itself, there was not sufficient time between the programme and the return from the programme to their schools for these principals to make informed comments about the impact of the programmes on their self efficacy.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all the problematic issues raised above, the findings of this study are still significant, namely that the principals' sense of personal efficacy was affected positively by the school management development programmes; and teachers' personal sense of efficacy did not show any significant change during the period of the evaluation. These findings are significant in the sense that they inform us that the professional development did have a positive effect on school leaders who should have been the intended target of the management professional development programme. There is,

however, a lack of theorising on the part of the researchers as to what could have accounted for the different effects on principals and teachers.

2.4.2 Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005)

In their study, Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005) conducted research aimed at determining the extent to which the learning that school principals in New Zealand had gone through, had been sustained beyond the formal programme — in other words, once the principals had returned to their schools. Using quantitative research approaches with a 48.5% response rate (33 participants), the study is unique from a number of studies in that it focuses on experienced principals.

One of the strengths of this study is that the components of the professional development programme are explained in detail. Principals reported that the programme had brought about personal and professional changes to them; and there was also evidence from the responses that the learning had been transferred not only to the principals but also to the school setting.

On the other hand, one of the major shortcomings of this study — which is partly related to its quantitative nature — is that although some principals' comments have been included confirming the fact that learning had been transferred to the school setting (including the fact that principals had continued to use notes and readings from the programme), there is no clear indication as to how this transfer had occurred. In other words, principals merely confirm this to be the case without providing any evidence or examples from their professional practice of how this has manifested itself in practice. I would argue that it could be a problem of the quantitative nature of the enquiry in as much

as it could be a product of a lack of research rigour on the part of the researchers. In the main, this calls to question the empirical validity of the study.

2.4.3 Daresh and Male (2000)

In contrast to the research conducted by Cardno and Fitzgerald (2005), of experienced principals in New Zealand, the study by Daresh and Male (2000) focuses on the experiences of newly appointed British headteachers and American principals. Although the study by Daresh and Male is dissimilar to the present study in terms of the unit of analysis—in their case, newly appointed school leaders, whereas in the case of my study the focus is on experienced principals — the research questions of their study and the interview questions of my study bear some resemblance.

Daresh and Male (2000) focused on the ways in which school management professional development had assisted school leaders in carrying out their roles, and in the case of my study, this is one of the issues that I addressed during the personal interviews with the principals. These researchers' second research question explored the activities or areas of study that the school leaders thought should have been added to their professional development programme to make it more effective. This was another area which became part of the interview protocol in my study. The research conducted by Daresh and Male illustrates the fact mentioned earlier that the review of the literature was instrumental in shaping the direction that my study followed.

2.4.4 Jankelowitz (2005)

The research by Jankelowitz (2005) on the other hand is unique in that it focuses on organisations and individuals that provide women's leadership development programmes in South Africa. Looking at the aims, content, underlying assumptions of the programmes,

activities undertaken by the organisations that provide development programme, and the challenges they encounter, a questionnaire was sent to 443 organisations that provide women's leadership development programme, with only 26 responses, a response rate of 5.9%. On top of the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with 12 participants who provide leadership development programme for women in different sectors.

Notwithstanding the fact that the research was conducted mainly with the view to providing an overview of the different women's leadership development programmes in South Africa, the study is conceptually and methodologically weak. Furthermore, it is limited in the sense that the focus is only on the providers' sense of what their programmes aim to achieve and how they go about achieving these aims. There is no form of triangulation or independent evaluation of the providers' responses. Moreover, the voices of the recipients of the development programme are conspicuous in their absence. Even with the responses from the providers, the extremely low response rate (5.9%) makes the empirical validity of the study suspect.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, there are studies which have utilised what I call the "checklist approach" in their assessment of the efficacy of EMDPs. These studies have evaluated EMDPs against "lists" of criteria discerned from the international literature (more often than not "international" meaning Western Europe and North America). The major problem with such a checklist approach is that it ignores contextual issues which, as argued before, are of critical importance. As Riley and MacBeath (2003: 174) have rightly argued, "there is no one package for school leadership, no one model to be learned and applied in unrefined forms, for all schools, in all contexts — no all-purpose recipe." What may be the most critical skills for principals in Manchester, England, may not be for principals in Bellville or Khayelitsha, South Africa.

2.4.5 Girvin (1995)

The research work by Girvin (1995) typifies studies which have utilised the “checklist approach.” In this study there is an attempt to solicit the views of school principals regarding the need for professional development. However, this falls short of assessing the effects of professional development on principals’ professional practice. Rather, the study is merely a description of what school principals consider to be their needs for professional development (or further development for those who have already undergone some kind of professional development), and their perceptions of what the content of the professional development should be.

Girvin (1995: 4) does, however, acknowledge the fact that the study focuses only on the content of the courses, as a limitation. He further acknowledges that “an examination of presentation methods and the effects which these courses have on the way principals fulfil their tasks when they return to school”, would have been ideal. Indeed, this is a gap that my study has attempted to close in terms of its design and focus.

For a study which looks into what the needs for the professional development for school principals are, the sample is quite negligible — 18 principals. This small size of the sample is in contrast with the statement made by the author that he chose the questionnaire in preference to the interview “since the ultimate intention [of the study] was to be able to quantify results...” (Girvin, 1995: 27).

Again, as with the other studies that have already been reviewed in this chapter, the study by Girvin possesses conceptual and methodological shortcomings which call into question its empirical validity. However, notwithstanding these and other shortcomings raised about this study, the findings of the research by Girvin (1995) have something significant to offer. Girvin (*Ibid.*) reports that without exception all the principals in the

study had found their professional development useful; that they had been able to apply some aspects of what they had learnt, in their schools; and that they still consulted course notes when faced with a particular problem.

Another tangential finding reported by Girvin is that some of the principals found the experience particularly valuable because it had brought them into contact with other colleagues with whom they had been able to share problems. I return later to this critical issue of principals establishing important networks with their colleagues, in the discussion of the data from my study.

2.4.6 Mestry and Grobler (2003)

Another study designed along the lines of the research conducted by Girvin (1995) is the study by Mestry and Grobler (2003). This study sought to determine which management competencies were necessary for the development and training of effective principals. As with the research conducted by Girvin (1995), a review of the literature was used in this study “to elucidate principal competence in the South African context” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 128). Furthermore, international literature was then used in developing a “prototype” programme that would ensure that principals manage their school effectively.

Similar to the study by Girvin (1995), the research by Mestry and Grobler (2003) also utilised a quantitative approach (questionnaire). Unlike Girvin’s study, Mestry and Grobler’s (*Ibid.*) sample was quite large with a total 992 participants. Beyond the bibliographical information about the participants which is contained in Section A of the questionnaire, we are not told what kind of items the rest of the questionnaire dealt with or aimed to probe. It is not quite clear what one of the research questions really aimed to explore: “What were the perceptions of principals and educators in respect to the

importance of effective management as an aspect of the training and development of effective principals?” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 128).

Although Mestry and Grobler do not provide “lists” *per se* in their work, they put forward certain competencies discerned from the literature that they argue principals need to have in order to lead and manage effectively. They even go further and use the Scottish Qualification for Headship Programme’s competencies as an example of competencies that principals should have in order to lead and manage their school effectively. One could argue that these competencies are in a way used to show up the Scottish Qualification for Headship Programme as “exemplary” — a problem already alluded to earlier.

The “most important findings” of the study in respect of principals’ and educators’ perceptions are nothing but trite. For example, we are told that “[F]emales... consider effective management to be very important because it means order, responsibility and accountability” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 132). No evidence is provided for such a claim. Furthermore, the findings indicate that “[T]he various racial groups [in South Africa] consider effective management to be essential. For example, the Indians are generally respectful of authority—[because of] their respect for their religious leaders, community leaders and heads of the family”, therefore “they will also respect a principal who manages schools effectively” (Mestry and Grobler, 2003: 132). The rehashing of such stereotypes without any attempt to provide evidence, is quite astonishing. These findings seem to point to the general problem with the conceptualisation and design of this study. It also points to a lack of research rigour.

2.4.7 Jaftha (2003)

Although its focus was not necessarily school principals, the study by Jaftha (2003) — which is a case study of one of the schools which had participated in a Centres of Learning (COL) programme — was found to be relevant to this review and therefore included (three of the participants are members of the School Management Team (SMT) while the other two are post level one educators).

There seems to be some confusion, however, as to the focus/aims of the study. On the one hand Jaftha posits that the study is looking at how the COL programme had affected management styles and practices in the school. On the other hand, the claim is that the study's aim is to investigate whether a leadership and management development programme changed the participants' perception about management. Is perhaps the assumption from the researcher that these aims are not mutually exclusive? If we accept that these aims are indeed not mutually exclusive, then the problem is that in the study the researcher seem to be vacillating between these two research objectives without any clear idea as to what exactly is the study all about.

In the reporting of the data we are given no idea as to which participants are post-level one educators and which ones are members of the SMT. This makes it difficult to make informed judgements about the impact of the COL programme on the participants, particularly in relation to their positions in the school. In raising these issues, I am cognisant of the fact that leadership encompasses different levels within the school, including teacher leadership, and therefore impact at any level would be just as important.

To further illustrate the general confusion in this study, after having asserted that the purpose of the research is to find out whether the COL project had an impact on the

perceptions of the educators about management, the author then makes a curious statement that: “[T]his research is not about an evaluation of the COL project” (Jaftha, 2003: 74). There is no attempt to qualify this statement.

Methodologically, the study by Jaftha is weak in several respects. A sample of five participants for a study that is aimed at determining the impact of a programme on the practices in the school is by any standards very small. In addition, not all the participants, as alluded to earlier, are involved in the management of the school by virtue of their positions.

The study by Jaftha (2003) falls into the same trap as other similar studies in that it takes postulations from the research literature — which is mainly from Western Europe and North America — and uses these as a framework through which the perceptions of the participants are “pigeon-holed.” In the case of Jaftha’s work four aspects of self-managing schools¹⁶ are used as the parameters through which the participants’ perceptions are then thematized. The impact of the COL project is therefore judged against these critical indicators of self-managing schools.

Notwithstanding all the shortcomings highlighted above, the author postulates that much of the programme did not seem to have had a lasting effect on the culture of the school, but it nevertheless made an impression on the educators’ perception of management. Furthermore, according to Jaftha (2003: 100), while there are clear indications that “the COL project had an impact on the perceptions of educators about management, the changes in perception appear not to have been comprehensive enough to cause a (significant?)

¹⁶ These aspects are: the importance of a shared vision; participation and collaboration; being a learning organisation; and the need for outside support/the issue of resources. In the analysis of the participants’ perceptions, planning is included because, according to the author, the COL programme has placed much emphasis on planning.

paradigm shift among the teachers of the school.” As with the other studies reviewed in this chapter, there is a lack of theorising as to why the programme did not have a lasting effect on the culture of the school or as to why the changes in perception were not comprehensive enough.

2.4.8 More (2004)

The study by More (2004) is a unique and innovative study in the area of programme effectiveness evaluation or impact assessment. The study involved an assessment of the impact of an education management development training programme (EMDTP) at the different levels of the education system — namely, national, provincial, district and local levels. To my knowledge, not many studies have attempted such a complex multi-level analysis, and therefore this is commendable.

What further makes this study transcend what other studies in this area (impact analysis) have offered us before, is that it goes beyond a mere focus on the impact of the cascade model of training — which would have been an easy endpoint for most studies. The study also focuses on the question of what the “operational impact” (More, 2004: 1) of the EMDTP at the different levels of the education system is.

More’s (2004) innovative research design uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research strategies (questionnaires, focus group free attitude interviews and observations). This research design, I would argue, enriched the study greatly and provided rich data which ensured that the issues of breadth and depth were catered for. What further strengthens this study is that in dealing with the different levels of the education system, the service providers (those who offered the training) were also interviewed with a view to probing “what they understand and identify as the key goals of the EMD training...”

(More, 2004: 24). This aspect (service provider interviews) differentiates the study from a number of studies in the area of the evaluation of training programmes.

Interestingly enough, my own study (the present study) also included in its design interviews with service providers (university lecturing staff who teach in the University Departments that offer EMDPs) with a view to, *inter alia*, determining what these service providers postulate as the objectives (and philosophical underpinnings) of their programmes. Later these objectives were juxtaposed with what the principals who have received some form of professional development perceive as their needs, in order to determine whether there is congruence between the two (namely, the service providers' objectives and the recipients' perceptions of the extent to which these programmes met their needs).

The study by More (2004) is also appealing because of its use of the materials from the training programme's modules, as a basis for the interviews with some of the recipients of the training. In other words, interviews with participants at the district and local levels (Research Training Unit and school) are based on the case studies that were constructed from the EMD training programme. I would argue that this is not only innovative, but also a much more useful way of determining the extent to which the participants in the programme were able to operationalise the different policies that were used in their training.

One of the findings of the study by More (2004) is pertinent for my present study, namely the fact that the organisers of the training did not conduct a baseline study on the training needs of the recipients of the training programme. As More (2004: 76), puts it, "...the phase commencing with the training of District Facilitators for the training of

primary schools Site Managers did not commence with the determination of critical aspects of pre-training needs analysis....”¹⁷ Given that my study is concerned with the perceptions of principals in relation to the extent to which EMDPs meet their needs, this is for me a significant finding. I return to this issue when I present the findings in Chapter Six of my study.

2.4.9 Steyn (2001)

Although it is in the field of education leadership and management, the study by Steyn (2001) is different from the studies reviewed in this chapter in that it is not focused on a professional development programme *per se*, but rather on a particular module in a professional development programme. The study is focused on the question of the extent to which two aspects — learning materials and the assessment system — have met students’ needs and expectations in a Distance Education module: Personnel Management within a BEd (Honours): Education Management programme. The study further examines students’ perceptions of the module using the concept of quality — defined by the author as the features of products and services which meet or exceed customer needs — as a yardstick.

In this study Steyn (2001) describes a quality assurance process that she put in place while in charge of the Personnel Management module, as a way of addressing the learning needs of the students. Different key role players were invited to participate in focus group interviews aimed to address the needs and the possible key learning areas that the programme needed to address. These role players included a DoE official, two colleagues from other universities, two school principals, an instructional designer, two students enrolled in the programme and other lecturers involved in the BEd (Honours): Education

¹⁷ The issue of the needs analysis is not unproblematic, as indicated in the Conceptual Framework (section 1.6) of the present study.

Management. This undertaking was quite significant because, I would argue, it answered one of the major criticisms of many professional development programmes, that is, a serious lack of analysis of the needs of the participants prior to the professional development programme being put in place¹⁸. What made this exercise even more important is that it included a cross section of key role players from different backgrounds, including, perhaps most importantly, students enrolled in the programme. These focus group interviews resulted in the development of the learning objectives, presentation strategy and format and content of assignments.

As with the study by More (2004), the research by Steyn (2001) also used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches in collecting data. Focus groups interviews were conducted with two sizeable samples (sixty four and thirty seven respectively) and yielded rich data. Questionnaires were used for three sets of cohorts of students (students enrolled in 1996, 1998 and 1999). However, the fact that the first questionnaire that the students had to complete (to determine their perceptions of the assignment and assessment system) was a “compulsory assignment” (Steyn, 2001: 35) and students earned credits for submitting the questionnaire/assignment, raises some ethical questions. This means that the students as participants were not afforded the right to decide not to participate in the research or to opt out if they wanted to.

Overall, the findings of this study present a very positive picture regarding the students’ perceptions of the assignment and the assessment system of the Personnel Management module. The action research approach adopted by the researcher—with the improvements made based on the initial student responses — is quite instructive in terms of

¹⁸ As indicated in this literature review, one of the critical findings in More’s (2004) study was the failure by the training programme organisers to undertake a needs analysis prior to the training.

how to improve the quality of professional development programmes—whether they are distance education programmes or contact education based.

2.4.10 Van der Westhuizen, Mosoge and Van Vuuren (2004)

The study by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) closely mirrors my present study in terms of its focus — the study examines the perceptions of school principals and district/circuit managers with regards to their satisfaction with the EMD programme of one of the provinces in SA, the Mpumalanga Department of Education. There are differences, however, with my study in terms of the research methodology: van der Westhuizen *et al.*'s (2004) study uses a quantitative research design; the research participants in their study also include district/circuit managers over and above school principals; and their study was commissioned by the provincial Department of Education.

In the research conducted by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) the extent of the effectiveness of the training programme is judged against the stated objectives of the programme. As already noted in the discussion of the research by More (2004), judging effectiveness on the basis of the stated objectives of the programme is of crucial importance since it gives an indication of how far the programme has gone in meeting the needs of the recipients, based on what was postulated as constituting the objectives in the first place.

With regards to the research design, as already noted, the study by van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) uses a quantitative research strategy. Although the use of a quantitative strategy is useful in terms of getting a wide range of responses—something quite understandable in this particular case given the large numbers of individuals who had undergone professional development in the Mpumalanga Province, as pointed out

previously, this strategy lends itself to major limitations in professional development programmes evaluation studies. Depth is therefore sacrificed for breadth. For example, it would have been of great interest to know why circuit managers were “satisfied” but not “very satisfied” with regards to the effectiveness of the professional development programme.

2.4.11 Mathibe (2007)

Although not an evaluation of a leadership and management development programme, the study by Mathibe (2007) is of great interest in that the author investigates school practices that necessitate the professional development of school principals in South Africa’s North West Province. Through the use of purposeful sampling, the study is made up of a large sample of 600 participants. What is commendable is that a cross section of participants within the school community is surveyed: 200 school principals, 200 Heads of Departments (HoDs) and 200 educators — unfortunately we are not told as to what the response rate (questionnaire) was. The focus on HoDs and educators can be regarded as one of the strengths of the study in that, in addition to the school principals, these sectors of the school community would also have critical contributions to make as they work closely with the school principal.

A number of areas for leadership and management development are identified from the results of the survey — such as skilling principals in change management, in ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place (instructional leadership), in encouraging team work, etc. Despite a focus on other key role players within the school (HoDs and educators), there seems to be too much focus in the study on the role of the principal to the exclusion of the role of, for instance, teacher leadership or the idea of distributed leadership. In general, the study is useful in pointing out those areas for leadership and management

development that are regarded as critical by not only the school principals but also by HoDs and educators.

2.4.12 Prew (2007)

While Mathibe's study focuses on the role of the school principal in change management, Prew (2007: 450) argues that "...being a transformational leader in the confines of the school in a developing-world context is not adequate to manage change." Successful schools, according to Prew, have realized that they also needed to build a real working relationship with the community and the local education district office. Based on a project that was aimed at turning around dysfunctional schools in Soshanguve — a township outside Pretoria — Prew's study documents how four (4) school principals reacted to innovation (School Development Project) and were either successful or unsuccessful in managing their schools. The project, according to the author, was also intended to mentor and train the management teams of the education district and the school.

In Prew's (2007) study extensive interviews for the baseline survey were conducted with the principals, school governing body members, staff and pupils. Moreover, an intensive triangulation process took place which included amongst others, analyses of school development plans, questionnaire responses, interviews with district office staff, observations, the school profiles and reports.

Prew identified a number of key findings, namely, the importance of the relationship with the local community; the connection between school, community and local economy; and the principals' relationship with the education district office as an essential success factor in school community improvement. Chief amongst Prew's (2007: 457) findings, however, is that "[T]he principals appear to have been the key to the successful take-up of the

[innovation/project] in their school.” Moreover, there seems to be a strong relationship between failing and deteriorating schools and their failure to engage with the project. The findings further indicate that the more effective principals adopted a range of different management styles and also distributed leadership across the school’s stakeholder groups.

2.4.13 Mestry and Singh (2007)

In a study by Mestry and Singh (2007), the authors explored the extent to which the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) course — which is conceived as a form of continuing professional development by the authors — influenced principals’ leadership style. Through purposive sampling, the study focuses on the experiences of four principals drawn from a target population of ninety four principals. Data were collected through a combination of a qualitative perception survey with individual principals and focus group interviews. The evaluation of the ACE course by the Centre for Education and Policy Development is further used in the understanding of the perceptions of the school principals.

According to these authors, the data from the research revealed that the participants in the course benefited significantly from undertaking the course of study. Mestry and Singh (2007) report that all the principals in this study confirmed that the ACE course had effectively promoted their professional growth and given them a better understanding of their role in school. Furthermore, the principals reported that their changed style of leadership had improved relationships with all role-players in the school. The principals indicated that the discussions with colleagues during cohort sessions had given them new insights into dealing with the staff and parents.

In considering the significance of these findings for our understanding of the effectiveness of professional development programmes for school principals, we should take

caution that the students — who were part of the cohort taught by the university researchers — could have said what they thought the university wanted to hear.

2.4.14 Simkins, Coldwell, Close and Morgan (2009)

The research by Simkins *et al.* (2009) is distinctive in that it is a study of the impact of three different programmes¹⁹ that are (or at some point were) offered by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in the UK, with a particular focus on the in-school components in each of these programmes. A comprehensive descriptive analysis of the three programmes is provided, highlighting the fact that these programmes focus amongst other things on the assessment of the participants' training and development and in-school work needs and on the participants' reflection on their learning from their in-school work as it progresses.

Methodologically, the study uses a combination of case study interviews (both individual and group) and surveys. One of the major strengths of this study is that a variety of individuals and groups (e.g., participants' superiors, peers, coaches, heads and chairs of governors) who are well-positioned to comment on the impact of the programme and the participants on the school's functioning, are surveyed and interviewed.

While recognising the challenges of tracing the impact of large-scale leadership development programmes, the authors' findings indicate that the in-school work on all three programmes, as well as the programmes in general, was perceived by all parties to have had significant positive effects on the development of individual leaders' personal capacity. Regarding the development of capacity at the organisational level, the findings indicate that the changes in practice that were initiated during the programmes were

¹⁹ These programmes are Leading from the Middle (LftM), the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH).

perceived to have become embedded in more than 70 percent of the participants across the three programmes.

The authors conclude by arguing that there are strong indications that the in-school leadership development activities had significant positive outcomes particularly in relation to personal development, impact on school in general, the enhancement of school's capacity for further development and on a range of pupil outcomes. The findings of this study have important implications for leadership and management development programmes.

As indicated in the beginning of the review, not all the empirical studies under review are in the education leadership and management field of study. Two of the studies whose review now follows fall outside this field. They have, however, been included because of their relevance to the present study with respect to being impact assessment studies.

2.4.15 Stilwell (2004)

The first of these studies is the research by Stilwell (2004) which looks at the perceptions of the post-graduate alumni of Information and Library Science Education (ILSE) programme at one of the universities in South Africa, the then University of Natal. The study by Stilwell (2004) is similar in orientation to the present study. Though focused outside education leadership and management — which is the area of concern of my study — this study is insightful. Its aim was to investigate the extent to which a post graduate programme, the ILSE, was seen by its alumni to have achieved its desired outcomes. The study looked at the extent to which the modules in the ILSE programme had prepared the graduates for their positions as ILSE practitioners.

Among other things, the study is different from a number of similar studies in that it is designed as a form of a needs analysis feedback from the alumni — an aspect that is

conspicuous by its absence in a number of professional development programmes. Furthermore, rather than assessing the effectiveness of the ILSE programme based solely on what the literature postulates — which is a common feature of most studies, including those reviewed in this chapter — in his research Stilwell used the programme outcomes, the research literature, and his own observations as the basis for assessment.

The fact that the research conducted by Stilwell focuses on individuals (alumni) who have gone through the programme and are now practitioners who have to evaluate the extent to which the programme had been useful for their practice, is of critical importance. Again, it is an aspect that is missing from a number of studies which opt to use simplified “checklist approaches.” It is unfortunate that we are not told as to how long it had been since the participants had completed their programme. Nor are we informed as to whether this (the time that has elapsed since programme completion) was one of the considered criteria in the design of the study. This is of importance in terms of the perceptions of the participants about the usefulness of the programme *vis-à-vis* their professional practice. This is an issue that the design of my study takes into consideration.

The study by Stilwell (2004) is among a few of the reviewed studies in this chapter that are methodologically sound. The study sample of 111 participants drawn from 6 of South Africa’s 9 provinces — including 2 participants from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — is impressive. The major finding of this study is that the ISLE programme had broadly achieved its anticipated outcomes in further preparing the students (alumni) for the workplace.

One issue though that needs to be raised is that notwithstanding the fact that the article on which this research is based was peer-reviewed, it would have been prudent to

make use of an independent evaluator, particularly given the fact that the author was part of the Department that was offering the programme.

2.4.16 Currie (2003)

The second one of these studies whose focus falls outside education leadership and management, is a study by Currie (2003). This 12-month longitudinal study is an evaluation of the impact of management development on a culture change in the health service sector (hospitals). The use of mixed methods in this study — observation, informal and formal interviews of the individuals who had gone through the programme — yielded rich data.

According to Currie (2003), the programme failed mainly because there were differences in the perceived objectives of management development interventions between the participants and other stakeholders. The three different stakeholder groups²⁰ did not have a shared understanding of the organisational objectives and therefore of the programme's desired outcomes. Even within the stakeholder groups themselves — apart from the programme facilitator group — there were divergent views. For instance, within the participant stakeholder group there were two groups: one group which felt that the programme needed to be delivered taking the existing culture into account, whilst the other group felt that there was a need for total cultural change to take place.

From this study it is clear that the failure to reconcile the divergent understandings regarding what the programme was supposed to achieve, resulted in its failure. The

²⁰ One group being the Chief Executive, the Director of Human Resources, the Organisation Development Manager and other Executive Directors; the other group being the Programme Facilitators; and the third group being the different participants who themselves had differing understandings of the objectives of the programme.

question then becomes: how does one reconcile the disparate understandings that the different stakeholders may have regarding the objectives of a professional development programme in order to avoid the problems encountered by this particular programme that are discussed by Currie in this study. Is it possible, perhaps, in this particular case of this organisation, a hospital, that the solution in terms of effecting a culture change — an agenda that was met with resistance by some of the participants—did not lie with a management development programme, but rather with, say, an organisation development or strategic planning exercise? Perhaps what the study points towards is that professional development programmes need to be well-considered before being instituted and that a training programme may not always be the solution.

The argument advanced by Currie (2003: 168), which seem to be in agreement with my sentiments above, is that “a programme which recognised where the managers were starting from, rather than where other stakeholders wanted them to go”, would have been ideal. He further argues that “rather than using management development to promote overnight cultural change, sensitivity to context” should have been considered.

The study by Currie speaks to the importance of attending to and dealing with different understandings that the different stakeholders may have about the objectives of a professional development programme rather than taking for granted that everyone is on the same page. This issue is related to the importance of undertaking a needs analysis before programmes are put together. This study is quite instructive and insightful in terms of pointing to the possible pitfalls which resulted from what Currie refers to as “a mismatch of objectives.”

2.5 Conclusion

What this review has clearly indicated is that some empirical studies that have attempted to assess the effectiveness of EMDPs possess several conceptual and methodological shortcomings while others lack empirical validity. Methodologically the majority of the studies that have been reviewed in this chapter not only contain small sample sizes — which limit their generalization — but a majority make use of only quantitative research approaches. In the studies reviewed, it is clear that through the use of this approach, these studies do not probe deeper in terms of the professional development of recipients' understandings of the effectiveness of the programmes in relation to their practices in organisations.

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, based on the weaknesses that have been observed in the literature study, the present study was conceptualised and designed in such a way that these weaknesses and limitations were addressed.

To begin with, in so far as the conceptualisation of my study is concerned, I moved away from the common idea of evaluating professional development programmes against particular “checklists” identified from what most authors call a ‘survey of international literature’ (“international” normally referring to the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and a few European countries, hardly ever Asian or African countries). In my study the perceptions of school principals are probed in relation to the extent to which these principals feel that the EMDPs meet their needs or not, particularly given the contexts in which they work. Furthermore, what the designers of the EMDPs under review put forward as the assumptions and the objectives of their programmes is used as a starting point for my study. In other words, before getting to the perceptions of the recipients —

the school principals in this case — about the relevance (or lack thereof) of the EMDPs *vis-à-vis* the recipients’ needs, it makes sense to start by examining what the service providers or programme designers see as the objectives of their programmes. These objectives and the underlying assumptions in the design of professional development programmes are then juxtaposed with the perceptions of the recipients with regards to the relevance of the programmes.

The inclusion of the service providers’ perceptions of their programmes is one aspect which is normally missing in impact assessment or evaluation studies²¹. However, most studies which do make an attempt to use the objectives of the professional development programmes as the starting point, do so merely through document review and analysis of these programmes’ documents. My study goes beyond this aspect, namely, document review and analysis. In the research design of my study I factored in not only the review and analysis of documents related to the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings behind the development of the different programmes, but also interviews with the university lecturing staff teaching in these programmes.

As indicated in this review, most studies that attempt to assess the impact of professional development programmes tend to get caught up in what More (2004: 62) calls “a familiar trade-off... between breadth and depth.” In other words, they attempt to cover a wide-spectrum of “voices” (breadth) and in the process sacrifice depth — that is, not probing deep enough and therefore fail to provide meaningful and reliable explanations for

²¹ The studies by Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) and More (2004) are the only two studies in this review which deal with the objectives and assumptions of the training programmes. However, in Van der Westhuizen *et al.’s* (2004) study interviews with the service providers were not conducted. Although in the study conducted by Stilwell (2004) the perceptions of the service providers about the objectives and assumptions of their programmes are not addressed, the study used the programme outcomes as the basis for the evaluation of the programme’s effectiveness.

the findings. The study by More (2004) was useful for using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and therefore able to address both the question of breadth and depth. My study has attempted to deal with this aspect of breadth and depth by innovatively employing a qualitative research methodology with a large sample size. In this way, I was able to probe deeper while at the same time being able to cover a wide variety of principals' voices.

Another aspect which was highlighted as a limitation in the studies under review is the amount of time between the programme and the return from the programme to practice. In the case of the research by Imants *et al.* (1994), a period of three months was allowed between the programme and the assessment of the impact of the programme — a limited time frame. In the present study the criteria used in the selection of the sample for the study was that a school principal needed to have been in practice for at least two years and that the professional development programme should have taken place between 1996 and 2002 — 1996 denoting two years following the dawn of a new political dispensation in South Africa.

All these and other shortcomings highlighted in the chapter point to a need for research rigour if studies in this important field of study are to make any significant contribution to our knowledge base and assist in the improvement of EMDPs and therefore leadership and management practices in schools.

Notwithstanding all the shortcomings encountered in the majority of the studies reviewed in this chapter, the general claim in the findings is that — where participants had been asked either in a questionnaire or in interviews — the EMDPs were perceived to be effective and useful in one or more ways.