CHAPTER 7
SYNTHESIZING AND CONSOLIDATING THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA INTO FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synthesis and consolidation of the major findings of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study, and to provide a summary, recommendations and conclusion of the study. The recommendations also encapsulate some suggestions for further research. The purpose of this chapter therefore, is to:

- Summarize the entire research project;

- Link the problem statement and aims with the data analysis and findings in chapter 5 and 6;

- Draw conclusions arising from the hypothesis and the findings reported in chapter 5 and 6 in order to indicate whether the problem statement has been responded to or not; and

- Present an alternative intervention strategy informed by the research findings and literature review in this thesis.

Before venturing into the final stages of this study it is important, as the title of this chapter suggests, dealing with the consolidation, integration and comparison of the data collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 explores the research design and methodology that was used to collect the data. The purpose of collecting the data, and the approaches that were used for this purpose, was to answer the research questions formulated for this study. A mixed methods research approach was used, namely a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Choosing the mixed methods approach ensured methodological triangulation, trustworthiness, validity and reliability of the research findings.

Figure 4.2 explains the fact that research methods (both qualitative and quantitative) cannot be viewed as part of an incompatible quantitative/qualitative dichotomy, i.e. they cannot be viewed as independent from each other but rather they are complementary modes of investigation, resulting in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Herman & Egri, 2008). Based on this view, table 6.4 lists seven steps in the data analysis

process. The last three steps in the process, namely data consolidation, data comparison and data integration are explored in this chapter.

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative data in this study has demonstrated that the three types of variables identified may provide an answer about the relationship that exists between instructional leadership and learner performance. The quantitative data collection method employed questionnaires, which was followed by collecting qualitative data by means of two types of interviews. The qualitative data allowed the principals to indicate what could not be expressed by means of the questionnaire responses. Integrating, comparing and consolidating data from various sources has the following advantages.

The possibility of overlapping weaknesses is minimized because the methods are mixed in way that complement each other's strengths. The integrated approach provides data from which stronger inferences can be made by capturing and presenting a greater diversity of viewpoints. Integrating data further provides a deeper, richer and more comprehensive set of data to develop effective strategies to communicate best practices. Integrating, comparing and consolidating data also recognizes the fact that education is a complex phenomenon which must be studied from multiple perspectives to gain a good insight, and that no single method could adequately capture an understanding of a particular phenomenon (Lieberman & Erickson, 2010).

7.2   SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the variables related to instructional leadership and their contribution to learner performance. The catalyst for this study was the observed and recorded decline in learner performance, particularly in the grade 12 examinations, with specific reference to the years from 2004 to 2008 in South African public schools. This study consisted of two phases which are briefly discussed below.

7.2.1   PHASE ONE OF THE STUDY

The primary research question focuses on the variables related to instructional leadership and their contribution to learner performance. In order to respond to this question, the study solicited responses from principals of secondary schools who had to provide their demographic information (and other data) through the completion of a questionnaire. A separate questionnaire was designed and distributed to deputy principals and HODs. The

purpose of the latter questionnaire was to solicit information with regard to those respondents' perceptions of their principals as instructional leaders. The questionnaires from both groups of respondents were collected and analyzed.

7.2.2 PHASE TWO OF THE STUDY

This phase consisted of two sub-phases. The first sub-phase was carried out using focus group interview with 60 principals. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to establish whether the principals understood each of the instructional leadership variables and how they chose to arrange them in order of priority. My interaction with these principals in the focus group interviews assisted me to formulate questions for the structured interviews, which formed the second sub-phase that followed after the focus group interviews.

The findings from both the quantitative data gathered during phase one of the study and qualitative data gathered during phase two, are detailed in the previous chapter and the major findings are summarized in this chapter.

7.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section sets out to determine the alignment of the problem statement in chapter 1 with the findings of this study. To achieve this alignment four questions were asked and answered. A summary of the answers to the four research questions is given below and the research findings of the entire study are discussed in the next main section.

7.3.1 WHAT ARE THE VARIABLES RELATED TO INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND WHAT IS THEIR EFFECT ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION?

From the literature review, four instructional leadership variables were identified which some scholars and researchers refer to as "functions" of instructional leadership. The effects of these variables on the performance of learners in the matriculation examination were tested through the questionnaires which were designed for principals. The analysis reveals that these variables seem to have little effect on learner performance and since they are characteristics of instructional leadership (also called the functions of instructional leadership), then instructional leadership appears to have little effect on learner

performance. Based on this finding, I inferred that there are other intervening variables, or certain characteristics which the principals must have in their practice of instructional leadership in order to influence learner performance.

It is important to note at this point that this study was not undertaken as a deliberate move to discredit instructional leadership. The findings of this study with regard to the effect of instructional leadership on learner performance contradict general understandings and conventional views about the effect of instructional leadership. This does not relegate instructional leadership and its related variables to the background. Rather, this situation opens up avenues for further research about the characteristics and values which principals require in order to perform their instructional leadership functions. It is also within the scope and functions of research and researchers to challenge existing knowledge and, by so doing, expose areas that require further research.

7.3.2 HOW CAN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP POSSIBLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE IN THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION?

Drawing on the findings in the main question above, I inferred that there must be certain characteristics that principals require in order to influence the performance of learners. Intervening variables such as the principal's orientation towards learner performance, motivation and commitment could have a marked effect on the improvement of learner performance. The creation of culture and setting a vision, implementing the vision and having high expectations of teachers and learners, are further intervening variables that have a positive effect on learner performance. The following figure represents the intervening variables:

FIGURE 7.1:   Intervening variables that may have an effect on learner performance
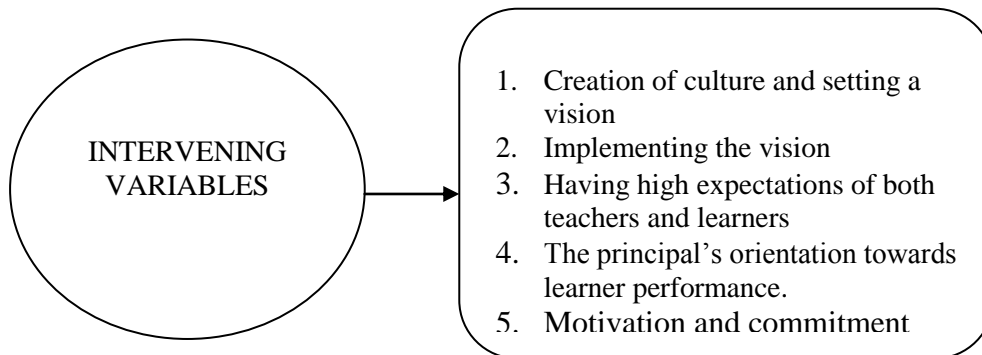
7.3.3   HOW DO HODS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS PERCEIVE THE ROLE OF THEIR PRINCIPALS REGARDING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP?

The distributed leadership literature indicates that teachers feel that principals should be visible in the school and also in the classroom. This, according to the teachers, would ensure that they do not feel isolated and left to themselves. The presence of the principal in the classroom is an act of instructional leadership during which teachers feel that they are being supported by the principal. Jorgenson and Peal (2008:54) indicate that teachers appreciate administrators who occasionally offer to relieve a class, and take every opportunity to be guest teachers, thus demonstrating their skills and engagement in classroom life. Teachers do not always appreciate a principal who tells them what to do, but one who models the way and shows them what should be done and how it should be done. This indicates that teachers perceive their principals as instructional leaders and would expect them to lead in the instructional process.

7.3.4   HOW ARE PRINCIPALS PREPARED WITH REGARD TO THEIR ROLE AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS?

The literature review has shown that it is only recently that a principals' preparation programme has been in place in South Africa. The ACE: School Leadership programme, as it is known, will henceforth be a prerequisite for all those who aspire to be principals and those who are already practising as principals. This question also encompasses the management qualifications which principals might or might not have. The findings from the principals' questionnaire indicate that the principal's qualifications do not have any

significance for the performance of learners. I inferred from these findings that a principal who has advanced qualifications should be able to translate the knowledge obtained through such qualifications into practice in order to be able to influence performance. Besides, instructional leadership is a module taught in the second year of the ACE programme. I believe that this module needs to be taught throughout the two years of the programme as it overlaps with and influences the content of other modules in the programme.

7.4   SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings from this research can be summarized under the following eleven major themes, each of which is discussed in further detail in this section: (1) the principals' qualifications controversy; (2) the effect of instructional leadership on learner performance; (3) time spent on instructional leadership; (4) support by the department of education; (5) the department's interference in principals' programmes; (6) teachers' job satisfaction; (7) teachers' understanding of the school's curricular goals; (8) teachers' degree of success in *implementing* the school's curricular goals; (9) teachers' support for the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS); (10) teachers' involvement in designing and supporting the school's improvement goals; (11) using learner achievement to evaluate the instructional practice of teachers.

7.4.1   THE PRINCIPALS' QUALIFICATIONS CONTROVERSY

This study has found that the schools where the principals hold the highest qualifications, ranging from Masters to a PhD degree, performed worst in terms of learner performance, whereas the schools of principals with lower qualifications did well. The five principals who participated in the structured interviews also indicated that the qualifications of the principal do not matter. What matters is the character of the principal and his/her orientation towards learner performance. The qualifications only give the principals extra knowledge; the principal needs to be able to apply this knowledge in his/her actual practice to influence teachers and learners.

7.4.2   THE EFFECT OF IL ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Four variables were identified in this study and most of the literature that was consulted confirms these variables as being characteristics of instructional leadership. The literature emphasizes that the enactment of these variables by principals would lead to the

improvement of learner performance. On the contrary, however, this study has revealed that there is no correlation between these variables (which are also referred to by some scholars as "functions" of instructional leadership), and the improvement of learner performance. Again, considering the patterns of fluctuations in learner performance from 2004 to 2008, the statistical analysis of the data has shown that instructional leadership accounted for less of the variation in learner achievement than expected. This deviation of the findings of this study from the conventional view that instructional leadership should have an effect on learner achievement could be a signal that there are intervening variables that act contrary to what the identified variables set out to demonstrate.

Furthermore, these findings could mean that the principals did not/were not effective during the years under review. This lack of effectiveness can be linked to intervening variables such as: (i) the challenges of dealing with changes in the education system; (ii) the incompatibility between the professional development of the principals with their tasks as instructional leaders; (iii) change fatigue that emanates from the multiple roles of the principal; and (iv) the district and/or regional management interference in the programmes of the principals through service meetings arranged at short notice. These intervening variables can be referred to as "administrative bottlenecks" which hinder the principals in realizing their visions for their schools.

7.4.3 TIME SPENT ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The principals whose schools recorded a good level of learner achievement over the years indicated that they spend a larger percentage of their time on instructional leadership. In spite of the interference by the department in their daily programmes, they still value the amount of time they spend dealing directly with teachers on instructional issues. The findings from the questionnaires reveal the same trend that the amount of time spent on instructional leadership has a statistically significant effect on learner performance. The inference drawn from this finding is that the visibility of the principal in the school halls and classes motivates both teachers and learners, and when the two groups are motivated, learner performance could improve.

7.4.4   SUPPORT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

As mentioned in section 2.5.7.1, Caldwell (2002) and Hallinger (2002) indicate that schools as organizations have become less in need of control and more in need of support and capacity development. This view implies that principals need the support of the department of education in their endeavour to improve learner performance (see also figure 2.1). The tier of the department which is closest to the schools and well placed to provide the required support to principals is the district office. The contributions of Togneri and Anderson (2003:23), Anderson (2003:8-11) and the Centre for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006:1) regarding the role of district offices and officials in the improvement of learner performance can be summarized as follows:

In addition to the schools' own vision, accountability systems and curricular goals, the district must also set a clear vision, coherent curricular targets and accountability systems and teach the principals and teachers how to use these supports to improve instruction for individual learners. Districts must move beyond the traditional one-time workshop approach to professional development that puts in place coherent, district-organized strategies to improve instruction.

Districts must also ensure that there is a connection between the school-based professional development activities and district level professional development. The goals of the district regarding learner performance should be directly connected to the school-level practices and the needs of the learners.

Districts should increase instructional leadership by building well-trained cadres of instructional experts among the teacher and principal corps.

This view emphasizes the fact that principals are not expected to lead alone and teachers are also not expected to work in isolation. Fostering networks of instructionally proficient principals and teacher leaders (e.g. content specialists and mentor teachers), districts may be able to increase their capacity to improve instructional practice. Novice teachers need mentoring and the district has the obligation to provide support systems for these new teachers. In order for the district to provide the necessary support to schools, strategic allocation of financial resources is imperative. Anderson (2003:11) refers to this aspect as "investment in instructional leadership development at the school and district levels" and further adds that one of the hallmarks of districts that have succeeded in moving from low to high performing in terms of learner performance is an intensive long-term investment in developing instructional leadership capacity at the school as well as at the district level.

Contrary to the summary indicated in the box above, the principals who participated in this study indicated that the level of support by the department is minimal. Others indicated that providing support to improve performance is something that would be appreciated by all principals. Further, finding fault with principals is another aspect that impacts negatively on their performance. The lack of capacity on the part of those who are supposed to provide support to principals was also identified by the principals in this study. Principals need support on issues such as management and leadership, curriculum management and implementation, policy formulation and implementation, teacher/learner discipline, and human resource provision and development.

The support of the district office and officials is therefore important for the improvement of learner performance. Newmann, King and Youngs (2001) and Schmoker and Marzano (1999) referred to earlier in this study respectively emphasize the concepts of programme coherence, alignment, and coordination of the curriculum. They argue against schools and districts "doing their own thing". Their contention is that unrelated and unfocused school improvement programmes may affect learner performance negatively. The district should therefore prepare principals and teachers to be able to align and coordinate the curriculum and instruction with the learning goals and assessment in order to improve learner performance.

7.4.5 THE DEPARTMENT'S INTERFERENCE IN PRINCIPALS' PROGRAMMES

One of the principals remarked that.... *"in as much as a teacher has to prepare his/her lesson before going to class, the principal also has to be thoroughly prepared for each day, each week, each month......the principal has to have a comprehensive programme for the year..."*. The principals indicated that the department sometimes keeps them away from their schools for several days which derail their strategic plans. They also indicated that due to a lack of planning on the part of the department, even the department's own turn-around programmes are compromised by spur-of-the-moment meetings and workshops for principals. The principals proposed a unified regional and/or district schedule of service meetings and workshops which will be friendly to the principals' own plans and programmes.

Although the ACE School Leadership programme is delivered to the principals on Saturdays and holidays, the absence of departmental officials results in principals having more knowledge about leadership and management than some of the officials who are supposed to give them support in this regard. Departmental officials sometimes lack the confidence to support and guide the principals due to their own lack of knowledge.

7.4.6 TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION

This study has shown that when teachers feel satisfied with the job they do, learner performance will improve. This can be achieved when teachers feel that their contributions are valued, and they are supplied with all the support conditions and materials to assist them in carrying out their instructional obligations. It is therefore incumbent on the principal to create collegial conditions in the school to encourage the teachers to work towards achieving the collective goals and objectives of the school.

7.4.7 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCHOOL'S CURRICULAR GOALS

The study suggests that it is imperative for teachers to know and understand the schools curricular goals. Most importantly, the teachers must be involved in the formulation of such goals. This will enable them to declare ownership of these goals and as a result, they will work towards the realization of these goals. If all the teachers, guided by the principal, work towards achieving the same goals, learner performance can improve.

7.4.8 TEACHERS' DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL'S CURRICULAR GOALS

The teachers' successful implementation of the curricula goals depends on their understanding of these goals. The more they understand them, the more they will succeed in implementing the goals and this will have a positive impact on learner performance. This, according to Anderson (2003:11), can be achieved through district-wide job-embedded professional development focuses and support for teachers. The same author contends that districts that believe that the quality of learners' learning is highly dependent on the quality of instruction, organize themselves and their resources to support instructionally focused professional learning for teachers. Based on this contention, teachers will only succeed in implementing the schools' curricular goals if they get the necessary support from the districts.

7.4.9 TEACHERS' SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NCS

The NCS is the core written curriculum in all schools in South Africa. The success of the principal in managing this curriculum, and its implementation, rests with his/her collaboration with the teaching staff and attending learning area workshops with them. This will assist the principal to intervene and assist the staff where there are learning area related challenges, and also in the provision of resources.

7.4.10 TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN DESIGNING AND SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL'S IMPROVEMENT GOALS

The study has shown that teachers will perform better and improve learner performance if they are involved in designing the school goals. Teachers must own the school's improvement goals and once this becomes the norm in the school, the teachers will be more focused, and achieving the school goals will be their primary focus.

7.4.11 USING LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT TO EVALUATE THE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF TEACHERS

The principal and his/her staff must use the previous year's results to build a "winning team of teachers" for the school. Subject teachers who consistently perform well should be retained in that grade, and for those who consistently underperform, the poor performance

of their learners should be used as an incentive to develop their skills. Roy and Hord (2003:3) indicate that districts need to prepare principals and teachers to use a variety of data to determine the focus of professional learning and continue to focus on long-term support for the development of classroom-based skills.

7.5 A NEW PARADIGM FOR PRINCIPALS AND THEIR ROLE AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

Earlier in this chapter I indicated that the variables related to instructional leadership as identified for this study do not seem to have any effect on learner performance and therefore need some fundamental rethinking. The findings also indicate that there must be a paradigm shift with regard to principalship per se and to principals' role as instructional leaders.

A new paradigm for principals in this context should concentrate on the emerging conceptualization of principalship, the requirements for someone to become a principal, and the recruitment, selection and appointment of principals. The emerging conceptualization of principalship emphasizes the role of principal as an instructional leader in addition to his/her other managerial functions. This raises the level of accountability of the principal on all matters related to curriculum implementation, instruction, and assessment, to levels not previously considered. This new paradigm requires the principal to be a leader of all learning interventions in the school, ranging from the learning of the learners to the professional development of teachers through school based initiatives, and the personal professional development of the principal as "head learner."

In terms of the requirements for someone to become a principal, and the recruitment and appointment of principals in South Africa, a new approach is imperative. This study proposes that competence in instructional leadership for any aspiring principal should henceforth be a prerequisite for principalship. This means that in addition to the number of years of experience as a head of department and/or as a deputy principal, any aspiring principal must have a track record of having been a "good teacher". Passion and learner performance orientation of the principal should be a driving force for all aspiring principals.

Other developments from the findings of this study challenge the traditional hierarchical view of principalship, where all the authority in the school rests in the principal. This study proposes that the principal, together with his staff, should collaboratively formulate the

school goals. Teachers feel that they are taken seriously when they are engaged in activities that are intended to give direction to the school. Finally, the findings from this research led to the development of four propositions which, it is suggested, should underpin the emerging paradigm of principalship and the practice of instructional leadership. These propositions are a distillation of the major findings from the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study and are presented in the following section.

7.6   FOUR PROPOSITIONS FOR PRINCIPALSHIP AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a proposition is a plan or scheme to be considered, discussed, accepted, or adopted. From a contemporary philosophical point of view, McGrath (2007:1) indicates that the term "proposition" is used to refer to some or all of the following: the primary bearers of truth- value, the objects of belief and other "propositional attitudes" (i.e. what is believed, doubted, etc.).

The four propositions proposed and indicated in the diagram below may be used to provide a framework for discussion, consideration, and acceptance of the emerging paradigm of principalship and instructional leadership.

FIGURE 7.2:   New paradigm for principalship and instructional leadership
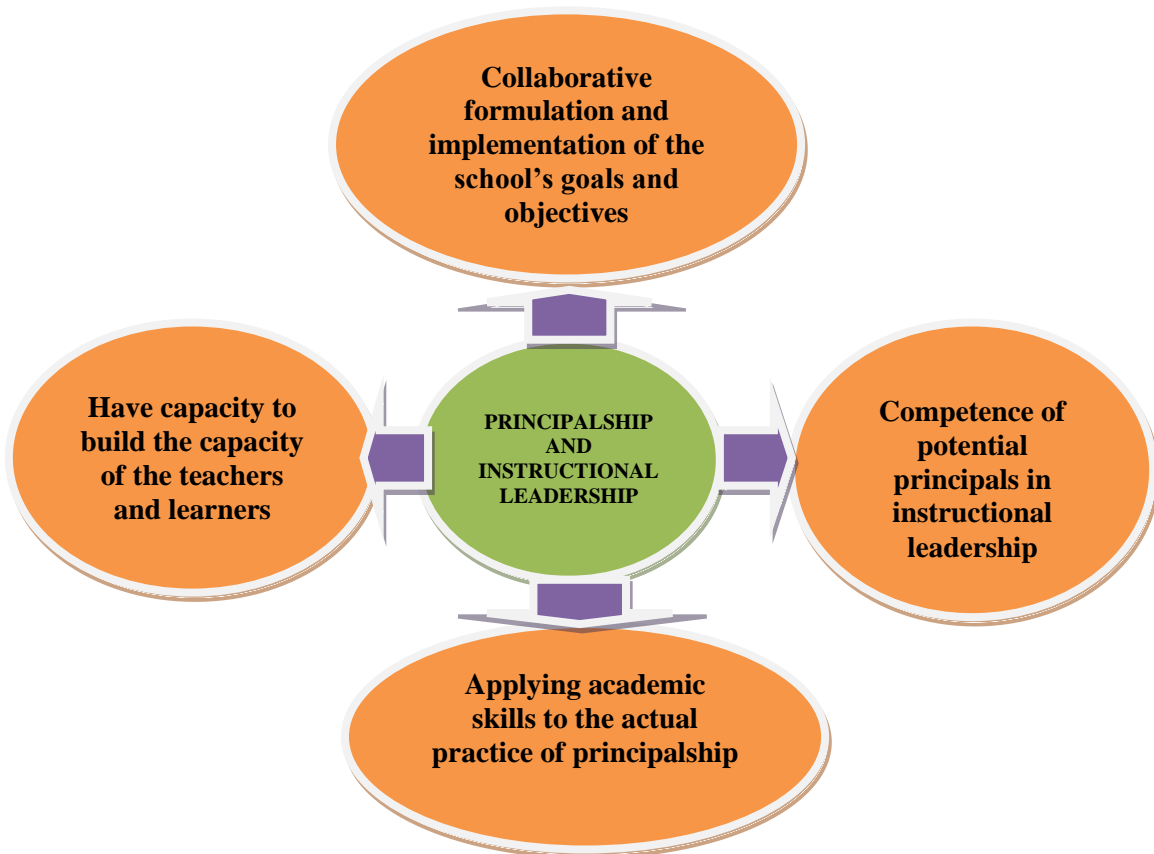
7.6.1   COLLABORATIVE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The role of the principal has become more complex over the years since the emergence of instructional leadership as a required competency of the principal. This complexity makes it difficult for the principal to perform all the roles associated with this position on his/her own. This therefore necessitates collaboration between the principal and his/her staff to formulate and agree on common goals for the school. The advantage of such collaboration is that the combined inputs of all the parties in the school save time because consensus is reached at the inception of each goal that is formulated.

7.6.2   COMPETENCE OF POTENTIAL PRINCIPALS IN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

If all serving and future principals were to be productive and contribute towards learner performance in their schools, the notion of principalship should expect competency in instructional leadership as a prerequisite and serving principals should be encouraged and supported by the department of education to participate in development programmes that

prepare principals in this sphere. The principal preparation programmes that are now in place in South Africa should have a module or modules to prepare all aspiring principals for instructional leadership related activities.

7.6.3 APPLYING ACADEMIC SKILLS TO THE ACTUAL PRACTICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

This research study has found that the advanced qualifications of a principal do not seem to have any impact on learner performance. Instead, the principal is expected to be able to translate the academic skills that he/she has obtained into the actual practice of instructional leadership. The literature reviewed reveals that there are certain behaviours by the instructional leader that have a significant impact on learner performance (see section 3.5.7.3). These behaviours, according to Gamage, Adams and McCormack (2009), include providing instructional leadership through discussion on instructional issues; observing classroom teaching and giving feedback; supporting teacher autonomy and protecting instructional time; providing and supporting improvement through monitoring progress; and using learner progress data for programme improvement. Chang (2001:1) held a similar view with Gamage *et. al.* (2009) above by suggesting that the instructional leader should:

> "*spend much time in classrooms, observing teaching and learning, and encouraging high performance, track learners' scores, and other indicators of learning, to help teachers focus attention where it is most needed; and provide opportunities for teachers to share information and work together to plan curriculum and instruction.*"

7.6.4 HAVING CAPACITY TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

The department of education has a duty to build the capacity of the principals to ensure that they know what to do in their schools and how to do it. Once the capacity of the principals has been built, they will be able to build the capacity of their teachers and that of the learners. The school will then become a learning community where all the stakeholders involved in the school are in a process of continuous learning.

As indicated in the definition of a proposition, the propositions outlined above provide a plan or scheme for discussion towards the realization of the ideals of the emerging paradigm

for principalship and instructional leadership. The recommendations informed by the findings of this study can provide a scaffold for frameworks to support the emerging paradigm of principalship and instructional leadership, and a possible recipe for the implementation of instructional leadership to improve learner performance in the matriculation examination.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations drawn from the findings of this research and for this purpose; they are presented according to the subsidiary research questions, and from the general analysis of the literature.

7.7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SUBSIDIARY QUESTION 1 (THE CONTRIBUTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP VARIABLES TO LEARNER PERFORMANCE)

- Principals need support from the department with regard to aspects such as performance orientation, and the translation of these support initiatives into practice in order to influence learner performance.

- Instructional leadership should be one of the major requirements for appointment as a principal.

- Aspiring secondary school principals should have a good track record as competent teachers with commendable achievements in learner performance in the matriculation examination.

7.7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SUBSIDIARY QUESTION 2 (DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' AND HODS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE ROLE OF PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS)

- Principals must model exemplary instructional practices to their teachers by being involved in the actual act of teaching.

- Principals should always be visible and available to give support to their teachers when they need such support.

7.7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SUBSIDIARY QUESTION 3 (PRINCIPAL PREPARATION WITH REGARD TO THEIR ROLE AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS)

- Instead of the regions and/or district officials taking responsibility for staff development and capacity building, principals must be empowered with all the necessary skills and be given opportunities to be innovative and develop their own staff. The principal as a representative of the department at the school level is well positioned to know the strengths of his/her staff and areas of weakness that need development. The department should therefore allocate a budget for development activities at the school level and develop the principals to implement such activities.

- Serving principals should be taken through skills development programmes that will enable them to carry out their instructional leadership responsibilities.

- The department of education should serve as a resource and support hub for principals to enable them to drive their programmes for better performance of learners.

7.7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

As proposed by Keefe and Jenkins (1991), the department of education should adopt and provide a comprehensive set of policies to support principals in their role as instructional leaders. Such policies should include indicating what is expected of learners behaviourally and academically; outlining the importance of protecting instructional time and optimizing learning time; specifying who will be involved in instructional decisions relating to the classroom, the building and the district; emphasizing the collaborative role of the teacher and principal in developing instructional processes and practices; formulating policies requiring a vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum; providing continuity between the written, taught and tested curriculum; allocating sufficient resources to implement these policies; and implementing policies to ensure that instructional content and delivery are based on sound research and educational practice (also refer to The Centre for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006), and Anderson (2003).

7.8 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the variables related to instructional leadership and their contribution to learner performance in the matriculation examination. While there have been several studies that investigated the relationship between instructional leadership and teaching and learning, the focus of this study is unique in that it investigated the linkage between instructional leadership as a role of principals, and the improvement of learner performance in the matriculation examination.

The findings from this research, together with the propositions, represent a contribution to the body of knowledge on how instructional leadership could be included into the wider conception of principalship. This research has established that a paradigm shift is required to enable the recognition and acceptance of instructional leadership as a defining feature and prerequisite for principalship. Another contribution is that the current failure of instructional leadership to contribute to learner performance in South Africa can be attributed to the national department of education making changes in the system without due consideration of the challenges facing principals with regard to coping with such changes.

This study has proposed a paradigm shift with regard to the preparation of principals, and provided succinct guidelines for preparing aspiring and serving principals for the practice of instructional leadership. When applied to both aspiring and serving principals, the proposed paradigm shift has the potential to ensure that instructional leadership becomes an important component of development when preparing principals for leadership positions. It is my contention that if the proposed paradigm shift is implemented, principals will be able to take their rightful place in providing effective instructional leadership that will go a long way to improving learner performance.

7.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research study, together with its propositions and recommendations, has opened a number of potential areas for further research. The following areas, in my view, warrant further research.

7.9.1 THE EFFECT OF OTHER LEADERSHIP STYLES ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE

This research has identified some shortfalls in the implementation of instructional leadership and its impact on the improvement of learner performance. A further study will be commissioned in the future to investigate the effect of other leadership styles such as transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, situational leadership, inter alia, on learner performance.

7.9.2 THE EFFECT OF TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Teacher job satisfaction features as one of the intervening variables that shows a significant relationship with learner performance. An investigation of this variable and its possible effects on learner performance may add to the body of knowledge on the effects of this variable.

7.9.3 PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EMERGING PARADIGM SHIFT IN LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

As suggested under the recommendations of this study, an investigation into the views of aspiring and serving principals with regard to the emerging paradigm on principalship is another area for potential further investigation. Principals, particularly those who are already serving in these positions, know about potential areas of development in their practice. Listening to their voices and engaging them in structuring the principal preparation programme would possibly make this programme versatile enough to address the challenges faced by principals as instructional leaders.

7.9.4 THE EFFECT OF PRINCIPALS' QUALIFICATIONS ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND LEARNER PERFORMANCE

This research suggests that there is no correlation between the qualifications of the principal and learner achievement. Investigations of the other issues that must be in place to support the principals' qualifications need to be investigated. Such issues include the four propositions suggested in figure 7.2 and the commitment of principals to improving learner performance.

7.10   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research project asked the main question: What are the variables related to instructional leadership and what is the effect of these variables on the instructional leadership practices of secondary school principals? Instructional leadership was identified as a central concept, four major variables associated with instructional leadership were identified, and their contribution to learner performance was tested. Based on the findings that emerged from the testing of these variables, the findings suggest that a fundamental rethinking of instructional leadership should be encouraged in order to fit it into the broader conception of principalship.

This study has shown that the nature of successful school leadership and the paths along which its influence travels to improve learner performance, include more than a few "black holes", not to mention many more "dimly lit" holes. This study has provided more certainty about those practices which form the core of almost all successful leadership repertoires such as passion, commitment, orientation towards learner performance, responsibility and accountability. Key dispositions such as teacher motivation, teacher job satisfaction, raising teacher efficacy, and including teachers in decision making on school policy, could shape the way in which principals approach their work as instructional leaders.

Furthermore (see figure 2.1), the department of education, through the district offices should play a role in the improvement of learner performance. The department needs to provide effective, tailor-made programmes and policies that outline all the activities that are directly linked to the improvement of learner performance. Based on these programmes and policies, they should support principals in their role as instructional leaders. Furthermore, district offices should regularly observe and assist principals in terms of their practice of instructional leadership. This would go a long way to making the principals aware that instructional leadership is part of their job. Based on this view, this study has added to the body of instructional leadership knowledge by indicating that professional development in instructional leadership and the supervision of principals needs to be linked to policy and practice.

The findings of this research further led to the development of four propositions which are viewed as imperative in informing the emerging paradigm on principalship and instructional

leadership. These propositions, together with the recommendations, could provide a scaffold to redesign principalship with instructional leadership as one of its key features.

Furthermore, this study found that the qualifications of principals do not seem to have any effect on learner performance. What is important are the principals' commitment, responsibility, accountability, passion, and orientation towards improved learner performance. Finally, this study proposes that the ACE: School Leadership programme, which is designed for principal preparation in South Africa, should have instructional leadership as a major module to prepare principals for their role as instructional leaders.

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