PRACTICES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

by

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SUMMARY

Effective principal's instructional leadership yields high achieving schools (Dhlamini, 2008:105; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, 2001; Khuzwayo, 2005; Kruger, 1999; Mbatha, 2004; Mthombeni, 2004). Annual National Assessment (ANA) (DoE, 2009) and Systemic Evaluation (SE) in 2001 and 2007 (DoE, 2008) revealed that South African learners are not able to read and write, and that their numeracy skills are not well developed. The performance is also evident in the Grade 12 performance which has not shown great improvement over the years. In an effort to address the poor performance as experienced in schools, the department of education introduced Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) which requires principals to provide professional leadership which is based on curriculum management; and to take accountability for the quality of learning that takes place within the school.

The poor learner achievement in schools triggered the question about the quality of education provided in the primary schools and the instructional leadership provided by primary school principals as it is a foundation to the schooling system. A qualitative approach was used to explore the practices of primary school principals as instructional leaders and the implications for learner achievement. Six primary schools in the Tshwane West district in Gauteng province were sampled for the research.

The research revealed the following distinguishing factors by those schools that performed extremely well in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (DoE, 2009) and Systemic Evaluation (SE) in 2001 and 2007 (DoE, 2008):

- The principal has to establish good relations amongst and between educators and learners and also foster two-way communication.

- The principal should make sure that academic results are analysed and interventions strategies are followed to improve learner achievement.

- Educators should be encouraged by the principal to perform a self-reflection of their teaching performance. The principal has to provide support for underperforming educators and encourage them to develop themselves professionally.

- The principal needs to conduct class visits.

- The principal should ensure that teaching and learning time is protected and that educators and learners attend classes punctually.

- The principal needs to keep abreast of the curriculum and instruction changes and provide the necessary support and guidance.

- The principal has to ensure that instruction is given priority and is central to the school's activities.

The above-mentioned factors proved to be essential in the instructional leadership of the primary school principal in ensuring improved learner achievement in schools.

KEY WORDS:

Instructional leadership; Learner achievement; Principal; Principal's role; Resource Provider; Instructional resource; Communicator; Visible Presence; Teaching and learning.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation on: **"Practices of primary school principals as instructional leaders: implications for learner achievement"** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as references.

M S SEKHU

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CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1.   Introduction

Instructional leadership is the key ingredient towards improvement of learner achievement. According to Hallinger and Heck (1998), improved learner achievement is an indication of a successful and effective school. Witziers, Bosker and Kruger (2010) take the discussion further, and highlight that instructional leadership is a vital factor to effective schools. The core business of a school is teaching and learning, and many researchers agree that the success and effectiveness of a school rests with the quality of leadership that the principal provides within the school (Charlton, 1993; Coleman, 1994; Dubrin, 1995; Garman, 1995; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Smith and Andrews, 1989; Tyler, 1989; West-Burnham, 2001).

In line with DuFour (1999), Redding (2006) and Sergiovanni (1995), instructional leadership style is re-emerging as the emphasis on school effectiveness becomes more prominent; and more accountability is placed on the principal to ensure improved learner performance and achievement. The importance of instructional leadership is also mentioned in Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) which states that the principal is responsible for ensuring effective curriculum delivery and management which should lead towards improved learner achievement. This view is supported by DuFour (1999) who further points out that schools need principals who focus on teaching and learning and regard it as the first priority; hence the need for instructional leadership.

Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) further requires principals to provide professional leadership which is based on curriculum management; and to take accountability for the quality of learning that takes place within the school.

According to Krug (1993), instructional leadership refers to management of the curriculum and instruction as well as supervision of educators' performance for effective teaching and improved learner performance. Lashway (2002) concurs with Krug (1993) and also mentions that the concept of instructional leadership is re-surfacing at the top of the leadership agenda, driven by the need for effective teaching and learning in schools, which in turn is directed by the instructional leadership provided by the principal.

The role of the principal as outlined in Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), clearly links with the definition of instructional leadership as described by Krug (1993) and Lashway (2002). Section 16A of the Education Laws Amendment Act (Republic of South Africa, 2007) also outlines the functions and responsibilities of the principal of a public school, as contemplated in section 16(3) and section 16A(2)(a)(i) of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The core function, as outlined in the Education Laws Amendment Act (2007), is that the principal is responsible for the implementation of all the educational programmes and curriculum activities. Ruebling, Stow, Kayona and Clarke (2004:1) also state that principals should be held accountable for poor results. The challenge that goes together with this re-emerging role of principals is that only a few principals have been trained on instructional leadership (Lashway, 2002:1).

The relationship between instructional leadership and learner achievement has been occupying the minds of the researchers for a number of decades and the topic has been researched internationally and nationally. International researchers such as Hopkins (2001), Bartlett (2008), Heck and Marcoulides (1993) and Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) have explored the impact of the principal's instructional leadership on learner achievement. Research has also been conducted nationally by researchers like Mbatha (2004), Mthombeni (2004) and Dhlamini (2008), who also explored the relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement.

The findings by both national and international researchers highlighted that the principal's instructional leadership is essential towards learner achievement. The bone of contention amongst the different researchers is the extent to which the principal's instructional leadership impacts on learner achievement.

Bartlett (2008) investigated the impact of the principal's instructional leadership practices on the academic achievement of learners. The findings were that there is not enough evidence to conclude that a relationship exists between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement. Again, Williams and Edward (2006) point out that the leadership behaviour of the principal may have less impact on learner achievement than teachers', parents' and learners' behaviours. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) report that there is a weak link between the principal's behaviour and learner achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) further report that there are other factors that impact on leaner achievement besides the principal's leadership.

To take the argument further, Jacobson and Conway (1995) argue that instructional leadership is an added function, and they are supported by Rallis and Highsmith (1987) and LaPointe and Davis (2006) who question if the principal can be equally effective as a manager and an instructional leader. Principals do not demonstrate sufficient instructional leadership skills (Dhlamini, 2008; Khuzwayo, 2005; Kwinda, 2002; Mbatha, 2004). Instructional leadership is often delegated to other educators, such as senior and master teachers, heads of departments and the deputy principals, as principals find it difficult to cope with their workload (Kruger, 1999; Haughey and MacElwain, 1992; Heck, 1992).

While Williams and Edward (2006) and Marzano et al. (2005) argue that the relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement is weak, Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) highlight that there is a direct correlation between the principal's instructional leadership and

instructional improvement in that instructional leadership enhances learner achievement. According to McEwan (2000), one variable that always emerges when describing effective and excellent schools is the principal's instructional leadership.

Foriska (1994) and Hopkins (2001:16) also contend that instructional leadership is critical to the development and maintenance of an effective school and that the domain of instructional leadership is the focus on learners' learning and achievement. Effective principal's instructional leadership yields high achieving schools (Dhlamini, 2008:105; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, 2001; Khuzwayo, 2005; Kruger, 1999; Mbatha, 2004; Mthombeni, 2004).

Studies conducted until recently evidently point out that the principal's instructional leadership impacts positively towards learner achievement. Although the importance of the principal's instructional leadership towards learner achievement has been recognised and acknowledged, Chell (1991:1) states that 'good instructional leadership skills are seldom practiced'. Chell (1991) further attests that there is a need to explore the skills and tasks required to support the principal's practices of instructional leadership in schools.

Furthermore, Haughey and MacElwain (1992) highlight that though the researchers agree on the importance of the principal's instructional leadership in enhancing learner achievement; the researchers differ in terms of the practices that principals need to engage in. In light of the arguments presented by Chell (1991) and Haughey and MacElwain (1992), this qualitative study therefore aimed at exploring specific leadership practices of primary school principals as instructional leaders and the implications for learner achievement.

In an effort to respond to the research question, McEwan (2003) summarises four dimensions to describe the practices of principals as instructional leaders. Firstly, the principal as an instructional leader has to be a resource provider.

In being a resource provider, a principal needs to ensure that educators and learners have the necessary resources to enable them to achieve the school's mission and goals, thereby achieving optimum results in learner achievement (McEwan, 2003). Secondly, as an instructional leader, the principal needs to be an instructional resource. The principal should be able to provide the necessary support and guidance to both educators and learners in terms of instruction (McEwan, 2003). This means that principals have to keep abreast of the curriculum developments and instruction so that they can provide meaningful and insightful advice to educators and learners. As instructional resources, principals need to promote and support staff development and also tap on the expertise of the different educators and promote team work and shared leadership.

Thirdly, a principal as an instructional leader also needs to be an effective communicator (McEwan, 2003). The principal has to articulate the school's vision and goals, as well as the means to achieve such goals by integrating instructional planning, activities and learner achievement. Clear standards have to be set and communicated to all stakeholders including learners and parents. Lastly, as an instructional leader, the principal needs to be visibly present inside and outside the classrooms (McEwan, 2003). The principal needs to demonstrate interest and be actively involved in all aspects pertaining to instruction. This means that the principal has to be readily accessible to provide support and direction on instructional issues (McEwan, 2003).

1.2. Significance of the study

According to Locke, Silverman and Spirduso (1998), the significance of the study seeks to describe the purpose of a study and how the study will contribute to the research world in an attempt to improve current practices. The purpose statement should provide a bird's eye-view, or synopsis, of the overall purpose of the study.

DuFour (1999) asserts that the principal's leadership is measured by the performance of the school with regard to learner achievement. Primary schooling is the foundation and bedrock in learner achievement. Unfortunately, the focus nationally is mainly on Grade 12 results, with little attention on the performance in primary schools. In essence, the Grade 12 results are the reflection of the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools. So far, the national Grade 12 performance has not been satisfactory, and in response to this concern, the study sought to explore the instructional leadership role of primary school principals in ensuring learner achievement.

This study was influenced by the performance of the learners as reflected in the SE (DoE, 2008) and the ANA (DoE, 2009) which were conducted nationally in both the Foundation and Intermediate phases. The findings in both reports revealed poor learner performance in reading, writing and numeracy. Though the Grade 12 results are used as a measuring stick to assess the overall success of the education system, this study focuses on primary schooling as it is the foundation level in the education system. Nowadays, educationists are starting to question the foundation that is laid in primary schools and how it influences the Grade 12 academic results. Through this study, the researcher intended to investigate the practices of primary school principals as instructional leaders and the implications for learner achievement.

The findings of this study may be useful to policymakers so as to inform in-service training for principals on instructional leadership, as recommended by Mbatha (2004) and Mthombeni (2004). Also, the participants may use the opportunity as a learning curve to reflect on their practices as instructional leaders and improve their practices as they perform as instructional leaders in order to enhance learner achievement.

1.3. Problem statement

The national performance for the Grade 12 learners over the past three years has been 62.5 in 2008; 60.6 in 2009 and 67.8 in 2010 (DoE, 2011). Though the performance seems to have improved in 2010, educationists began to question the quality of education provided in lower classes and how it impacts on Grade 12 learner performance. Several studies were conducted internationally to measure the performance of the South African learners compared with learners in other countries.

With regard to international learning achievement assessments, the studies conducted include The Monitoring Learner Achievement (MLA) Project (1999), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) (1995, 1999, 2003) and Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEC) (2000). The findings indicated that the South African learners perform poorly compared with learners in other countries. The quality and outcomes are deteriorating, and the standards of student learning are not improving as they should be (Department of Education, 2007).

South Africa has shown to be performing very poorly compared with other countries with similar socio-economic standards, and this has prompted many questions as the South African government is pumping in more money in education than most other countries. This has raised many questions about the quality of education provided in primary schools as many learners prove not to be able to compute, read or write in the language of learning and teaching.

1.4. Why this study

International tests such as the MLA (1999), TIMSS (1999), PIRLS (2006) and SAQMEC (2000) indicate that South African children perform exceptionally

poorly compared with children in other countries that took part in the studies (HSRC, 2005).

The Department of Education (2007) also confirms that the outcomes are deteriorating and the standards of student learning are not improving. The MLA project was conducted in several African countries in 1999 and measured the competencies of Grade 4 learners in numeracy, literacy and life skills. South Africa's performance in all three areas indicated poor performance - of the 12 participating countries, South Africa scored the lowest average in numeracy, the fifth lowest in literacy, and the third lowest in life skills (Strauss, Plekker, Strauss and Van der Linde, 1999).

Table 1-1 MLA percentage average scores for numeracy, literacy and life skills, 1999

	Numeracy average	Literacy average	Life skills average
Botswana	51.0	48.0	56.0
Madagascar	43.7	54.7	72.1
Malawi	43.0	35.0	77.0
Mali	43.6	51.8	56.9
Mauritius	58.5	61.0	58.0
Morocco	56.4	67.6	62.3
Niger	37.3	41.1	44.7
Senegal	39.7	48.9	45.7
South Africa	**30.2**	**48.1**	**47.1**
Tunisia	60.4	77.9	74.7
Uganda	49.3	58.7	66.8
Zambia	36.0	43.0	51.0

Source: Strauss et al., 1999

The TIMSS studies measured Grade 8 learning achievement in mathematics and science in several countries in 1995, 1999 and 2003. In both the 1999 and 2003 TIMSS studies, South Africa's performances were very low (HSRC, 2005). Learners attained lower average test scores in both mathematics and science than all other participating countries, including other African countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and Botswana (HSRC, 2005).

Table 1-2 Average Score in the TIMSS 1999 and TIMSS 2003 Grade 8 Mathematics and Science Achievement Tests

	Mathematics	Science
TIMSS 1999		
SA average score	275	243
International average score	487	488
TIMSS 2003		
SA average score	264	244
International average score	467	474

Source: HSRC, 2005

In the 2006 PIRLS rating for Grade 4 and 5 reading literacy, South Africa scored last out of all 45 education systems (Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman and Archer 2007). The Russian Federation, followed by Hong Kong, were the top performing countries, with average scores close to 600 (Howie et al., 2007). South African Grade 4 learners achieved an average score of 253 and the Grade 5 learners had an average score of 302 (Howie et al., 2007). While the difference between the Grade 4 and 5 scores indicated some progress in reading achievement from one Grade to the next, the scores are significantly below the international average score of 500, fixed for the reading literacy of Grade 4 learners internationally (Howie et al., 2007).

In the SAQMEC II for Grade 6 mathematics in 2000, South Africa scored 486, Kenya scored 563, Mozambique 530, Tanzania 522 and Uganda 506 (HSRC, 2005). South Africa scored low and still below the international average score. Some of the evaluation systems that the national Department of Education has embarked on include Systemic Evaluation (SE) and Annual National Assessment (ANA).

Systemic Evaluation is a process of measuring the effectiveness and performance of the education system within the country using Grades 3, 6 and 9 as benchmarks for the achievement in the Foundation, Intermediate and Senior phases respectively (DoE, 2001a).

According to the Department of Education (2001a):

> *'The main purpose of Systemic Evaluation is to benchmark performance and track the progress made towards the achievement of the transformational goals of the education system in respect to access, redress, equity and quality. In so doing, Systemic Evaluation aspires to promote and ensure accountability and thus gain the confidence of the public in education'.*

Two Grade 3 SE studies have been conducted in South Africa so far, one in 2001 and the other one in 2007, and the focus were on Literacy and Numeracy (DoE, 2008). Another SE was conducted in Grade 6 in 2004, and the focus was on languages, mathematics and natural sciences (DoE, 2008).

Table 1-3 SE Grade 3, 2001

Learning Programme	Percentage (2001)	Percentage (2007)
Literacy (Reading only)	30	36
Numeracy	30	35

Source: DoE, 2003c

The 2001 scores for Grade 3 learners were further divided as follows:

Table 1-4 SE Grade 3, 2001 sub-division

Learning Programme	Average score
Literacy	54%
Listening comprehension	68%
Reading comprehension	39%
Numeracy	30%
Life skills	54%

Source: DoE, 2003c.

Although there has been a slight improvement in Grade 3 results between 2001 and 2007, the report still revealed that most learners struggle to read and write and their numeracy skills are not well developed (DoE, 2008).

The following diagram indicates the performance in Grade 6.

Table 1-5 SE Grade 6, 2004

Learning programme	Average score
Language	38%
Mathematics	27%
Natural Sciences	41%

Source: DoE, 2005b.

The problem of poor performance also surfaced in the Grade 6 results, and the report reflects that the learners' language and mathematical skills are not well developed.

The Systemic Evaluation (SE) study has been reinforced by the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (DoE, 2008, 2009), which is a process of measuring the performance of the education system within the country using the foundation and intermediate phases as benchmarks for the achievement. In an attempt to improve the results in primary schools, the Department of Education has since introduced the Foundations for Learning (FFL) programme which is meant to run from 2008 to 2011.

The aim of the FFL programme is to improve the reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all learners in both the foundation and intermediate phases. The target of this new programme is to improve performance by no less than 50%, which implies an increase of 15-20% in four years (Government Gazette 30880, 2008). The following table indicates the ANA results for Grade 3 (2008, 2009) learners in Tshwane West district, Gauteng province (DoE, 2009).

Table 1-6 Comparison of ANA results in 2008 and 2009

	Levels	Numeracy (%)	Literacy (%)
2008	1	38	40
	2	24	21
	3	24	23
	4	14	16
2009			
	1	24.2	26.2
	2	28.1	18.8
	3	28.5	30.8
	4	20.0	24.6

Source: DoE: 2009

The findings from the different studies concur with the conclusion by Fleisch (2008:7) who states that 'the average Foundation Phase learner struggles with numeracy and can barely cope with the demands of learning to read and write'. This study focuses on the principals and their instructional leadership role within the school so as to enhance learner performance and achievement as mandated by Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008).

Though the principal takes the ultimate responsibility, there is a team to work with. The team comprises of the educators, parents, departmental officials and learners themselves who together should ensure that the school as a whole functions excellently and produces high achieving learners. The principal is characterised as a leader of instructional leaders, and is expected to lead the educators who are also instructional leaders.

A school is an organisation, and like all other organisations, the staff should work together and complement each other to achieve the set common goals (Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt, 2003).

In a school situation, the goal that has to be achieved is high learner achievement. Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), in enforcing team work within the school, highlights the roles of the master and senior teachers who are duly recognised, based on their expertise and experience. This simply implies that instructional leadership is not a 'one-man-show'; it is a shared responsibility. This was emphasised by the South African president, Mr. Zuma, when he announced that: 'Teachers must teach; learners must learn; parents must provide support to their children; government must create a conducive environment for learning and teaching' (Zuma, 2009).

Everyone has a role to play in ensuring effective schools that produce high achieving learners. The role of the principal in this regard dictates that the principal must ensure that all the school community members work together towards the achievement of the set goal.

1.5. Research question

According to Leedy (1993), the main question is broad and complex and provides a broader picture of the study itself and it gives birth to sub-questions. The sub-questions, on the other hand, are more workable, easy to deal with and are drawn from the main question. They make it easier to unpack, understand and respond to the main question.

1.5.1   Main question

What are the practices of primary school principals in Tshwane West district in Gauteng province in their role as instructional leaders in enhancing learner achievement?

1.5.2   Sub-questions

- How do principals understand their role as instructional leaders?

- How do principals fulfil their instructional leadership role?

- Which activities do principals as instructional leaders engage in so as to improve learner achievement?

1.6.   Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to explore the practices that primary school principals, as instructional leaders, need to engage in so as to enhance learner achievement. In an attempt to explore instructional leadership practices of primary school principals, the research investigated the principals' understanding of their role as instructional leaders and the activities that they embark on in fulfilling the role so as improve learner achievement.

Kruger (1999) asserts that principals struggle to provide guidance on instruction as they are not sure how to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching that is provided by the educators. According to Kruger (1999), principals resort to delegating the management of the curriculum to the deputies and heads of departments (Kruger, 1999).

With the introduction of Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), principals are to be held accountable for learner performance in their schools, which means that they need to provide leadership that will ensure effective teaching and learning in the schools.

Ruebling et al. (2004:1) support the statement in Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) by stating that: 'Leaders must take responsibility and be held accountable for poor results. Different leadership practices must be instituted'.

Studies such as SE (DoE, 2001, 2007); ANA (DoE, 2008, 2009); TIMSS (1999) and SAQMEC (2000) revealed that most learners in the primary schools are unable to express themselves in the language of learning and teaching; which makes it difficult for them to read and interpret questions in the question papers (HSRC, 2005). Learners also struggle to count and do basic numeracy activities. This research seeks to explore the practices that principals need to engage in towards improving the learners' reading, writing and numeracy abilities for increased learner achievement.

1.7. *Conceptual framework*

Some researchers view instructional leadership as a role of the principal alone whereas others view it as a responsibility of a team in the school. Researchers such as Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) characterise the principal as the 'chief learning officer' who bears the responsibility of the school's performance. Ruebling et al. (2004:1) support the argument, and further state that the principal is the one who should be held accountable for the school's performance.

From the South African perspective, Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) states that principals should be held accountable for the quality of instruction offered within the school.

Though principals have a team of educators that work together with them, they need to ensure that they provide the professional direction that will lead the school to achieve optimally. Furthermore, King (2002:61-63) and Elmore (2000:15) view instructional leadership as distributive across the school community. Glickman (1989:6) further describes the principal as the 'leader of instructional leaders'.

This simply means that educators are also perceived as instructional leaders in their own right, and instructional leadership within the school is shared among all educators based on their expertise, competence and experience. Teamwork among educators is important in ensuring learner achievement.

This is also reflected in the Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), which acknowledges the potential and competencies of individual educators, and further encourages that they be utilised formally and optimally in order to enhance performance within the school. Marks and Printy (2003:377) describe shared instructional leadership as the one that seeks an active collaboration of the principal and all educators on 'curriculum, instruction and assessment'.

Instructional leadership is grounded on the principles of team work and organisational theory. According to Dean (1996:6), a team is a group of people who feel energised by their respective abilities to work together in order to achieve a common goal. Blasé and Blasé (2000) further contend that collaboration among educators is essential towards effective teaching and learning. This notion is affirmed by Squires and Bullock (1999) who state that schools that have effective curriculum teams perform better academically than those with no curriculum teams.

Lambert (2002:37) concurs with King (2002:61-63), and reports that instructional leadership is everyone's work and not the principal's alone. Furthermore, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001)

defines instructional leadership as 'leading learning communities'. All educators are therefore expected to take responsibility of their own professional development and instructional improvement. Educators rely on one another for support and advice. This is evident in the principle of instructional leadership which seeks of the principal to be a 'leader of instructional leaders'; that is, the principal is the leader of the instruction programme where educators are leaders themselves. Educators need to work collaboratively as a team to ensure the highest level of performance and achievement in the school.

A school in the South African context comprises the school management team (SMT) which is made up of the principal, deputy principal(s) and head(s) of department(s). Curriculum management and monitoring is shared amongst all members of the SMT, and the heads of departments report to the deputy principals, who in turn report to the principal with regard to instruction within the school.

Heads of the departments are regarded as the experts in the subjects that they lead and they are content specific. They form part of the educator's Development Support Group (DSG) as specified in Resolution 8 of 2003 (DoE, 2003). The DSG is the one that provides development, support and guidance to a particular educator in terms of curriculum delivery and instruction. The deputy principals are there to support the principals and to act on behalf of the principals in their absence.

In addition to the structure of the SMT, as acknowledged in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (DoE, 1999), Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) also recognises the senior and master teachers as those educators who also have the necessary expertise and experience in particular subjects. Together with the senior and master teachers, the whole SMT becomes responsible for the academic performance of the school.

According to Zuma (2009), the responsibility for the school to perform is not just limited to the educators and the principal, it includes parents who must provide support to their children and learners who must focus on learning and doing what is asked of them by their educators. However, Resolution 1 2008 (DoE, 2008) emphasises that although the responsibility might be shared among different stakeholders, the accountability remains that of the principal to ensure that the learners achieve optimally.

The seven steps regarding the principal's tasks towards effective instructional leadership, as presented by McEwan (2003:19-21), are as follows:

1.   Establish, implement and achieve academic standards:

In order for the school to achieve academic standards, the school should, under the leadership of a principal, set goals that are owned and implemented by all staff members (Khuzwayo, 2005). Standards are there to coerce people into performing as expected, and to contribute to the coherent academic practices needed to achieve the set standards. According to Cross and Rice (2000), the academic standards should clearly indicate how well learners should perform in terms of the expected knowledge and skills with regard to the subject content. Furthermore, a successful principal should put the academic standards as the first priority and be able to motivate staff to achieve the set standards. Jamentz (in Lashway, 2002) further contends that principals should ensure that lesson plans and assessment are aligned with the predetermined standards.

For McEwan (2003), there are two ways in which academic standards can be implemented and achieved. Firstly, the principal needs to establish teams of educators and provide the necessary time to solve the grade and departmental challenges relating to instruction and academic performance.

Secondly, the principal needs to set team, grade, departmental, and school-wide targets/goals and provide guidance and support in achieving them. The principal who has high expectations for the educators and learners is able to draw high performance from them.

2.   The principal as an instructional resource:

For the principals to be effective instructional resources for the staff, they need to be like a 'genius-in-a-bottle' who will serve as a reference for all staff members and also solve the frustrating and difficult instructional problems that the staff experience (McEwan, 2003:33). In performing the role as instructional resources, the principals should be lifelong learners and encourage the staff to do likewise (McEwan, 2003).

Gupton (2003) is in accord with this view and further argues that principals need to be supportive and view challenges as opportunities that they can utilise to accomplish the school goals despite all the barriers that the school might encounter. According to Bamberg and Andrews (in Chell, 1991), effective instructional resources acquire and provide resources needed to attain the school's goals; that is, materials, information and opportunity. Without the necessary resources, the school cannot attain its goals and targets.

3.   Create a school culture and climate conducive to learning:

Sterling and Davidoff (2000) describe school culture as a network of attitudes and behaviours that direct how people within the school think and perform. Van der Westhuizen (1991) affirms this view and postulates that the school culture is important in that it influences the working life of both educators and learners. Principals are therefore expected to lead by example and act within the predetermined school culture.

Glatthorn (in Gupton, 2003) lists five beliefs that are essential to a school culture that enhances learner achievement, namely, i) the school as a cooperative community; ii) belief in common goals; iii) school improvement can be achieved through problem-solving orientation; iv) all those in the school – administrators, educators and learners - can achieve; and v) instruction is their highest priority. These beliefs need to be nurtured and upheld in creating a school culture that enhances learner achievement.

4.   Communicate the vision and mission of the school:

McEwan (2003) describes vision as a driving force reflecting the future of the organisation, and the mission as the direction emerging from the vision to direct the day-to-day activities of the school. The principal should ensure that the vision of the school is shared and owned by all stakeholders. For Sergiovanni and Starratt (1996), a communicated and shared vision as well as commitment propels the school community to focus its energies to the purpose and the accomplishment of the school's goals.

The core business of the school is academic achievement, and Weller and Hartely (1994:25) argue that schools that are improving in learner achievement have a vision and mission statement that place curricular and instructional goals at the centre of their operation.

5.   Set high expectations for the staff and for yourself:

As revealed by Gupton (2003), high expectations are an essential building block towards a positive school culture that promotes quality teaching and learning. McEwan (2003:83) describes setting of high expectations as 'knowing what a good one looks like'. Setting high expectations elicits high performance from educators and learners.

High expectations are a result of a team and a learning community that is committed to the vision, mission and enhanced learner achievement. McEwan (2003:93-99) enlists seven indicators that enhance high expectations from the staff and oneself as follows:

- Assist educators in setting and reaching professional and personal goals related to the improvement of instruction, learner achievement and professional development;

- Make regular classroom observation in all classrooms both informally and formally;

- Engage in planning of classroom observations;

- Engage in post-observation conferences that focus on the improvement of instruction;

- Provide thorough defensible and insightful evaluations, making recommendations for personal and professional growth goals according to individual needs;

- Engage in direct teaching in the classroom; and

- Hold high expectations for personal instructional leadership behaviour, regularly solicit feedback (both formal and informal) from staff members regarding instructional leadership abilities, and use such feedback to set yearly performance goals.

Cotton (2003) concurs with McEwan (2003:93-99) and mentions that 'The principal's expression of high expectation for student is part of the vision that guides high-achieving schools and is a critical component in its own right'.

According to Rossouw (1990), the learners' academic achievement is directly proportional to the academic expectations that educators have for learners.

6.   Develop educator leaders/teamwork:

Glickman (1989:6) explains that instructional leadership is not the sole responsibility of the principal; in fact, the principal is the 'leader of instructional leaders'. The principal needs to identify and tap into the individual potential and utilise it to benefit the team, school and learners.

In order for educators to function as leaders, McEwan (2003:104) suggests that they should, 'train and provide staff development for other educators; coach and mentor other educators; develop and write the curriculum; and be decision-makers and leaders of school making teams and serve as members of teams, committees, tasks forces or quality circles'.

Squires and Bullock (1999) affirm this view and state that schools that have effective curriculum teams perform better academically than those schools with no curriculum teams.

7.   Establish and maintain positive relationships with students, staff and parents:

For principals to establish and maintain positive relationships with all school community members, they need to share the vision and goals of the school with them. According to Sergiovanni and Starratt (1996), a communicated and shared vision propels the school community to focus its energies on the purpose and accomplishment of the school's goals.

According to Zuma (2009), learners, educators and parents all have a role to play in ensuring enhanced learner achievement in schools.

The principal should ensure that all stakeholders understand their roles, and perform in accordance with the vision and goals of the school. Regular meetings and feedback to stakeholders can be used to improve and maintain relationships with the school.

1.8. Literature study

According to Gay (1992), a literature study refers to the systematic identification and analysis of documents that contain all the relevant information needed to conduct the study.

Researchers such as Bartlett (2008); Budhal (2000); Dhlamini (2008); Khuzwayo (2005); Kwinda (2002); Lethoko (1999); Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005); Mbatha (2004) and Nemukula (2002) have conducted extensive studies on the effect of instructional leadership of a principal on learner performance, school effectiveness and the culture of teaching and learning. Again, Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Williams and Edward (2006) have explored the educators' perspectives on principals' characteristics for instructional leadership. These researches have shown conflicting findings on the effect of instructional leadership with regard to learner achievement. Some researches depicted an insignificant correlation between the principal's leadership behaviours and learner achievement; whereas others attest that the principal's leadership has a positive influence on learner achievement.

Other researchers such as Gaziel (2007) state that although the principal's leadership is pivotal in improving learner achievement, there is vagueness in terms of the specific behaviours that directly influence achievement. This conclusion is supported by Marzano et al. (2005) and Carmon (2009) who suggest that the principal's leadership behaviours are not the sole reasons that affect achievement, but there are specific leadership practices that do so.

This study therefore sought to uncover the specific leadership practices that positively affect learner achievement.

1.8.1   Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership encompasses 'those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning' (De Bevoice, 1984:15) and comprises the following roles, as outlined by McEwan (2003): a resource provider; an instructional resource; a communicator; and a visible presence.

Instructional leadership has proven to have a positive effect on a number of aspects besides learner achievement, as alluded to by Mbatha (2004). For instance, according to Mthombeni (2004) and Dhlamini (2008), instructional leadership can influence academic performance and the quality of education in a school. Furthermore, Nemukula (2002) attests that instructional leadership also influences the culture of teaching and learning, which ultimately results in improved learner achievement.

In support to Glickman (1989), Motaboli (2008) asserts that instructional leadership is not the responsibility of the principal alone. Hallinger (1989) confirms the argument and further talks about leadership teams that help the principal to carry out the critical functions of curriculum and instruction. Motaboli (2008) describes the different levels of instructional leaders within the school, starting from the principal, the head of the department and the educator. Each educator, irrespective of their position, is seen also an instructional leader and should ensure that instruction in the school results in improved learner achievement.

1.9. Empirical research

Empirical research is described as the first hand collection of data about the research problem, and analysing and interpreting it in order to address the problem that is being investigated (Wallen and Fraenkel, 1997; Mouton, 2001). The aim of this study was to explore the practices that primary school principals, as instructional leaders, embark on in order to enhance learner achievement.

Six schools in the Tshwane West district of Gauteng Department of Education (DoE) were therefore used as the sample. The six schools were sampled purposively to include three that performed excellently, and three that performed poorly in the SE (DoE, 2007) and ANA evaluations (DoE, 2009). Participants were given questionnaires to complete individually, followed by focus group interviews. The questions were based on the four dimensions; namely, resource provider; instructional resource; communicator; and visible presence as described by McEwan (2003), and they attempted to distinguish the practices that principals from excellently performing schools do differently to those of poorly performing schools.

Data were then analysed, following the adapted Tesch's approach (as cited by de Vos and Fouche, 1998) of data analysis. The findings confirmed that there is a direct relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement. Furthermore, the practices that make the difference include the principal promoting teamwork and providing instructional support to educators and learners.

1.10. Research design

The following section attempts to outline the research design that the researcher used in collecting the data for the research.

According to Leedy (1993) and Mouton (2001), a research design refers to the plan that the researcher follows to approach the research problem.

1.10.1   Research method

Sprinthall, Schmutte and Sirois (1991) state that the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods is in the nature of data collection techniques and the actual data collected. According to Creswell (2008), a quantitative research it the one that involves quantifiable data which is usually analysed statistically. On the other hand, a qualitative research is a naturalistic enquiry which involves the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to explore the flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

In line with the definitions of quantitative and qualitative research methods as described above, the researcher opted for the qualitative research method since the researcher needed to explore the attitudes and feelings of the participants in the study. The choice is supported by Creswell (2008) who explains that the researcher in the qualitative research asks broad and general questions which the participants respond to in words as they express their views. According to Creswell (1994), a qualitative research is suitable for this study as it focused on obtaining textual data, based on the perspectives and views of the participants.

Hoberg (1999) states that qualitative research is useful when the researcher intends to get a proper understanding about human phenomena and to investigate the meaning that the people who are implied in the research attach to the research question, as it is the case in this study. The researcher in this study aimed to explore the practices of the principals based on how they construct meaning and understanding in their interactions and context. In line with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), the researcher in this study used the interpretivist paradigm which allows the researcher to understand data based on how the participants understand and interpret their world.

The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire and an interview design, as they allowed for the identification of the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of individuals pertaining to the research problem (Creswell, 2008). Again, in collecting the data, the researcher used the semi-structured questionnaire followed by a group interview which, according to Cohen et al. (2000), allows for participants to freely express their views in writing, and verbally in responding to the questions posed.

1.11. Demarcation of study

The researcher should choose a site which is accessible in terms of time, mobility, skills and resources (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). The researcher in this study chose six schools in Tshwane West district office in the Gauteng Department of Education. The schools were accessible to the researcher since the researcher works in the same district in which the schools are situated.

The learners in the sampled schools have similar socio-economic status because all of the schools belong to Quintile 1 category, which comprises schools that receive more funding from the Department of Education because learners in those schools come from poverty-stricken families. Schools were sampled from the areas of Winterveldt, Mabopane, Soshanguve and Mabopane. The researcher selected three schools that performed excellently (above 70%) and three that performed poorly (less than 30%) in the Systemic Evaluation and Annual National Assessment studies for 2007 and 2009 respectively. .

1.12. Clarification of concepts

1.12.1 Management vs. leadership

Some researchers make a distinction between management and leadership, and others say they are intertwined and cannot be separated (Witziers et al., 2010).

For a better understanding of this study, a clear distinction has to be made between management and leadership. According to Drucker (2007:1) and Van Deventer and Kruger (2003), management is about 'doing things right' while leadership is about 'doing the right things'.

Kroon (1996), Smit and Cronjé (1998) and Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) define management as a process of planning, organising, leading/activating and controlling the activities of organisational members, as well as ensuring efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve the set organisational goals. Clarke (1996) summarises the responsibilities and tasks of management and leadership as planning and budgeting; organising and staffing; controlling and problem solving; as well as ensuring predictability and order.

Leadership on the other hand, is a process of influencing members of the organisation to act in a way that will enable achievement of the set organisational goals (Dimmock, 2000; Ivancevich and Matteson, 2002; McEwan, 2000; Stoner et al., 1995; Van de Westhuizen, 1991). Marzano (2003) sees leadership as the single most important aspect in school reform, and claims that it is vital in maintaining school improvement. According to this author, the tasks related to leadership are: being a visionary to establish direction; strategising and planning to achieve the vision; aligning with people by marketing and selling the vision and strategy; and motivating and inspiring

people so as to instil energy and commitment to drive the purpose (Marzano, 2003).

The function of a school principal, as prescribed in the Personnel Administration Measures (DoE, 1999) is to provide leadership and management of activities within the school. In order to achieve the vision of the school, i.e. effective teaching and learning, principals need to balance their roles as managers and leaders. Though the two functions are both essential in a school environment, this paper only focused on leadership, as it is linked to learner achievement.

In support of this statement, Chirichello (2004) also mentions that principals need to shift their focus from management duties to leadership duties, with great emphasis on learner achievement.

As mentioned by DuFour (1999), the instructional leadership role of the principal is now seen as important within the education system. According to O'Neill, Fry, Hill and Bottoms (2003:8), 'the clarion call today is for adept instructional leaders'. The emerging emphasis of instructional leadership triggered the interest of researchers on, amongst others, the actual practices that define this role; hence this study.

1.12.2 *Instructional leadership*

According to Redding (2006), the concept of instructional leadership re-surfaced in the 1990s with the increased demand of accountability from the education officials. Sergiovanni (1995) argues that instructional leadership became prominent as school effectiveness took a high level position in the school system. Instructional leadership is perceived as the behaviours and actions taken by the principal so as to enhance learner achievement and growth (De Bevoice, 1984; Budhal, 2000; Donmoyer and Wagstaff 1990; Leithwood, 1994, 1999; Mbatha, 2004; Van De Grift, 1993).

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The definition adopted in this paper is that instructional leadership means the behaviour of, and actions taken by, the principal towards ensuring effective teaching and learning, as well as the development and achievement of all learners. In doing so, the principal makes sure that the environment is conducive and positive for effective performance by educators and learners.

McEwan (2003) summarises instructional leadership according to the following four dimensions:

- Resource provider – being able to obtain all the necessary resources to enable the school to function optimally.

- Instructional resource – being able to provide the necessary guidance and support pertaining to instruction.

- Communicator – being able to share the school's vision and goals with all stakeholders and also ensuring that they are attained.

- Visible presence – being able to be 'everywhere at all times' to provide guidance and support.

1.13. *Plan of study*

Chapter 1 covered the introduction to the study, problem statement, aim of the research, conceptual framework, literature study, empirical research, research design, demarcation of the study and plan of the study.

Chapter 2 entails the literature study of previous researches that are relevant to the research problem and the legal imperatives that relate to the study. It also deals with the factors that influenced the study, both internationally and nationally.

Chapter 3 deals with the research method, design and techniques; site setting and criteria; arrangement for access to schools; population and sampling; trustworthiness and credibility; role of the researcher; delimitations; ethical considerations; data collection; and data analysis.

Chapter 4 comprises the data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5 addresses the summary of the previous chapters, findings from the literature study and empirical study, summary of findings, implications of the study, summary of the study, limitations of the study, recommendations, suggestion for future study and concluding remarks.

1.14. Conclusion

This chapter provided the overview of the study and its purpose. The next chapter outlines the literature study of other researches, and the conclusions drawn from them about the research problem that the researcher aimed to explore.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The role of the principal seems to have evolved full circle. According to Sergiovanni (1995, in Bartlett, 2008), in the early 20th century the principal was perceived as the lead instructional person responsible for instructing learners and maintaining discipline and order in the school. Brooks and Miles (in Bartlett, 2008) state that during the 1920s and 1930s, the role of the principal changed towards a management role due to the influence of the business world, thereby making its realm in the education system. This role further continued in the 1950s to the 1980s where the principal was seen as a human resource agent, while also dealing with budgets and discipline (Sergiovanni, 1995).

The role of the principal as an instructional leader re-emerged in the 1990s, and Redding (2006) attests that the re-emergence is related to the increased accountability from the federal, state and local governments of the United States of America. DuFour (1999) also asserts that the ultimate test for any principal's leadership is results in learner achievement. In America, accountability by principals was enforced to address the prescripts of 'No Child Left Behind' which was introduced in 2002 after an act was promulgated in 2001 to ensure that learner achievement was increased (Bartlett, 2008:1).

In South Africa, instructional leadership was introduced in section 16A of the South African Schools Act, (Republic of South Africa, 1996) as the emphasis on school effectiveness became more prominent and more accountability was placed on the principal to ensure improved learner performance. The importance of instructional leadership is also mentioned in Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), which states that the principal is responsible to ensure effective curriculum delivery and management towards improved learner achievement.

In support of the importance of the principal's instructional leadership, O'Neill, Fry, Hill and Bottoms (2003: 8) state that, 'The clarion call today is for adept instructional leaders, not mere building managers'.

A number of research studies have been conducted on the concept of instructional leadership and the role of school principals as instructional leaders. Researchers such as Bartlett (2008), Budhal (2000), Cotton (2003), Dhlamini (2008), Gaziel (2007), Glickman, (1989), Hallinger and Heck (1998), Heck (1992), Heck and Marcoulides (1993), Khuzwayo (2005), Kwinda (2002), Lethoko (1999), Marzano et al. (2005), Mbatha (2004), Mthombeni (2004), Nemukula (2002) and Neetles (2005) have conducted extensive studies on the implication of instructional leadership of a principal on learner achievement, the quality of education, the culture of teaching and learning, and school effectiveness. Furthermore, Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Williams and Edward (2006) have explored the educator's perspective on the principal's characteristics for instructional leadership. These findings are discussed in detail in the following section.

Researchers such as Marzano et al. (2005) and Williams and Edward (2006:91) showed an insignificant correlation between the principal's leadership behaviours and learner achievement.

On the other hand, international researchers such as Cotton (2003), Fullan (1991), Hallinger and Heck (1996) and Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) attest that instructional leadership helps to create a school where learners continue to learn and continuous learner progress is achieved. The argument is supported nationally by Mthombeni (2004) and Dhlamini (2008) who assert that instructional leadership is essential to learner achievement. According to Crawford (1998:8), 'The nation cannot attain excellence in education without effective school leadership'.

2.1.1 Management vs. leadership

While other scholars make a distinction between management and leadership, others say they are intertwined and cannot be separated (Witziers, Bosker and Kruger, 2010:398-425). According to Drucker (2007:1), management is about 'doing things right' while leadership is about 'doing the right things'. This study needed to determine the correct practices that have to be performed by principals as instructional leaders, not managers; in order to improve learner achievement and this concept aligns well with Drucker's (2007) definition of leadership. So for a better understanding of this study, a clear distinction has to be made between management and leadership in order to avoid confusion.

2.1.2 Management defined

Kroon (1996) and Smit and Cronjé (1998) view management as a process of planning, organising, leading/activating and controlling the activities of organisational members as well as ensuring efficient utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve the set organisational goals. Kroon (1996) further mentions that the six additional management functions embedded within this role are communication, motivation, coordination, disciplining, delegating, decision-making, and conflict management.

However, principals should not underestimate the important of management and its effect on learner achievement (Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). A manager should engage in managing teaching and learning, instructional time, finances, human resources, teaching and learning materials, information resources, and external and community relations (Moloi, 2007; De Beer, Rossouw, Moolman and Labuschagne, 1998; Duke, 1987).

2.1.3 Leadership defined

Leadership, on the other hand, is the process of influencing, directing and motivating organisational members to act in a way that will enable the attainment of the set organisational goals (Dimmock, 2000; Ivancevich and Matteson, 2002; McEwan, 2000; Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 1995; Van de Westhuizen, 1991). For Bush and Glover (2003), leadership is a process of getting things done through people with the emphasis on relations, communication and motivation. Marzano (2003) sees leadership as the single most important aspect in school reform and states that it is vital in maintaining school improvement.

Clarke (1996) summarises the responsibilities and tasks of leadership as follows:

- Providing vision – a leader is expected to establish direction for the organisation. All activities in the organisation should be aligned with the broad vision of the organisation and should be geared towards achieving the set vision and goals.

- Providing strategy – After the vision has been set and agreed upon, the leader should then plan and strategise on how to utilise the available resources optimally so as to attain the vision. The strategy that the leader plans should also be shared with all stakeholders.

- Aligning with people – It is the responsibility of the leader to market and sell the vision and strategy of the organisation to the people within and without the organisation for the organisational progress and success. Again, the leader should allocate duties to the staff accordingly, considering their strengths and weaknesses, so as to get the best out of them in terms of performance.

- Motivating and inspiring – In order for people to work optimally and effectively, they need to be motivated and inspired. The leader should create the energy and commitment to drive the purpose and goals of the organisation.

Different contexts call for different leadership styles and models. According to Bush (2007:394), the models are 'broad compilations of the main theories of educational leadership and management' where theories of educational leadership and management reflect the different ways in which behaviours in schools are understood and interpreted.

A leader should be able to select an appropriate leadership model based on the situation that is being presented. Bush (2007) highlights the different leadership models as: i) managerial; ii) participative; iii) transformational; iv) transactional; v) post-modern; vi) contingency; vii) moral; and viii) instructional. For the sake of this study, only an instructional leadership model is discussed.

2.1.4   Instructional leadership model

The instructional leadership model is 'strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers as well as student growth' (Southworth, 2002:79). The instructional leadership model is important because it targets the core business of the school, which is teaching and learning.

However, this model underestimates other aspects of the school such as sport, socialisation, student welfare and self esteem (Bush, 2003). A learner in a school has to be developed holistically, and according to Bush (2003) instructional leadership neglects other aspects of development if the focus remains on teaching and learning.

The model is grounded on the notion that the main reason for school existence is teaching and learning, and improved learner achievement. In line with Southworth (2002:79), for schools to improve on learner achievement, they need to put instructional leadership at the forefront.

The researcher in this study aimed at exploring the implications of the practices of the primary school principals as instructional leaders on learner achievement. Therefore, following from the above discussion of the different leadership models, this study focused more on the **instructional leadership model** as it forms the pivot of the study.

Doyle and Rice (2002:49) echo that, 'Although researchers stress the importance of the principal as an instructional leader, the consensus in the literature is that principals spend most of their time dealing with managerial issues'. Miller (2001) concurs, and further notes that the typical high school principal works 62 hours per week with the vast majority spent on managerial issues, of which at least eight hours are spent on dealing with parents' concerns alone. In a recent research study conducted by Goodwin, Cunningham and Childress (2003:28), the conclusion is that: 'Despite the principals' emphasis on instructional leadership, they also identified a dichotomy between effective leadership and efficient management'.

In supporting the dual role of the principal as a manager and a leader, Dubrin (1995:03) voices that 'A leader must also be a manager, just as a manager must also be a leader'. This notion is confirmed by Southworth and Doughty (2006) who contend that to be effective; principals need to have both good managerial and leadership skills. Other researchers such as Gaziel (2007) state that although the principal's leadership is pivotal in improving learner achievement, there is vagueness in terms of the specific behaviours that directly influence achievement.

This notion is supported by Marzano et al. (2005:38) who suggest that the principal's leadership behaviours are not the sole reasons affecting learner achievement, but that there are specific leadership practices that do so. This study therefore sought to uncover the specific leadership practices that impact positively on learner achievement.

2.2.   Instructional leadership

Southworth (2002) views instructional leadership as an important factor since it focuses on **teaching and learning**. On the other hand, Bush (2003) perceives instructional leadership as compromising the holistic development of learners as it only focuses on teaching and learning. These different arguments are separately supported by different researchers who also find and conclude differently with regard to the relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement. The following paragraphs depict the conflicting conclusions or discourse with regard to the extent of the impact of the principal's leadership behaviours and practices on learner achievement.

Bartlett (2008) investigated the effects of the principal's instructional leadership practices on the academic achievement of learners. The findings were that there is not enough evidence to conclude that a relationship exists. Suskavrevic and Blake (1999), in their study to explore if pervasive and sustained learning is more likely to occur in schools with strong instructional leadership, concur with Bartlett (2008) and they found out that there is actually no significant correlation between instructional leadership and learner achievement. There was no significant difference between the scores of learners in schools with strong instructional leadership and those with poor instructional leadership (Bartlett, 2008). Hallinger, Bickman and Davis (1996) further mention that the principal's leadership can have an indirect effect on school effectiveness.

Again, Williams and Edward (2006) point out that the leadership behaviour of the principal may have less impact on learner achievement than teachers', parents' and learners' behaviours. Marzano et al. (2005) report a weak correlation between the principal's behaviour and learner achievement. In responding to this weak correlation, as highlighted by Marzano et al. (2005:32), Crawford (1998) further reports that there could be other factors that impact on learner achievement besides the principal's leadership and mention aspects such as recruiting and retaining of staff members.

According to Darling-Hammond (2000), the effectiveness of the classroom, teacher preparation, qualifications and educators' morale have great influence on learner achievement. The Tennessee's 'Project Star' study by Mosteller (1995) reveales that class size has a tremendous effect on learner achievement. Learners in small classes perform better than learners in regular classes. Carmon (2009) also states that the principal's leadership is not the sole reason for learner achievement.

Principals are less likely to engage in activities that relate to instruction and more likely to engage in activities that relate to managing the school facilities, maintaining building security, enforcing school rules and attending district meetings (LaPointe and Davis, 2006). This challenge prompted Darling-Hammond (1998:9) to advocate for restructuring of the current principals' training programmes to incorporate effective instructional leadership strategies so that principals can be well capacitated to handle the demands of their role as instructional leaders.

Lashway (2002), Flath (1989) and Fullan (1991) claim that there has not been sufficient training for principals on instructional leadership as they do not demonstrate sufficient instructional leadership skills, and further, there is not enough time to execute the tasks as embedded within the said role.

Lashway (2002) cites that only a few principals demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of instructional leadership. Kwinda (2002) concluded in her study that principals do not have sufficient understanding of their role as instructional leaders, which makes it difficult for them to perform the role effectively.

Principals therefore tend to delegate the curriculum and instruction management to the deputy principals and heads of departments because they are unsure of how to intervene and advise educators on instruction, and they also find it difficult to cope with their workload (Fink and Resnick, 1999:3; Haughey and MacElwain, 1992; Heck, 1992). The findings are supported by Dhlamini (2008), Khuzwayo (2005) and Mbatha (2004) who confirm that principals need to be trained on instructional leadership.

The principals' job description, as mentioned in the PAM document (DoE, 1999) is silent on curriculum management, and this role is left for the deputies and the heads of the departments. Resolution 1 02 2008 (DoE, 2008), on the other hand, puts the function in the hands of the principals, but as mentioned above, principals are not sufficiently trained to handle this new role and this poses a serious challenge. Furthermore, their roles with regard to administration have not been reduced; instead the need for paperwork has increased with the developments and changes in the education system, which also hampers their functionality as instructional leaders.

Jacobson and Conway (1995) argue that instructional leadership is an added function, and they are supported by Rallis and Highsmith (1987) and LaPointe and Davis (2006) who question if the principal can be equally effective as a manager and an instructional leader. The argument is also established further by Budhal (2000) who states that the increased workload and the lack of additional time and resources make it more difficult for principals to meet their new role expectations.

The problem seems to be even more challenging in small schools, where administration work is equally demanding for the principals and they also have to be in class fulltime, due to low number of educators as determined by the school's post establishment.

Principals find themselves not able to be in class most of the time and instruction is compromised as a result. Fink and Resnick (1999) affirm the statement and go on to mention that principals tend to spend relatively little time in classrooms and even less analysing instruction with teachers. They also claim that this behaviour is aggravated by the fact that their training is mainly focused on administration, rather than on instruction and what transpires within the classroom.

In the South African context, there is no specific training for people to become principals. Principals are appointed as educators who are expected to teach as reflected in the PAM (DoE, 1999) document. To become a principal, a person has to be promoted into a post. As the top person in the hierarchy within the school, the principal has to ensure that administration; management and leadership are run in a way that will enable the school to function smoothly. As alluded to by Sergiovanni (1995), principals are therefore overwhelmed with cases relating to human resources, budgets and discipline. Principals have to welcome and attend to parent and community queries, make sure that the school has sufficient human resources that are qualified and can perform optimally, and also deal with both staff and learner discipline issues. As a result, principals find themselves bound to the office chair and spend less time on instructional issues.

Kruger (1999) and Phillips (2004) agree, and further attest that principals have to juggle their different roles of being a manager, administrator, instructional leader and curriculum leader. Principals are said to devote only one-tenth of their time to providing instructional leadership (Martin and Willower, 1981, as

cited in Murphy, 1990). Murphy (1990) further reports that the organisational context in which principals work, and the set of skills and expectations that go together with the role act as stumbling blocks to effective instructional leadership as principals are not competent enough to carry out the role.

These competing roles of being a manager and an instructional leader prompted Cross and Rice (2000), and DiPaolo and Tschannen-Moran (2003) to call for 'split' principal's roles; that is, the instructional principal and the management principal.

The instructional principal would be ultimately responsible for everything in the school but would primarily deal with instructional and curriculum issues, working with teacher teams, department heads, and others to improve instruction. The management principal would report and be responsible to the instructional principal but would be responsible for discipline, buildings, custodians, and parental involvement. In theory, the 'split principalship' would allow more time to be spent on instructional issues, while at the same time maintaining an orderly school.

According to Lashway (2002), instructional leadership became dominant in the 1980s and has recently re-emerged at the top of the leadership agenda as accountability and improved learner performance become prominent. Brookover and Lezotte (1982) further mention that the shift from management to instructional leadership is influenced mainly by the research that reveals that effective schools are those in which principals emphasise the importance of instructional leadership.

In terms of whether a relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner performance exists, Gary (1993) insists that a statistically significant relationship does exist. Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) and Williams and Edward (2006) are in accord with this view and highlight a

direct correlation between instructional leadership and instructional improvement in that **instructional leadership enhances learner achievement**. Effective instructional leadership yields high achieving schools (Dhlamini, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, 2001; Khuzwayo, 2005; Mbatha, 2004; Mthombeni, 2004).

Instructional leadership is a very important tool towards school discipline, effectiveness and improvement, as well as establishing and maintaining a positive culture of teaching and learning within the school (Budhal, 2000; Dhlamini, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Heck 1992; Heck and Marcoulides, 1993; Lalumbe, 1998; Lethoko, 1999; Masitsa 1995; Mthombeni: 2004).

Furthermore, instructional leadership has brought in an effective change in the classroom, and one of the behaviours of principals for effective or excellent schools is that they emphasise instructional leadership (Fink and Resnick, 1999; McEwan, 2000; Brookover and Lezotte, 1982; Prawat, 1993). According to McEwan (2000), one variable that always emerges when describing effective and excellent schools is instructional leadership. Hopkins (2001:16) also contends that instructional leadership is 'critical to the development and maintenance of an effective school' and that the domain of instructional leadership is the focus on learners' learning and achievement.

In the study conducted by Mbatha (2004:138) which aimed at investigating the relationship between the practices of instructional leadership of secondary schools and the academic achievement of learners, the researcher found that instructional leadership has a great impact on the learners' academic achievement. This finding is supported by Dhlamini (2008:105) who asserts that principals could improve the quality of teaching and learning through instructional leadership.

Furthermore, studies by Khuzwayo (2005) and Mthombeni (2004) deduce that instructional leadership is an aspect of increased learning and the achievement of academic standards. According to Murphy, Hallinger, Weil and Mitman (1983) and Murphy and Louis (1998), the principal is expected to be an instructional leader and protect instructional time in order to ensure improvement in learner achievement. The basic aim of the school's existence is teaching and learning, which makes instructional leadership central to the schooling system (Southworth, 2002). This statement implies that principals should take and practice instructional leadership seriously so as to enhance learner achievement.

The arguments presented above highlight that instructional leadership is important for improved results because it promotes a school environment that is orderly, disciplined and conducive for effective teaching and learning; and that the principal ensures that appropriate resources are provided.

Educators, whose principal is an instructional leader, are supported throughout, work as a team towards a shared vision, and the principal is there to give direction in all curriculum and instruction activities within the school. Instructional leaders do all in their power to protect teaching time by dealing with conflicts as they arise and making sure that the educators' and learners' morale is uplifted. Such a principal 'walks the factory floor', is visible, and is on top of instruction activities within the school. Ultimately, they take responsibility and accountability for the overall performance and success of the school.

From the above discussion, it is clear that researchers agree that instructional leadership is a factor towards learner achievement; the only question is the extent to which instructional leadership affects learner achievement and whether principals are equipped enough to deal with the challenging management duties as opposed to their role as instructional leaders.

2.2.1 What is Instructional leadership?

According to Lashway (2002), the concept of instructional leadership re-surfaced in the 1980s with the increased demands of accountability from the education officials. Concurring with Lashway (2002), Sergiovanni (1995) argues that instructional leadership became prominent as school effectiveness took a high level position in the school system.

There seem to be as many definitions of instructional leadership as there are authors who constructed them. The following are but just a few:

Instructional leadership is perceived as the behaviours and actions taken by the principal so as to enhance **learner achievement and growth** (De Bevoice, 1984; Budhal, 2000; Donmoyer and Wagstaff, 1990; Leithwood 1994, 1999; Mbatha, 2004; Van De Grift, 1993). These actions include the provision of resources, staff development and support, supervision and evaluation of instruction, protection of instruction time, and creation of an environment that is conducive for effective teaching and learning (Bartell, 1990; Blasé and Blasé, 2000; Boyd, 2002; Hopkins, 2001; Keefe and Jenkins, 1991; Seyfarth, 1999). According to Smith, Sparkes and Thurlow (2001), instructional leadership is the time the principal devotes to instruction, as opposed to administrative tasks, in order to provide direction to the process of teaching and learning at school.

The thread running through the above-mentioned definitions, and the definition adopted in this study, is that instructional leadership means the behaviour of, and actions taken by the principal towards ensuring effective teaching and learning, as well as the development and achievement of all learners. In doing so, the principal makes sure that the environment is conducive and positive for improved learner achievement in the school.

Implicit within this definition is that educators are empowered to perform their duties as expected, learners commit to learning, and at the same time the

principal provides the necessary resources, support and guidance to both educators and learners so that they can perform optimally.

2.2.2   *Instructional leadership and academic performance*

Mthombeni (2004) conducted research on the assessment of instructional leadership as an aspect to improve learner achievement. In line with Weller and Hartley (1994), Mthombeni (2004) postulates that instructional leadership is an essential aspect to learner achievement. Mthombeni (2004) further explains that instructional leadership consists of three fundamental factors; namely, staff development, vision and commitment, and educator and learner discipline:

Staff development

The research by Mthombeni (2004) reveals that educators view instructional leadership of principals as impacting positively on staff development. Educators also highlight that as instructional leaders, principals need to make sure that educators are developed and also supported in the classrooms, as this will promote effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Vision and commitment

From the research, Mthombeni (2004) concluded that vision and commitment are the instructional leadership behaviours that propel the performance of learners towards excellence. As an instructional leader, the principal is expected to make the vision a reality and ensure that it is communicated to all stakeholders. All stakeholders should commit to the vision of the school and ensure that all activities are geared towards its achievement.

Educator and learner discipline

The research by Mthombeni (2004) illustrates that principals who are instructional leaders need to inculcate discipline among educators and learners.

The research also states that educator and learner discipline promote high learner achievement as more time is spent on teaching and learning, rather than dealing with discipline issues which derail the progress of the school.

From the definition of instructional leadership as adopted in this study, the principal's actions and behaviours should be geared towards learner achievement, development and growth. With reference to the findings by Mthombeni (2004), as an instructional leader, the principal needs to ensure that the staff is well developed to teach effectively and can also handle curriculum changes as they happen. When the staff is well developed, they become confident in the teaching, which results in improved learner achievement. All activities within the school should support the achievement of the school's vision and the principal should make sure that all stakeholders, learners, educators and parents are committed to the set vision and goals.

If learners and educators are not well disciplined, the principal becomes inundated with handling disciplinary issues at the expense of curriculum instruction and the teaching and learning time is compromised.

2.2.3 Instructional leadership and the quality of education

Dhlamini (2008) investigated the instructional leadership role of the school principal in the improvement of the quality of education.

The following factors were concluded by Dhlamini (2008) as the major findings:

- The principal can improve the quality of teaching and learning by defining and communicating a clear vision to all stakeholders.

According to Dhlamini (2008), the vision determines the daily activities of the school and it is the responsibility of the principal to involve everyone in its formulation in a way that will foster ownership and buy-in.

The principal should make sure that the vision is communicated and well understood by all stakeholders, who will also ensure its attainment.

- Principals as instructional leaders can improve the quality of education through a collaborative approach to decision making.

In support of Zuma (2009), Dhlamini (2008) illustrates that the principal needs to involve all 'school clients' in decision making, as well as in all other activities within the school. The conclusions by Dhlamini (2008) also indicate that principals who do not practice a democratic management style experience poor parental involvement and low morale on the side of educators, which culminates in de-motivated staff and poor learner achievement.

- The principal can improve the quality of education by addressing all the factors that impact negatively on the process of teaching and learning.

The role of an instructional leader includes making sure that the school environment is conducive for effective teaching and learning. According to Dhlamini (2008), the role involves ensuring that the school has appropriate and sufficient physical resources to enhance teaching and learning; maintain discipline and deal with all disciplinary issues that may hamper the school's

success, as well as protecting teaching time to avoid any disturbances within the school.

▪ The principal as an instructional leader can improve the quality of education by being directly involved in both curricular and extracurricular activities.

Dhlamini (2008) states that principals need to be knowledgeable about the challenges that the educators experience inside the classroom. Principals, as instructional leaders, need to have knowledge of the developments on instruction issues in order to provide the necessary support and guidance to educators. In fact, Dhlamini (2008) suggests that the principal should also be involved with the actual teaching.

▪ There is a need for principals to be trained after being appointed to the position and prior to the introduction of any change in the school system.

The findings by Dhlamini (2008) reveal that a lack of training hampers the principal's performance as an instructional leader. The study also highlighted that the newly appointed principals were not trained and the old ones were inadequately trained to handle the role of instructional leadership.

▪ The principal could improve the quality of education in a school through effective teacher development programmes.

The research by Dhlamini (2008) deduces that not enough development is done at the school level and that learners perform well in schools where staff development is planned for and carried out.

Like any other organisation, a school should have a vision which will direct its activities. The vision should be clearly communicated and owned by all involved with the school.

The principal should therefore align all the activities of the school with the agreed upon vision for the success of the school. Though it is the principal who takes the ultimate responsibility and accountability of the school's performance, the principal has to work in collaboration with the educators and parents.

The school system affords for the school heads of the departments who are perceived as the specialists when it comes to subject content. The principal should elicit their expertise in assisting the school to perform well academically. The parents are there to assist the principal with issues of learner discipline, which according to Mthombeni (2004), if not addressed, will hamper progress within the school. The principal should make sure that the school environment is positive and it promotes effective teaching and learning. This means that the principal should deal with all factors, be they physical, financial or human resource factors that may derail the school's progress.

As an instructional leader, the principal should be directly involved with the instruction. The principal should know what the educators and learners are doing, how well they are doing, and the kind of support they need to be effective. Teacher development is central to effective teaching and learning. As the curriculum develops, educators need to be kept up to date with the developments so that they can be confident inside the classrooms.

2.2.4   Instructional leadership and the culture of teaching and learning

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) refer to the culture of teaching and learning as the norms, value and belief systems that both educators and learners have towards learning and academic performance. Nemukula (2002) investigated the influence of the instructional leadership role of the school principal on the organisational culture of the school and its effects on the culture of teaching and learning. The findings from the research by Nemukula (2002) identified five factors that are key to an instructional leader in improving the culture of teaching and learning in the school.

The five factors are:

- Physical resources that will enable the school to achieve its objectives.

- The organisational structure which refers to an 'incomplete hierarchical structure' where the school has a shortage of heads of departments and even non-teaching staff - as a result, educators' workload is so heavy that it hampers effective teaching and learning.

- Management factors which entail management of resources where principals find themselves with a heavy workload that hinders them from performing the instructional roles, and management and protection of teaching and learning time in order to avoid 'drop-in visitors' who demand attention from educators even during teaching time.

- The instructional leadership role of the school principal which involves supervision of work for educators and learners. The findings emphasised class visits which participants in the study believe to be motivating to educators and ensure that educators are always prepared for teaching. The instructional leadership role of the school principal also includes improvement of staff development programmes at the school level which participants believe to be capacitating educators in order to improve their teaching.

- The organisational culture of the school which emphasises the importance of good discipline in maintaining an orderly environment, and motivation of educators and learners which participants concur that it improves the culture of teaching and learning.

As mentioned by Dhlamini (2008), one other important factor that the principal should manage is the physical resources. The principal should create an environment that enhances effective teaching and learning. The school should have buildings, teaching and learning materials and finances that will enable it to run smoothly and progressively. The principal should also ensure that the school has sufficient human resources, at all levels of the school's hierarchy, to carry the workload in line with the school's post establishment. In cases where there is a shortage of human resources, educators' workload, including the principal's, becomes so heavy as to be detrimental to effective teaching and learning.

The principal who is an instructional leader should put instruction central to the school's functioning. The principal should make time to supervise the work of educators and learners, and provide advice and support where it is due. As a leader within the school, the principal should set the culture of the school and live it. Every other individual within the school should also promote the culture of the school in line with the vision and goals of the school.

2.2.5   *Instructional leadership and effective leaders*

Findley and Findley (1992:102) state that 'if a school is to be an effective one it will be because of the instructional leadership of the principal'. Rutherford (in Anderson and Pigford, 1987) cites five general leadership qualities of effective leaders as follows:

- Have a vision with shared understanding of the goals and progress towards their achievement.

- Translate the vision into action wherein all stakeholders work as a team for the success of the school.

- Create a supportive environment which promotes an academically-oriented, orderly and purposeful school climate.

- Know what is going on in the school, which entails the principal finding out what learners and educators are doing and how well they are performing.

- Act on knowledge and intervene where necessary.

An organisation without vision has no direction. Central to the vision of the school should be improved learner achievement, and the vision should be translated into action towards its attainment.

In order to attain the vision, the school environment should support effective teaching and learning. The school should have all the necessary resources to support instruction, and discipline should be maintained at all times. As instructional leaders, principals should 'walk-the-factory-floor' and be in the know as to what is happening inside and outside that classrooms so that they can act accordingly to enhance learner achievement and the success of the school.

2.3. *Dimensions and elements of instructional leadership*

The following diagram was adapted to depict the important dimensions and elements of instructional leadership from literature review:
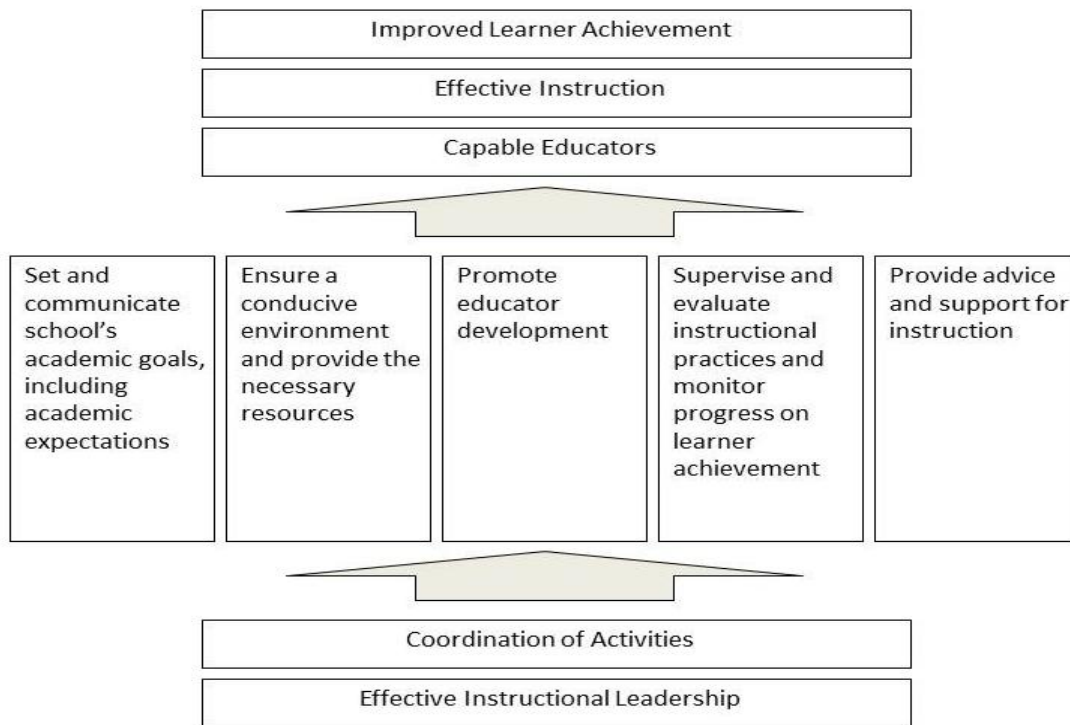
Figure 2-1 An adapted integrated model for instructional leadership

Source: Hallinger and Murphy (1987), Van Deventer and Kruger (2003), McEwan (2000), Zepeda (2004), Mbatha (2004) and Kruger (1999).

The paragraphs below briefly elaborate on the instructional leadership activities as reflected in the above diagram, and also draw from the findings in the previous researchers.

▪ **Set and communicate school's academic goals, including academic expectations:**

Reynolds and Cuttence (1996) and Zepeda (2004) emphasise that performing schools are the ones that have visionary principals who also ensure that all stakeholders have the buy-in and support of the vision. The vision of the school should revolve around learner achievement and all efforts should be streamlined towards attainment of such a goal.

This means that the school community should work together as an organisation in order to attain the shared vision, and all activities should be geared towards learner achievement.

This view is supported by the findings by Masitsa (1995:125-127) and Mthombeni (2004) which reveal that instructional leaders set and communicate the school's vision and goals to all stakeholders. The goals should have academic achievement as the cornerstone, and all activities within the school be directed towards attainment of such goals. Leithwood (1994) and Rossouw (1990) point out that the principal's expectations of performance influences learner performance in a positive way. Principals who have high expectation of the learners' performance inspire learners to perform excellently.

- **Ensure a conducive environment and provide the necessary resources:**

Poor infrastructure contributes to low educator and learner morale which ultimately is translated into low performance (Lethoko, 1999; Masitsa, 1995; Naidoo, 1999). The principal should make sure that the learning environment is created by providing and securing human, physical, financial, time and information resources (De Beer, Rossouw, Moolman, Le Roux and Labuschagne, 1998; Duke, 1987; Heck, 1992). This can be a challenge in rural schools where the resources are limited.

Khuzwayo (2005:91) in her study found out that principals who are successful as instructional leaders, shape and create an environment that promotes effective teaching and learning by ensuring that all the necessary resources (physical, human, financial and information) are in place. Lalumbe (1998), Lethoko (1999), Masitsa (1995) and Mthombeni (2004) further reveal in their research that a conducive environment is the one that has discipline, minimum class disruptions, and where instruction time is protected.

- **Promote educator development:**

Staff development should aim at creating a positive and constructive change of knowledge and abilities of educators in such a way that they are empowered to perform to the best of their abilities and produce excellent results (Khuzwayo 2005; Clarke, 1996).

Staff development builds educator confidence, motivation and self-esteem in performing their tasks. Glickman (1989:6) asserts that the principal is a 'leader of instructional leaders' where educators are also seen as instructional leaders. Therefore, it is imperative for the school principal to ensure that staff development becomes part of the school programme so that the educators' instructional skills can also be polished and nurtured.

Findings by Andrews, Basom and Basom (1994) and Dhlamini (2008:103) continue to emphasise that as an instructional leader, the principal should facilitate and support staff development programmes within the school. The principal should afford educators the time to network within and outside the school, and also to improve their studies and qualifications.

- **Supervise and evaluate instructional practices and monitor progress on learner achievement:**

Supervision and monitoring should not only be limited to control of educators' and learners' files and books, but should encompass everything that has to do with curriculum delivery and management. According to Resolution 8 of 2003 (DoE, 2003), the supervisors to an educator should conduct classroom visits that aim at improving learner achievement. Then they should provide feedback that will inform future strategies for effective teaching and learning.

The principal, as the most senior supervisor within the school premises, should also conduct classroom visits, check educators' and learners' work, and provide the necessary support. Hopkins (2001) claims that learners are found to perform better in schools where classroom observations are conducted regularly.

▪ **Provide advice and support for instruction:**

According to Dubin (1991) and Duke (1987), the best support that the principal can give to educators and learners is an orderly environment that has minimum class disruptions. This entails making sure that the educators and learners are in class on time, and effective teaching is taking place at all times. At the same time, the principal should provide guidance and direction to educators with issues related to instruction and how they can improve learner achievement. This does not mean that the principals should master everything; rather they should establish strong support teams to assist educators with their challenges.

According to Table 2.1, an effective instructional leader coordinates all the school's activities so that they support effective teaching and learning and learner achievement. As an instructional leader, the principal should set and communicate the school's goals, provide the necessary resources to promote teaching and learning, promote staff development to improve the effectiveness of the educators, supervise the work of educators and learners, and provide advice where it is needed. These activities will capacitate the educators to do their job effectively which will lead to effective instruction being provided in the classrooms and ultimately, improved learner achievement.

The instructional activities, as stated by Hallinger and Murphy (1987), and the seven steps to effective instructional leadership as mentioned by McEwan (2003) correlate, and they emphasise goal setting and communication of the school's vision to the school community; the principal monitoring and

supervising learner progress and supporting educators through provision of information and resources, as well as development of staff.

Instructional leadership is found to have a positive impact on learner achievement. Siens and Ebmeier (1996) concur with other researchers that there are activities that the principal engages in at the school that also influence learner achievement. The Department of Education (2000) also emphasises that instructional leadership is the cornerstone to learner achievement. Furthermore, the principal's duty, as described in PAM (DoE, 1999), states clearly that they are responsible for the curriculum management in the school. This prescribed duty is in line with the activities of the instructional leader, as mentioned by Hallinger and Murphy (1987).

The survey by Smith and Andrews (1989) on the perceptions of educators regarding instructional leadership drove them to develop a framework to define four broad functions of the instructional leader. In line with the framework developed by Smith and Andrews (1989), McEwan (2003) reiterates in a form of a summary and identifies the four areas for effective instructional leadership as follows:

- **A resource provider:**

Smith and Andrews (1989) state that a principal must be able to requisition and utilise resources in order to achieve the school's missions and goals. The principal should ensure that all the resources needed for effective teaching and learning are available. The requisition may include ensuring that the school has well maintained infrastructure, sufficient and relevant teaching and learning materials, proper allocation and deployment of qualified and capacitated educators, and proper distribution of finances in line with the identified needs in order to achieve the school's vision and mission statement (Foriska, 1994).

As a resource provider, the principal should also provide opportunities for professional development of staff so as to enhance their teaching (Marzano et al., 2005). Well qualified and capacitated educators contribute positively towards improved learner achievement. Darling-Hammond (1998) and Mthombeni (2004:83) agree, and state that staff development is an important aspect to learner achievement.

In addition, Duke (1987) highlights that the instructional time is a very important and valuable resource that also needs to be provided and protected. As alluded to by Zuma (2009), teachers should always be in class teaching and learners should always be in class learning. It is therefore the responsibility of the principal to ensure effective use of 'time on task'. Another resource is the environment, and the principal should also ensure that the school environment is safe, healthy and conducive for effective teaching and learning (Duke, 1987; Dubin, 1991). According to Kwinda (2002), an instructional leader demonstrates effective use of time and resources by:

- o Planning, organising, scheduling and prioritising work to be done.

- o Delegating work as appropriate.

- o Assigning staff members according to their strengths.

An effective resource provider directs all resources towards achievement of the set goals that lead towards improved learner performance and achievement.

- **An instructional resource**

The most obvious role of the principal as an instructional resource is to facilitate good teaching (Smith and Andrews, 1989). The principal, as an instructional resource, should set the school's academic goals and engage staff in

professional development programmes so as to enhance quality teaching and learning.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), successful principals have high expectations of the curriculum standards and insist on the adherence thereof. The principal should also provide the necessary support and guidance for instruction when needed. As stated by Sergiovanni (1995:86), the principal should be like a 'clinical practitioner' of the school. This means that principals should be knowledgeable about the developments pertaining to instruction and curriculum issues in order to advise the educators accordingly and appropriately.

Sergiovanni (1995) further points out that such a principal should be able to diagnose education problems, ensure support for the educators, provide counselling and advice, encourages dialogue with educators, monitor and evaluate curriculum and instruction, provide feedback, and also motivate for staff development and excellent performance. For principals to be effective instructional resources, they should keep abreast with the developments relating to curriculum and instruction.

Instruction occurs within stipulated timeframes, and Cotton (2003) explains that in ensuring improved learner achievement, the principal should protect instructional time. Protection of instructional time is not only limited to making sure that educators and learners are in class, the principal should conduct informal class visits in order to monitor and evaluate the work that is done inside the classes. DiPaolo and Tschannen-Moran (2003) summarise this role by stating that because the primary activity in schools is instruction, instructional leaders must be steeped in curriculum, instruction and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance.

- **A communicator:**

The principal as a communicator should establish clear communication of the school's vision, mission, goals and academic expectations and standards. The school's goals should be shared and owned by all learners, educators, parents and the entire school community. The school community as a whole should, under the leadership of the principal, develop strategies to achieve the stipulated goals and objectives. The set goals within the school should be translated into programmes and activities which will ensure learner achievement. Also, the means for integrating instructional planning, implementation and achievement should be known to all educators.

According to Rossouw (1990), the learners' academic achievement is directly related to the academic expectations that educators have for learners. Cotton (2003) continues in mentioning that the principal's expression of high expectation for student is part of the vision that guides high-achieving schools and is a critical component in its own right. The principal and educators should set high standards and communicate them to the learners and the parents. It is the responsibility of the principal to make sure that standards are set and are not compromised.

One other way of articulating the high expectations and standards of achievement is by acknowledging and celebrating the accomplishments of both educators and learners (Cotton, 2003).

The principal should also encourage educators to motivate learners extrinsically through the celebration of excellent performance by giving rewards, even in the classrooms. Furthermore, the principal should communicate the culture of positive teaching and learning to all stakeholders. O'Donnell and White (2005) and Lethoko (1999) claim that maintaining a positive climate of learning within the school promotes learner achievement.

In conclusion, effective principals not only share information, but they also listen and take the suggestions of staff and constituents seriously, acknowledging that they do not have all the answers (Cotton, 2003).

- **A visible presence:**

According to Glatthorn (1990), as strong instructional leaders, principals are seen as visionaries who are out and about. Andrews, Basom and Basom (1994) back this notion, and suggest that a great percent of success is 'showing up'. As a leader who is visibly present, the principal interacts with staff and students in classrooms and hallways, attends grade-level and departmental meetings, and strikes up spontaneous conversation with teachers (Smith and Andrews, 1989).

The principal should model his beliefs consistent with the school's vision and be hands-on and well conversant with what transpires within the classrooms through informal class visits, supervision, monitoring and evaluating of instructional practices and learner achievement (Krug, 1993; Andrews et al., 1994). Marzano et al. (2005) explain two reasons that are brought about by the principal's visibility as follows:

- The principal is interested and engaged in the daily activities of the school.

- It provides an opportunity for the principal to interact with the educators and learners on instructional issues.

Johnson (2006) concludes that the visibility of the principal is a contributing factor to student achievement. As mentioned above, the principal's visibility in the classrooms and hallways should not be a social event; rather it should be purposeful and official.

The principal should use this opportunity to diagnose educational challenges and impediments to effective teaching and learning in order to provide feedback and also to give guidance and support where needed.

Skretta and Fisher (2002) outline the following principles that should be followed for the principal's visibility:

- o   Develop and use a common language for quality instruction;

- o   Establish clear and consistent expectations for the administrator's presence in classrooms and communicate these with staff members and school community.

- o   Schedule informal walkthrough observations as you would any other important item on your calendar.

- o   Use walkthroughs to promote dialogue with teachers.

- o   Share anecdotal feedback from walkthroughs with faculty.

The above-stated principles assist the principal to make sure that the 'walkthroughs' yield the expected results in supporting educators and learners to improve performance and learner achievement. Such an activity should be well planned and communicated to all educators and learners so as to ensure buy-in and support of the programme. The expectations should be shared with all stakeholders and the necessary support should be provided at all times.

2.4. Conclusion

The discussions on the instructional tasks by Hallinger and Murphy (1987), the seven steps, and the four dimensions for effective leadership by McEwan (2003), refer to similar concepts that need to be considered and implemented for instructional leadership. The principal as an instructional leader is expected to provide a conducive environment for educators and learners to perform optimally in order to enhance learner achievement.

In providing a conducive environment, the principal needs to provide all the necessary resources; i.e. physical, human, financial and information. The principal also needs to sets goal and ensure that the goals are owned by the entire school community. Again, the principal needs to ensure development of staff and provide the necessary advice and guidance and also promote teamwork and acknowledgement of expertise from different individuals. The principal, as an instructional leader, needs to be visible and uphold the culture of the school in order to ensure the attainment of the set goals. In summary, an instructional leader should be a resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator; and be a visible presence.

This chapter provided a detailed discussion on instructional leadership and the activities that principals need to engage in to improve learner achievement. The following chapter will explain in detail the research design that the researcher used for the collection of data.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1.   Introduction

The literature review in Chapter 2 served as the bedrock for the research design. The previous chapter highlighted the implications of the primary school principal's instructional leadership on learner achievement, as perceived and concluded by different researchers.

According to the literature review, in order to improve learner achievement, an instructional leader should set the school's academic goals and communicate them to all stakeholders so that all activities within the school can be directed towards the attainment of the set goals. An instructional leader should also make sure that all the necessary resources are provided for in order to enhance teaching and learning. One of the resources that needs to be provided is the human resource and the principal should make opportunities available for educators to develop themselves. At the same time, the principal should monitor and control the work of both educators and learners regularly so that advice and support can be provided on time.

This chapter explains the research design used by the researcher in exploring the principals' instructional leadership practices that enhance learner achievement with focus on the following aspects: i) Purpose of the study, ii) Research question and sub-questions, iii) Site setting and criteria, iv) Arrangements for access, v) Research design, vi) Population and sampling, vii) Research techniques, viii) Trustworthiness and credibility, ix) Role of the researcher, x) Delimitations, xi) Ethical considerations, xii) Data collection, and xiii) Data analysis procedure.

3.2. Purpose of the study

Studies such as Systemic Evaluation; Annual National Assessment; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality have revealed poor learner achievement over the years. According to Kruger (1999), principals are not sure how to provide guidance to educators on instruction and they end up delegating this role to the deputies and the heads of the departments. On the other hand, the introduction of Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008) puts accountability of school's performance in the hands of the principal, which poses a great challenge for the principals.

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed different conclusions on the extent of the effect of the principal's instructional leadership on learner achievement. Although the conclusions from different researchers might seem to be contradicting one another, the common thread that runs through all the research is that there are instructional leadership practices of principals that have an effect on learner achievement, however insignificant.

Williams and Edward (2006) and Marzano et al. (2005) point out that the leadership behaviour of the principal may have less impact on learner achievement. However, Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) and Hopkins (2001) are in accord in articulating that a direct relationship between instructional leadership and instructional improvement exists, and that instructional leadership enhances learner achievement. Also, this finding by researchers such as Dhlamini (2008), Hargreaves (1994) and Mbatha (2004) confirm that effective principal's instructional leadership skills yield improved learner achievement.

This study therefore aimed at exploring the practices by principals as instructional leaders that impact positively on learner achievement.

The findings may be used to inform effective practices and intervention strategies that need to be employed to assist poorly performing schools and/or reinforce the plans and developments in the education system in enhancing learner achievement.

3.3. Research question and sub-questions

According to Leedy (1993:125), the main question is broad and complex and gives a broader picture of the study. The sub-questions, on the other hand, are more workable, easy to deal with, and they should be drawn from the main question. The researcher based the research questions on the literature review as discussed in Chapter 2.

The research question has the following dimensions, as stated by Smith and Andrews (1989) and McEwan (2003):

- **Resource provider**: Smith and Andrews (1989) indicate that an effective resource provider is one that is capable of requisitioning resources to enable the teaching and learning to be effective and improves learner achievement.

- **Instructional resource**: According to Sergiovanni (1995:86), the principal should be the 'clinical practitioner' of the school. This means that the principal should be abreast of the current instruction and curriculum issues and developments so as to advise educators accordingly and provide the necessary support and guidance.

- **Communicator**: Smith and Andrews (1989:15) stipulate that 'As a communicator, the principal articulates a vision of the school that heads everyone in the same direction. The principal's day to day behaviour communicates a firm understanding of the purpose of schooling and can translate that meaning into programs and activities within the school'.

The principal should communicate the vision of the school and act as a role model.

- **Visible presence**: Cotton (2003:14) claims that, 'Effective principals are a frequent presence in classrooms; observing and interacting with teachers and students'. Johnson (2006) concurs and concluded in her study that principals of low performing schools were less visible in the school premises as compared with principals of high-achieving schools. A principal who is always visible gets a sense of what is happening inside and outside the classroom and is able to act immediately.

3.3.1 Research question

Creswell (2008:122) describes the research question as a problem statement in a question form. The research question is the overarching question that the researcher aims to explore and answer during the study (Creswell, 2008). The researcher in this study phrased the research question as follows:

> *What are the practices of primary school principals in Tshwane West district in Gauteng province in their role as instructional leaders in enhancing learner achievement?*

3.3.2 Sub-questions

According to Creswell (2008), sub-questions are meant to refine the central question and they have similar qualities as the main question but they provide greater simplicity to the main question. The sub-questions are as follows:

- How do principals understand their role as instructional leaders?

- How do principals fulfil their instructional leadership role?

- Which activities do principals as instructional leaders engage in so as to improve learner achievement?

3.4. Research paradigm

Patton (2002) describes a paradigm as a way that people make sense of the complexities of the world. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:183), a paradigm is a 'basic set of beliefs that guide that action'. As an alternative to positivist approaches, Cohen et al. (2000:21) explain that with interpretive approaches, individual people interpret events and contexts subjectively based on their own and unique perspectives.

As suggested by Cohen et al. (2000), the researcher chose the **interpretivist** paradigm in order to explore the understandings and interpretations of individual principals on how they perceive their role as instructional leaders and the practices that they engage in to improve learner achievement. Although the interpretivist paradigm does not allow generalisation since it is a small-scale research, it provides for in-depth knowledge, meaning and understanding of situations, based on individual perspective and interpretation.

3.5. Research design

- Qualitative research method

A qualitative research method is said to be a naturalistic enquiry which involves the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to explore the flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:372). Creswell (2008:46) agrees and explains that the researcher in the qualitative research asks broad and general questions which the participants respond to in words as they express their views.

Creswell (2008) suggests that qualitative research tends to address problems that require the researcher to explore understanding of a central phenomenon and to establish the tendency of responses from individuals so that they can note how this tendency varies among people. The researcher tends to be subjective and biased in the approach as the research mainly deals with analysis of perceptions and interpretations by individuals. The literature review in qualitative research plays a minor role in that though it may justify the importance of studying the research problem, it does not provide major direction for the research question(s) to be asked.

The researcher needs to ask questions that are general and broad that can lead to understanding the participants' experiences very well. Data is collected from a small number of individuals using forms with general, emerging questions to permit the participants to generate textual responses or data which will be analysed by developing descriptions and themes in order to state the meaning of the findings. The research reports tend to use flexible and emerging structure and evaluative criteria. Creswell (1994) further states that qualitative research is useful when the researcher intends to get a proper understanding about human phenomenon, and also to investigate the meaning that the people in the research attach to the research question itself.

Mamabolo (2002:236) suggests that:

- Qualitative research seeks understanding – this allows the researcher an opportunity to employ qualitative methods such as interviews and observation.

- Qualitative methods are humanistic – participants are able to air their views, perceptions and feelings.

- The setting is natural as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.

- Qualitative research is descriptive and the data collected in a qualitative study is in verbal (in text form) form rather than numerical.

- Meaning is of essential concern for qualitative research. Researchers who use this approach are interested in the way different people make sense out of their lives.

Furthermore, Creswell (2008) identifies the following characteristics of qualitative research that need to be recognised:

- Listen to the views of the participants in the study.

- Ask general, open questions and collect data in places where people live and work.

- Research has a role in advocating for change and making the lives of individuals better.

In the light of the descriptions and characteristics stated above, a qualitative research method is more appropriate as the researcher intended to explore the perceptions and practices of principals regarding their role as instructional leaders. This approach allows for probing of questions which enables participants to explain and elaborate on their views and feelings on the research problem.

3.6.   Research techniques

The researcher in this study used the questionnaire and group interviews as research techniques. The two research techniques are described briefly in the following paragraphs.

3.6.1   Questionnaire

Creswell (2008) defines a questionnaire as a document where the participants have control over how they respond to the set questions. This notion is supported by Harris and Bell (1994) who mention that the questionnaire is a collection of written statements from the respondents based on their views and feelings about the questions asked.

According to Cohen et al. (2000), one of the advantages of the questionnaire is that it tends to be more reliable because it is anonymous and it encourages honesty. On the other hand, the questions in the questionnaire can have different meanings for different people and the interviewer is not around to provide clarity. Cohen et al. (2000) differentiate between three types of questionnaires; firstly, the structured questionnaire which comprises fixed or preset questions; secondly, the semi-structured questionnaire which sets the agenda but does not presuppose the nature of the responses; and lastly, the unstructured questionnaire which allows for more open and word-based responses.

As suggested by Allport (1942), the researcher uses a semi-structured questionnaire which affords individuals the opportunity to air their perceptions without feeling threatened. As Mouton (2001) points out, textual data is rich in meaning, and a semi-structured questionnaire was found to be more suitable for this study as it aimed to explore the feelings and experiences of the participants.

The questions in this study were directed towards obtaining information from principals on their practices as instructional leaders and how these practices impact on learner achievement. The researcher used the semi-structured questionnaire which contained 29 questions which included personal (sub-question 1), attitudinal (sub-question 2) and behavioural (sub-question 3) as reflected in Chapter 1.

The questions were aligned with the four dimensions of instructional leadership as described by McEwan (2003). The questions aimed to establish how the principal provides for the educators and learners so that the teaching and learning environment can be made conducive for effective learning. The questions also explored the practices that the principal engages in towards improved learning, and how they communicate and maintain a 'visible presence' so as to provide 'on-the-spot' assistance and advice that will improve instruction in the school. Some of the questions were closed which required preset response options, and some were open-ended which allowed the participants to elaborate on their responses. The responses from the questionnaires were corroborated in the interview sessions.

The plan of the study was to collect data through questionnaires but after the analysis of the questionnaires, the researcher needed to probe further on the responses from the participants since a clear distinction could not be made from the responses of the principals whose schools performed poorly and those which performed excellently in the Annual National Assessment and the Systemic Evaluation reports. In an effort to identify the practices by principals of excellently performing schools from those of the poorly performing schools, the researcher divided the participants into two groups and the following questions were asked:

- What activities should a principal engage in as an instructional leader?

- What activities do you practice towards improved learner achievement?

- How do you feel about the role of a principal as an 'instructional leader'?

3.6.2   Interview

McMillan and Schumacher (1993) and Budhal (2000) describe interviews as vocal questionnaires which involve the gathering of data through direct verbal interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee(s). The interview allows for a greater depth of responses from participants but it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Cohen et al. 2000). McMillan and Schumacher (1993) and Cohen et al. (2000) divide interviews into three categories; that is, structured - which is made up of preset questions and procedures organised in advance; semi structured - which includes both closed and open-ended questions and responses; and unstructured interviews - which comprise open-ended questions which allows for greater flexibility and freedom. The interview in this study was open-ended as the researcher sought for openness and freedom from the participants so as to corroborate the data collected through questionnaires.

For Creswell (2008), one-on-one and focus group interviews are the two basic types of interviews. A one-to-one interview involves the researcher conducting an interview with an individual in the sample and recording the responses thereof. The one-on-one interview is useful for asking sensitive questions and enables the interviewer and interviewee to go beyond the initial questions by asking and responding to follow-up questions. However, a one-on-one interview does not protect the anonymity of the participants and may prejudice the participant's responses.

Creswell (2008) and De Vos and Fouche (1998) define the focus group interview as a process of collecting data through discussions with a group of participants on a specific topic or related topics. Focus group interviews may be used to corroborate data collected from questionnaires (as is the case in this study) or any other means of data collection. The researcher's choice of using the focus group interview is supported by Lemmer (1993) who affirms that a focus group interview may be used to interview a group of deliberately sampled people, as was the case in this study.

The researcher in this study opted for a focus group interview instead of a one-on-one interview so as to enhance interaction among interviewees and to minimise or eliminate fears of victimisation that participants might have had towards the interviewer as their senior. Like any other research technique, the focus group interview has its own advantages and disadvantages but only a few are listed below.

Advantages of focus group interview as outlined by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990:16):

- 'Focus group interviews allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents.

- Focus group interviews provide data from a group of people much more quickly and at less cost.

- The open response format of a focus group interview provides an opportunity to obtain large and rich amount of data in the respondents' own words.

- Focus group interviews can be used to examine a wide range of topics with a variety of individuals and in a variety of settings.

- Results of focus group interviews are easy to understand'.

De Vos and Fouché (1998) list the following disadvantages of focus group interviews:

- 'Recruiting the right people to participate in the interview poses many difficulties.

- Researchers should be able to match the topic for discussion with the participants' ability to discuss that topic.

- Focus group interview allows the participants to influence and interact with one another and they are able to influence the course of the interview.

- Data generated by focus group interview are relatively difficult to analyse.

- Information acquired by using the focus group interviews is not generalisable'.

In this study, participants were invited to the same venue and responded to individual questionnaires, and these were followed-up by separate group interviews (one group for schools that performed excellently and the other comprising schools that performed poorly), where questions were asked in order to corroborate the data in the questionnaires.

3.7. Site setting and criteria

The researcher should choose a site which is accessible in terms of time, mobility, skills and resources (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

In line with the suggestion by McMillan and Schumacher (1993), the researcher in this study chose six schools in the same district; namely, Tshwane West district, Gauteng Department of Education. All schools chosen are primary schools as it is the population of the study. The schools were accessible to the researcher since the researcher works in the same district in which the schools are situated.

The sampled schools all come from Winterveldt, Garankuwa, Mabopane and Soshanguve areas in Gauteng province. The learners in the sampled schools have a similar socio-economic status as they come from the 'poorest' family backgrounds. Such a school is categorised as a Quintile 1 school, and because of the poor state of affairs of the learners in such a category, learners enjoy a feeding scheme provided by the Department of Education because their families are unable to fully provide for them.

The researcher selected three schools that performed excellently (more than 70%) and three that performed poorly (less than 30%) in the Systemic Evaluation (2007) and the Annual National Assessment study (2009). These two evaluations were conducted nationally to measure the performance of the Grades 3 and 6 learners in Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills.

3.8.   Arrangements for access to schools

A letter requesting permission to conduct research at the schools (Annexure A) was written to the Gauteng Department of Education and the purpose of the study was clearly explained in the letter. Forms from the department (Annexure B) were completed and sent back to the department office which subsequently granted permission for the research to be conducted.

Ethical clearance (Annexure C), which indicates if the study complies with the ethical codes of the university and research ethics generally, was then sought

from the university and thereafter letters were written to the sampled principals to request them to participate in the study. Again the purpose and all ethical considerations were explained in the letters. Then, the principals signed consent forms (Annexure D) to indicate that they were not pressured to take part in the study and that they agreed with all the conditions set by the researcher.

3.9.   Research site

Creswell (2008) explains that researchers choose a sample of participants from a population so that they can generalise about the target population. According to Creswell (2008), a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics. A sample, on the other hand, is described as 'a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for purposes of making generalisations about the target population' (Creswell, 2008:646). Stoker (1989:100) agrees, and states that a sample is a 'selected finite set of persons, objects or things that the researcher employs in the study'.

Choosing a sample enables the researcher to generalise about the target population since it is not possible for the researcher to study the entire population due to constraints relating to time, accessibility and cost. Lethoko, (1999) and Masitsa (1995) concur and explain that the purpose of a sample is to get a manageable group for research purposes.

For this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to identify the sampled schools. The aim of purposive sampling is to get more information-rich group of people to do an in-depth study (Patton, 1990; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). The target population in this study was primary school principals as the researcher intended to get their perspective and practices on the concept of instructional leadership in their daily practices.

The population of the study is primary schools in the Tshwane West district in Gauteng, since this is the population wherein the Systemic Evaluation (2007) and the Annual National Assessment (2009) were conducted. The total number of primary schools in the areas of Mabopane, Winterveldt, Garankuwa and Soshanguve is 61, and a 10% sample was drawn from that population which gave a sample size of six schools.

The sample was chosen purposefully to include primary schools with similar low socio-economic status that performed well and those that performed poorly in the Systematic Evaluation and Annual National Assessment in 2007 and 2009 respectively. The approach enabled the researcher to also identify the behaviours that the principals in these two categories engage in and how they impact on learner achievement.

3.10. Trustworthiness and credibility

The research conducted followed the qualitative approach which requires trustworthiness and credibility of the data rather than validity and reliability. The terms validity and reliability are briefly explain so as to explain the choice of the researcher in the study. The term validity, according to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), refers to the degree to which explanations of phenomena match realities of the world. Creswell (2008) describes validity as the extent to which the responses from the instrument make sense and are meaningful so as to enable the researcher to draw good conclusions. Creswell (2008:171-173) enlists three types of validity as content; criterion; and construct validity.

Cohen et al. (2000:117) define reliability as 'consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents'. Creswell (2008) concurs and mentions that reliability means the stability and consistency of the instrument used. Creswell (2008) lists five types of reliability, namely, test-re-

test; alternate forms; alternate forms and test-retest; inter-rater; and internal consistency reliability.

On the other hand, Naidoo (1999) explains trustworthiness as the applicability, consistency, neutrality and truth-value of the research results. Trustworthiness, as mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985), replaces the views of reliability and validity and this notion is entrenched in issues of credibility, conformity, transferability and dependability.

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that to plan for trustworthiness, the researcher has to choose research questions in response to situations observed; seek informed consent; ensure confidentiality and anonymity; choose the sample for which the research questions are appropriate; seek permission from the 'gatekeepers'; build participants confidence and trust in the researcher; choose research techniques that are relevant; and analyse data in terms of the participants' definition of the situation and themes.

In response to the suggestion by Cohen et al. (2000) on trustworthiness, the researcher based the research questions on the results from ANA (2009) and SE (2007). The researcher also sent out letters of consent from the participants which they signed to indicate approval. Participants were informed not to write their names on the questionnaires for the sake of promoting anonymity. The researcher used a focus group interview so as to ensure the standard protection of the participants. The research question in the study focused on the primary school principals; hence the researcher used purposive sampling to sample the group appropriate for the research question. Permission was sought from the Department of Education in Gauteng as the 'gatekeepers' who facilitate entry and access to the group.

The researcher had already built a rapport with the sampled principals as they all work in the same district office. For corroboration purposes, the researcher

used questionnaires and interviews as research techniques. Data were then analysed directly from the participants' responses in terms of how they perceive and experience the situations at their schools.

3.11. Role of the researcher

The researcher's social relationship with the participants is an important aspect that must be identified in a study (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:386). In doing so, the researcher should establish a relationship with the participants; that is free of threats and victimisation. As a senior to the participants, the researcher guarded against being biased by using the preconceived ideas and knowledge about the participants.

The issues of anonymity and confidentiality were emphasised wherein participants were advised not to write their names on the questionnaires. The purpose of the study was also explained so that interviewees could feel free to give honest and credible information, knowing exactly how the findings were going to influence the principals' good practices and ultimately improve learner performance and achievement.

The researcher completed the necessary documentation, namely, request/permission letter to the Department of Education, departmental forms and the request letter for ethical clearance; and then sent out invites to the participants. The participants were also requested to consent to take part in the study.

A conducive environment, including venue and time, were set where the participants met to complete individual questionnaires and later to take part in the focus group interviews. Thereafter, the researcher compared data from participants which were used to provide insight on the views and practices of

principals on instructional leadership, and then they were consolidated to highlight the findings of the research and to reach a conclusion.

3.12. Delimitations of the research

A one-on-one interview would have been a more appropriate technique to use but because of the researcher's relationship with the participants, which is a position of seniority to the participants who are principals, the participants might not have felt free when they respond to the questions in an individual interview and this might have compromised the trustworthiness and credibility of the data collected.

Hence, the researcher resorted to semi-structured questionnaires which allowed the participants to express their views freely as they were not expected to identify themselves on the questionnaires. The questionnaires were followed by probing questions in the focus group interviews for corroboration of the data. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:250) refer to an interview as a 'vocal questionnaire', and since a group interview was used, participants felt less threatened and also obtained an opportunity to clarify some of the questions and learn from each other at the same time.

3.13. Ethical considerations

For ethical compliance, the researcher first asked permission from the Department of Education and completed an ethical clearance form for the university. Participants were then called to a meeting where information regarding the study and their role in the study was explained. Participants were asked to consent to take part in the study by signing an agreement form.

All other principles related to ethics, such as confidentiality, objectivity and non-victimisation, were explained before the distribution of the questionnaires.

Participants were advised not to write their names on the questionnaires for anonymity purposes and confidentiality of data. Again, participants were assured that the information that they provided would not be used against them in any way and the purpose of sharing of good practice was emphasised. A short discussion on 'instructional leadership' was shared with the participants so as to ensure a common understanding of the concept before the questionnaires were distributed.

3.14. Data collection

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996:574) recommend triangulation so as to eliminate the biases that the researcher might have after collecting data from only one source or one data collection technique. The researcher in this study used the questionnaire (Annexure E) and focus group interview (Annexure F) to corroborate the data. The whole process of data collection was planned for two hours, which involved one hour for completion of the questionnaire and one hour for the interview.

The sample included school principals from Winterveldt, Garankuwa, Mabopane and Soshanguve, in Gauteng province - the learners in these areas come from similar backgrounds.

Six principals were sampled, three whose schools performed excellently in the Systemic Evaluation (2007) and Annual National Assessment (2009) studies, and three whose schools performed poorly. Participants in this study responded individually to questionnaires which were followed by two separate group interviews. The questions centred around the four dimensions as discussed in Chapter 2, namely; i) Resource provider; ii) Instructional resource; iii) Communicator; and iv) Visible presence.

3.15. Data analysis

De Vos and Fouché (1998) list the following eight steps, referred to as Tesch's approach to data analysis, to be used for data analysis:

- Reading through all transcripts carefully to get a sense of the whole.

- Selecting one participant's response to find underlying meanings and thoughts of the responses which are then written in the margin. The step has to be repeated for all participants in the study.

- Clustering similar topics together.

- Matching the list to the data and finding out emerging categories.

- Reducing categories by grouping related topics that show interrelationships.

- Each category is coded and arranged accordingly.

- Assembling data material belonging together into one place and beginning with preliminary analysis.

- Existing data is recoded if necessary.

The researcher started by reading and then transcribing all the responses from each participant's questionnaire in order to get an overall sense of the responses. Responses from each participant were aligned in a matrix form which allowed for an easier comparison. The responses from the questionnaires were corroborated with the responses from the focus group interviews. After this process was completed, each transcript was hand coded; then data coding and

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segmenting was completed for further in-depth analysis where emerging textual themes were identified and grouped according to the four dimensions.

Crabtree and Miller (1999:164) suggest that in order to 'explore a limited facet of the data, a researcher may construct an analysis process that begins with more structure, such as that provided by a template organising style that uses a code manual'. The researcher in this study started by coding the collected data because, as recommended by Crabtree and Miller (1999), creating a code scheme/manual is reasonably fast, duplicable, and simple to understand for those pessimistic of qualitative research. The researcher then used templates to categorise the data in terms of the four dimensions of instructional leadership. According to Crabtree and Miller (1999:177), templates assist the researcher in 'categorising [the data] into empirically based and meaningful segments'.

The responses were analysed by identifying the emerging themes from excellently performing schools and those from poorly performing schools. Emerging themes were grouped and a deduction was then made to inform the perceptions and practices of principals on instructional leadership. The findings were then drawn from the collated data of all participants.

3.16. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research design and method employed in the study. The purpose of the study was explained, which was then used to direct the research method and design. The research question was linked to the four dimensions of instructional leadership as discussed in Chapter 2, and a brief description of each dimension was also highlighted to give clarity on how the dimensions link with the research question.

Since the researcher aimed to explore the practices of individuals, a qualitative research method was chosen. A brief explanation of each method of research

was given to explain the choice made by the researcher. The researcher opted for the qualitative design since it allows for the description of opinions and experiences that individuals have on a particular matter. The two techniques of data collection, i.e. questionnaire and interview, used in the study were also discussed.

The following topics were also discussed to explain the setting and measures taken by the researcher in preparation to collect data: i) Site setting and criteria, ii) Arrangements for access, iii) Population and sampling, iv) Trustworthiness and credibility, v) Role of the researcher, vi) Delimitations, vii) Ethical considerations, viii) Data collection, and ix) Data analysis procedure.

The next chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data.

CHAPTER 4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the research method and design, as well as the techniques that the researcher used in the study. Brief discussions were also made with regard to the role of the researcher and the sample for the study. This chapter follows from the previous one and presents the data collected, the analysis and the interpretation thereof.

4.2.   Data presentation

As referred to by Kerlinger (1979), in analysing data the researchers categorise, manipulate, summarise and interpret data collected so that findings and conclusions can then be drawn. According to De Vos and Fouché (1998) and Vithal and Jensen (1997), data analysis means making sense of the data collected.

The researcher in this study adapted Tesch's eight steps to data analysis, as listed in the previous chapter, in the following four steps (as cited by De Vos and Fouché, 1998):

▪ Reading through all questionnaires and interview transcript carefully to get a sense of the responses from each participant.

▪ Coding of questionnaire responses and formulating descriptions of interview data.

- Using template to categorise emerging themes/theories from each group with the dimensions discussed in Chapter 2.

- Comparing emerging themes from excellently performing schools with those from poorly performing schools.

For a better analysis of the results, schools that performed excellently were labelled Group 1 (comprising schools 'A, B and C') and schools that performed poorly were labelled Group 2 (comprising schools 'D, E and F').

Table 4-1 General information of the participants and school profiles

Items	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female
Experience in post	12 years	37 years	12 years	16 years	3 years	12 years
School type	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary	Primary
Experience in current school	10 years	13 years	12 years	16 years	3 years	12 years
School location	Township	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural
Educator: learner ratio	1:40	1:40	1:45	1:39	1:40	1:50

4.2.1   Step 1: Reading the transcripts

Reading through all questionnaires and interview transcript carefully to get a sense of the responses from each participant.

The researcher read through all the responses from the questionnaires and got an overall sense of the responses. Data from the interview transcript was then read in conjunction with the questionnaire responses in order to match the data.

4.2.2   Step 2: Coding the data

Coding of questionnaire responses and formulating descriptions of interview data.

Creswell (2008) describes coding as a process of labelling and collapsing the text to form broad themes in the data in order to make sense of the presented data. Data from each item was coded for each participant. The researcher analysed each participant's responses to find underlying meanings and thoughts of the responses.

4.2.3   Questionnaire responses from the participants

Detailed information follows:

Table 4-2 SECTION B: responses from questionnaires

No.	Questions	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1.	**How do you communicate the set academic standards to learners?**	Issue report cards LOs and ASs are communicated to learners	Teach learning activities verbally and in writing	Through learning area masters Provisioning of learner support material	Teach the learners the importance of learning	Set ASs and LOs Issue report cards	Communicate the pass targets Encourage them how to reach the standards
2.	**How do you keep learner discipline in the school?**	Lock gates Make sure educators attend to periods	Apply Code of conduct, school policy, classrooms rules and Alternatives to corporal punishment	Ensure that learners are engaged with school activities Involve parents	Make sure that educators are in class teaching	Apply school policy on learner conduct Involve police	Keep learners engaged in school work Award best behaved learners
3.	**How do you address poor learner performance?**	Intervention Involve parents Involve CPF	Learners with barriers are identified Results are analysed Weaknesses are identified and programmes are drawn	Remediation done Extra work given	Intervention done (internal and external support) Involve parents	Intervention done Draw school improvement plan	Remediation done Extra work given
4.	**How do you motivate learners to perform well academically?**	Give awards quarterly Issue report cards quarterly	Give accolades to learners	Give awards to learners Recognition given at assembly	Give awards to learners	Encourage learners to read	Give awards to learners

5.	How often do you discuss learner performance with learners themselves?	Regularly	Regularly	Sometimes	Sometimes	Regularly	Regularly

Table 4-3 SECTION C: responses from questionnaires

No.	Questions	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1.	**How do you communicate the set academic standards to educators?**	Staff meetings Briefings SMT meetings Circulate analysis of results	Staff meetings SAT meetings Phase meetings Learning area meetings	Hold meetings to discuss standards	Learning area meetings Departmental meetings	Follow IQMS Make sure lesson plans are drawn	Analyse results Hold SMT, phase and staff meetings
2.	**How do you keep educator discipline in the school?**	Set example as a principal Lock gates Monitor timetable	Apply school policy, SACE, ELRC document	Educators complete time register and period register	Encourage them to do as expected Call them to order if they falter	Apply SACE and policies	Apply EEA, code of good practice
3.	**How do you address poor educator performance?**	Hold meetings with the HoD concerned Follow-up with the educator concerned	Draw staff development plan Mentoring provided	Hold sessions with educator(s) concerned	Encourage team work	Hold meetings SWOT analysis Draw school improvement plan Monitor educator performance	Discuss with concerned educator and the immediate senior Deal with barriers Provide mentoring Provide support
4.	**Do you motivate educators to do their work optimally?** **How so?**	Yes Keep good results Involve parents	Yes Coaching and mentoring Motivational talks	Yes Communication with educators on their work as professionals	Yes Provide resources Listen to them Provide help where needed	Yes Hold meetings Have sessions to address problems Promote team work and capacity building	Yes Engage in open discussions Allow networking Give awards Team building
5.	**How often do you discuss learner performance with educators?**	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly

Table 4-4 SECTION D: responses from questionnaires

No.	Questions	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1.	**Would you say you are highly visible to the educators and learners?**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	If yes, what activities do you engage in to ensure your visibility?	Teach class Monitor timetable and class attendance by educators	Teach class Take part in extra-curricular activities	Hold regular meetings Supervise absenteeism, late-coming	Teach class Relief educators	Hold assembly Hold meetings	Teach class Hold assembly Supervise school cleanliness
2.	**Are you actively involved in curriculum delivery?**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How so?	Subject teacher	Subject teacher Conduct class visits	Substitute absent educators Interpret policies	Subject teacher Relief educators	Class teacher Monitor SMT on curriculum	Class teacher Monitor SMT on curriculum
3.	**How often do you do class visits for all educators in the school?**	Sometimes	Regularly	Sometimes	Sometimes	Regularly	Sometimes
4.	**How often do you control educators' work?**	Regularly	Regularly	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Regularly

5.	How often do you control learners' work?	Regularly	Regularly	Sometimes	Regularly	Regularly	Regularly
6.	What do you understand by 'instructional leadership'?	Being in front Give direction on activities	How leadership and management activities are practiced by a leader	Taking the lead	Leading by example Having and communicating the vision Promote team work	Principal as the main man on curriculum issues and enhances effective teaching	Individual's behaviours that guide the conduct and action
7.	What support do you give to your educators in performing the instructional duties?	Provide resources Interact with educators	Communicate with them Provide guidance	Provide resources Address problems through meetings and workshops	Communicate the expectations to educators	Encourage team work	Provide resources
8.	Which activities do you engage in to improve learner achievement?	Analyse quarterly achievement	Follow policies on curriculum: reading, writing and numeracy	Follow policies on curriculum: reading, writing and numeracy	Encourage learners to read	Involve parents Encourage reading and mental Develop curriculum improvement plan	Involved in SBST Assist to improvise teaching aids

Table 4-5 SECTION E: Responses from questionnaires

No.	Questions	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
1.	**How do you establish a positive culture of teaching and learning within the school?**	Lead by example Lead from front Involve all stakeholders	School organogram is respected Learners treated with love and respect	Create a conducive learning environment Have policies and timetable in place	Control lesson plans	Use policies Hold meetings Have SIP in place	Provide resources Involve all stakeholders
2.	**How do you ensure protection of teaching time?**	Monitor late-coming and periods No visitors or meetings during teaching time Clear communication to all	Follow timetable Supervise periods	Monitor timetable Supervise time register and attendance	Monitor timetable Walk around	Have timetable Supervise time register	Monitor timetable Supervise class attendance
3.	**How do you manage your time in giving support to effective curriculum delivery and management of the school?**	Follow timetable Hold SMT meetings for planning	Follow personal plan and timetable	Follow personal timetable	Follow personal timetable	Have year plan Have personal timetable Have budget	Follow personal timetable Monitor SMT Conduct class visits Involve parents
4.	**Do you provide development opportunities for your educators? How?**	Yes Workshops Allow educators to lead committees	Yes Educators attend distance education Invite outsiders for development	Yes Encourage educators to enrol with tertiary institutions Invite experts for	Yes Inform educators of development opportunities Encourage information sharing	Yes Workshops Encourage educators to further their studies	Yes Share information on development opportunities Encourage educators to apply

No.	Question						
				development			for departmental bursaries Allow educators to network
5.	**How do you ensure sufficient resources for your school?**	Follow budget Functional LTSM committee	Follow budget Request donations	Follow budget	Caring of available resources Request donations Purchases done	Draw budget Request donations Raise funds Maintenance of resources	Follow budget Seek sponsors Raise funds

4.2.4   Interview responses from the participants

Group 1: Excellently performing schools (A, B and C)

According to the group members, the activities that the principal should engage in as an instructional leader include: improving academic performance; monitoring attendance and punctuality (to school and to class) by educators and learners; take the lead; conducting class visits; and providing guidance and support.

What became prominent in the responses was that the principal should make sure that effective teaching and learning takes place in the classrooms. This is an extract from the responses from one of the participants:

> *'The principal should not just rely on the reports from the heads of the departments and the deputy principal. The principal should also conduct class visits so that he can identify the problem areas and intervene before they escalate.'*

The group also emphasised that as an instructional leader, the principal should lead by example and have a class that he is teaching.

> *'Class teaching keeps that principal abreast with the curriculum changes and how they should be implemented. He experiences the same frustrations and challenges that ordinary educators experience and he can relate to them. As a result he is able to give informed advice to the educators when they experience the challenges.'*

According to this participant, an instructional leader needs to be informed about the curriculum developments and changes so that he can assist the educators to implement them and work towards improvement of academic results.

The participants also stressed that results can also improve when educators and learners respect teaching time and quality teaching is always observed. The principal should see to it that educators and learners are at school and in class on time.

One of the participants further mentioned that:

> *'In ensuring improved performance, teachers should be in class teaching and learners be in class learning'.*

In addition, School A stated:

> *'The principal should lead by example in all activities of the school: be it punctuality, teaching or submitting work on time. The principal should be the role model for educators and learners; they look upon him for conduct and advice'.*

On the question of activities that they practice to improve learner performance, the group declared that learner performance should be analysed after every assessment, intervention strategies should be employed as soon as the problems are identified. Intervention strategies include remedial, extra work and parental involvement.

School B:

> *'One important factor that is normally neglected in terms of ensuring high performance is educator reflection. Educators tend to always point fingers at the learners when there is high failure rate and sometimes the problem emanates from themselves. They need to do self-introspection and identify how they contributed to learners failing'.*

The input by School B was supported by the other participants who also stated that sometimes educators fail to convey knowledge and skills to the learners, hence learners fail.

The group also highlighted the principle of team work as a means to improve learner performance. Educators should plan together and share information in their subject and departmental meetings. Educators should be open enough to point out their problem areas so that they can advice one another as they engage in their meetings.

According to one of the participants,

> *'…educators can only be open to one another if there is mutual trust and open communication amongst themselves and they do not feel judged by the other colleagues. When educators work together, they even engage in team teaching where one educator can teach a particular topic in another educator's class that the other educator has a problem with.*

Sometimes they invite their colleagues to observe their teaching and give them constructive advice so that they can improve their teaching.'

About their role as instructional leaders, the group agreed that the role is challenging because of the administrative tasks that they also need to perform. They continued to state that principals spend most of their time in meetings and with paper work that is needed by the district office.

School A:

'I sometimes refuse to attend the meetings called by the district, especially when they are called at the last minute. As a principal I make my own plans and someone who didn't do his planning on time just calls us to a meeting at any time, that does not work with me.'

The group agreed that the only way they manage as instructional leaders is to put curriculum delivery at the top of their lists and everything else will follow. The only way to survive is to draw a personal plan and try by all means to stick to it.

The other participant stated that he does his administrative work after contact time and also attend to parents after school unless if it is an emergency, otherwise one will not have time to monitor teaching and do his own teaching.

The group further mentioned that a principal needs to delegate functions. Delegation alleviates the pressure that principals have and also empowers the

juniors. What the group also stressed was that that the principal needs to follow up on delegated duties because he is the ultimate accounting officer.

School C:

> *'I'm fortunate to have a deputy principal who is always willing to learn and assist. She is a person I can trust with some of my duties, especially administrative work that relates to curriculum issues. She is a serious relief on my side as I am able to get time to do other duties and monitor teaching and learning in the whole school'.*

In summary, the group agreed that instructional leadership is an interesting role if one knows how to manage the time in such a way that it benefits the learners and academic performance.

Group 2: Poorly performing schools (D, E and F)

Participants from Group 2 responded to the question of the activities of an instructional leader as follows:

School D:

> *'Communicating the vision to others and influencing educators to work as a team'.*

The other participants supported the description by the participant from school D. The other participant added by saying,

> 'It is when the principal is the main person on curriculum issues and he leads by example'. (School E)

According to the participants, in order to improve learner achievement, the principal needs to encourage learners to read more. Another glaring factor from the group was that the school needs to involve the parents.

School D further said:

> 'Parental involvement is very crucial in improving learners' achievement because they need to assist the learners while they are at home'.

On the same issue, the participants expressed their frustration with parents in that parents do not fully support the school activities and their children's education.

One participant continued to say,

> 'Parents in our communities do not show interest at all on their kids' education. They don't even come to the school when called for intervention. The whole education of the learners is left in the hands of the "poor" educator'.

The other participant added by saying,

> *'Even worse, most learners stay in child-headed families, others are orphans'.*

The group also agreed that an instructional leader needs to provide the needed resources to support the educators in their work.

On the question of how they feel about their role as instructional leaders, the group was in unison in saying that the role is just an addition to their already loaded job description and they believe that the role should be left to deputy principals and heads of departments.

> *'The department expects too much from the principals and surely, principals cannot manage. It is as if the principal is the only manager in the school, no accountability is put on the other managers within the school like the deputy principals and the heads of the departments. There is just too much for the principals, hence they are sickly and cannot function to their best': (School F)*

School E added by saying that:

> *'There is so much administrative work that the principal needs to do. When then will he be able to also check curriculum delivery? This should be the job of the other SMT members'.*

The group declared that even though they understand what is expected of them as instructional leaders, they rarely perform those duties because they are overwhelmed with the administration duties that they need to do.

Table 4-6 Summary from the interviews

Questions	Group 1 (Excellently performing schools)	Group 2 (Poorly performing schools)
Question 1	- Improve academic performance - Monitor attendance and punctuality - Class visits - Provide guidance and support - Lead by example - Class teaching - Keep abreast with changes	- Communicate vision - Team work - Principal as main person - Lead by example
Question 2	- Analyse results - Remediation - Educator reflection - Team work - Open communication	- Encourage learners to reading - Involve parents - Provide resources
Question 3	- Challenging role - Contests with administration work - Personal timetable - Teaching and learning as	- Overworked - Rarely perform instructional duties

	priority	
	• Delegation	
	• Interesting role	

4.2.5 Step 3: Categorising themes in the data

Using the template to categorise emerging themes/theories from each group with the dimensions discussed in Chapter 1 – the link between emerging themes from questionnaires and interviews with the dimensions.

The researcher categorised the emerging themes from the questionnaires and interviews in terms of the dimensions for instructional leadership, namely, i) resource provider; ii) instructional resource; iii) communicator; and iv) visible presence.

Table 4-7 Link between emerging themes from questionnaires and interviews with the dimensions

Dimensions	Group 1 (Excellently performing schools)	Group 2 (Poorly performing schools)
Resource Provider	• Establish good relations among all stakeholders. • Provide resources • Apply policies • Utilise the budget; Ask for donations.	• Apply policies • Provide resources • Utilise the budget; Ask for donations.
Instructional Resource	• Monitor educator attendance to classes • Monitor timetable, time and period registers • Interpret and implement curriculum policies e.g. Foundations for Learning policy • Implement policies on discipline • Extrinsic motivation • Issue report cards • Analyse results and develop improvement plan • Employ intervention strategies • Meeting with educator	• Monitor educator attendance to classes • Monitor time table and time register • Implement curriculum policies e.g. Foundations for Learning policy • Implement policies on discipline • Extrinsic motivation • Issue report cards • Employ intervention strategies • Meeting with educator concerned • Encourage team work • Provide guidance

	concerned	• Take the lead
	• Encourage team work	• Engage in teaching
	• Provide support	• Do class visits
	• Coaching and mentoring; Motivational talk	• Control educators' and learners' work sometimes
	• Take the lead	• Provide resources
	• Engage in teaching	• Have a vision
	• Do class visits	• Involve parents
	• Control educators' and learners' work regularly	• Communication with educators
	• Provide resources	• Follow personal time table
	• Have vision	• Make educators aware of development opportunities
	• Involve parents	
	• Open Communication with educators and learners	
	• Protect teaching time	
	• Follow personal time table	
	• Provide development for educators	
	• Improve academic performance	
	• Keep abreast with educational changes	
	• Encourage educator reflection	
Communicator	• Issue report cards	• Issue report cards
	• Hold meetings with SMT and	

	educators	Hold meetings with educators
	• Communicate with educators and learners regularly	• Address learners at the assembly
Visible Presence	• Engage in teaching	• Engage in teaching
	• Monitor class attendance and time table	• Hold meetings with educators
	• Hold meetings with educators and learners	• Address learners at assembly

4.2.6 *Step 4: Comparing the themes*

Comparing emerging themes from excellently performing schools with those from poorly performing schools

The researcher compared the emerging themes between Group 1 (excellent performers) and Group 2 (poorly performing) with the aim of getting a sense of what each group reported on, for the sake of analysis and comparison.

4.3. **Summary of the responses**

The two groups agreed on most of the activities in relation to the dimensions. Basically, they concurred that the instructional leader has to perform the four basic functions of resource provider; instructional resource; communicator; and be visibly present, as suggested by McEwan (2003).

However, there are other activities that Group 1 highlighted as crucial to the effectiveness of an instructional leader. Furthermore, the groups had different perspectives with regard to the role that they have to play as instructional leaders. The findings will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

4.4. Lessons learnt from the responses of both groups

Table 4-8 Lessons learnt according to the four dimensions of Ewan (2003)

Dimension	Group 1 (Excellently performing schools)	Group 2 (Poorly performing schools)
Resource provider	• Establish relations among stakeholders	
Instructional resource	• Analyse results and develop improvement plan • Coaching and mentoring • Control educators' and learners' work regularly • Protect teaching time • Improve performance • Keep abreast with changes • Encourage educator reflection	• Control educators' and learners' work sometimes
Communicator	• Communicate with learners	• Address learners at assembly
Visible presence	• Monitor class attendance and punctuality • Hold meetings with educators and learners	• Hold meetings with educators

On the question of how they feel about their role as instructional leaders:

Table 4-9 Responses regarding role of instructional leader

Question	Group 1 (Excellently performing schools)	Group 2 (Poorly performing schools)
How do you feel about the role of a principal as an 'instructional leader'?	• Do the best to perform the role • Delegate duties • Put teaching and learning as priority • Interesting role	• Rarely perform the role • Principals are overworked • Added role

4.5. Conclusion

The researcher in this chapter presented and analysed the data collected from the two groups. Data was collected using the questionnaires and the focus group interview. The interviews were used to corroborate the data that was gathered through the questionnaires.

Thereafter, Tesch's approach (as cited by de Vos and Fouche, 1998) to data analysis was adapted to analyse the collected data. The participants were grouped in terms of their performance in the SE (Systemic Evaluations) and the

ANA (Annual National Assessment) (DoE, 2008). Schools that performed excellently were labelled Group 1 and those that performed poorly were labelled Group 2.

Responses from the two groups were analysed to identify the practices that separate schools in Group 1 from the schools in Group 2 in terms of performance. The responses were aligned with the four dimensions as discussed in Chapter 2 (Ewan, 2003). The research findings established that though the two groups share most of the practices, there are practices that are performed by the excellently performing schools that impact positively on learner achievement. The following chapter will outline the findings, conclusion and recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the data that was collected through questionnaires and interviews was presented, analysed and interpreted. The Tesch's approach (as cited by de Vos and Fouche, 1998) to data analysis was adapted to suit the analysis of data collected. Schools were divided into two categories, namely, Group 1 which comprised of schools that performed excellently and Group 2 comprising of schools that performed poorly in SE and ANA. This made it easier for the researcher to compare the practices that each group performed in relation to the four dimensions of instructional leadership as discussed in chapter 2. This chapter will provide the summary, findings and recommendations of the study.

5.2. Summary of previous chapters

In Chapter 1, the orientation and background to the study were provided. Instructional leadership as a leadership style was introduced and the factors that prompted this study were also clarified. According to Ruebling, Stow, Kayona and Clarke (2004) and Resolution 1 of 2008 (DoE, 2008), the principal is expected to take responsibility and accountability of the performance of the school. The role of the principal to take responsibility of the learners' achievement calls for an instructional leadership style, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

This qualitative study was influenced by the national results of the Systemic Evaluations (2001, 2007) and the Annual National Assessment (2009) (DoE, 2009) which revealed poor reading, writing and numeracy skills by the South African learners in general.

The findings were supported by the international studies such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (1999), the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEC) (2000), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (2006) and The Monitoring Learner Achievement (MLA) Project (1999), which also pointed out that most primary school learners are unable to express themselves in the language of teaching and learning, and that their numeracy skills are not well developed (DoE, 2007).

The international tests further concluded that South African learners perform poorly compared with other countries that took part in the studies (DoE, 2007). At the same time, there are schools that performed excellently in the same Annual National Assessment (ANA) (DoE, 2009). This discrepancy compelled the researcher to explore the practices that schools that perform excellently apply that impacted positively on improved learner achievement. Even though the Grade 12 results are used as the barometer to check how the Department of Education is performing, educationists believe that lower Grades' results also impact on the performance in Grade 12. The researcher therefore used primary schools as the population.

In Chapter 2 the researcher briefly outlined the difference between the concepts 'management' and 'leadership' which are found to be the competing roles of the

school principal. Kroon (1996) and Smit and Cronjé (1998) define management according to its core functions, namely, planning, organising, leading/activating and controlling. A manager performs these functions with the aim of ensuring efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve the set organisational goals.

Leadership, on the other hand, is defined by Bush and Glover (2003) as a process of getting things done through people with emphasis on relations, communication and motivation.

The instructional leadership model was also discussed in detail, which led the researcher to the concept of instructional leadership which is the leadership style under discussion in this study. According to the De Bevoice (1984) and Budhal (2000), instructional leadership is the behaviours and actions taken by the principal to enhance learner achievement and growth. Different views with regard to the extent of the impact of instructional leadership on learner achievement were also discussed.

For researchers such as Suskavrevic and Blake (1999) and Bartlett (2008), there is no significant correlation between instructional leadership and learner achievement. On the other hand, effective instructional leadership yields high achieving schools (Dhlamini, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, 2001). According to Fink and Resnick (1999) and Lashway (2002), principals are unsure of how to intervene and advice educators on curriculum delivery and instruction since only a few principals demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of instructional leadership.

Different activities of a principal as an instructional leader were discussed in line with the four dimensions of instructional leadership, as outlined by McEwan (2003:197). The four dimensions are: (i) resource provider; (ii) instructional resource; (iii) communicator; and (iv) visible presence.

Chapter 3 outlined the purpose of the study, research design and techniques, data collection and analysis. A sample was identified from the entire population of primary school principals in the Tshwane west district. The main question was phrased and sub-questions were also drafted from the main question so as to enable the researcher to collect relevant data.

Main question:

What are the practices of primary school principals in Tshwane West district in Gauteng province in their role as instructional leaders in enhancing learner achievement?

Sub-questions:

- How do principals understand their role as instructional leaders?

- How do principals fulfil their instructional leadership role?

- Which activities do principals as instructional leaders engage in so as to improve learner achievement?

A brief discussion between the quantitative and qualitative research methods was provided. The researcher opted for a qualitative research method instead of a quantitative research method since, according to Creswell (1994), a qualitative research is useful when the researcher intends to get a proper understanding about human phenomenon. A qualitative research method allows the respondents to express their views in terms of words and text instead of statistics, as in the case of quantitative research method. In line with Creswell (2008), a qualitative design seemed more appropriate since it affords the respondents to articulate their attitudes, opinions, behaviours or characteristics.

The site was chosen to suit access for the researcher in terms of time, mobility and resources. The site chosen was the Tshwane West district office in Gauteng because the researcher works in the same district as the participants and has full access to the site.

Furthermore, proper arrangements were made and permission was granted from both the Gauteng Department of Education and the university so that the research could be conducted.

Since the question was based on the practices of the school principals, primary school principals to be specific, the researcher sampled six primary schools in the district, which is the equivalent of 10% of the entire population in the selected area. The researcher used the semi-structured questionnaire and focus group interview which gave the respondents an opportunity to air their views and opinions without feeling threatened by the researcher.

In order to address the limitations that could result from the researcher being the senior to the participants, the researcher used the individual anonymous questionnaires and focus group interview instead of a one-to-one interview which would have raised issues of fear of victimisation. The Tesch's approach to data analysis (as cited by de Vos and Fouche, 1998) was adapted to analyse the data that was collected.

In Chapter 4, the researcher analysed the data following the adapted version of the Tesch's approach (as cited by de Vos and Fouche, 1998) to data analysis. The six schools were divided into two categories, namely, Group 1 consisting of schools that performed excellently, and Group 2 consisting of schools that

performed poorly in both the SE (DoE, 2008) and the ANA (DoE, 2009). This enabled the researcher to analyse the practices that each group performs and how the practices impact on learner achievement. The findings of the research and the implications thereof are discussed in this chapter.

5.3.   Findings from literature review

The literature review revealed different conclusions with regard to the extent of the impact of the principal's instructional leadership role on learner achievement. Researchers such as Suskavrevic and Blake (1999) and Bartlett (2008) contend that there is no significant relationship between the principal's instructional leadership and learner achievement. According to Marzano et al. (2005) and Crawford (1998), there is a low correlation between the principal's instructional leadership and the learners' achievement. They further claim that there are other factors that affect learner achievement such as learners', educators' and parents' behaviours.

Kwinda (2002) and Fink and Resnick (1999) support this notion and further state that principals are not well trained on instructional leadership, hence they tend to delegate the role to the deputy principals and heads of departments as they are unsure of how to intervene and support educators on instruction. However, Hallinger and Heck (1998) and Mthombeni (2004) report a direct correlation between the principal's instructional leadership and learners' achievement. This argument is supported by researchers such as Hargreaves (1994), Hopkins (2001) and Khuzwayo (2005) who assert that effective principal's instructional leadership yields high achieving schools.

5.4. Findings from the empirical study

Data was collected from six primary school principals (Group 1, comprising schools that performed excellently, and Group 2 comprising schools that performed poorly in the SE (DoE, 2008) and the ANA (DoE, 2009). Data collection techniques that were used were questionnaires and focus group interviews. Schools were divided into two groups in terms of their performance in the SE (DoE, 2008) and the ANA (DoE, 2009). The division enabled that a clear analysis could be made in terms of the practices that impact positively on learner achievement. Questions raised were based on the four dimensions of instructional leadership as discussed in Chapter 2 (McEwan, 2003). The four dimensions are: (i) resource provider; (ii) instructional resource; (iii) communicator; and (iv) visible presence.

5.5. Summary of findings

In presenting the findings, the researcher categorised the themes that emerged from the data collected through the questionnaires and interviews according to the four dimensions as presented by McEwan (2003); namely, resource provider; instructional resource; communicator; and visible presence. Firstly, the researcher looked at the common themes from both groups A (excellently performing) and B (poorly performing). Thereafter, the distinguishing themes from both groups were also presented in relation to the four dimensions as mentioned.

5.5.1 Common themes that emerged from groups A and B

▪ **Resource provider**

The principal needs to make sure that the policies and systems are in place to guide the activities of the school. Over and above that, a resource provider should also ensure that the policies and systems are followed to the letter and implemented consistently. A resource provider needs to **provide for the human, physical and financial needs** of the school. The principal should facilitate the drawing up of the budget and supplement the financial allocation from the department by requesting sponsors and donations. The resource provider should make sure that the school finances are utilised to enhance curriculum and instruction delivery with the aim of improving learner achievement.

▪ **Instructional resource**

Curriculum policies and systems have to be established and implemented. The policies and systems have to be communicated to the staff and learners so that they can have a clear understanding of what is expected and how to achieve the desired results. In addition to the curriculum policies, the principal needs to implement policies on discipline in order to keep order and maintain a **conducive environment** for effective teaching and learning.

As an instructional resource, the principal should have a **vision** and make sure that the vision is well understood and followed by all stakeholders. The vision of any school should be centred on improved learner achievement and it starts

with **educators and learners attending classes on time**. The principal should therefore **monitor adherence to the timetable; monitor the time and the period registers** as well.

To ensure high performance within the school, the principal needs to first establish the strengths and areas of challenges that the educators experience. The principal should be able to identify such strengths and challenges by controlling the educators' work and conducting class visits in order to get to grips with what is taking place inside the classrooms. **Class visits** will also enable the principal to identify the impediments to effective teaching and learning, and deal with them at their earliest stages.

In order to assist learners who are not reaching the expected outcomes, the principal should **provide the support and guidance to educators and learners** and also assist educators to develop intervention strategies that will enhance learner achievement. In cases where it is the educator who is not performing as expected, the principal needs to promote open communication with such an educator in order to provide the necessary support.

The principal should also encourage teamwork among educators so that they can assist and advise one another with regard to instruction. The principal needs to make educators aware of the **development opportunities** that are available for them to improve their performance and also take the initiative to organise development for them.

Principals who have classes that they teach are able to give informed advice and guidance because they understand the actual frustrations and challenges that the educators experience.

In actual fact, principal needs to **lead by example** and educators will emulate their behaviour towards improved performance. The principal needs also to show acknowledgement for educators and learners who are performing excellently. Learners become motivated when they receive their report cards that explain their performance and how to improve. Again, the principal can **motivate educators and learners** by issuing awards for best performance. Extrinsic motivation is important in that it serves as an appreciation for excellent performance and it also motivates those who are lacking so as to perform better in future.

- **Communicator**

On the question of the instructional leader being a communicator, the two groups emphasised that the principal needs to promote **open communication** with educators. Open communication can be kept by holding meetings with the educators. Issuing of report cards to learners is also seen as a way of communicating to learners about their performance.

- **Visible presence**

Principals who are visibly present are described by both groups as those that have classes that they teach themselves. Being **class teachers** makes the

principals visible to educators because they lead by example and act as role models. As learners engage with the principals in the classrooms, it becomes easy for the learners to approach them.

5.5.2 Distinguishing themes that emerged from groups A and B

- **Resource provider**

Group 1 participants explained that as a resource provider, the principal has to establish **good relations** among all stakeholders. The good relations will promote **teamwork** and cooperation which is necessary for effectiveness and productivity. Different parties need to know and understand what the other parties are doing so that they can complement each other in the achievement of the school's vision and goals.

- **Instructional resource**

According to Group 1, in order to deal with learners who are underperforming, the principal should **analyse the results** and identify areas where support is needed. Thereafter, an improvement plan should be drawn to address the identified areas of weakness. The approach will inform remedial work that has to be done where **intervention strategies** are employed to assist struggling learners.

Unlike Group 2, participants who reported that they sometimes control the work of educators and learners, Group 1 indicated that in order to improve learner achievement the principal needs to control **the educators' and learners' work regularly.** Regular control will enable the principal to keep track of what is happening with regard to teaching and learning, and intervene as soon as the problems arise.

According to Group 1, educators need to be encouraged to perform self reflection on their teaching and its impact. **Self reflection** will assist educators to identify their weaknesses and seek appropriate assistance in order to improve their performance.

Group 1 further highlighted that the principal is also expected to keep track of educators who are underperforming through regular **class visits** and create an environment where such educators will feel free to communicate with the principal and other educators to seek help. The approach to deal with underperforming educators should be in a way that will promote teamwork amongst the educators.

Again, the principal is expected to give advice and guidance for educators who are under-performing. In order to give proper advice, the principal needs to **keep abreast of the curriculum and instruction changes and developments**. Another way of **dealing with underperformance by educators** is for the principal to provide coaching and mentoring. The processes of coaching and mentoring require an environment of trust and professionalism. It is the responsibility of the principal to create such an environment. At the same time, educators and learners who perform excellently need to be rewarded in order to keep them motivated.

The role of the principal is to ensure improved learner achievement in the school and the starting point should be **protection of teaching time.** The principal should not allow disruptions to teaching time as this will compromise effective teaching and learning. All activities within the school should be

directed towards improved learner achievement and the principal should direct all the activities for the attainment of the school's goal.

- **Communicator**

Over and above holding meetings with the educators and issuing report cards to learners, Group 1 emphasised the need for the principal to also hold meetings with the learners so as to encourage a **two-way communication and feedback.** This approach will enable the learners to approach the principal when they need support and proper intervention can be applied at once.

- **Visible presence**

In order to be visibly present, Group 2 stated that the principal needs to hold meetings with the educators and be involved in class teaching. In addition, Group 1 indicated that the principal also has to hold meetings with the learners. Furthermore, the principal has to monitor punctuality to school and classes by both educators and learners and also monitor that the educators and learners attend classes in line with the timetable of the school.

On the question of how they feel about their role as instructional leaders, Group 2 participants view it as an added role which is overloading the principals. They also confess that they rarely perform that role because they have a lot of administrative work that they need to do. The role of instructional leadership is mainly played by the deputy principals and the heads of the departments.

On the other hand, Group 1 participants stated that they see their role as instructional leaders as interesting and vital to the functionality and overall performance of the school. To them, **instructional leadership takes precedence** over all other duties; hence they delegate their deputies and heads of the departments to deal with the administrative work. The Group 1 participants believe that instructional leadership is the main function of the school principal because teaching and learning is the main reason for the school's existence.

5.5.3   Emerging themes and activities in the adapted model

In relation to the five activities of the integrated model for instructional leadership, as set out by Hallinger and Murphy (1987), Van Deventer and Kruger (2003), McEwan (2000), Zepeda (2004), Mbatha (2004) and Kruger (1999) as discussed in Chapter 2, the two groups agree on four of the activities.

The activities are as follows:

▪ Set and communicate school's academic goals, including academic expectations:

The two groups agree that as an instructional leader, the principal needs to set the school's goals which emanate from the vision of the school. These goals should be communicated to all stakeholders and the principal should see to it that all activities within the school are geared towards achievement of such goals. At the top of the list should be learners' academic achievement and the

principal should ensure that all stakeholders understand that and support the goals. Masitsa (1995) and Mthombeni (2004) support this, and argue that an effective instructional leader is the one who is visionary, sets the goals and communicates them to all stakeholders.

- Ensure a conducive environment and provide the necessary resources:

According to Lethoko (1999), Masitsa (1995) and Naidoo (1999), poor infrastructure contributes to low educator and learner morale which later translates into poor performance. In line with this argument, the two groups in the research state that for a school to be fully functional, the principal should ensure that all educators and learners are provided with the necessary resources.

An instructional leader should make sure that all resources, namely, physical, human and financial, are provided for and that they are utilised effectively to support instruction within the school. The other resource that was brought up is time. Excellently performing schools indicated that it is the role of the principal to make sure that teaching time is always protected and not compromised for any reason.

This notion is also supported by Zuma (2009) who states that for schools to be effective, educators and learners need to be in classes and teaching and learning should be given first priority in all schools.

- Supervise and evaluate instructional practices and monitor progress on learner achievement:

An instructional leader should see to it that effective teaching is taking place and the two groups mentioned that in order for the principals to fulfil the role as instructional leaders, they need to move around the school premises; do class visits and conduct formal and informal interviews with both educators and learners. Hopkins (2001) concurs and mentions that schools that perform better are the ones in which classroom observations are conducted regularly. The principal should also control the work of educators and learners and match it with what is happening in the classrooms. In cases of poor performance, the principal should be able to identify such performance on time so that the necessary intervention can be sought.

- Provide advice and support for instruction:

The two groups also agree that as an instructional leader, the principal should provide the necessary advice and support to the educators and learners so that performance can be enhanced. The principals should therefore be abreast of all the developments and changes within the education system so that they can provide informed advices to the educators and learners when needed (Sergiovanni, 1995). In cases where they cannot advise accordingly, principals should afford educators an opportunity to seek advice from outsiders and the principal should support such initiatives at all cost.

The one activity that distinguished the two groups from each other is:

- Staff development:

Though Group 2 participants mentioned that they make educators aware of the development opportunities, Group 1 participants perceived it to be an important factor towards enhanced educator performance and learner achievement. The group indicated that it is not sufficient for the principal to make educators aware of the development opportunities; the principal needs to also to take the initiative of providing for coaching and mentorship programmes for the educators.

Staff development can also entail instances where outside experts are invited to the school to conduct school-based workshops and training. According to Steyn (1996) if the principal does not show interest in staff development, chances are slim that the educators can take the initiative to develop themselves on their own. Group 1 participants claim that **staff development enhances educator effectiveness and confidence which results in high performance and achievement.**

Andrews et al. (1994) and Dhlamini (2008) support this statement and further state that the principal should facilitate staff development and provide the staff with the opportunity and time to empower themselves. This notion is supported by DuFour and Berkey (1995) who assert that the principal needs to create opportunities for professional development and growth of the staff. Some of the aims of staff development, as mentioned by Steyn (1996), are that it improves the educator's performance; it is for the personal fulfilment of an individual; and

it changes the individual's behaviour emanating from the ineffectiveness that the person was displaying.

5.6. Implications of the research

In relation to the sub-questions emanating from the main question as raised by the researcher in chapter 1:

▪ How do principals understand their role as instructional leaders?

The participants showed a good understanding of what the instructional leadership role entails. They stated that instructional leadership means putting instruction and learner achievement central to all the school's activities. The principal is expected to take the lead in terms of ensuring that the school's goals are shared and understood by all stakeholders and should give direction in terms of attaining such goals.

▪ How do principals adapt to responsibilities related to instructional leadership?

The two groups differed on how they adapt to instructional leadership as a role that they have to perform. Group 2 participants felt that it is a role that should not be performed by principals as they are already over-burdened by the administrative work that they have to do. They believe that the role should be left to the deputy principals and heads of the departments. The group also confessed that although they understand what they need to do as instructional leaders, they rarely perform the duties of an instructional leader because of their workload.

On the other hand, Group 1 participants perceived the role of instructional leadership as a cornerstone of the school's existence. They believe that everything within the school should be centred on improved instruction and learner achievement.

The Group 1 participants stated that as a principal, one has a lot of administrative work that they need to do but they rather delegate the administrative work to the deputies and heads of the departments while they focus on enhancing learner achievement within the school. They also stated that instructional leadership is an interesting role because it keeps the principal on par with what is happening with regard to teaching and learning, and appropriate steps can be taken as soon as threats to effective teaching and learning are identified.

- Which activities do principals as instructional leaders engage in so as to improve learner achievement?

The two group members displayed a good sense of what principals need to do as instructional leaders. The activities included setting and communication of the school's goals with learner achievement at the top; building teamwork amongst educators so that they can assist one another in their endeavour to enhance learner achievement; control of educators' and learners' work which should be accompanied by class visits; open communication with the educators; giving support and guidance where necessary and encouraging educator development.

The difference between the two groups is that Group 1 participants emphasised that the principal needs to monitor punctual attendance by both educators and learners to school and classes. In order to enable the principal to intervene appropriately, results analysis needs to be done and improvement plans be drawn and followed. Learners are seen as important stakeholders in learner achievement and communication with them should also be open and embraced. Instead of the principal just making educators aware of the development opportunities, the principal needs to initiate, encourage and support educator development in order to improve their performance and confidence.

The researcher analysed the activities that schools that perform excellently practice different from those that are practiced by schools that perform poorly. In line with the dimensions, the following were identified:

- **Resource provider** – the principal needs to establish good relations amongst and between educators and learners.

- **Instructional resource** – the principal needs to be visionary; analyse results and develop improvement plan; protect teaching time; regularly control the work of educators and learners; provide support and guidance; and plan and support educator development.

- **Communicator** – the principal should also communicate with learners, not just the educators.

- **Visible presence** – the principal should monitor punctual attendance by both educators and learners to school and to classes.

5.7.   *Summary of the study*

From the current study it is clear that the principal's instructional leadership has an influence on learner achievement. Principals who practice the instructional leadership activities perform better in enhancing learner achievement compared with those who do not. The argument is supported by Dhlamini (2008), Hallinger and Heck (1996), Hargreaves (1994), Hopkins (2001), Khuzwayo (2005), Mbatha (2004), Mthombeni (2004), Fink and Resnick (1999), McEwan (2000), Brookover and Lezotte (1982) and Prawat (1993) who contend that instructional leadership fosters a positive change in the classrooms which results in enhanced learner achievement.

From the findings of the literature review and the current study, the following conclusions can be made with regard to the principal's role as an instructional leader. As an instructional leader, the principal should be a resource provider; instructional resource; communicator; and be visibly present.

In fulfilling the role of an instructional leader as mentioned in Table 2.1 the principal should:

- Establish good relations amongst and between educators and learners and also foster two-way communication.

- Make sure that academic results are analysed and interventions strategies are followed to improve learner achievement.

- Conduct class visits.

- Ensure that teaching and learning time is protected and educators and learners attend classes and are punctual to school and classes.

- Keep abreast with the curriculum and instruction changes and provide the necessary support and guidance.

- Ensure that instruction is given priority and is central to the school's activities.

Furthermore, educators should be encouraged by the principal to do self-reflection of their teaching performance. The principal has to provide support for underperforming educators and encourage them to develop themselves professionally.

5.8.   Limitations of the study

The six school principals that took part in the study are in the same district as the researcher, who also happens to be their senior. Though efforts were taken to assure the participants of confidentiality and non-victimisation, the researcher cannot conclude beyond doubt that the participants did not feel threatened in a way that compromised data. Again, due to time constraints, the researcher

could not observe the actual practices that the principals engage in at the schools. The researcher only depended on the information that was provided by the participants.

5.9. Recommendations

A group of primary school principals was sampled for the study with the aim of exploring the practices of the principals as instructional leaders and the implication thereof for learner achievement. The sample included three schools that performed excellently and three that performed poorly in ANA (DoE, 2009) and SEs (DoE, 2008). Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Instruction should be central to the school activities.

- The principal should establish good relations amongst and between the educators and learners. This approach fosters an environment of openness, mutual communication, teamwork and interdependence. Educators and learners will be able to approach each other for assistance and support.

- Academic results need to be analysed so as to inform the improvement plan and intervention strategies that need to be employed towards improving learner achievement.

- Teaching time has to be protected at all costs, and the principal needs to ensure that educators and learners are punctual to school and classes.

- The principal has to encourage educators to do self-reflection, provide support for underperforming educators, and support educator development.

- The principal should conduct class visits in order to know what is exactly taking place inside the classrooms.

- The principal needs to be abreast of the curriculum, and instruction developments and changes in order to provide informed guidance and support.

5.10. Suggestions for future study

The study could not clearly highlight how the principals of excellently performing schools perform their role as instructional leaders, considering the competing roles of being a manager and an instructional leader. The topic that still needs to be explored further is how principals of excellently performing schools balance the two roles of the principal as a manager and an instructional leader. In such a study, the researcher needs to make observations at the school.

5.11. Concluding remarks

This research has evidently shown that the principal's instructional leadership is an important factor that influences learner achievement. Also, there are activities which principals of schools that excel practice differently to principals of poorly performing schools. The Department of Education should see to it that principals are properly trained on how to balance their roles as instructional

leaders and administrators. Also, the department of education needs to come up with ways to minimise the administrative work that principals need to do in schools.

The core business of the school is enhanced learner achievement, and the Department of Education should show support of this objective. The support should include provision of capacity, resources (such as physical, human, and financial) and time, so that principals can be effective in performing their role as instructional leaders and improving learner achievement. Again, principals can be twinned so that those who are underperforming can learn from the ones that are performing well. In conclusion, research has shown that instructional leadership is an important tool towards enhanced learner achievement.

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ANNEXURES