



**The contribution of
instructional leadership
to learner performance**

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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**The contribution of instructional leadership
to learner performance**

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, BARBER MBANGWA MAFUWANE, declare that this doctoral thesis titled: “**The contribution of instructional leadership to learner performance,**” submitted to the University of Pretoria is my own work in design and execution.

All sources cited or quoted have been duly acknowledged. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this thesis for a degree at any university. I also have not allowed, and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his or her own work.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

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This is an explanatory research investigation on the role of principals as instructional leaders which has been highlighted over the past two to three decades. The emergence of this concept in the leadership field and the rigorous research attention that it has received is a result of mounting pressure faced by principals as a result of the year-on-year poor performance of learners in the matriculation examinations. Parents, politicians and other organs of civil society expect principals to be accountable for what happens in the classroom (teaching and learning), including the performance of learners.

The poor performance of learners in the matriculation examinations is the central focus of this study, growing out of the discussions and arguments which have dominated the media, social and political groupings, government, as well as the business sector. All these groupings and institutions are perturbed about the decline of learner performance in the matriculation examinations and seek possible solutions to this problem. I was therefore intrigued by the above concerns, which motivated me to engage in this study.

This study set out to investigate the variables related to instructional leadership and the contribution of these variables to learner performance. The study was guided by the following research question:

What are the variables related to instructional leadership practices of secondary school principals and what is their effect on the pass rate in the matriculation examinations?

In order to respond to the above question, the following subsidiary questions were examined:

- a. How can instructional leadership possibly contribute to the improvement of learner performance?
- b. How do heads of department (HODs) and deputy principals perceive the role of their principals regarding instructional leadership?
- c. How are principals prepared with regard to their role as instructional leaders?

This study followed an explanatory, mixed method research approach, utilising two sets of questionnaires (one for principals and another for HODs and deputy principals), semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. Seventy eight principals completed questionnaires regarding the performance of their learners. One hundred and thirty-seven deputy principals and HODs completed questionnaires regarding their principals' roles in instructional leadership and contribution to learner performance.

The interviewing process took place in two stages / phases. During the first phase, a group of sixty principals was exposed to the four variables which underpin this study, namely:

- a. The principals' role in promoting frequent and appropriate school-wide teacher development activities;
- b. Defining and communicating shared vision and goals;
- c. Monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process; and
- d. Managing the curriculum and instruction.

In fifteen groups of four, the respondents brainstormed the strength of each variable and prioritised or arranged them in order of their importance and contribution to learner achievement. The outcome of this first phase of the interview process and the findings from the analysis of the questionnaires informed the formulation of questions for the face-to-face interviews with five principals who were randomly selected from the seventy eight principals who participated in the completion of the questionnaires for the quantitative part of this study.

The key insights and contributions drawn from this study make it unique in the sense that it:

- has an impact on the preparation of principals for their role as instructional leaders;
- informs the support that principals need with regard to their practice as instructional leaders;
- assists principals to identify appropriate variables to help align their own visions for their schools with the national, provincial and regional visions for the improvement of learner achievement;
- adds value to the existing body of knowledge on instructional leadership and the central role that it plays in improving the achievement levels of learners in the National Senior Certificate; and

- clarifies the fact that ‘leadership’ is not a semantic substitute for ‘management and administration’, but rather an independent construct which is capable of interacting with the latter in the practice of education.

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KEY WORDS

Variables

Instructional leadership

Teacher development

Learner performance

Curriculum management

Leadership practices

Matriculation examination

Effective school leadership

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ACRONYMS

CS1	Civil Servant at post level 1
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DV	Dependent Variables
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
IL	Instructional Leadership
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
IDSO	Institutional Development Support Officer
IV	Independent Variables
LTSM	Learner Teacher Support Material
MDoE	Mpumalanga Department of Education
MIS	Management Information System
MV	Mediating Variables

NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDoE	National Department of Education
NIEPA	National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
REQV	Relative Qualification Value
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SMT	School Management Team
TILS	Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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