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Instructional leadership practice in the context of managerialism: The case of four primary schools in Gauteng Province

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Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Masters in Education (Educational Planning and Management) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has never been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University.

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(Signature of Candidate)

Professor Michael Cross

……...
(Signature of Supervisor)

1st Day of September 2007
Wits University, Johannesburg

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late grandmother, Hanna Donbachongno, for her unwavering support and making it possible for me to have formal education. This work is also dedicated to the Marist Brothers and friends for their support, love and encouragement.

Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge the guidance and support received from my supervisor, Professor Michael Cross, for the motivational support and encouragement he gave me which enabled me to complete this report. Your insightful guidance and comments helped me to improve the study.

My sincere and special thanks also go to the District Superior (and Council) of the Marist District of West Africa, for offering me the opportunity to undergo this study. I wish to acknowledge also with delight the encouragement, support and friendship received from the Marist Province of Southern Africa, especially the Observatory community for availing to me a serene environment to do my studies. Furthermore, your incredible support and friendship significantly contributed to the completion of this report. For this I am extremely grateful.

To the principals and other participants of the schools from which the research was conducted I also say thank you. I could not have completed this project without your cooperation and participation. For the cooperative and supportive role you played by giving your honest responses during the interviews, I am particularly grateful.

My indebtedness reaches also to all those who took the pains and trouble to read through and made valuable suggestions to this work. In particular, I acknowledge the painstaking contributions of Odhiambo Angela, doctoral student at Wits University for her support and friendship, Dr. Lorraine Marneweck of Sacred Heart Research and Development Unit and Andrew Graham of the University of Johannesburg for editing this work. I am extremely grateful and may the Almighty God richly bless you all.

Abstract

The principal's roles as manager and instructional leader are complementary terms for explaining what s/he does daily in the school to direct the mission towards its fulfilment. However, these roles are often in tension, especially in the context of school self-management. This scenario has led to an overemphasis on routine (administrative) tasks by school managers, leaving them over-worked and with little time to devote their efforts to the core technology of schooling, the most critical and essential responsibility of school management namely, instructional leadership.

Employing a qualitative case study approach, this report explored the day-to-day instructional tasks of leaders in two primary schools in the Johannesburg East District in the Gauteng Province. It is argued, in the study, that it is necessary for school principals to distribute, collaborate and involve other SMT members in executing their instructional leadership responsibilities to enhance quality delivery of C2005. The deputy principal and school level HoDs, it is argued, should be the immediate arbiters of the tension between the principal's functions as manager and instructional leader. They should be enabled and encouraged to create a balance between meeting the school's educative goals and sharing in the instructional duties of principals. The lack of time and commitment to instructional improvement on the part of principals seriously hampers and compromises their effectiveness, teaching and learning, and student achievement.

Consistent with the Department of Education's policy framework on instructional leadership practices in schools (DoE, 2000), the findings in this study reveal that the effective implementation and reaping the benefits of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) requires collaborative practices among the SMT members (the principal, deputy principal and the heads of departments).

This study also found that instructional improvement should be regarded as core to everybody's job and not as a specialised function for an individual, the principal. This is consistent with Alvarado (in Elmore & Burney, 1997), who asserts that anyone with staff responsibility has the duty to support others directly involved in staff development. The deputy principal, the heads of department and subject heads in primary schools as formal leaders, all have an instructional responsibility to assist the principal in meeting the school's instructional goals.

KEY WORDS
Instructional Leadership, Managerial leadership, Distributed leadership, supportive school climate, professional development, parental involvement

List of Abbreviations

- DoE Department of Education
- GDE Gauteng Department of Education
- HDE Higher Diploma in Education
- HoD Head of Department at the School level
- SMT School Management Team
- KZNDEC KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture
- SIP School Improvement Plans
- SDT Staff Development Team
- SBST School Based Support Team
- IQMS Integrated Quality Management System
- SBM School-Based Management
- SASA South African Schools Act
- C2005 Curriculum 2005
- OBE Outcomes-Based Education

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