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A case study of teacher leadership development in a secondary school

Govender, Diviah

2016-03-08
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20038

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate how teacher leadership is developed in schools. The study also aims to investigate teachers' and SMTs understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, teachers' understanding of the concept could impact on their uptake of teacher leadership roles and secondly, the SMTs understanding of the concept has a direct and significant impact upon whether teacher leadership is actually developed in a school. This study will also investigate the barriers that hinder teacher leadership. The study also investigates the way in which teacher leadership programmes are developed, implemented and evaluated.

This qualitative case study took place in a secondary school in Johannesburg. I used a multi-method approach using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and documents analysis to collect the data. All forty staff at the school were chosen to answer the questionnaire and ten staff were chosen to participate in the interview. The participants in the interview were from amongst both the teaching and management staff. This was an essential criteria, as the study aimed to investigate teachers' and SMTs understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. As such the coding drew on concepts from the theoretical framework underpinning the study, namely distributed leadership and teacher leadership. The themes that emerged were presented in the form of graphs and the data analysis focused on answering each of the research questions.

Findings from the research proved that the majority of staff viewed teacher leadership as encompassing roles beyond the classroom. The school is actively engaged in the development of teacher leadership, and displayed evidence of collaboration. The principal and deputy principal, as members of senior management, were identified as the most significant barriers to the development of teacher leadership. In addition to the SMT, support, collaboration and communication emerged as important factors in the development of teacher leadership. To a lesser extent, remuneration, planning, consistency, leadership, and willingness to take on leadership roles were identified as effective in the development of teacher leadership programmes. Despite the barriers indicated, the aspiring teacher leaders, showed a high level of motivation to participate in teacher leadership roles, and in teacher leadership development.