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THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER IN CREATING A QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Education,
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ABSTRACT

This research is underpinned by a conceptual framework which is based upon the theory that the principal should share leadership responsibilities with educators to inspire commitment in creating a quality learning environment. The research investigates the role of the principal in creating a quality learning environment to improve school performance and the achievement of its learners.

The research considered complexities surrounding educational reforms which require a collaborative approach wherein the principal invites educators to participate in a discussion on how instructional activities should be conducted in a school. When principals who are instructional leaders accept their instructional role and exercise it in collaboration with educators, they practice an integrated form of leadership.

This report is relevant in the South African context because the situation in South Africa is made critical by the introduction of a new curriculum framework which requires an approach which will emphasise the principal's interactive role with educators in the central area of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Shared instructional leadership is an inclusive concept, compatible with competent and empowered educators.

Educators assume leadership responsibility when they interact with other adults in the school community around school reform efforts, encourage others to improve their professional practice, or learn together with their school colleagues (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996).

A qualitative methodology was used which involved a secondary school in Gauteng.This case study was undertaken to establish the principal's and educators' perception of the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Although limited in its scope, the research revealed valuable information which identified contextual factors such as socio-economic, organizational climate and educator commitment which concluded that these are factors which play a significant role in creating a quality learning environment.

What is needed in South Africa for a quality education to take place is an inclusive approach to leadership to promote a school climate supportive of teaching and learning. Instructional leadershipis shared, therefore, in that specific leadership functions are carried out by designated staff members working in collaboration, under the guidance and direction of the principal.

Keywords
School leadership
Shared instructional leadership
Distributed leadership
School-focussed staff development
Collaborative teaching
Collegiality
Induction
Strategic learning
Developmental appraisal

DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university.

Cleopas Kau

Signed:
February 2009

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to my wife, Margaret, and three sons, Jerry, Tshepo and Koketso.

Without their continuous support, understanding and assistance through trying times, I would not have been able to complete it.

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- I thank the Almighty God for giving me the strength and endurance to persevere and remain committed in completing this research report.
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- I am also grateful to the Principal and Staff who willingly participated in the interview and questionnaires and made it possible for me to complete my research study.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

H.O.D - Head of Department

I.Q.M.S – Integrated Quality Measurement Systems

L.O – Life Orientation

L.T.S.M – Learning and Teaching Support Material

N.C.S – National Curriculum Statement

N.E.E.E.D.U – National Education Evaluation and Development Unit

R.C.L – Representative Council of Learners

R.D.P – Reconstruction and Development Programme

S.A.D.T.U - South African Democratic Teachers' Union

S.G.B – School Governing Body

S.M.T - School Management Team

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