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

Gandeebo, Cyprian Bankakuu

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The goal in a learning community is to build connections between people, socially and intellectually. Control interferes with this process; it distances people from one another. Commitment strengthens interpersonal connections...building a learning community is tantamount to developing a commitment to shared learning (Prawat, 1993: 9)

1 Chapter One: General Orientation to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Instructional Leadership has long been established as a key factor in the improvement of schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Blasé and Blasé (1999) equally demonstrate that effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on student achievement. Although the quality of teaching in schools strongly influences levels of pupil motivation and achievement, Fullan, (2001) and Sergiovanni (1990) assert that the manner in which leaders enact their instructional practices, especially in shaping the enthusiasm of teachers and their quality of teaching, greatly matters. Bennett et al. (2003), contend that in school improvement processes, instructional leadership practices of school leaders should be of significant influence in affecting school and student achievement. Despite the research base on instructional leadership practices, studies on school management teams (SMTs) is far less extensive, albeit the clear implication is that the SMT can have a positive impact upon school and student improvement.

In this study, collaborative leadership and teamwork in the professional management of schools in the context of managerialism is argued as the best approach to quality delivery of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). The idea of teamwork in instructional leadership practices recently received interest and enthusiasm within the literature (Harris, 2002; Spillane et al., 2001; DoE, 2000). This enthusiasm for teamwork in South Africa has been endorsed by the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) and supported by Hallinger (2003: 231), who assert that, “it is simply foolish to think that only principals provide instructional leadership for school improvement”. The principles and objectives of teamwork and collaborative actions embedded in school-based management (SBM) form the bedrock of the South African Schools Act (hereafter, SASA). Since the promulgation of SASA in 1996, the concept and rationale of SBM in South Africa is no longer new. Despite the challenges of putting it into practice effectively, the majority of stakeholders appear to

have embraced its principles and objectives. Though the approach has widely been criticized for its limitations in the South African context (lack of resources, incapacity and lack of expertise of school personnel to effectively translate SBM into practice), the concept appears to have found 'rich soil' in the South African education system because of its objectives of redress, representivity and stakeholder participation.

However, since its adoption after the post-1994 democratic election, SBM has brought challenges to some school level personnel in terms of guiding the school towards achieving its educative mission. Increased managerial responsibilities brought by SBM are so great and varied that it becomes difficult for school principals alone to lead and manage the school to achieve its purpose. It becomes necessary then for school principals to solicit and encourage the cooperation of other SMT members in effectively operationalising the teaching and learning activities in their schools. This research report describes the instructional leadership practices of SMT members in two primary schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province.

1.2 Background

The post-1994 election in South Africa has been followed by a plethora of reform policies attempting to redress apartheid inequities. Among the new policies were those aiming to improve the quality of education delivery, especially in historically disadvantaged communities. One was the self-management of schools, otherwise called 'school-based management' (SBM), legitimated by SASA. SASA mandates the formation of school governing bodies (SGBs) and SMTs in each school to facilitate the principles of self-reliance and self-management. Since 1994, the approach to school leadership has changed from a hierarchically structured system to one of collaborative participation. The National Department of Education (DoE, 1998) has accordingly created new policies and regulations that redefine the roles of leading, managing and governing public schools.

As indicated above, SASA encourages schools to become self-managed and self-reliant through striving to become section 21 schools which results in financial independence from the department of education. However, self-managed and self-reliant schools also create other challenges for those responsible for leading and

managing them. The principal of such a school is ultimately the one responsible for the day-to-day professional and operational leadership and management of the school.

However, in the new democracy, and with the current reforms, the school principal is no longer able nor expected to carry this responsibility alone. Rather, national policy suggests school management tasks be shared with others, including members of the SGB, SMT and senior teachers (DoE, 2000). The policy then encourages the school principal to form an SMT comprising the principal, deputy principal and school level heads of department (HoDs). The work of the SMT is to harmonise their work in such a way that ensures the school becomes a dynamic environment for both learners and educators. The SMT, therefore, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and the implementation of the school's polices which have been determined collaboratively with the SGB. All members of the SMT have leadership functions as part of their job, and the professional responsibility and mandate for running the school. However, the principal still holds ultimate responsibility for making sure that the task of teaching and learning goes on appropriately, and s/he chooses how to share that responsibility with other SMT members (DoE, 2000).

The apartheid education system was based on a hierarchical management leadership style, with power and control exercised from the top and where the principal had to run the school on a daily basis with the department making all the managerial decisions. Thus, in the previous centrally-controlled education system, the principal was more of an administrator than an instructional manager. In effect, the desired management style of schools in the new South Africa has changed from one of control to one of collaboration (teamwork).

1.3 Research Problem

The new approach to managing schools has brought with it increased responsibilities for school leaders. Educational leaders now have two basic tasks – instructional and managerial. However, writing in the American context, Cuban (1988) argues, that in school-based decision-making, the managerial roles tend to dominate the lives of most educational leaders. The situation is not different in the South African context where the life of most school leaders is perceived as a tug-of-war between managerial and instructional responsibilities. The former responsibilities often overwhelm the latter,

and leaders tend to see themselves largely as managers of their schools. The job of instructional leaders then becomes an ongoing struggle to preserve a substantial amount of time and energy for instructional supervision, especially in the context of managerialism.

To successfully carry out the functions of teaching and learning in schools, Squelch and Lemmer (1994) suggest that school leaders must learn to be both managers and leaders. As educational managers they ensure that fiscal and human resources are used effectively to achieve the school's institutional goals. As instructional leaders they display the vision and skills necessary to create and maintain suitable teaching and learning, but these two roles are often in conflict and/or in contradiction with each other. For instance, instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning, with the corollary of neglecting managerial duties, which, when well coordinated, promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. The focus of this study was thus to explore how primary school leaders (SMT) enact their instructional duties to achieve success in the context of managerialism (that is while they still manage to fulfil administrative duties). The study highlights the paradoxical functions of the school principal, arguing that a team approach comprised of the principal and other SMT members enhances effective teaching and learning.

1.4 Argument in the study

Instructional leadership is one of the responsibilities of principals. However, because they have other leadership duties, especially in school-site decision-making, they are often unable to carry out this function adequately. The managerialist thinking in today's schools, brought about by school-based management, has damaging effects on the work of school leaders (McInery, 2003). School Principals, above all, have lamented the increase of their workload. They now have to manage an increasing number of administrative responsibilities formally handled by the department (ibid: 66). Many of them have lamented that their work was being redefined in quite instrumental ways, in line with business managers rather than educational leaders. For school principals, local school management means a shift away from the core business of schooling (teaching and learning) to administration. This scenario is recognised by McInery (2003), who upholds that there is a major transformation in the role of

principals from that of educational leaders to business managers (corporate heads). Meanwhile, Ball (cited in McInery 2003) argues that school site-based management has produced:

> *A re-focusing of the primary tasks and substantive identities of school principals around the management of the budget and budget maximisation and away from educational and instructional leadership (p.67).*

My argument in this study, then, is that school leaders need to develop collaborative practices around instructional leadership if the mission of the school is to be achieved. Hence, the collaboration of school principals with deputy principals and HoDs may be an appropriate strategy if the objectives of school self-management and the challenges stated above are to be realised. SMT members should hence be supported to assume a more significant function in the school as site-based decision-making has made it difficult for all the tasks to be undertaken by principals alone. Moreover, the demands of the new curriculum (C2005) have made it even more inevitable that SMTs would have a major role in its functioning. This submission is consistent with the DoE's (2000:10) assertion that "the members of the SMT are instructional leaders and are thus responsible for taking the lead in putting the school curriculum into practice and improving it". Fullan (2002, cites Leverett, 2001) believes that an organisation cannot flourish – at least not for long – on the actions of the top leader alone. He upholds that schools at least require many leaders to function effectively and efficiently. In view of this, the members of the SMT need collaborative actions, at all times, to promote a positive culture of teaching and learning and to achieve the purpose and mission of the school.

1.5 Aim of the study

Against this background the study was undertaken with the aim of ascertaining how instructional leadership practices are carried out in primary schools and identifying the strategies used that promote effective instructional leadership in those schools. An attempt was thus made, in the study, to address the following key questions:

- What is the nature and practice of instructional leadership in schools?
- What are the tasks engaged in by instructional leaders?
- How do primary school leaders promote effective instructional practices?
- How do such practices relate to or promote teaching and learning?

1.6 Rationale

In the recent past, much attention has been focused on the principal and the role s/he played in bringing about effective teaching and learning. This brought about a consensus among researchers of the positive relationship between instructional leadership practices of principals and increased learner performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Although there are many books and articles (Botha 2004; Bush 2003; Kruger 2003; Harris 2000; Hallinger 2003; DoE 2000; KZNDEC 2002) which describe and/or analyse instructional leadership in educational establishments, it appears that no studies have been conducted in South Africa that have really focused on the instructional practices of SMTs. For instance, the literature accessed by the researcher on instructional leadership practices in South Africa has focused mainly on high schools and their principals and the impact they have had on student performance. Research on the instructional leadership responsibility of SMTs in primary schools in South Africa is thus limited. Data concerning the instructional leadership functions of SMTs in primary schools, thus, remains to be generated. One motivation for this project is thus to fill this gap in the existing literature, by exploring the instructional leadership practices of the SMTs in two primary schools in the context of managerialism and OBE/C2005. The second motivation is to open up the debate vis-à-vis instructional responsibilities of the SMTs in the implementation of C2005. My third and final motivation is to help practising and prospective leaders, by offering potential strategies for implementing effective instructional leadership, especially in public primary schools.

1.7 Outline of Chapters

Chapter One – This chapter provides a general overview to the study of instructional leadership practices in primary schools. It briefly highlights the recent changes in the education system in South Africa that have given rise to school-based decision-making. The chapter also flags the challenges, and the paradoxical functions, of school principals ensuing from the reforms in the education sector.

Chapter Two – The chapter reviews the body of literature dealing with instructional leadership practices in schools. Backed by the various conceptual and methodological issues associated with this research topic, this study argues that as a result of school

self-management it is no longer sufficient for school principals to take decisions unilaterally. Hence, drawing on the works of prominent scholars such as Spillane et al (2001), Harris (2000), Sergiovanni (1990), as well as documents from the Gauteng DoE (2000) and the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC, 2002), the chapter contends that other SMT members must become more involved in school improvement processes.

Chapter Three – The study set out to explore the instructional leadership practices in two primary schools by means of a qualitative case study methodology. This chapter describes the research process, showing the qualitative methods and data-collecting instruments employed to address the issues raised in the literature, and to assist in answering the research questions.

Chapter Four – Contextual Issues. Context is an essential concern in research and this chapter captures the contextual issues in the two schools in which the study took place. It briefly discusses the peculiarity of instructional leadership practices in each school. The different leadership styles and experiences employed in the two schools are articulated, showing how contextual factors can influence the implementation of national and provincial policies, in particular, the national framework for instructional leadership in public schools.

Chapter Five – The National Policy Framework for Instructional Leadership. This chapter describes the national policy framework and its features arguing for teamwork and collaborative practices in improving the teaching and learning in schools. It thus highlights the government's vision of promoting quality education in the country's primary schools. The achievement of this vision, according to the policy document, is through the collaborative actions of the SMTs in the various schools. The chapter thus answers two simple but basic questions: What is the national instructional policy framework? and what are the features of this policy framework? It is articulated in the following chapter, through examining how the framework is put into practice and exploring the challenges faced.

Chapter Six – Practising Instructional Leadership in Schools. In line with the aim of the study, this chapter analyses instructional leadership practices of leaders in two schools, vis-à-vis the national and provincial policies of instructional leadership. A

vivid description of the instructional leadership practices in two schools is presented and discussed.

Chapter Seven – Summary and Conclusion. This chapter summarises the research process. The researcher contends that the work of the school principal is, indeed beyond his/her capability and there is need for collaborators to carry out effectively the mission/goals of the school. In view of this, the chapter concludes that SMTs that display instructional leadership qualities are those that take active and leading roles in managing curricular activities. They immerse themselves in curricular development through ensuring effective classroom instruction, advising and assisting educators in resolving curricular problems (Gupton, 2003).

1.8 Conclusion

A general overview of the study was presented highlighting the changes that occurred in the South African education system, giving rise to school-based decision-making. it also highlighted the conflicting nature of the school principals roles as manager and leaders. The research problem, questions and rationale of the study are also presented. It was thus argued, in this chapter, that research base on instructional leadership of the entire SMT members is limited and remains to be generated.

2 Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

Instructional leadership plays a crucial role in shifting the emphasis of school activity more directly onto instructional improvements that lead to enhanced student learning and performance. But what is instructional leadership? What are the tasks engaged in by instructional leaders? How are these tasks enacted by effectively minded school leaders? With a focus on the research questions, this chapter discusses these questions in relation to instructional leadership in primary schools, its different conceptions and methodologies, the various instructional tasks engaged in by effective instructional leaders; managerial leadership in schools; managerial tasks undertaken by school mangers; and the collaborative instructional leadership practices and approaches employed in schools to promote effective teaching and learning.

Various instructional leadership practices that are engaged in by school leadership, and which have the potential to influence student performance have been identified. The effective school movement has argued that instructional leadership is the prerogative of the school principal. Thus the principal instructional leadership in schools has been consistently alluded to as the most significant factor in the success and quality of the school's improvement process (Petersen, 2001:159). In this light, Petersen describes instructional leadership as a professional relationship involving school leaders and teachers – an alliance where the leaders assume a supportive role and think of others as constituents. Alternatively, Spillane et al. (2005) postulate that school instructional leadership "should best be understood as distributed practices stretched over the school's social and situational contexts". In this perspective, instructional leadership is not simply a function of what a school principal or any other individual leader does, it is regarded as a function of all the stakeholders in the school and community. The principal's role as instructional leader is thus exercised 'with' others and not 'over' others.

Hopkins (2001) shows that research in educational leadership reveals that schools that function as teaching and learning communities are successful in increasing students' academic achievement. This view is supported by Leverett (2002) who maintains that "the collective will of many is obvious in the ownership of the work needed to change

outcomes for work". He reiterates that leadership that embraces collective effort promotes a shared sense of purpose and mission. Such leaders, he emphasized, engage in collaboration across and between roles and develop organisational cultures that set high expectations for effective teaching and learning. However, the creation of an organisational community, he cautions, depends on the structures of leadership and the behaviours of leaders in the particular school. To generate learning communities, principals must be able to transform their school cultures from places of isolation to sites of teamwork for collaboration. Principals and the other SMT members within the school should work interdependently to learn with and from each other so that together they can help the teachers and learners (Williams & Matthews, 2005).

2.2 Instructional Leadership in Schools

There is consensus among scholars and policy makers that instructional leadership is part of the school principal's leadership responsibility. Literature points the instructional roles of principals in educational establishments, however, the current trends in education reforms, in South Africa, tend to downplay the instructional dimension of the principal's tasks, with most principals neglecting and/or entrusting this all-important responsibility to someone else while engaging him/herself with more managerial and administrative tasks. With the upsurge of managerialism, the principal cannot but 'behave' as a company's chief executive officer (DoE, 2000). In Australia, Gillet (1996) interviewed twenty primary and secondary school principals and concluded that not only had their work intensified over the last period but it had also increasingly focused on financial administration and school promotion, to the exclusion of educative leadership. In addition, their work was more directed towards managerial issues rather than responding to instructional initiatives, all of which distanced principals from their staff and learners. Similarly, in her study in England, Grace (1995) argued that school management had generated new forms of managerialism which had not only distanced headteachers from their children and classroom learning but had also seriously undermined their work as educational leaders. In the same vein the restructuring process in the South African context has tended to distance the school principals from their primary tasks, namely instructional supervision (DoE, 1998).

The responsibilities of the primary school principal in the current reform process have become complex and multifaceted. The increased managerial functions of school principals tend to 'conflict' with his/her instructional leadership responsibilities. As Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) rightly argue, the life of school leaders is largely seen as a tug-of-war between managerial and instructional duties. Apart from the primary function towards ensuring effective teaching and learning, the principal has to make sure that s/he has an effective and efficient SGB and also ensure that good budgetary practices are in place for the school to operate effectively and efficiently. However, these duties do not correlate directly with the objective and mission of the school, which is effective teaching and learning.

The raison d'être of a school is to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. However, the increased managerial tasks of primary school leaders do not permit them to effectively and efficiently pursue matters that are closely related to curriculum delivery (Terry, 1996; DoE, 1998). These two functions thus appear inconsistent and contradictory. For instance, school principals are expected to be fully involved in curriculum issues (teaching and learning), whilst they are also expected to be business managers, responsible for putting all the accountability systems in place and to ensure efficiency. The concurrent performance of these two indispensable tasks is not an unproblematic one and hence requires only collaboration and teamwork in order to be successful.

Contributing to the instructional leadership debate, Kruger (2003) acknowledges that the primary role of the principal in the school is to make sure the educative function is carried out to the desired level. He, however, asserts that the principals' workloads have become increasingly unmanageable, to the extent that principals of educational institutions hardly have the time for understanding their instructional leadership tasks (ibid: 206). School leaders are weighed down with accountability and administrative endeavours that they hardly have any time to see what is happening in the classrooms. This complex task of the leader, as pointed out above, has come about because of the recent reforms in the country necessitating a shift from a highly centralised and controlling education system to a much more democratic and school-based decision-making process. The paradigm shift in favour of school-site decision-making, coupled

with the introduction of C2005, have not only complicated, but also compounded the effective functioning of school leaders.

The over-involvement in, and the commitment of principals to, perform managerial functions led Botha (2004) to refer to school principals as 'administrative chief executive officers'. In this scenario, school leaders are predisposed to adhering to and perpetuating business values rather than acting as leaders of instructions. This means that the school leader has the tendency to act more as a business manager with insufficient time for his/her instructional responsibilities. In research conducted into instructional roles of school principals, Murphy (1990:165) found that elementary school principals spend just over two per cent of their time attending to their instructional functions. This means that as many as 98 percent of the leader's time is allocated to administrative duties. The implication is that the instructional tasks of school leaders are thus sacrificed for their managerial responsibilities, or treated only as secondary functions. Notwithstanding this dichotomy between managerial and instructional practices of the school principal, and despite the complexity and volume of tasks, his/her main responsibility remains that of ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place (Kruger 2003:245). How school leaders appropriate these primary functions to achieve success in terms of the educative function of the school is the concern of this study. The collaboration and active involvement of other SMT members seems a suitable strategy in addressing these paradoxical functions of school principals. To address this issue in detail, I draw on studies conducted on instructional leadership, among others, Spillane et al (2001), Harris (2000), KZNDEC (2002) and national and GDE policy on instructional leadership (DoE, 2000), to give an overview of the different ways instructional leadership has been conceptualised. The following section thus concerns itself with the varied meanings and conceptualisations of the concept and how it can be effectively practiced, especially in primary schools.

2.3 Conceptualising Instructional Leadership

Over the years, a plethora of articles and books have created confusion about the conceptual and operational definition of instructional leadership (Witziers et al, 2003). This notion is evidenced from the literature reviewed suggesting that instructional leadership means different things to different people. This diversity has increased the

complexity of the notion to the extent that it has made discussion highly problematic. Nevertheless, the primary understanding of instructional leadership relates to the teaching and learning process within the classroom, and although most scholars allude to the fact that the concept relates to the processes involved in the delivery of the curriculum, there is as yet no consensus regarding its definition. As a result there are as many descriptions of instructional leadership as there are scholars in educational leadership studies. Nonetheless, the concept is seen in the literature as a significant factor in facilitating, improving, and promoting the academic progress of students. In this regard Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) affirm that instructional leadership plays a central role in shifting the emphasis of school-level activities more onto instructional improvements that lead to better student learning and performance.

Instructional leadership is a framework by which school leaders provide direction, resources and support to educators and learners, with the objective of bringing about improvement in teaching and learning in the school environment. The process embraces those activities engaged in by the school leadership with the objective of improving teaching and learning. Instructional leadership, according to the KZNDEC (2002:40), is “a process of striving towards the goal of effective teaching and learning”. The purpose and goal of instructional leadership, in this regard, is to support, improve and enhance teaching and learning. The real work of schools is teaching and learning and the success of this process is the responsibility of school leadership. Therefore, successful instructional leadership has been widely accepted as a key constituent in achieving school improvement (OFSTED, 2000).

Glickman (1985, cited in Blasé & Blasé, 1999) describes instructional leadership in terms of the tasks engaged in by school leaders. He points out direct assistance to teachers, group development, staff development, curriculum development and action research as some of the tasks engaged in by instructional leaders. This relates to the argument of Larry (2002) that instructional leadership is a dominant paradigm for school leaders because effective schools usually have leaders who focus on curriculum and instruction. The role, he contends, involves tasks such as setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans and evaluating teachers. However, King (2002) argues that the tasks of instructional leadership include a much deeper involvement in the core technology of

teaching and learning than initially. In this age of information, communication and technology (ICT), the concept carries much more sophisticated views of professional development and emphasises the use of data to make decisions in the school.

The conceptualisations of instructional leadership have often emphasised classroom teaching, curriculum and staff development aspects with the object of helping teachers discover and construct professional knowledge and skills. Instructional leadership then emphasises those tasks that are directly linked to the supervision of teaching and staff development. The school effectiveness research of the 1980s did portray the principal's role as being an instructional leader, however, as pointed out above, the principal alone can no longer carry out this job and it becomes incumbent on the entire SMT to be involved in the instructional process. Lambert (2002, cited in Leverett 2002) holds the same view. She asserts that:

> *The days of the principal as the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for an entire school without substantial participation of the other [SMT members] (p.2).*

By virtue of their appointment to this position they have formal leadership functions and must assist the school principal in the execution of his/her instructional tasks. Instructional leadership then assumes that the critical focus of leaders is the behaviour of the SMT members as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of educators and students (Leithwood et al., 1999). Stronge (1993 cited by Kruger, 2003) does not acquiesce to this view and calls it a narrow conceptualisation of instructional leadership. In his opinion, this approach may result in the neglect of certain managerial activities that, directly or indirectly, are linked to instructional leadership and which play an important role in ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place. Although Stronge's argument is persuasive, the emphasis of instructional leadership in schools is an attempt to draw the attention of leaders back to the core business of schooling (teaching and learning) and away from the business and managerial or corporate philosophy that have suddenly engulfed the minds of majority of schools leaders. Kruger (2003, citing Donmoyer and Wagstaff, 1990) emphasise that instructional leadership should not be regarded as a separate function distinct from the leader's managerial responsibilities, but rather it should be regarded as the easiest and most direct way for any school leader to exercise his/his instructional

leadership role through the managerial responsibilities s/he engages in every day. Anecdotal evidence show that this does not happen in primary schools as most school leaders spend most of their time on managerial duties with only a small proportion of the time spent on instructional activities.

Quinn (2002 citing Leithwood, 1994) declares that instructional leadership should be perceived as a series of behaviours and attitudes designed by school leaders to affect classroom instruction. In this perspective, the SMT have the overall responsibility for informing teachers about new educational strategies and methods that are applicable to effective instruction. He further asserts that in carrying out this function, effective instructional leaders should not only present or inform teachers about new educational methodologies but must also assist them in critiquing these methods so as to determine their applicability to the classroom activities (Quinn, 2002: 447). Members of the SMT in this context should thus be perceived as strong, proactive and visionary instructional leaders, with the capacity to lead the instructional process. In his vision for improving schools, Barth (1990:64) declared, “show me a good school and I will show you a good principal [SMT]”. In this way, an SMT is effective if the members lead a school by setting clear goals and expectations, maintaining discipline and creating high standards.

Foriska (1994), in the same vein, perceives instructional leadership as critical to the development and maintenance of an effective school. Effective instructional leaders influence others to pair appropriate instructional practices with their best knowledge of the subject matter. To be effective, the focus is on student achievements and principals, and SMT members focus on supplying teachers with the appropriate resources that keep their attention on students. Embedded in the SMTs’ role as instructional leaders is also the ability to motivate and inspire teachers with the end objective of impacting positively on instructional practice and, ultimately, student achievement (Quinn, 2002).

Features of instructional leadership practices identified in effective schools relate to SMT members who are collaborative and responsible for sustaining students' learning, who use democratic leadership styles focussed on it, and who provide leadership in instruction, including the coordination of instructional activities while emphasising simultaneously high academic standards (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Sebring & Bryk,

2000). Blasé and Blasé (1999) conceptualise instructional leadership as a blend of several tasks, including supervision of classroom instruction, staff development, and curriculum development. Similarly, Blasé and Blasé (2000:22) posit that instructional leadership is "embedded in school culture", pointing out its central role in the school improvement process. A positive and supportive school environment is a prerequisite for the effectiveness and progress of any instructional activities. This form of climate can be created through a process of transformation, by which all members of the school community are involved if the instructional process is to be effective. In the new educational spectrum, it becomes necessary for the entire membership of the SMT, educators, students and parents to change the way they think about their roles in the new self-governed school, particularly in the light of C2005. This new approach then brings about a new understanding of running a school and improving the instructional process, so as bring about quality delivery of the new curriculum. The paradigm shift in the instructional processes must therefore also reflect the new democratic values of democracy, equality and freedom that the Constitution seeks to achieve.

2.4 Instructional Leadership Tasks

Marks and Printy (2003) are very critical of the narrow definition of instructional leadership that focuses on the leaders' direct relationship with teaching and learning. They recommend viewing instructional leadership in terms of the other functions that contribute to student learning, including the managerial behaviours of leaders. Heck et al (1990) also identified instructional leadership behaviours as setting the climate or high expectations for academic and social behaviour. For them the focus of instructional leaders should be the development of instructional goals consistent with school goals and supervising how instructional strategies are transformed into learning activities through direct instruction. Similarly, Waters et al. (2003) branded curriculum, instruction, and assessment as instructional functions which require the direct involvement of the school instructional leader in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

Blasé and Blasé (1998) also identified effective instructional practices to include talking with teachers, promoting teachers' professional growth and fostering teacher

reflection. In their study of principals' roles in schools, the authors recommend that, to be effective, instructional leaders must perform and accomplish certain specific tasks. For instance, the SMT's continuing dialogue with teachers and other staff, builds trust and rapport with and among. It fosters collaboration and develops group and teamwork, supports peer coaching, empowers teachers and, above all, maintains visibility. The SMT promotes the professional growth of teachers by supporting and encouraging the acquisition and practice of new skills, encouragement of risk-taking, innovation and creativity, providing effective staff development programmes, enhancing adult growth and development, giving prompt feedback and suggestions (ibid:195).

Focusing on the orthodox style of instructional leadership, Murphy (1990) identified four sets of activities with implications for the core business of schooling: (1) developing the school mission and goals; (2) coordinating, monitoring and evaluating curriculum, instruction and assessment; (3) promoting a climate for learning; and (4) creating a supportive work environment. Hallinger and Murphy (1987:55) emphasize that instructional leadership should be defined in terms of observable practices and activities that school leaders can implement. They proposed a model grounded in the leaders' expert knowledge to provide specific instructional leadership functions. The authors thus defined specific functions made distinct by leadership behaviours that must be performed by effective instructional leaders. The model as proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (ibid) is composed of three broad dimensions of instructional leadership practice, with ten specific functions or tasks linked with the relationship between instructional leadership practices and student achievements. The three major responsibilities delineate into ten other specific indicators of instructional leadership practices. Hallinger (2003) defines these three major dimensions consisting of the SMTs capacity to collaboratively (1) define the school's mission and academic goals, (2) manage instructional programmes, and (3) promote a positive school climate.

This first dimension does not assume that the SMT alone defines the school's mission and its academic goals, rather it assumes that it is the responsibility of SMTs to ensure that the school possess a clear mission with well-formulated academic goals. It also assumes that after the mission and goals have been formulated, the SMTs have the obligation to communicate the mission and goals to the other stakeholders within the

school community (Hallinger, 2003:332). In this dimension, Hallinger contends, principals must collaborate with other SMT members in the school to ensure that it has clear, measurable goals that focus on the academic progress of students. As the ultimate person responsible for the instructional process in the school, it is incumbent upon the school leader to adequately convey these academic goals of the school to the entire school community and, through him/her, obtain support from the external and immediate community.

In the second element, managing the instructional programme, effective instructional leaders supervise and evaluate instructions, coordinate the official curriculum, and monitor the progress of learners (Hallinger, 2003). These functions, according to the author, require instructional leaders to be deeply involved in the school's instructional process. It means that the SMT not only expects teachers to carry out directives but also must be actively involved in all instructional activities themselves. The SMT must provide guidance and support in the instructional process. In smaller schools, though, the level of involvement might not be the same as in larger schools. In very large and effective schools, deputy principals, heads of department (HoDs), subject heads, and other co-opted members of the SMT, should all be involved in the instructional process. Even though it is suggested that there has to be some form of collaboration and teamwork in the instructional processes, the main responsibility remains with the school manager (DoE, 2000). The school principal holds the key task in seeing to it that the core business of the school is carried out effectively.

Within this framework, Hallinger has identified some specific practices which must be undertaken by instructional leaders in order to achieve success. Some of these practices: reviewing the work of students, conducting formal and informal classroom visits and observations with written feedback or formal conferences, and highlighting specific strengths in the teachers' instructional practices in post-observation feedback (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987:2). These authors argue that instructional leaders are expected to monitor student progress by meeting and discussing with those teachers directly involved in the day-to-day business of curriculum delivery. It helps to identify weak students and devise strategies and solutions for assisting needy students. The SMT monitors learner progress by finding out learner achievements from their teachers and through scrutiny of book marks, and student and teacher portfolios.

The functions of instructional leadership in the third aspect involve many activities and are much broader in scope. Hallinger (2003:333) maintains that it is instructional leaders' responsibility to align the school's standards and practices with its vision and mission so as to create enabling conditions within the school that support effective teaching and learning. Highlighting the importance of this mission, Terry (1996) asserts that operating a school without a clear mission is like beginning a journey without having a destination in mind. He adds that "chances are that you won't know when you get there" (p.14). Consequently, the entire SMT should work together collegially and in collaboration with the entire staff to develop achievable goals for the school. Terry (1996: 21) reiterates that "when the atmosphere of the school values learning and supports achievements, it is difficult not to learn". For this reason, when the relationship among staff and the SMT is positive, there is openness and trust and members are ready to commit themselves and to contribute to and be actively involved in the instructional process. Similarly, Krug (1992:56) claims that "those who survive for very long in leadership positions learn that their primary objective is to motivate others to do what needs to be done". The SMT in any school is therefore responsible for creating an atmosphere of educational excitement at all levels and for channelling the energies of teachers and students into productive ways.

Kruger (2003) states that the climate within the school can be created in one of several ways, including adopting an open door policy, openness in communication, provision of a safe and structured environment, being consultative, empowering others, using the teamwork approach, adopting child-centred activities, and simply doing the best that one can. Some specific practices carried out by SMTs in this dimension should include, among others: the maintenance of high visibility, providing incentives for both teachers and learners, promoting professional development among teachers and protecting instructional time. Instructional leaders carry out this duty by regularly visiting classrooms and discussing instructional and academic issues with teachers and students. They perform these tasks also by covering classes for teachers or tutoring students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987:4). The authors further uphold that, in promoting professional development, one of the primary functions of the leaders is to lead and/or attend "teacher in-service activities that concern instruction" (ibid: 5).

2.5 Managerial Leadership in Schools

An essential dimension of the school leaders' responsibilities has to do with dealing with the variety of managerial tasks evident in site-based decision-making. Bredeson and Johansson (1997) have argued that leaders who successfully deal with their managerial responsibilities will help to create positive and supportive environments for effective teaching and learning. Consequently, there have been frantic efforts by scholars to distinguish between leadership and management. In their effort to make this distinction, Bush and Glover (2003) have described leadership as:

> *a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. It involves inspiring and supporting others towards the achievement of a vision for the school which is based on clear personal and professional values. Management on the other hand is the implementation of school polices and the efficient and effective maintenance of the school's current activities. In this perspective both leadership and management are needed if schools are to be successful (p.5)*

The notion of managerial leadership when compared with instructional leadership often appears contradictory, as indicated at the start of this research report. This contradiction and/or inconsistency is, write Bush and Glover (2003), necessary, as it demonstrates how narrowly management is frequently perceived. Bush (2003:54) then describes managerial leadership as follows:

> *Managerial leadership assumes that the focus of leaders ought to be on functions, tasks and behaviours and that if these functions are carried out competently the work of others in the organisation will be facilitated. Most approaches to managerial leadership also assume that the behaviour of organisational members is largely rational. Authority and influence are allocated to formal positions in proportion to the status of those positions in the organisational hierarchy (p.54).*

This description is similar to the formal models given by Bush (2003) on his six models of management. In his view, formal models:

> *Assume that organisations are hierarchical systems in which managers use rational means to pursue agreed goals. Leaders possess authority legitimised by their formal positions within the organisation and are accountable to sponsoring bodies for the activities of their institutions (p. 37*).

Management in the 1980s and 1990s was conceived as an overarching concept and leadership was just one dimension of this broader notion. In recent years, leadership and leadership studies have been in the ascendancy, but the above definition of Bush suggests that management has been reduced to a shadow of its former range and significance: “if leaders simply implement external policy decisions, as this description implies, then such leaders are said to engage in managerial leadership, sometimes described as managerialism” (Bush 2003:54). The implication is that, if school authorities continue to rely on the policy decisions of the DoE, they fall into the jargon of managerialism and so lose sight of the goals of site-based decision-making. Leaders would be so preoccupied with paperwork and many effective and efficiency issues that the educative function of the school, namely teaching and learning would be lost.

According to Bush and Glover (2003), leadership is seen as a process of influence leading to the achievement of a desired purpose. Successful instructional leaders, they assert, develop a vision for their schools explicitly based on professional values. Educational leadership, in this context, is similar to managerial leadership. Bush and Glover (2003) distinguish the two, showing that managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements, whereas managing well often entails leadership skills and the overall function of management is usually towards maintenance rather than change. Leading and managing are therefore perceived as distinct but not exclusive. The two are indispensable for school improvement. Davidoff and Lazarus (2003:36) write that “leaders do the right things while managers do things right”. The authors also affirm that both are essential. Leadership relates to mission, direction and inspiration while management involves designing and carrying out plans, getting things done and working effectively with people (2003:37). In the school improvement process the objective of every SMT should hence be to adequately combine these two responsibilities in order to achieve the objectives of the learning establishment. Bolman and Deal (1997), have observed that organisations which are over managed but under led eventually lose any sense of spirit or purpose. The authors reaffirm that poorly managed organisations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter. This is to highlight the fact that both management and leadership are essential for school improvement. The success and effectiveness for any school organisation therefore requires “the objective

perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides" (1997:34). Squelch and Lemmer (1994:11) concur, stating that school leaders must be both managers and leaders. As managers they ensure that fiscal and human resources are used effectively for achieving organisational goals. As leaders they exhibit the vision and the skills necessary to create and maintain suitable teaching and learning, to develop goals and to inspire others to achieve the goals.

2.6 The Leaders Managerial Tasks

Just as there are specific tasks performed by instructional leaders, so there are tasks that managers need to perform in order to be effective. To that effect Myers and Murphy (1995, in Bush 2003:55) have identified some responsibilities associated with the managerial roles of school leaders which include: "supervision, input controls like teacher transfers, behaviour controls, output controls, selection/socialisation and environmental controls (community responsiveness)". The DoE supports the effective combination of the two functions and thus advocates cooperative managerial tasks among instructional leaders (KZNDEC, 2000:43). Consequently they have identified certain managerial duties with the SMTs, which when appropriately combined with the instructional responsibilities are expected to yield positive results in terms of school improvements and student achievement. Some of these managerial functions include: resolving labour grievances, implementing developmental appraisal systems, resource allocation, interpersonal roles, liaison and entrepreneurial roles. The focus of these roles, Bush (2003:34) asserts, is to "manage existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the school". Similarly, Bredeson and Johansson (2000:395) identify ten managerial functions engaged in by school leaders similar to those listed above. These tasks are engaged in with a view to creating and maintaining a positive culture for teaching and learning and include: (1) recruiting and hiring teachers who are learners; (2) coordinating professional development activities; (3) making decisions on resources and school priorities; (4) scheduling time, spaces and opportunities for teachers to work and learn together; (5) identifying resources and providing information to the staff; (6) aligning available incentives with professional development priorities; (7) arranging for substitute teachers; (8) visiting classrooms; (9) developing and implementing teacher evaluation practices that support growth and improvement; and (10) acting as buffers against overly intrusive

and debilitating external forces that threaten the schools leaning environment. The authors conclude the list by assuring that "school leaders who successfully deal with these managerial tasks help to create supportive school contexts for learning" (2000: 395).

2.7 Shared Instructional Leadership

This section discusses the necessity of teamwork and collaboration in the instructional leadership process. To achieve the purpose of the school, which is, increased student performance, there is need for cooperation in all aspects of school decision-making and activities. Shared instructional leadership practices of the SMT are thus proposed as an appropriate alternative to promoting effective instructional leadership, especially in the context of managerialism. This school of thought and philosophy offers a new and significant theoretical lens through which instructional leadership practice in schools can be seen and re-conceptualised. Shared instructional leadership is an approach that helps in building capacity and thus contributes significantly to school improvement. The approach also purports that collaboration and teamwork enhance better planning, teaching and learning and improved student performance. The old-age adage sums it up: 'two heads are better than one'.

The traditional conception of leadership (alluded to above) assumes that there is one central person who is the leader. In recent times it is clear that this perception is no longer appropriate. Leadership should exist through a group of people who work closely together towards achieving a goal. Principals and other members of the SMTs therefore have leadership functions as part of their duties as they are appointed to formal positions (KZNDEC, 2002:31), and to work towards achieving the educative roles of schooling. The conception of leadership as shared or distributive then means that the principal of the school does not necessarily have to do everything by him/herself. It means that the work of leading the school is shared or done in a group, in a team approach. The different functions of the school then are delegated, which means passing on to others certain leadership duties. However, it must be pointed out that even though the SMT may share in the instructional roles of leading and managing the school, the principal still holds the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the work is effectively carried out. The principal is accountable for the school and its

community but, as a ambassador of the DoE, s/he is also accountable to it (KZNDEC, 2002:76). Consequently, the principal must ensure that everything relating to teaching and learning are well co-ordinated and executed to the benefit and aspirations of all stakeholders, especially parents and learners.

Shared instructional leadership is an emerging approach to the improvement of teaching and learning in schools but there is little agreement as to its meaning (Harris, 2002). Harris and Lambert (2003:13), have described it in terms of "leadership of the many rather than the few". In their view, shared instructional leadership concentrates on engaging expertise whenever it exists within the school rather than seeking this only through the formal position. In contrast to the traditional notions of leadership premised upon an individual managing hierarchical systems and structures, shared instructional leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership in which other members of the school community develop expertise by working collectively. They have stressed that the central tasks of the formal instructional leaders are to create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities. Elmore (2000:14) indicates that in a knowledge-intensive enterprise such as teaching and learning, it is not possible to carry out these complex tasks without widely distributing or sharing the responsibilities and engaging others within the school. This does not suggest that there should not be one person responsible for the overall performance of the instructional activities, nor does it render those in formal roles redundant. On the contrary, those entrusted with formal responsibilities within the school are primarily to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship (ibid: 14). Formal leaders (in this case the SMT members) are to become coordinators and facilitators of the teaching and learning processes.

The DoE (2000:10) supports the above viewpoint establishing that the members of the SMT in the new South African schools are instructional leaders. As such, they are to act and stand up to the instructional challenges together as a team and work to develop strategies for improving the performance of learners. The document points out that the successful running of a primary school is ultimately the responsibility of the principal and the other SMT members (ibid). Section 16 of the SASA (84 of 1996) supports this view though it does not explicitly state that each school must have an SMT. It, only assumes that the school principal should be supported by senior staff members or a

constituted management team exclusively responsible for the school's professional management (DoE, 2000:ii). As posited by the DoE, by virtue of their membership, SMT members are instructional leaders and have the responsibility for putting the school curriculum into practice and improving it. This means that, the members of the SMT share responsibility for the effectiveness of the curriculum delivery in the school. Shared instructional leadership in this context is not something done to others rather it is an "emergent property of a group or network of individuals in a group in which members pool their expertise" (Bennett et al 2003:3).

Spillane et al. (2003), view shared instructional leadership as a collective agency incorporating the activities of many individuals in a school who work at mobilising and guiding others in the process of instructional change. The instructional process within schools, according to the KZNDEC (2002), involves building shared visions and goals, and acting in ways to achieve them. The new education policy thus requires school leaders and managers to work in democratic and participatory ways to build relationships and to ensure efficient and effective curriculum delivery. It will not be an overstatement, however, to say that many school leaders and managers are struggling to translate this policy into practice. Many factors account for this, but poor resources and a lack of a culture of teaching and learning are a few of the factors militating against its effective implementation. Another limiting factor is the inadequate expertise of teachers, coupled with low morale in the profession.

In the new dispensation, it is no longer acceptable for a principal to unilaterally do things or take decisions alone in the school. The principal is no longer expected to carry the burden of running the school alone. SASA (1996), as previously indicated, mandates each public primary school to form an SMT, made up of senior level staff with the sole responsibility of the day-to-day professional management of the school and putting the school policies (developed by the SGB) into practice (DoE, 2000). The SMT is thus responsible for guiding and inspiring other staff, while at the same time being responsible for getting things done in the most effective and efficient way. In this way they are responsible for leading and managing the school, are two sides of the same coin which thus go together. The one without the other is not sufficient. An effective SMT should be able to combine the skills of both good leadership and management.

In light of this, Spillane et al. (2005), claim that there is a lack of information on how leaders go about creating and following changes. For them, instructional leadership concerns "the identification, allocation, coordination and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" (ibid: 23). Shared instructional leadership departs from the perception that school principals have the single role in providing instructional leadership. Spillane and his colleagues (2001) believe that there are other prominent people with expertise within the school that assist in the leadership activity to promote the mission and core business of the school. Shared instructional leadership is thus framed in the actions and processes, activities engaged in by leaders and in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks. They maintain that leadership should best be understood as "practice stretched over leaders and followers" (p.22). Instructional leadership practice is therefore perceived as tasks attained by the collaborative actions between school principals, deputy heads, HoDs, and teachers to effectively discharge their duties of curriculum delivery. In this way the principal is relieved to exercise and attend to other equally vital managerial issues while other members actively engage themselves in the core business of the school. This perspective is supported by research (Spillane et al 2001; Harris 2002; Botha 2004; DuFour 2002) which reveals that collegial and collaborative behaviours and practices promote effectiveness and are more in tune with democratic processes proposed in the constitutions.

The shared instructional leadership approach attempts to incorporate activities of multiple teams or groups of individuals in the school who collaborate to guide and mobilize others in the instructional process (Spillane, 2001:20). It implies a distribution or sharing of leadership tasks where the leadership function is stretched over the work of a number of individuals and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of a number of individuals – senior level staff including the principal, deputy principal, and HoDs and Subject Heads. Leadership can then be shared through formal as well as informal leaders in a circle of inter-dependence (Spillane et al., 2001). Shared instructional leadership is carried out in collaboration with others, sharing tasks with others and using a participatory approach to achieve goals. The emphasis in this approach is leadership that transforms the process of teaching and learning by mobilizing other school personnel and other

stakeholders to engage with the task of improving educational instruction as well as harnessing and mobilizing the resources to do so (ibid: 14).

The question arises as to how school principals enact their functions in the context of managerialism. In the midst of multifaceted and numerous tasks brought by school based decision-making and realising that the primary responsibility of the principal is to see to it that there is effective teaching and learning, the principal indeed has a complicated role. Task performance in the context of managerialism in primary schools may thus become difficult or unmanageable if there is no teamwork and collaboration. Principals must learn to work collaboratively with their SMT counterparts if they are to generate the desired results that they are meant to produce. Shared instructional leadership, it has been noted, is complicated (Harris, 2003; Spillane et al., 2001). However, evidence has also shown that it certainly can bring about results better than when the job is tackled in isolation (ibid: 23). This advocates and stresses the relevance of collaboration of skills and knowledge within and across people in the improvement process (Spillane et al., 2001:19).

The model expounded thus far seems to suggest that instructional activities dominate the work of school leadership, but this is not the case in practice. In fact the contrary is what is obtainable in most schools. The reason for this is not far fetched. There is an increased amount of work on the part of the school principal, and the next suitable alternative at his/her disposal is to share this instructional responsibility with other members of the SMT. As a consequence of the volume of work at their disposal (Kruger, 2003), most principals tend to focus more on their managerial tasks at the expense of the core business of the school, namely teaching and learning. The DoE, hence, has stressed the need for school principals to collaborate with other members of the SMT if they are to be effective and generate the desired results. This approach attempts to minimize some of the challenges and tensions experienced by the school principals in the exercise of their functions as managers and instructional leaders. The shared instructional leadership framework, expounded by Spillane et al. (2001, 2002), and Harris (2002), allows the analysis of how personnel interactions and collaborations promote effective teaching and learning within the professional community. Instructional improvement in schools is seen as core to everybody's job, not as a specialised function that only one person does. Alvarado affirmed this view

asserting that anyone with staff responsibility also has the duty to support others who are directly involved in the instructional process (Elmore & Burney, 1997).

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The popular assertion in the instructional leadership literature is that principals are the instructional leaders and should enact such tasks as to promote the performance of learners in their schools. Other researchers (Sergiovanni 1992; Spillane et al., 2001; Harris, 2002) oppose this popular view, contending that a community of leaders could serve as an effective alternative to principals. But the idea of school level personnel working together collaboratively is relatively recent. My contention in this study is that instructional functions should not be the responsibility of an individual person but the combined activity of a group, especially in the context of schools. The function of instructional leadership must be a collaborative function of the principal and the other members of SMT. This approach will encourage active participation and collaboration among the SMT members in the school improvement process. Citing Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998), Mitchell and Castle (2005) assert that the educational role of the principal is more appropriately configured as a facilitator of the teaching and learning process than as the one solely in-charge in deciding whatever goes on in the school environment. Blasé and Blasé (1999) share this view, arguing that the primary instructional responsibility of school principals should be to promote professional dialogue among their instructional staff.

The conceptual framework of this study thus locates instructional leadership within the context of collaboration and teamwork, around two aspects of the school's social organisation – learning climate and instructional milieu. These two elements shape the instructional behaviours and activities of both educators and learners. One important feature in instructionally effective schools is the importance given to highly inclusive and intensive team working (Connolly et al., 2004). The staff in such schools are highly collaborative in the ways they execute their responsibilities (ibid:2). Chris and Jule (2005) calls this working collaboratively on a task, 'collaborative practice'. This joint working takes a number of names, namely, 'working together', 'teamwork', 'partnership' and 'collaboration' itself (Glatter 2003). Collaboration is preferred in this study because of its etymological link with 'joint working' (Harper, 2001) and

principally at the level of instructional practice among SMT members in the school. In addition, collaborative practices promote cooperation, information and resource sharing, trust and support of one another, and quality instructional decisions (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994). However, as Glatter emphasizes, for collaboration in instructional practice to be successful, the collaborating partners (i.e. SMT members) should be reflective practitioners, capable of adjusting their collaborative actions to ensure that these actions are optimally appropriate for enhancing learners' performance.

The principal is expected to fulfil the school's instructional activities in conjunction with the members of the SMT, who are equally instructional leaders (DoE, 2000). The framework (collaborative practice) proposed here thus suggests certain conditions in which the SMT can collaborate and 'jointly work together' (Harper, 2001) to enhance effective teaching and learning, particularly in the context of managerialism. This entails the team's (SMT) ability to collaborate in the conditions that create effective instructional leadership practices: promoting professional growth of teachers; creating a positive learning environment; a professional learning community; monitoring the teaching and learning processes; facilitating parental involvement in school work; and building effective teams to successfully carry out instructional functions in the school.

To ensure effective teaching and learning, it is essential for leaders in primary schools to generate supportive and stimulating structures in the school, by providing adequate and uninterrupted time and ensuring the availability of incentives and resources for both teachers and learners. Instructional leadership activities are no longer the prerogative of the school principal alone but an activity of the entire membership of the SMT. To be successful instructional leaders, able to perform adequately the educative function of the school, requires collaboration in practices that constitute instructional leadership tasks between principals and other SMT members (namely, deputy principal, HoDs).

2.9 Conclusion

The role of school principals in the instructional process cannot be compromised. However, because s/he also has other daily operational responsibilities, there is need for collaboration with other members of the SMT namely, the deputy principal, the HoDs, subject heads and other senior level staff within the school.

3 Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The main objective in this study was to explore the instructional leadership practices of two schools in Gauteng Province. To address and make sense of this phenomenon in the context of managerialism, I used a qualitative case study design, so helping to provide an in-depth understanding of the articulation of instructional leadership and its practice in primary schools. This approach was useful as it allowed participants the freedom to share their experiences in their own setting and in their own words. This sharing of personal experiences served to generate insights for the participants as well as the researcher.

This chapter thus elaborates on the approach and the data collection tools used during the study. It is my contention that the members of the SMT should perform instructional tasks jointly. This means that the SMT must collaboratively define the mission and academic goals of the school, manage the instructional programme and create a supportive as well as stimulating school climate for effective teaching and learning. To help me demonstrate how the SMT performed these responsibilities, the case study approach was deemed appropriate, as it recognises the capacity of human beings to construct and interpret their social world (Robson, 1994). Since I sought to understand the personal articulation of participants' own practices and experiences of instructional leadership in the context of managerialism, this design was thought to be most appropriate in helping me address the issues raised in the literature, as well as during the data collection process.

The case study design employed in this study was both exploratory and interpretive, and endeavoured to examine instructional leadership practices in terms of the day-to-day activities of the participants (SMT members) in primary schools. Accordingly, the raison d'être of this study was to make sense of the SMT's daily instructional practices and how they perceived what they did. In doing so, it was necessary to listen to SMT members in the study, and two other teachers (one in each school), in a face-to-face interview in relation to the tasks reflected in the literature of effective instructional leadership practices in educational establishments.

While I acknowledge the limitations of a case study approach, due to its subjectivity and biases, I believe that it is also a very valuable instrument for contributing to theory, practice and social issues and actions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Moreover, the case study design is appropriate for such exploratory research such as that in my topic. Exploratory studies examine issues or concerns in which there have been little or no prior research and are designed to stimulate further enquiry. The design thus afforded me a systematic way of looking at the practices of the SMT members, collecting and analysing the relevant data and reporting the results. The approach also enabled me to gain a sharpened understanding of how instructional leadership tasks are performed in these two schools. In a face-to-face interactive style of inquiry, the study enabled me to foster a relationship of trust and rapport among the participants and helped me to gain access into their life worlds (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

3.2 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual collection of data. This was done in a public school with similar characteristics (primary, ex-model C, well resourced) as those of the sample schools. A letter requesting access and permission to do the pilot study was sent to the school principal, detailing the place and purpose of piloting in a research project. According to Mahlangu (1987), it is desirable to run a pilot study to enable the researcher to revise the tools or design to be used in order to achieve the desired results. The purpose of the pilot study was to fine-tune the study for the main enquiry and, in particular, to determine whether the relevant data could be obtained from the respondents. The pilot study was also meant to test out whether the interview schedules and the entire design to be used in the research process possessed the desired qualities of measurement.

In this pilot project, the group of participants for piloting were part of the population but not part of the sample. Thus the respondents possessed the same characteristics (members of SMT, wide range of experiences, qualified staff) as those of the main study. The goal of piloting was then to help me refine my research design and the tools of measurement before embarking on the actual study. As a result, the piloting process assisted to make modifications so that I had quality interviewing during the

actual data collection process. The interview schedules, in particular, were rigorously scrutinised and revised during the process. Questions were reframed and streamlined for clarity and lack of ambiguity before I could employ them in the actual research process. This confirmed Mahlangu's assertion that the pilot study has the strength of exposing failings as well as areas of extreme sensitivity (ibid: 82). The result of the pilot study was thus worthwhile as it assisted the researcher to authenticate the interview questions before embarking on the actual research.

3.3 Sampling

This study was conducted in two public primary schools in Johannesburg East District in the Gauteng Province. The sample was composed of the SMT members and one teacher in each school. Altogether eight (out of the original twenty) participants contacted took part in the study – including the two school principals, the two deputy principals, two HoDs and two teachers. Two other teachers (one from each school) consented to take part in the study but could not be interviewed due to ill health. the principal of school B and the teacher of school A were male the remaining six participants being female.

Four primary schools were originally contacted for the study but two decided to withdraw. No reasons were given for their inability to take part in the study. In one of those schools the secretary informed me by telephone that the principal was simply not interested. The second school did not even respond and when I followed up I was told to go back home and wait for a response from the principal. As I write this report no response has come from this school.

The participants constituted a purposive sample selected from recommendations made by one school principal (name withheld), because they had a reputation for building instructional capacity among the SMT. These schools also had a history of generating effective school improvement strategies. These two schools were thus information-rich cases to generate data required for this research report. However, what constitutes purposeful sampling is problematic, as there is no consensus regarding its definition. Nonetheless, all who make use of purposive sampling allude to the fact that it is a selected group/unit that has relevance to the issue being dealt with. McMillan and Schumacher (2001), for example, describe purposeful sampling as the selection of

elements in a population that is informative about the topic of interest. In other words, a judgement is made about the type of sample and subjects to be selected, so as to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research. Similarly, Maxwell (1996:70) portrays purposeful sampling as a strategy in which a particular setting, person or events are selected deliberately, in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained via other sources. Cohen and Manion's (1994:57) opinion on purposive sampling is that "when a choice is made of a sample through purposeful sampling, the researcher 'handpicks' participants in the sample on the basis of his/her judgements of the participants' typicality". In this study, the sample schools were deliberately selected. These schools were chosen as high performing instructional leaders to mean that they were truly doing what they purported to do. These are information-rich in the sense that the SMT have a shared sense of instructional leadership practices reflecting the focus of this study. The schools were thus chosen for their particularity for the topic.

3.4 The Research Process

Before embarking on the study, permission to undertake the research in public schools was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and letters were sent to all the sample schools requesting access to conduct research (Appendix B). A supporting letter from the researcher's supervisor was attached to the letters sent to the sample schools to authenticate my request for access (Appendix C). With the approval letter obtained from the GDE (Appendix A), and the positive telephonic responses from each of the two school principals I undertook to visit the different schools to introduce and familiarise myself with the members of the SMTs and those teachers who had volunteered to take part in the study. I undertook to discuss and explain the project with them while responding to their concerns. I explained the ethical issues (such as anonymity and confidentiality) involved in their participation in the research project. A consent form (appendix D), was given to them to which they were free to consent or not. Thereafter, possible and suitable interview dates, times and venues were fixed. I spent one week in each school as I had each day to interview one participant. Apart from the interviews, the rest of the day was spent analysing national, provincial and school documents related to teaching and learning. I also moved around the school

premises to have a look at the physical resources of the schools (including library, computer centre, learning materials, and sporting facilities).

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

In examining the instructional leadership practices of SMT members in primary schools, certain procedures and techniques were employed to facilitate addressing the research questions. In order to gain insight into how SMTs enacted instructional tasks in these schools, the following qualitative instruments were used in the data collection process: an extensive literature review was undertaken of the instructional leadership practices, and on-site qualitative interviews were carried out. These were corroborated with documentary analysis and non-participant observations. These instruments were chosen for purposes of cross-validation of the data obtained.

3.5.1 Literature Review

An extensive review of literature was undertaken on generic instructional leadership to inform me of what had already been conducted on the topic. In order to conduct a sound and useful literature review, various sources were used to help locate material that was relevant and up-to-date. In this perspective, the literature search included books, dissertations, journals, research reports, policy and legislative documents, as well as provincial and national documents. These sources were based on national as and international empirical perspectives.

Drawing on such an existing body of work helped me to explain what the research topic required or was set out to achieve – instructional leadership in primary schools in the context of managerialism. This was done in line with Bell's (1993) advice that the first step in investigating a researchable question is to examine what the literature says about that issue or what work has been done in that area. The review of literature assisted me with more insights into my topic and also helped me to identify key issues that have been dealt with in this project. The literature also revealed that there has been little or no research on instructional leadership practices of SMT members of primary schools, especially in South Africa. The works on instructional leadership have often centred around secondary (high) school principals and the relationship that such practices have on matriculation (matric) performance.

3.5.2 Interviews

The primary data source consisted of personal interviews with the participants. These were semi-structured, face-to-face open-ended questions (appendix E-H). As Denzin (1998) writes, the interview is a favourite methodological tool for qualitative research, while for Greeff (in de Vos 2002) qualitative interviews are "attempts to understand the world [or phenomena] from the participants' point of view, to unfold the meaning of the people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (ibid: 292). This approach was chosen so that I could present accurate descriptive data in the participants own words. With the participants' expressed consent (Appendix D), I used a micro-tape-recorder to tape-record the interviews. This information was later transcribed verbatim. Notes were also taken during the interview session. This was done to ensure some form of accuracy in data collection process. This approach was chosen because the technique helps to access data by asking rather than by watching. Interviews were useful in understanding the experiences of the instructional practices of participants and the meanings they personally attached to their experiences. This is an appropriate instrument, as Cohen and Manion (1994) points out that interviews are used to convert into data information "directly obtained from a person, by providing access to what is inside a person's head, what a person likes and dislikes and what a person thinks" (p.56). This study, framed in the qualitative paradigm, employed interviews as part of the data gathering instruments and served to be a good source for primary information gathering.

3.5.2.1 Types of Interviews

While reviewing the literature, three types of interviews associated with qualitative research were identified: (1) structured interviews (2) unstructured interviews and (3) semi-structured interviews. In structured interviews the goals and questions for the interview are detailed and well mapped out prior to the interview. It is usually a question and answer session with detailed and specified questions. The unstructured interview, in contrast, is an informal discussion that has no strict guidelines, that allows the discussion to be open but not necessarily concise. A major shortcoming of unstructured interviews, however, is that, the information that is received from the participant may be too vast and unrelated for the interviewer to put together. Semi-structured interviews combine a highly structured agenda but with the flexibility to

ask probing questions. As indicated above, semi-structured interviews were used in this study as they focus on collecting and formally capturing details about individual feelings and experiences. A description of semi-structured interviews thus follows.

3.5.2.2 The semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were suitable for this study into the lived enactment of instructional leadership practices of SMT members in primary schools. Open-ended questions enabled me to use prompts and probing questions to obtain deeper data from the participants, and to move from designed questions to unplanned prompts that emerged during the interview process. These prompts required giving examples, further explication of points made or issues raised and these were useful as they encouraged open communication and allowed participants the freedom to elaborate on their responses.

The open-ended types of questions helped to elicit the appropriate data responses from the participants, and focused on the formal as well as the informal aspects of shared instructional influence of the SMT. Open-ended questions try to solicit additional data from the participants. With these questions the participants were encouraged to talk about whatever that was essential to them in terms of their instructional leadership practices. In other words, they were invited to ‘tell their story’ of how they exercised instructional leadership in their own words. This approach then allowed participants to elaborate on their own experiences or attitudes towards their instructional leadership practices in terms of how their instructional roles were enacted. Even though the structure and sequencing of these questions were predetermined, probes were used to ‘dig deeper’ beneath the surface and obtain the required information from the participants.

All the interviews were conducted after school hours and lasted for 45 minutes to about one hour with each participant. Interviews were conducted after school in order not to disrupt their instructional time and to comply with one of the requirements of the GDE that all interviews be conducted after school hours. The interviews were carried out on-site and the time for each was negotiated with the participant.

Some researchers have registered their disapproval of the use of interviews as a tool for information-gathering in research. They point out that interviews have a greater potential for influencing the findings, assert that the researcher might receive false information as his/her presence may have an influence (positive or otherwise) on the responses of the participants. While interviews may be time-consuming (particularly during transcription), they also result in unnecessary information, and require more efforts to sift such information. McMillan et al. (2001:257) also point out the potential for subjectivity and bias. Interviews have again been criticised for their lack of anonymity in data collection. To minimise these limitations, the questions were checked and cross-checked with my supervisor and critical friends. Furthermore, as indicated above, the study was piloted to ensure that the instruments were clear and unambiguous. Methods such as observation and documentary analysis were also employed, to compensate for the weaknesses of the open-ended interviews and to give credibility to the work.

3.5.3 The Interview Schedule

To maximise the use of interviews, an interview guide was designed (Appendix E - H) to guide and put the interview process in focus. An interview schedule is a checklist to assure that all relevant topics are covered for each participant (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I therefore made a list of the questions or issues that I needed to be discussed or explored in the course of the interview. This was done to avoid the loss of vital data in the process (through forgetfulness). The schedule was also useful to ensure that the same basic issues were pursued with each individual participant. The interview schedule was concerned with exploring three fundamental instructional leadership tasks identified in the literature. This has to do with how the school mission or goals were arrived at, who managed the instructional programme, and how a culture of teaching and learning was created in the school.

3.5.4 Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis is one of the methodological tools for verifying information contained in texts. The approach required me (the researcher) to analyse national and school policy documents. Consequently, the following documents and artefacts were requested and examined: (1) the school time table; (2) the notice boards; (3) GDE

instructional policy framework; (4) school instructional policy; (5) the school mission and vision statements; (6) school newsletters; (7) development plans; (8) minutes of meetings; and (9) the principal's circulars/memos to the staff. The rationale for such an analysis was to ascertain the extent to which such documents were consistent with GDE policy requirements regarding instructional leadership practices. This instrument was employed as a data gathering tool since it had the potential of unearthing vital information that may not necessarily have been supplied by the participants during interviews or during observation. Notes were taken on how these documents were being put into effect in the school.

The method, apart from being a data-gathering instrument, was also thought to be useful in the study's triangulation process, in which data obtained through several approaches is verified and cross-validated. This means that this process of analysing documents was also used as a cross-check on the study's reliability. Documentary analysis as a data-gathering approach was thus utilized as a complementary technique for the data-gathering process.

3.5.5 Observation

Observation is one of the most common methods of qualitative research. Bell (1993) contends that it is not always the case that what people say is what they do. Consequently, I decided on observation as an approach to data-collection so as to be able to match theory and practice in relation to the coordination of instructional leadership practices of SMT members, in terms of their management strategies in running the school. This tool is described by Marshall and Rossman (1995:95) as "the systematic narrative of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study". They propose a checklist during observation and include: the physical setting (environment, context, behaviour), the participants (who is in the scene? How many and what are their roles? What brings them together?) This schema was thus followed during the observation.

Observation during the study was based on my perceptions of what I saw and heard as I moved round the school environment. The purpose of this observation was to match the information received during interview and documentary analysis against what was

being practiced. Consequently I focused on the daily enactment of instructional leadership tasks by the SMT.

As with interviews, I was guided by an observation schedule (appendix I), designed and focused on: communication parameters set among staff; regularity of staff meetings, the frequency of visits by the SMT to classrooms, who dominated staff meetings; and regularity of committee meetings. I looked at the school environment, the school buildings, the library, the computer room, teachers' offices and classroom seating arrangements. In so doing I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The literature accessed reveals that research observation can be conducted in one of two ways: as overt or covert participation. In the former, the researcher makes his/her intentions known to those being observed that they are being observed. The disadvantage of this approach is that vital data may be lost as participants may exaggerate the issues under investigation. In the latter, in contrast, s/he disguises him/herself and takes part fully as the others. The advantage of this later approach is that it is likely to record a more accurate and valid observation than the former. However, the second approach has also been criticised on ethical grounds. The ethical code stipulates that any research conducted on human subjects must seek consent from the subjects before being embarked upon. The overt approach was employed in this study for ethical reasons and for the fact that the researcher does not work in those schools where the research was undertaken. Field notes were compiled of the instructional tasks undertaken by the SMT members, helping to maintain a record of the day-to-day actions during the period of observation.

Armed with a warning from Kerlinger (1979), on the unobtrusiveness in observation during data-gathering, I conducted the observations with as much discreetness and objectivity as was possible. I was very conscious not to obstruct or to interrupt the activities of the participants. Before the commencement of the research I visited the schools to familiarise myself with both the environment and the participants. This was meant to diffuse the tension usually associated with meeting unfamiliar people for research purposes. The effects of any subjectivity, biases and idiosyncrasies of the researcher during the observation process were also minimised through triangulation.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The question of validity and reliability are crucial and pertinent to qualitative research. There are as many and varied ways of addressing validity and reliability as there are different approaches to the research process, but triangulation is one of the most important. Since no single approach is entirely adequate for data-gathering for the problem under investigation, I employed more than one research instrument, thus enabling me to maximise validity and reliability. This triangulation plays an essential role in ensuring validity and reliability as it assists in corroborating data from the different data sources and ensures that the weaknesses of one method is compensated by the strengths of another. Denzin (1998) defines the concept as:

> *The application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The diverse methods and measures that are combined should relate in some specific way to the theoretical constructs under examination. The use of multiple methods in an investigation so as to overcome the weakness or biases of a single method taken by itself is sometimes called multiple operationalism (p. 318).*

Similarly, Potterton (1999) citing Robson (1994) describes triangulation as providing a means of testing one source of information against other sources. For him:

> *Both correspondence and discrepancies are of value. If two sources give the same message then, to some extent, they cross-validate each other. If there is discrepancy, its investigation may help in explaining the phenomenon of interest (p.383).*

The utilisation of these three methods of data-collection was thus useful for methodological as well as data triangulation purposes. It was useful in the sense that the same information was solicited from using three different methods. This served to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the data obtained. For instance, information received from the observation may show a reality different from that obtained through interviews and/or documentary analysis. In this way the drawbacks of each of the methods are counter-balanced by the strengths of the others. For instance, the limitations of the semi-structured interviews, such as misrepresentation of information, may be compensated for by data from textual analysis.

To further ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the following were undertaken to minimise researcher biases (McMillan & Schumacher 2001): interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Direct quotations were used in the study to reflect participants' voices. The data obtained from interviews received corroboration from field notes based on the observation, and documentary analysis. Apart from these methods, I also made use of literature controls, meaning that the concepts (themes) used constituted what people with authority on the issue under investigation regarded as tasks for effective instructional leadership.

3.7 Data Analysis and procedure

According to de Vos (2002:339), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data during a research process. Thus data analysis entails breaking down the mass of data into constituent parts, the purpose of which is to enable the researcher to attach meanings to it, and largely assisting him/her to address the research problem.

In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyse the data. Power (2002) observes that there is insufficient literature outlining the pragmatic process of thematic analysis but acknowledges that it is one of the ways of putting information received from participants into meaningful and usable forms for easy interpretation and understanding.

As qualitative studies normally result in numerous pages of texts, observation notes and transcripts, thematic analysis became for me an appropriate analytical approach for evaluating the data in this study. The results of tape-recording and transcribing interviews verbatim were large volumes of texts of transcriptions. The thematic analysis approach thus utilized to analyse the data based on the comparison and categorization of the data from the interviews, observation and texts. In doing this, individual data was compared with evidence from the literature reviewed. Secondly, this was cross-checked within and between the two schools to look for similarities and differences. The data obtained from the process was interrogated for subject matter corresponding to themes identified

in the literature reviewed. The themes thus identified were then arranged, categorised, organized and discussed.

3.8 Ethical Considerations/Issues

Writing about ethical issues in research, Mouton (2005:238), notes that the ethics of science concerns what is wrong and what is right in conducting research. He argues that because scientific research is a form of human conduct, it follows that such conduct has to conform to generally accepted norms and values. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln, (2000) point out that because the objects of enquiry in research are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any form of harm to them. They point out that traditional ethical concerns have often revolved around topics of informed consent, right to privacy and also protection from harm. However, McMillan and Schumacher (2001) observe that most novice researchers give only assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, but seldom think about the issue of physical or emotional harm.

In the present study, even though informing participants was done in a manner to encourage free choice of participation, the non-judgemental and non-interfering role of the researcher was equally explained to all participants. To safeguard participants' rights and dignity, they were personally approached and in a personal dialogue the entire research process was explained. After illumination of the research process, participants were free to withdraw if they so wished. In addition to the verbal or oral explanations, a detailed written consent form (Appendix D) was also given to participants, to which they could freely consent or not. The consent form also highlighted the data collection methods and the need to tape-record the interview sessions. Hence, for ethical reasons, neither the names of participants nor the schools are disclosed in this research report.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

As with all case study research, the major limitation of this study is its small size, which makes it difficult for the findings to be generalised to a larger population. Only two primary schools were involved in this study.

Secondly, the contribution of the SGB in the effectiveness of instructionally-minded schools cannot be over-emphasized. Unfortunately, this study did not provide for the views of SGB members and this will have affected the findings in this study.

Thirdly, even though steps were taken to minimise researcher bias, it is not certain that this was adequately dealt with in the study. The selection of themes and other conceptual underpinnings (subjectively selected by the researcher) may also have had an impact on the findings of the study.

Nonetheless, these limitations were anticipated and the researcher tried to deal with them in the manner described above (see validity and reliability).

3.10 Conclusion

The chapter described the research methodology employed to explore instructional practices in two primary schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng province. The analysis in the chapter showed that the qualitative case study approach adopted to investigate the topic was appropriate and allowed participants the freedom to share their experiences in their own words. The data-collection instruments used were equally appropriate for the study.

The next chapter highlights contextual issues in the schools in which the study took place.

4 Chapter Four: Contextual Background of the Schools

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the contextual concerns of the schools under investigation. The study set out to explore instructional leadership practices of school leaders in two primary schools. Consequently it is appropriate to set out the contextual milieu of the schools under which the study was conducted. The issue of context is crucial to research so it is necessary to reflect on the context of these schools and the significant impact it has on their operation and productivity. Leadership structures within each school were examined to highlight how they enhance or impede the delivery of the new curriculum.

The way of leading, behaving and acting are all shaped by the social context of the particular school or its immediate environment. Accordingly, a brief background analysis of the two schools visited is presented below. This brief analysis will relate to the type of school, its legacy and location and the number of pupils as well as teachers and the management structures. Once again, for ethical reasons, these two schools are simply named ‘school A’ and ‘school B’. Participants’ names have been identified only by their titles (‘principal’, ‘HoD for senior school’ and ‘HoD for foundation phase’ or ‘deputy principal’).

4.2 School A:

School A is a public primary (ex-Model C) school situated in one of the suburbs of Johannesburg in Gauteng province. Originally the school catered for children living in the immediate area but, as years passed, the school opened its doors to children from adjoining communities. Currently, the school serves ten other neighbouring communities, giving quality education to previously disadvantaged children. This shows that most of the learners are not resident in the immediate school environment but commute from the surrounding suburbs.

The learners in this former Model C school hail from both working and middle class families. The school offers subsidies to some by means of fee-exemption and providing feeding scheme to learners who are unable to afford such costs. 12% of the

learners receive partial fee-exemption, while 6% receive full exemption. The school has an average poverty index (quintile), but the exemptions given to parents, are still moderate resourced as parents are fully involved in and committed to the activities of the school, and are generous in their care for it.

The school's literacy rate ranges from moderate to average, with varying contributory factors, one of which is that most of the learners live with their grandparents, who are uneducated. The school has a well-defined and visible vision and mission statement, displayed in various parts of the school compound. The vision statement highlights open access to the school, addressing the needs of all learners, giving equal opportunity to all learners and being accountable to all stakeholders. The school's stated aims are to provide the best possible education for all learners, according to their needs and abilities, regardless of their race, religion, language or gender.

The mission statement expressed the need to develop the skills, attitudes, and values of the learners, conducive to their personal, academic and social development. The aims are to develop in their learners' self-disciple, respect for other, critical thinking and resourcefulness. The school community attempts to do so by establishing a supportive and stimulating environment for the staff, with the aim of fostering their personal and professional development.

There are altogether 536 learners in this school, with 16 teachers. Of the 536 learners, 287 are boys and 249 girls. Of the total learner population 90% of them are Black, 2% White, 2% Coloured, 3% Indian and 3% of other racial backgrounds. The principal in this school is female and in-charge of 15 other teachers. Out of the 16 teachers in the school, two are male and 14 female. Their racial groupings include: seven Blacks, three Whites, two Coloured, three Indian and one Asian. Fifteen teachers in this school are employed by the state, with only one employed by the SGB. This school has a high teacher-learner ratio of 1:40.

The leadership structures in school A appear to be democratic. The principal and her deputy described a decentralised and participatory leadership style in the school. According to the principal, all staff members are involved in decisions concerning the school. In fact she said, "I alone cannot run the school. I have to delegate and ask others to help me otherwise I will break down before I retire" (principal of school A).

The deputy principal concurs with the principal stating that staff members are encouraged to be active and involved in the running of the school by taking turns to talk to pupils during morning assemblies and similar occasions. The teacher interviewed had a different perspective of the Principal's leadership style. The teacher feels that the principal is autocratic and takes decisions unilaterally and merely informs the other members of the staff are merely informed after decisions have been made. Although there are two HoDs in the school, the Principal excluded them in the study stating that they (the two HoDs) did not want to be part of the study. However, the teacher interviewed disagreed and said that the Principal unilaterally decided to exclude those HoDs from the study.

The Principal in this school did not permit the researcher to visit the classrooms. Observation of physical structures was done from a distance. The researcher managed to visit only the deputy Principal's class since it was the venue for the interview session.

Table 1: Staff of School A

Position	Sex	Qualifications	Yrs (Exp)	Yrs (post)	Yrs (here)
Principal	F	BA, ACE (Educ), PTC	27	6	12
Deputy	F	BA, BEd, Med	12	2	7
Teacher **1**	M	HDE	11	11	11

These staff members had been in this school for many years, as a result of which they also had a great wealth of teaching experience ranging from 11 – 27 years. Apart from their long teaching experience they also had a wealth of academic expertise. They were highly qualified in their teaching careers, having qualifications ranging from primary teachers' certificate (PTC), advanced certificate in education (ACE),and higher diploma in education (HDE) to masters in education (MEd), as shown in table 1 above.

4.3 School B:

School B is also an ex-model C public primary school located in the same suburb as school A. The school was built to cater for the growing number of children in the

area, having opened in 1938 with only ninety three (93) pupils and three (3) teachers. Since its establishment in 1938, it has had over sixty years of service record with only three appointed principals, including the current one. This has helped to create a stable school environment, strengthened by the fact that most of the parents of the current students are themselves ex-former pupils. The strong bond of family spirit in the school has earned it the name, 'the family school'. Parent support and involvement in school activities in this school was a prominent feature.

With very few exceptions, recounts the Principal, the school is given active support by its parent body. He affirmed that funds raised of the years have enabled the school to acquire almost everything an educational institution could desire. Apart from the school buildings, the parents contributed to the building and equipping of a well-equipped computer centre, and arts, music and science laboratories. Additionally, the school has provided facilities for the specialist staff (psychologist, remedial teacher, and a social worker).

The SGB had employed ten teachers, two secretaries, four grounds staff and three specialist staff (in addition to the twenty-one GDE posts provided). The Principal also confirmed my observation that each teacher was provided with a computer (desktop) in his/her office. The funding for all these undertakings was provided by the parents of the school.

The Principal recounts that the importance of teamwork, rapport and trust at all levels of human interactions had been stressed throughout the history of the school. The members of staff had provided and continued to offer children with a varied extramural activity programmes intended to cater for their sporting and cultural needs. Academically, the school boasted record of many outstanding achievements.

The school had a current learner population of 614. This number comprised 296 boys and 318 girls. The school was composed of various racial groupings among the learners, with 87 Black, 379 White, 62 Coloured while 92 Asian and Indians. Of the total, only 48 (8%) of the learners were exempted from paying schools fees. Of the 48 learners exempted from paying school fees, 40 received partial exemption, while 8 received full exemption.

There were 27 teachers in the school of whom 24 were female and 3 male. The Principal was male, with 26 other teachers. Their racial composition was 2 Blacks, 18 Whites and 7 Indians. The school had a small class size and small teacher- pupil ratio (1:30). Of the 27 teachers, sixteen (16) were employed by the state with the other 11 employed by the SGB.

There appeared to be a participatory leadership style in this school. The deputy Principal indicated that "different individuals are entrusted with different duties and which makes everyone feel empowered and makes all develop accountability for whatever they do". The Principal also said he employed an autocratic style of leadership at times because the democratic styles did not always work: "there are occasions when I say I hear all points of views but we have to go in that direction; I have got to decide. I'm democratic but on some occasions we've got to make a decision because we cannot always get consensus".

Table 2: Staff of School B

Position	Sex	Qualifications	Yrs Exp	Yrs post	Yrs here
Principal	M	TTDHD, BA, B.Ed	42	25	25
Deputy	F	HDE, Diploma Spec Ed	17	3	5
HoD 1	F	HDE	24	4	24
HoD 2	F	HDE	37	25	37
Teacher 1	F	BA, HDE	4.5	3.5	3.5

The statistics from the table above show that the teachers in this school are well-qualified for their jobs and some have had many years of teaching experience. Except for the teacher, the SMT members all have taught for a period ranging from seven to 42 years. Similarly, the table indicates that the members of the SMT had been in this school for a long time and appeared to have helped create the ethos of the school. They had been in the school for periods ranging from 24 to 37 years. Only the deputy Principal had been in the school for a few years (only 5).

Table3: School populations in both schools

Category	Teachers	Boys	Girls	Total
School A	16	287	249	536
School B	27	296	318	614
Total	43	583	567	1,150

The statistics in table 3 (above) demonstrate that there were more boys than girls in school A. Conversely, school B had more girls than boys. Similarly, there were more teachers in school B than in school A. The Principal of school B had more teachers to supervise than the Principal of school A. The SGB in school B had appointed more extra staff than in school A. The statistics then suggest that parental involvement in school B was more pronounced that in school A. There were a total of 43 teachers in both schools, with a combined learner population of 1,150.

Table 4: Staff teaching experience in both schools

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
00 – 04 years	0	0
05 – 10 years	1	12.5
11 – 15 years	2	25
16 – 20 years	1	12.5
21 $^{+}$ years	4	50
Total	8	100

Table 4 (above) shows that 50 percent of the staff members had a considerable amount of teaching experience that is more than 21 years. More than 12% had teaching experience of between 16 – 20 years and another 25% had experience of between 11 – 15 years of teaching. Only one teacher, or 12.5%, had taught for less

than ten years. This shows a wealth of teaching experience of the teachers in these two schools.

4.4 Conclusion

The contextual issues illuminated in this chapter reveal that effective instructional practices in schools require SMTs to collaboratively engage in designing the mission and goals of the school. In addition, there should be active parental involvement in their activities. High academic qualification and significant experience of both staff and the SMT appear to be a necessary requirement for effective instructional practices in primary school. To be able to assist others in the teaching and learning process, school leaders need to be more schooled in pedagogy and so be effective facilitators to their colleagues. It requires INSETS, workshops and further higher training of all members of SMT.

The following is a description of the South African policy framework on instructional leadership practices in public schools.

5 Chapter Five: The National Instructional Policy Framework

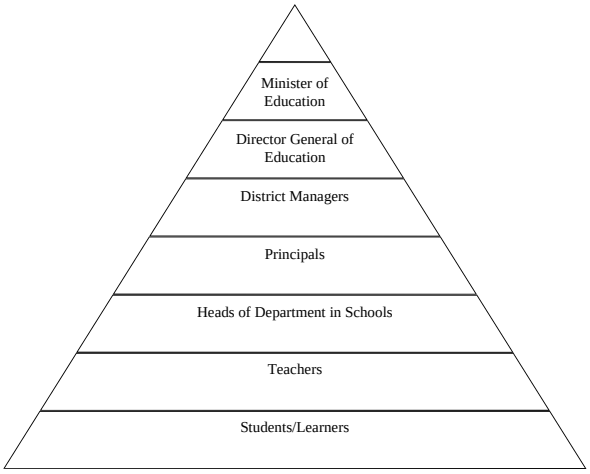
5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores and highlights the national and provincial instructional policies as expounded by the national education departments for principals, HoDs and any other members of the SMT (DoE, 2000). Various changes have been made (RNCS) in attempt to implement curriculum 2005 (C2005) in terms of how it will be delivered in the classroom and the expectations of learners at the end of their study. Undoubtedly, for the changes in the education system (OBE/C2005) to impact on teaching and learning practices, processes, strategies and structures need to be put in place to assist the transformation within the sector. Description is thus given of the strategies and structures needed to positively impact on teaching and learning. The national policy framework (DoE, 2000) indicates that:

> *Best practice aims to improve learner achievement by creating an environment in which both teachers and learners share a clear purpose, are able to take shared responsibility for learning and are able to engage collaboratively in activities which promote the goals of the school.*

The national policy framework defines the manner and procedure in which curriculum is to be delivered to achieve the vision and mission of the school. A critical analysis of the national policy documents show that the emphasis on instructional practices in the new curriculum is intended to correct the inefficiencies of the old education system.

The apartheid education system was based on a top-down management and leadership style. Power and control were exercised from the top, that is, from the minister of education trickling down the educational ladder to the Principal at the foot. In this period the Principal and the SMT had no power in policy decision-making. The Principal in those days merely administered or ran the school on a day-to-day basis, with all decisions transmitted from the DoE. As a result, principals and SMTs were more of administrators rather than instructional leaders. By way of illustration, the educational structure in the old system looked similar to the figure represented below:



Source: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (2000)

Figure 1: Structure of the old education system

In such a context, principals and HoDs did not provide any instructional leadership, rather, their responsibility was predominantly to control the activities of teachers and learners. School leaders received syllabi from the circuit officer and only ensured that teachers taught the prescribed syllabi and the approved textbooks. As a result SMT and principals find instructional leadership very hard to effectively put it into practice. They did not practice it neither have they been effectively been retrained to include it in their work.

In the new dispensation, policies and laws have been enacted that reflected the values and principles of democracy. Schools must therefore operate within the principles of the new constitution of South Africa (democracy, equality, equity, human dignity and participation). The South African schools Act (84 of 1996) and the national norms and standards for school funding (DoE, 2005) has created a radically new approach to leading, managing and governing of schools. This new approach has made it possible for principals, members of the SMTs educators, parents and even learners to change the way they think about their roles and responsibilities in schools. Leadership and management in the public school now reflect a culture of human rights in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The new national structure of education embraces the contributions of all stakeholders within the system. This is encouraged in the school system by the Principal establishing collaborative structures

and encouraging participation in the administration of the school and thus enhancing effective teaching and learning. In this approach the public school is at the centre of educational activity, with all the stakeholders contributing to its educative mission of effective teaching and learning. Figure 3 below illustrates the new education structure.

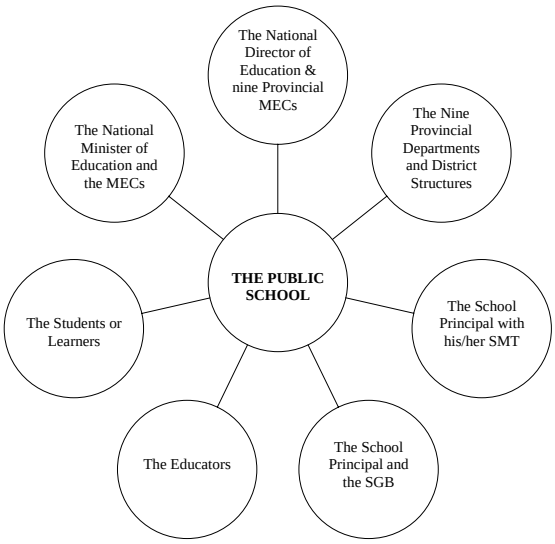


Figure 2: Post-1994 education structure (school-centred)

In the new structure, the work of the Principal has been broadened. It is no longer enough, in the post-apartheid era, for principals to be good administrators. The Principal is by no means the sole source of leadership in the school today. In Gupton's (2003) view, a more integrated democratic approach to today's principalship is not merely preferred, it is increasingly essential for dealing well with the nature of today's schools and students. For that reason, school principals must be proactive leaders and managers and encourage cooperation and teamwork with the other members of the SMT. Principals no longer hold all the responsibility for running the school on their own. The policy even stipulates that they should form SMTs made of senior level staff with the responsibility of the professional management and putting the school's policies into practice (DoE, 2000). An allied structure to the SMT is the SGB that determines the school's policies. School leaders (SMT) thus need democratic ways or approaches for the running of schools. The policy framework also requires that the SMTs provide opportunities for educators, learners, parents and the whole community to participate in the running of schools. School managers are thus required to operate

in democratic and participatory ways and to develop and build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery of quality education for all learners.

The national instructional policy document fits in the national curriculum policy of 1998, the year in which the ANC-led government adopted a policy framework with a view to changing the curriculum in all public schools in the country. The programme Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was to be as its name suggests, fully put into operation by 2005. It is based on outcomes based education (OBE), an approach which shifts the emphasis of learning and teaching away from the traditional rote learning to concrete educational results or 'outcomes' (DoE, 2000). The intent of the national plan for instructional practices in schools is thus to assist SMT members to understand the concept of instructional leadership in the context of the new curriculum (C2005), to manage the new curriculum as instructional leaders and to put it into practice (DoE, 2000). As instructional leaders, SMTs are responsible for taking the lead in putting the school curriculum into practice and improving it. They ensure that there is a culture of teaching and learning in their schools. This is because, as the document stipulates, "good instructional leadership is the ticket to good teaching and learning" (ibid: 13).

But the question arises as to what role instructional leaders play in schools. In line with the framework for instructional leadership (DoE, 2000:10), SMT members are responsible for the following instructional tasks:

- Overseeing curriculum planning in the school;
- Helping to developing learning activities;
- Developing and managing assessment strategies;
- Ensuring that learning and teaching time is used effectively;
- Ensuring that classroom activities are learner-placed and learner-centred;
- Developing and using team planning (and teaching) techniques;
- Developing and managing learning resources.

In specific ways, the SMT members in every public primary school are expected to be involved in tasks such as:

- Setting up staff development programmes, including in-service training (INSET);

- Keeping learner records;
- Visiting classes and observing lessons and students' work;
- Discussing learners progress with teachers and parents;
- Discussing educational policies with educators;
- Giving Feedback to educators and learners.

These specific functions (bulleted above) of SMT members in enhancing teaching and learning in primary schools are described in the following sections.

5.2 Staff Development

In effective schools, SMTs have different committees responsible for different things. The staff development team (SDT) is one such committee. Professional development of staff is at the heart of every effective school, and is the sole responsibility of the SMT. One of the instructional tasks of the SMT is to provide staff development to its members in the school, a function of staff development is delegated to the SDT in the school. Each school must then form an SDT consisting of the teaching and administrative staff, democratically elected. The members of the SDT are responsible for the staff development needs of the entire school community and report to the SMT.

One important task of the SDT is to draw up a staff development policy, which is a written document of the professional interests and needs of educators in the school. The SDT has a further essential responsibility of ensuring that the curriculum is being developed in the school. To successfully carry out this function, it is necessary for the SDTs to establish a sub-committee, the Curriculum Committee, with responsibility for making sure that the curriculum is appropriately used by the entire school as required. Activities to be engaged in by the curriculum committee include, but are not exclusive, to the following: providing instructional information, organising meetings, and conducting formal as well as informal classroom visits.

5.3 Provision of Information

Communication is essential in information transfer, and school level personnel need up-to-date information to successfully carry out their mission. It is important,

therefore, that the SMT through the SDT, have the necessary documents in place to give a sense of direction to staff to adequately perform their respective responsibilities. In addition to other information required, each school must also develop a continuous assessment policy, homework policy, policy on selection of textbooks and other stationery, to be effective and efficient instructional leaders.

According to McEwan (2003), other forms of information necessary for instructional leaders are dialoguing with staff at all times. For her, there is no substitute for good conversation and instructional leaders should constantly be engaged in dialogue with their teachers. Effective instructional leaders, in her opinion, also adopt an open door policy – they never, or rarely, close their office doors. The body language of effective instructional leaders says: "come in, how can I help you?". Instructional leaders close their doors only when they are conferencing with learners, teachers or parents. They never close their doors to work (ibid: 71).

5.4 Organising Meetings

Meetings are forums where information and clarification of matters are disseminated. According to the national qualifications framework (NQF) this takes place at three different levels in the primary schools – foundation, intermediate and senior phase (DoE, 1996). Meetings are held at the beginning of each term and curriculum plans and content, use of resources and assessment methods are discussed in each phase or learning area. At the end of each term these different groups are called together with each presenting their various curricula to the larger group for discussions. The purpose of this general meeting is to ensure progression of learners from one phase to another. In addition to the phase meetings, groups such as grade teachers also meet to develop short-term plans for their particular grade levels. McEwan (2003) cautions, though, that these meetings are not for complaining and whining, but are used as strategies for staff development, reaching consensus on mission statements, discussing how to meet the needs of target students, ironing out conflicts and celebrating successes.

5.5 Formal and Informal Class Visits

Conducting development appraisal for all educators is a responsibility of the SMT. Through the SDT, the SMT ensures that there are structures and procedures in place in the school to facilitate development appraisal activities. The SDT should organise two classroom observations for each educator the purpose of which is to assess their practice and to decide what forms of assistance the school can provide if the educator needs it. In addition to these formal visits, the SDT also organises unofficial or informal classroom observation visits. These informal visits aim to help teachers with their classroom work, in terms of quality delivery of the curriculum. The support required may be related to how to implement continuous assessment strategies, establishing a learner-centred classroom, observe the effectiveness of group work, manage time and evaluate learners' use of worksheets.

During classroom visits, the development support group (DSG) are supportive and positive by being sensitive to the feelings of educators, who thus feel more comfortable. Observations are thus accompanied with feedback that indicates positive aspects of the lesson, as well as highlighting what needs to be improved. This attitude helps educators realise that such observation visits assists them to improve their classroom practice. In this way teachers will come to the realisation that the strategy is meant to help improve their professional practice and are not a fault-finding strategy.

5.6 Learning Resources

A learning resource is anything that can assist with the learning process, even if it was not specifically designed for that purpose (DoE, 2000). It is the reasonability of the SMT to encourage and support educators to use different learning resources, to share them as well as share ideas. The SMT should encourage educators to use resources with the view of helping learners to achieve the intended outcomes. The SMT should also appoint one of the educators to take charge of the resources in the school, a person who will have the task of creating a resource room to keep all the resources, storing all resources properly and keeping a list of all the available resources in the school.

5.7 Continuous Assessment

Assessment is an important part of the new curriculum (OBE). In the national protocol on assessment for schools, assessment is defined as "a process of collecting, synthesising and interpreting information to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in making decisions about the progress of learners" (DoE, 2005:2). Classroom assessment thus provides an indication of learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner by ensuring that adequate evidence of achievement is collected using various forms of assessment. Learners work should thus be assessed at all times. The purpose of continuous assessment is thus to check on how learners are progressing towards meeting the outcomes.

The teacher is responsible for the day-to-day assessment of learners and the SMT ensures that a systematic programme for continuous assessment is in place in the school. The SMT makes sure that educators keep journals of the learners in which they record observed behaviours and actions of each one.

Informal Assessment of Badu

The learner shows these qualities: (tick the most important qualities or write comments)

- Responsibility
- Cleanliness
- Punctuality
- Self-control
- Cooperative
- Respectful
- Shows imitative
- Consistency
- Good Manners

Mon 5 Jan: Badu continues to keep good time control. But she does not listen to instructions.
Mon 5 Feb: Badu was so quiet this week that I hardly noticed her. Perhaps something is wrong at home
Thur 25 Mar: Badu's neighbour told me how responsible Badu is when he works as a child minder on Saturdays. He never forgets to go and he always keeps the children busy

Source: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (2000)

Figure 3: Learners' informal assessment record

There are two forms of assessment: formal and informal. Informal assessment is the daily monitoring of learners progress. This is done through observations, discussions, informal class interactions and conferences. Formal assessment, by contrast, provides teachers with a systematic technique of evaluating how well learners are progressing

in a grade and in a particular learning programme, learning area or subject. Examples of formal assessment are projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances, tests, examinations, and practical demonstrations (DoE, 2005:6). The instructionally focused SMT ensures that these structures are in place in the school and are working accordingly.

Another instructional responsibility for the SMTs is to assist teachers in recording and reporting assessments. School leaders encourage and assist teachers to keep and record mark books, portfolios and report cards, among others. The mark book records the marks, symbols and comments the educator gives to learners. The SMT checks to ensure that each teacher diligently and accurately keeps these records. Similarly, learner portfolios are records indicating the learners' work. This is a file of samples of the various tasks and assignments learners have undertaken. These tasks and assignments in the learner portfolios are used to measure progress towards achieving the outcomes.

The national protocol on assessment (DoE, 2005) requires that report cards be sent to parents once every term. It is the responsibility of the SMT of each school to ensure that such report cards are made available to the parents and at the appropriate time. The report card provides a holistic picture of a learner's achievements in different learning programmes or learning areas of learners to their parents. The marks given in this report are arrived at through many continuous assessment activities and contain remarks aimed at being informative and helpful and to guide parents to give help to the learners. According to the national protocol on assessment (DoE, 2005), information in a report card includes:

- Personal Information: name, grade and class, birth date, attendance profile;
- Official school details: year, term, school name, date, signature and comment of parent, teacher, principal, dates for closing and opening of school, school stamp, explanation of the national coding system;
- Performance details: a percentage or code indicating the level of performance per learning programme, learning area of the strengths and developmental needs of the learner;

- Constructive Feedback: this feedback contains comments about the learner's performance in relation to his/her previous performance and in relation to the requirements of the learning programme, learning area or subject.

Below is presented a sample of a learner's report card for the intermediate phase. The component parts are integrated into this card to give a holistic picture of the overall performance of the child, indicating his/her potentials and how other stakeholders may assist the child to progress academically, socially and psychologically.

Name of School: ……	Name:	Gender: … Class: …					
	Birth Date:	Year:	Term: ...	1	2	3	4
School opening: Date: ….. Time: ……	School opening: Date: …. Time: …			Days absent: …			

EXPLANATION OF NATIONAL CODES			
1	2	3	4
Not Achieved	Partially Achieved	Satisfactorily Achieved	Outstanding/Excellent Achievement
1 – 34	35 – 49	50 – 69	70 – 100

LEARNING AREA	RESULT	COMMENTS
English – Home Language		
Afrikaans		
Sesotho		
Mathematics		
Natural Sciences		
Technology		
Life Orientation		
Economic and Management Sciences		
Arts and Culture		

Signature		Date	Comment
Principal			
Teacher			
Parent			

School Stamp

Source: National Protocol on Assessment (DoE, 2005)

Figure 4: Learners' report card for intermediate phase

6 Chapter Six: Practising Instructional Leadership in Schools

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to investigate instructional leadership practices of two primary schools in Gauteng province. In particular, attempts were made to record how leaders in these schools enacted tasks that constituted instructional leadership practices to influence the learning and teaching environment. Analysis of the data from the study has revealed that school leaders engaged in effective instructional leadership possess certain behavioural dispositions. A critical review of the literature of effective instructional leaders share similarities between the behaviours expressed by the participants in the study. The common behaviours identified include: overseeing the formulation of specific school goals and ensuring that these are clearly communicated to all members of the school community; protecting instructional time; monitoring student progress; promoting professional development; supervising and evaluating instructions; providing instructional resources and incentives for teachers and learners; and being a visible presence in the school. These behaviours are essential in providing an ethos that supports effective and engaging teaching and learning and that corresponds to student success and academic achievement.

The information provided in this chapter was derived from the data obtained from the participants interviews, document and observation analysis on the tasks carried out by these school leaders. These tasks centre around aspects of curriculum management and supervision. The issues in respect of curriculum management and supervision revolve around the leaders' duties towards creating enabling conditions for effective teaching and learning to take place. These issues include the SMTs perception of instructional leadership, promoting professional development, parental involvement, creating a positive school climate, and maintaining high visibility.

6.2 Understanding Instructional Leadership

The school improvement plans (SIPs) assessed in school B showed that, "teaching is a primary responsibility and creating classroom morale was a duty of every teacher". The Principal and HoDs in school B, mentioned that it is the duty of the HoDs to

ensure that the curriculum is understood and followed by all staff in the school. For instance, the Principal indicated that they have prioritised instructional practices over managerial duties. Though the two tasks are essential for the effectiveness of the school, he highlighted the primacy of instruction rather than the operational aspects of the schoolwork. The managerial principal, according to the Principal, "mostly stays in his/her office to perform managerial jobs like filling forms, ordering supplies, receiving and discussing with parents and not getting out into the classroom and seeing where the instruction is". Instructional leadership in his opinion is "being in the classroom, talking to learners and discussing their work".

For the principal of School A, good instructional leadership is "being in the classroom, asking learners questions about their studies and how they [learners] get help". She, however, acknowledged that the task has been a huge challenge for her. In her opinion, "it seems unrealistic for SMT members to be in the classroom all the time as they have other duties to attend to as well; and HoDs for instance, have full teaching responsibilities on a daily basis". This challenge/problem is compounded by the volume of administrative paperwork brought by C2005. The Principals mentioned that to effect instructional improvement, instructionally minded leaders should strike a balance between instructional involvement and managerial responsibilities. This was well-articulated by the Principal of School B when he stated: "I need to be actively involved in the instructional process within the school; and I am often out in the classroom, not everyday but at least three times a week". The Principal's assertion was substantiated by all participants indicating how helpful the Principal has been in terms of his readiness and availability for classroom visits.

The view of the teacher in School A about Instructional leadership is that it has to do with ensuring that there is effective teaching and learning in the school. For him, instructional leaders should be facilitators in the sense that they should be able to assist others in the teaching and learning process. The perception of the teacher in school B was that instructional leaders should be able to demonstrate teaching techniques in classrooms and during general conferences with the educators:

> *Well, when I thought about that … I thought … instructional … would be giving guidance or giving instructions but at the same time being an example of it, you know, learning by example (teacher of school B).*

The HoD for the senior school (School B) thought the management team in her school was instructionally focused, because members spent much of their time and energies on instructional practices that were centred on teaching and learning. Visiting teachers in their classes, talking with teachers and finding out if they needed support, were some of the things used to sort out teachers pedagogical issues: “we constantly commune with our teachers with the view to guiding and supporting them so they can improve and be able to deliver [the curriculum]” she commented. The SMT members in both schools alluded to the fact that instructional leadership should not be perceived as merely as a substitute for management but emphasized that it should be seen as key to any instructional improvement programme.

6.3 Defining and Communicating School Goals

The educative mission of the school should be upheld at all times, so before aims, strategies and outcomes can be formulated to guide the actions of educators and learners, the SMT must have a shared sense of the mission of the school. Responses from participants from both schools (A and B) showed that the mission, began with a clear vision formulated by the SMT together with the SGB, which was then communicated to, and eventually accepted by all the staff, learners and parents. This approach supports the view of Gupton (2003) of creating an instructionally oriented vision and mission and communicating it to the entire school. This is consistent with research (Kowalski & Oates, 1993) that suggests that instructional improvement is not possible without vision/goals. 'Vision, is described by Coleman and LaRocque (1990) as a set of professional norms that shape school activities toward a desired state. Sergiovanni (1990) defines vision as beliefs, dreams and direction of the organisation and the building of consensus to get there. Vision then, in this context, refers to the personal beliefs about the education of children and the expressed school goals and/or mission for the school to accomplish those beliefs.

The participants’ responses strongly indicated that the formulation of a vision or goals was of paramount importance for their schools’ success. The participants in this study thus stressed the role of the SMT in creating and facilitating the vision and mission accordingly. For instance, the teacher in school B said: “the principal and the SMT have to have the vision and sense of what can be for the school”. The Principal of

School B expressed similar sentiments: “I think our role is to establish the vision for the school and to ensure that all stakeholders assimilate and personalise this vision”. The teacher in school A said: “the SMT is the initiator and seller of the vision”. Through the interviews all the participants seem to say that that formulation of school goals started at the beginning of the year in a general staff meeting, which set the tone and direction for the activities for the school year. According to the SMTs in School B, they communicated the national vision of teaching and learning through “consistent contact with and involvement of teachers and parents”. They expressed the idea that they attempt to transform their instructionally-focused vision for academic success through teacher empowerment and parental involvement. These behaviours shown by the SMT (in School B) are supported by research that says that instructionally-focused leaders typically organise their schools around an emphasis on instructional improvement, supported by a distinct vision of instructional quality (Gupton, 2003). It should be stated, however, that the articulation of the vision alone is insufficient to promote adequate success. As the Principal of School B indicated, such a vision must be integrated throughout the organisation: “you have a vision and you must transfer that vision into goals. In a school whatever you establish as your goals should then influence the school outcomes”.

6.4 Teamwork

The interviews and documents examined showed that there was teamwork among the staff in these schools. The HoD for the foundation phase (School B) sums this up succinctly: “a staff team that works together stays together”. Her assertion is consistent with the GDE instructional policy (DoE, 2000:17) document that states:

> *When educators plan and develop programmes together, they get to know each other well. They draw together, develop a sense of group belonging and become committed to making teaching and learning more effective.*

The interviewees perceived instructional leadership as teamwork. According to them instructional leadership cannot be done by the Principal alone. As the deputy Principal of school A said: “instructional leadership in the school is the job of all staff, and not the Principal alone. If we leave it to the Principal, things will not go well especially with our new education system”. This is in line with Leverett’s (2002) claim that achieving equitable outcomes for all learners is beyond the capacity of individual,

highly talented leaders and requires the knowledge and expertise of others in the school organization, working with a shared sense of purpose.

Instructional leadership in schools is thus a shared responsibility involving staff, SGB and the SMT. All of these are involved in creating the vision, mission, goals and strategies and hence for putting it into practice. The research showed that principals did not assume instructional leadership responsibilities alone but in collaboration with their deputies, HoDs, grade heads and learning area heads. This is expected due to the increasing managerial functions principals play in the context of the new curriculum (C2005) and school-based decision-making. For this reason this study has consistently contended that the collaborative action and effort of the entire SMT is more likely to enhance a positive culture of teaching and learning in primary schools than when the Principal unilaterally took instructional decisions and imposed them on the rest of the school community. Hence, Spillane et al. (1999) have often argued that, rather than seeing instructional leadership practice as solely a function of an individual's ability, skill and charisma, it should rather be perceived and understood as practice distributed among colleagues. The case for teamwork and cooperation, especially in instructional leadership practice, is well supported by Leverett (2002), who agues that:

> *School leadership models that rely totally upon principals to change systems without using the vast resources of the school community are often not successful in developing the needed critical mass to force the abandonment of old paradigms to improve the core business of schools – teaching and learning. The elimination of bad practices in classrooms is more attainable when leadership is spread across vertically and horizontally within the school (p. 2).*

Therefore, in drawing up policies and academic goals, the participants articulated that the SMT did not perform the activity in isolation. Rather, the task was accomplished in collaboration with teachers and SGB members. Referring to policies and school goals, the HoD for foundation phase (School B) said: "we have everything in place; everything has been drawn up with our governing body and the SMT'. Similarly, the teacher in School A, said: "yeah, the school does have academic goals and these are clearly stated in the vision and mission statements". The formulation of school goals, according to this teacher, involved the SMT and SGB making draft policies/goals, which were then sent out to the other, staff members and parents for their input. In the different committees meetings (learning area, curriculum, finance, SBST and SDT),

the members further deliberated on the goals and how these can be translated into workable goals. In the two schools, the academic goals centred on fostering a nurturing environment for both the learners and educators. The deputy Principal of School B, in particular, pointed out that their school "strives to ensure that every child that is here [School B] is feeling worthwhile and is happy". Similarly the mission statement of School A stated that "the school aims are to develop in the children skills, attitudes and values that are conducive to their personal, academic and social development which will enable them to take their places as citizens of this country [South Africa]".

Quality education, Gupton (2003) argued, is often supported and informed by sound management. Planning and management are a collaborative effort, therefore, involve all role players in a context in which the national curriculum plays a central role. Similarly, increased learner performance, quality teaching and learning and a healthy school environment, rely strongly on good management plans and practices. Gupton (2003) once again posits that a school is only as good as all its members (educators, learners, SMT and parents) working together. She adds that a team working together to solve particular problems is likely to do so far more imaginatively than if a single individual – usually the Principal – is held responsible for doing this. Teamwork thus creates a culture of commitment and shared responsibility among the members of the school community.

The analysis of the staff minutes and responses from interviews showed that the mission, vision and goals of these schools were jointly formulated. Thereafter, these were legitimated in a general staff meeting with elaborations in various committees, grade and learning area meetings. According to the teacher in School B, copies of these policies and goals were subsequently made available to all staff members, including the support staff. This occurred after all stakeholders had understood and agreed on how they wanted to proceed as a school, seeking to enhance quality teaching and learning and therefore striving to achieve the mission/purpose of the school. Through memos and newsletters, the ideals (policies and goals) were also communicated to the parents and other stakeholders.

6.5 Promoting professional development

Ensuring that teachers are competent and have capabilities to improve their classroom skills was critical for school management in these two schools. Documents from both schools show that school management makes available various opportunities such as workshops and conferences, to promote and improve their staff. For instance, the policy documents and school improvement plans (SIPs) showed that the two schools made available to their staff: workshops, conferences, resources and even courses at various universities within the province in order to help improve their professional repertoire. One HoD captured this idea in the following statement:

> *We see teacher training as an important part of the effort to improve our instructional programme. If people know how to teach they will teach and teach well. And if they don't know how to teach they won't. They will come up with other things to do to fill the time (HoD for foundation phase in school B).*

The deputy Principal of School B also pointed out that "the pursuit of student success is the essential goal of our school". This was complemented by HoD 2 in the senior school (School B) who said "to attain this goal we must provide the finest possible instruction in our classrooms". Quinn (2002) concurs, asserting that in instructionally minded schools, leaders provide and promote professional development opportunities to improve teachers' instructional skills. This illustrates the importance attached to teaching and learning in these schools. The members of the SMT in both schools expressed confidence in the professionalism of their teachers but acknowledged that teachers could still benefit from learning alternative ways of presenting materials in their classrooms and dealing with discipline issues. As the Principal of School B reported:

> *I think that we have to let the professionals adapt from a menu of well accepted research and educational practices and let them use those strategies that suit them. We seek various ways to assist teachers to improve their work in the classroom.*

The SMT understood that it was their responsibility to provide opportunities for their teachers to grow professionally. This is in line with the national policy framework (DoE, 2000) that encourages school leaders to provide development opportunities for their staff. Similarly, Mendez-Morse (1991) affirms that since effective teachers

determine the academic needs of students by the use of data, so too do proactive leaders use data to determine areas of need for professional development activities. By the same token, Guskey and Sparks (1996) assert that students learn best from high quality teachers who know the subject matter and also know how to deliver it. The national policy document for instructional leadership also states that even though ongoing professional development is the primary responsibility of the educator, the SMT remains an important partner and participant in facilitating ongoing professional support programmes for all staff (DoE, 2000).

6.6 Parental Involvement

The responses from school B showed that parents felt welcome to the school through their 'open door policies,' that encouraged parents to visit as and when they wanted to interact, both with the teachers and school managers, about the progress of their children. Involving parents and communities in meaningful ways in the school is critical to the success of students and influences teachers' decisions to be committed to their work. School and community cooperation is hence a necessary and valuable asset to school-level improvement programmes. Gupton (2003) asserts that parents are the most important people in a child's life, with the most potential to influence and motivate. It is thus not a surprise that parental involvement is often listed as a critical variable for schools attempting to improve their effectiveness.

From the documents and interviews parents sometimes were encouraged to meet and organise activities with the learners, and participate in school enrichment programmes within and outside of the school. At other times, parents were also encouraged to attend planning and other meetings and, in the school-based support team (SBST) group, in particular, parents provided excellent and active participation in school improvement activities (School B). This cooperation and activities encouraged by the school management, according to HoD 1 (in School B), helped the parents to feel welcome and to support the school wholeheartedly. This is consistent with Gupton's (2003) view that schools should take the initiative to pave the way through policy and good practice to develop better forms of participation in children's education. This form of school and parental cooperation must be enhanced because, as Gupton points out, the child's education is a shared responsibility between the home and the school.

Research (Colley, 2002) suggests that active parental involvement in school activities more often than not leads to improved student achievements. However, in these two schools there was also evidence that the corollary was true, that is, improved school achievement led to increased parental involvement. Parents were more than willing (especially in School B) to support activities because they saw evidence that teachers were very committed, dedicated and cared about their children, and worked hard to improve their performance. This increased parental involvement thus became an important tool for generating further improvements in the schools' academic learning, as parents were willing to assist and contribute both financially and materially to the academic progress of their wards.

6.7 Interpersonal Relationships

All participants in School B and two in School A reported cordial relationship among staff and SMT. Respecting each other and giving praise to both teacher and learners were stressed by all the participants in the study. The participants contend that this action had the potential to motivate teachers, and enhance their self-esteem and efficacy. Motivation, writes Kruger (2003:251), is an important issue facing school leadership in the current education environment. Motivation, according to Suit and Gronje (1999 in Kruger 2003), is an inner state of mind that enhances a worker's behaviour and energy towards the attainment of objectives. The Principal of School A recounted how she motivates her staff: "I always remember to consciously write a letter of thank you to every member of the staff and to say we [SMT] appreciate you and the work you have done". The deputy Principal in School A also said: "I write little notes to say how disciplined your class was or your lesson was well organised". This corresponds to Fullan's (2001:2) assertion that: "in people-centred organisations (such as schools), relationships are the key to successful change. We have found that the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve".

The teachers and HoDs in both schools concur with Fullan's view, indicating that "we have often enjoyed fraternal and good interpersonal relationships among ourselves in the school, that is, among the educators and school management" (HoD of foundation phase in School B). The principals also articulated similar sentiments, asserting that

they enjoyed good and healthy relations with staff and fellow members of the SMT. In particular, the HoD for the senior phase in School B, said: “interpersonal relationship in our school is excellent”. Similarly, in School A, the Principal pointed out that they [SMT] have a good working relationship in their school. This statement was supported by the deputy Principal (of School A)stating that they: “have an open door policy here in this school[School A] and there are open communication lines between teachers, among teachers and SMT members and this makes work here a little more effective for us”.

6.8 Community of instructional practice

The strategies used to develop their school, according to the participants, are focused mainly on classroom instruction. They use approaches such as book scrutiny, journal entries, continuous assessment and professional development to ensure that every member in the school community is instructionally tuned towards the vision and mission of the school. To achieve this, the SMT chose first of all to provide a safe and a nurturing environment within which both teachers and learners can live and effectively carry out the educative function of the school. Management also adopted an open-door policy, opening up channels of communication and strong collaboration among stakeholders for purposes of expanding networks of engagement around issues of instructional improvement. The leaders in these schools, from the responses of the interview, also cultivated a community of instructional practice in their schools creating safe and collaborative environments for teachers to engage in their work and drawing upon a wide network of individuals including inter-school visitations to deepen the professional practice of the teachers.

To support instructional improvements, the SMTs in these two schools created formal as well as informal leadership structures so as to empower others, but more so to free themselves (SMT) of some time for instructional attention. The HoD for the senior phase in School B said (while laughing):

> *We have thousands of committees here in this school – we have like, the curriculum committee, the staff development committee, the school based support team, the learning area heads, the grade heads and others. I tell you everyone in this school has some additional responsibilities apart from their normal teaching duties.*

This is very important in schools because the decisions that school leaders make and how they implement them, have a direct impact on working conditions. It is not uncommon that teachers often complain that decisions affecting them are usually made without their knowledge. In both schools, the SMTs showed that they try to involve most of the stakeholders in decisions affecting their schools. This motivates and also solicits commitment from members.

This is aligned to Supovitz and Poglinco's (2001) argument that a vision held by one person, no mater how powerful that vision, is invisible to others. So that the vision can be put into practice it should gain acceptance among other members of the school community. This is made effective by cultivating a community specifically committed to fostering instructional improvement across the entire school. This is to reiterate Supovitz and Poglinco that the primary idea behind communities of practice is that groups that are created around specific purposes are a more effective means to achieve than individuals working on the same task in isolation. To facilitate effective group practice, individuals must comfortably and regularly interact and form relationships in substantive and particular ways around those particular activities (Mendez-Morse, 1991). SMTs that collaboratively engage in instructional activities will be more likely to enhance student performance than when performed in isolation.

Although teachers were motivated through bonuses and other external rewards they also received intrinsic rewards (for example, recognition, praise, respect and support). Empowerment of teachers is one of the ways of providing intrinsic motivation, which was highly emphasised in both schools. Empowerment, in Kruger's (2003:210) view, is the respect for individuals and the willingness to train them, to set reasonable and clear expectations for them and to grant them autonomy to contribute meaningfully and directly to their work. The responses from interviews and documents showed that in these two schools, teachers were empowered to take decisions: those decisions that related directly to their classrooms activities and, more importantly decisions that affected the entire school life-wire, namely teaching and learning. Teachers were made responsible for various committees (e.g. grade heads, learning area heads, sports and recreation and even some co-opted to the SMT). Kruger (2003) identified three different ways by which employees can be intrinsically motivated: work enlargement, work enrichment and work characteristics model. In analysing participant responses,

it was realised that these schools adopted the second of the three intrinsic modes of motivation. According to Kruger, work enrichment refers to the vertical extension of a job (post). Vertical work loading thus takes place when the planning and control of work which was previously done by only the SMT members is now performed by a post-level one teacher, for instance.

When teachers are empowered and given opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process of schools they feel appreciated and supported by school management and are willing to give of their best and 'go that extra mile' to help learners achieve and realise their dreams. The deputy Principal of school A said, teacher empowerment in her school was useful because it: "has contributed to the cordial relationship that we enjoy here in our school because we recognise teachers as the most important resource here in this school. So we stress and insist that our teachers must be given the due respect that they deserve".

Effective school leaders recognise that collaborative networks among educators were essential for successful teaching and learning (Gupton, 2003). The participants in this study indicated that leaders in these schools modelled teamwork at all levels in their schools, provided time for collaborative work among teachers (educators) and actively advocated sharing and peer observation among them (teachers). Collaboration in this school, the Principal of School B indicated, facilitated increased teacher motivation, self-esteem and reflective behaviour, such as instructional variety, risk-taking and pedagogical creativity. A teacher in this school (School B) also reported:

> *I stretched out and tried new strategies because of the support the team provided … I became a better teacher, I worked harder to find solutions and I was anxious to share whatever I learned. Since our discussions were open our professional dialogue became richer (teacher in School B.).*

The data from this study showed that school leaders encouraged their teachers to visit their colleagues, especially those in effective primary schools, to observe classroom activities and school-related programmes. The HoDs and the two teachers interviewed acknowledged that they had sometimes "visited other educators in other schools to observe how they carry out their teaching duties or invite experts to our school to help us work out or resolve certain issues because of the encouragement we receive from

our school management". This support, the HoD for foundation phase (in school B) noted, encouraged teachers to try new 'things' and ideas.

6.9 Positive school climate

Petersen (1999) asserts that teachers and learners will do their best work in a healthy and pleasant environment. This is true with the schools in this study as they try to create a climate and make their schools places where teachers and their learners and even parents will want to be. The climate of the school, according to Petersen, has a direct effect on the members of the school and their productivity, eventually their job satisfaction, and therefore promotes a positive and sound school climate. This is an important aspect of a school leader's instructional leadership responsibility. Similarly, Krug (1992:433) affirms that a sound and positive school climate is one that makes learning exciting. Hence, he maintains that when educators feel supported for their achievements, when there is a shared and mutual sense of purpose, learning will not be difficult. Harris (2001) concurs and asserts that establishing a positive climate in schools is an indispensable requirement of instructional effectiveness. In the school improvement literature, creating the conditions necessary for improvement is again an essential part of generating a climate for instructional improvement at both the school and classroom levels (ibid: 482). The presence of a clear vision designed together with the staff, SGB and the SMT, was one of the variables that seem to have contributed to the positive climate in these schools. Because the vision and goals were shared by all, it enabled them to move forward and successfully engage with the instructional policy. It was evident from the interviews and documentary analysis that there was a sense of decentralised, devolved and shared approach to leadership within these schools. The principals adopted what the deputy Principal of school B called "a devolved model of leadership"; what Harris (2002:19) calls 'distributive leadership' that gave priority to the fostering of leadership, among the SMT members and among teachers.

6.10 Maintaining High Visibility

Maintaining high visibility or personal presence was an instructional leadership strategy identified in this study, and the participants alluded to the fact that the two principals with their deputies, in particular, depicted a visible presence in their

schools. They pointed out that these leaders were often seen around, assisting teachers and discussing with learners. The Principal and his deputy (in School B) noted that being available for short and spontaneous guidance is perceived by the teachers as being supportive. Their personal presence was thus perceived to demonstrate support for the teachers, monitor classroom instructions and observe what goes on in classrooms, and hence provides support in whatever ways they can. This view was reiterated by the teacher in School B who said: "our principal is not locked up in his office; he is always with us". This assertion was confirmed by the researcher during the study period since the Principal was seen discussing with learners and educators during break times. The SMT in both schools indicated that they enjoyed class visitations and felt that their presence in the classrooms signalled their support of teachers and what they were trying to accomplish. The Principal of School B said:

> *I show interest in how teachers are teaching and how kids are learning by going round and visiting and observing what goes on in classrooms with the view to designing appropriate support strategies for teachers.*

Similarly, the two HoDs (School B) said they also made walk-through-visits or pop-in-visits when they were less busy. These were the unofficial and unannounced visits to the classrooms or walks along the verandas while observing what and how teachers and learners were going about the instructional activities. According to the teachers interviewed, the leaders' walk-through-visits and pop-in-visits did not disturb or disrupt their teaching. For them, such unannounced visits facilitated and served to maintain classroom discipline and learners, according to the teacher in School A: "like it because then they have the chance to see and interact with the leaders of their school or even to be more serious with their classroom works because of the presence of the school authorities".

6.11 Monitoring the Learning Process

Monitoring the progress of teaching and learning was emphasised in both schools. The Principal in School B was very emphatic about it indicating that "when you make your primary focus instruction, you must spend time in the place where instruction is going on, and that is in the classroom". This is inline with Kruger's (2003) assertion that "effective instructional leaders spend much time in classrooms". This is also supported by Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) stating that effective school leaders spend

substantially more time in classroom visitations than ineffective leaders. The Principal of School B, however, acknowledged that the amount of administrative paperwork given to them by the current education policies left them with little or no time to perform this duty satisfactorily. Notwithstanding, this challenge, the task was carried out as possibly as they could.

The objective of these classroom and walk-through visits, according to the HoDs and the principals of the two schools, was usually to validate the strengths of teachers so as to devise support initiatives for their instructional efforts. Participants were also unanimous in stating that classroom observation was not a "policing kind of thing nor a fault-finding strategy" (HoD 1, in School B). They were also undivided in affirming that teacher monitoring and supervision was a formative activity by which the personal and professional needs of teachers were identified and support strategies formulated. The school management tried to achieve this task through direct and frequent talks with the individual teachers about instruction and their learner needs. For instance, the deputy Principal of School A pointed out that they made conscious efforts to interact in a positive way with every teacher on a daily basis. This way they were able to create the conditions needed for effective dialogue and to devise the appropriate strategies that would help teachers improve their practice in the classroom. Through talking with teachers, the Principal of School A said: "we were able to identify the needs of teachers and so design support activities to help them improve their professional practice as educators in the classroom".

The Principal of School B admitted, however, that "classroom visits is not enough if your [SMT] presence in the classroom does not have an effect on the learners". The consensus among these instructionally-minded leaders was that they focused more on learners, analysing their performance more than they did for the teacher. The Principal of School A mentioned that while she was in the classroom she focused more on the learners and their output than on what teachers did. In her view, learner performance and their class activities were evidence of their accomplishments. Hence, she believed that through learner outcomes teachers' instructional techniques could be evaluated and then support appropriately designed for them. This has the long term effect of enhancing teaching and learning and, hence, improving teaching methods, with new modes of learner assessments and class management.

The participants' assertions were in line with Supovitz and Poglinco's (2001) view that instructional leadership activities in schools should be merged with a clear vision of instructional quality. The authors postulate that a:

> *Concrete vision of instructional quality provides a tangible representation of what effective instructional planning and delivery looks like, provides teachers with an instructional portrait they can work toward, and provides a picture that administrators can measure implementation against (p: 4).*

The vision and academic goals formulated in these schools were found to be useful, as indicated by the participants. They stated that it gave them a sense of direction, a road map to accomplish their duties. As one of the teachers interviewed declared:

> *I have a clear, focused vision of what the school needs to look like and what instruction needs to look like and above all what learners' work needs to look like. I have a clear charge (teacher A, in School A).*

6.12 Assessing Learner Progress

The documents and interviews reveal that there were various assessment protocols in the schools and the participants explained that this was in accordance with the vision and objectives of the DoE. According to the DoE instructional policy (DoE, 2000), "the assessment of learners progress forms part of the SMTs instructional leadership tasks". While the teachers are responsible for the day-to-day assessment of learners, the SMT plays an important role in making sure that there is a systematic programme for continuous assessment. Continuous assessment endeavours to check how a learner is progressing towards meeting set outcomes. The SMT ensures that teachers understand all the procedures involved in recording and reporting assessment. The responsibility of the SMT, according to the Principal of School A, "is to ensure that the teachers keep journals and portfolios, and mark books and report cards for each learner". The recording and reporting of all assessments is to help monitor learners' progress, as well as the teaching and learning programmes that teachers use.

The HoD for the senior phase in School B indicated that "there are several protocols to ensure that teachers perform satisfactorily in the classroom". One such strategy was the book scrutiny, which is the responsibility of the HoDs. The HoD for foundation phase (HoD 1) in School B told me how they [HoDs] performed the task of book

scrutiny. She said: “a number of the children’s books are taken in from the different teachers and perused”. In book scrutiny, the HoD checked whether parents were signing the children’s books as an indication that they were doing some work at home. The HoDs also searched for indications as to “whether the teachers are showing signs of differentiations” among the learners. In other words, the HoDs wanted to know if teachers were “making sure that the weaker learners are getting the support that they need and the brighter learners are being extended”. HoDs also wanted to see, she added, if learners’ assignments and homework were being marked by the teachers.

Another instructional role of SMTs related to the book scrutiny, was to assist teachers to record and report assessments. The GDE instructional policy, which was adopted by both schools, stipulated the use of mark books, portfolios, journals and report cards for assessing learners. The mark book recorded the marks, symbols and comments that the teachers gave to the learners. During formal class visits, the SMT ensured that each teacher diligently and accurately kept these records. The HoD for senior phase in school B, described the portfolio as “a file containing examples of the different tasks and assignments learners had done”. The purpose of keeping learners’ portfolios, she explained, was “to assist teachers to measure the learners’ progress towards achieving the desired outcomes”. As schools regularly communicated learners’ progress to parents, they (SMT) used report cards to achieve this aim. The SMT thus ensured that learners’ report cards were well kept to serve the purpose. Marks recorded in the report card, according to the HoD for the foundation phase (School B), were arrived at through many continuous assessment activities and the remarks were aimed at “being informative and helpful to guide parents to help the learner at home”.

6.13 Classroom Visits

Classroom visits was another instructional strategy employed by the SMT to ensure effective teaching and learning in their schools. They carried out this function through the staff development team (SDT), a committee that was responsible for overseeing, planning, coordinating and monitoring quality management processes in the schools. This group, in each school, organised at least two formal classroom visits for each educator. Of these, one was usually announced and one not. The Principal of School A mentioned that the purpose of these class visits was to assess the teachers’

classroom practices and to decide what forms of help the school could provide if the teacher needed it. In addition to the formal class visits organised by the SDT, the committee also undertook informal and unofficial visits. Such visits, according to the SMT in school B, "enabled them to help teachers with their work", for example, implementing continuous assessment strategies, establishing a learner-centred classroom, classroom management, classroom discipline or evaluating learners' use of worksheets.

Classroom visits (formal or informal) involved the SMT and SDT members going into a teacher's classroom and observing how s/he went about classroom activities in order to promote effective teaching and learning. The group for classroom observation usually included a peer of the particular teacher and a member of the SMT, which was usually, the HoD. The SMT members interviewed indicated that classroom visits were a priority for them and were passionate about them. They showed that they were involved in classroom visits and made sure that teaching and learning was organised well. Class visits, by the SMT, is one of their duties towards improving teaching and learning.

In undertaking class observations, the HoD for intermediate phase (in School B) said she made an effort to be very supportive and positive*:* "I try to be sensitive to the feelings of teachers". However, she also admitted that she had not had as many class visits as was desired. The reasons advanced for this shortage centred on insufficient time, coupled with the amount of administrative paperwork involved in the system. According to the HoD for foundation phase (School B), informal classroom visitation and observation of teachers, was regularly carried out by the Principal and his deputy. Data from the interviews and observation showed that HoDs, apart from their full-time classroom teaching duties, also had other administrative duties and, therefore had limited time for the duty of class observation. In School B, the Principal had the role and regularly oversaw the activities of the foundation phase teachers, while his deputy took charge of the activities of the teachers in the intermediate and senior phases.

6.14 Constructive Feedback

The SMTs in both schools indicated that feedback was given to teachers after every classroom observation. They acknowledged that though the practice was difficult and

stressful, it was a useful tool and a fundamental responsibility of school leadership in the effectiveness of the instructional process. This was also confirmed by the two teachers interviewed who pointed out that feedback usually followed immediately after classroom visits, in the form of verbal discussions. This was usually followed by a formal written report, from the HoD and SDT, to the teacher concerned. In areas of general concern, the SMT and/or SDT organised forums where these issues were discussed by all concerned. Giving constructive feedback to teachers and learners was an instructional strategy emphasised by these leaders. The literature accessed showed that instructionally-minded school leaders coax their staff to belief that they can be helped to reach their personal as well as professional goals (McEwan, 1998). This McEwan termed: “the ability to give helpful and collegial feedback” and to encourage the staff with the view to designing strategies for improving their classroom practice. McEwan (1998:90) again posits that the most crucial aspect of classroom observation, is the sharing of feedback in a collegial manner that facilitates open discussion and leads the teacher to reflect on his/her teaching. Bird and Little (in McEwan, 1998) label this ‘reciprocity’ by which school leaders and teachers mutually engage in the observation and feedback process to result in the improvement of instruction, and hence benefit and increase learner performance in the classroom.

6.15 Instructional Time and Resources

If schools are to succeed in their mission, it means a proper learning environment should be in place that allows teachers and learners to focus most of their time and energies on teaching and learning. So, as educators address students’ basic needs, for instance, by providing the necessary stationery, so school leaders provide a service to teachers’ basic instructional needs by allocating educational resources and materials. From the data obtained (through interviews and by observation) it was evident at both schools that substantial energies were devoted to making sure that teachers felt like they had the resources they considered necessary in order to get students to reach the schools’ academic goals. School (B), through the SMT and SGB ensured that teachers had adequate materials and equipment with which to work and learn. This supports Doyle and Rice (2002) and Ingersoll and Smith’s (2003) assertion that leaders must ensure classroom teachers have enough resources and materials to perform their jobs satisfactorily. This supports the assertion of the Principal in School A, who showed

that “when instructional leaders know what is happening in classrooms, they are better able to provide resources and materials that support teachers’ instructional efforts”. This is also in line with Mendez-Morse’s (1991) claim that “one of the most essential variables determining high instructional improvement is the ability of leaders’ to give assistance to teachers by acquiring the requisite instructional resources”.

Time and resources appear significant factors in the instructional process and were highly emphasized during the interview sessions. All the participants were unanimous on the importance of time. According to the deputy Principal of School A, “time is very essential and needs to be managed profitably”. This is in line with Kruger’s (2003) assertion that, “for effective management of the instructional programme in schools, time and human resources must be available. The schools visited both had well-planned timetables displayed on the general notice boards, and in the classrooms. For Kruger (2003), the school timetable is key to ensuring that the flow of teaching and learning goes on in the most predictable and ideal circumstances. Although the SMT was responsible for the school timetable, the participants pointed out that it was designed by all stakeholders, in line with the parameters set by the DoE (DoE, 2000). In school B, it was produced as follows:

> *First we started by making a list of all the classes in the school; then a list of the teachers was made; a list of the learning areas and notional time was compiled. We then related the notional time to teaching time. Thereafter, we looked at each teachers workload and teaching periods and made some balancing work. In the end we also provided times for curriculum development (principal of School B).*

Classrooms, science laboratories, libraries, computer laboratories, stationery and other instructional materials are indispensable for accomplishment of school instructional objectives. Through the interviews, and by observation, it was realised that these two schools were well resourced in terms of physical and human resources. Talking about material resources, the HoD for foundation (in School B) cheerfully remarked:

> *Oh! Yes! Have you seen our library? It is excellent. The school provided it. Look we get a bit of money from the department but you see we’ve got a beautiful computer centre. I have got a computer in my office; lots of teachers have computers in their classrooms for children to use. We have lots of resources. And then with the juniors we have all the games they have and the books. We’re well stock – in fact we’re very lucky (HoD 1 of School B).*

All the participants (in School B) pointed out that the resources in their school were mostly sponsored by the school. They revealed that the provision of these resources was largely from school fees, the payment of which was usually supplemented by fundraising organised and executed by an SGB committee set up for that purpose. The Principal in this school hinted that because grants from the DoE were only enough to provide for stationery and hardware, parents made efforts to supplement the school budget through payment of fees and fundraising. In fact, the bulk of the school's budget, according to the two HoDs in School B, came from the payment of school fees and fundraising. This enabled the school to do the things it did, according to HoD 1 of School B. These schools, portrayed by the data, had very active and vibrant parents and parent committees that organised and carried out many fundraising activities. The teacher in School B said:

> *You know we've been lucky at this school because generally people [parents] pay the school fees and we can use the money to enhance what we do. Usually there is money in the budget and we can use it. And we use it for tours, field trips or invite theatre groups to come to the school to do productions with the children.*

6.16 Professional Development Programmes

From the data SMTs appear passionate about, provided for and promoted professional development for staff. The SIPs showed detailed descriptions of planned activities for the professional growth of both educators and SMT. This document (SIP) also showed dates, persons responsible and budgets related to those particular activities. They seemed to place high values for professional development for their teachers. For instance, the Principal in School B believes that professional development of teachers was a very important variable in schools because teachers needed to be abreast with new information at all times. Professional development activities, in the literature, are viewed as fundamental for the effectiveness of the instructional process. Indeed it was one of the most fundamental tasks of effective leaders to boost the will to develop and improve teachers. Instructional leaders value their role as staff developers and consistently view their responsibility as facilitators driven by a clear vision for their school (Gupton, 2003). Therefore, the fundamental role of the SMT, in these schools, according to HoD for the senior phase (School B), was to help create conditions that would enable staff to develop so that the school could function more effectively. The

SMT, therefore, in her opinion, has a key responsibility to provide information and in-service training to educators to facilitate decisions that best serve their needs. This supports Kruger's (2003:47) argument that "if the quality of teaching and learning are to be improved the development of the educators is an indispensable part of in-service training". The school policy documents analysed such as (SIPs, school policy) in both schools showed that many in-service activities and workshops were organised for their staff, which were mostly on-site and a few organised off-site. The DoE and the national union of educators (NUE) complemented these activities further in-service programmes usually organised at the teachers' centre, in Johannesburg. Teachers were then encouraged and sometimes motivated financially to attend these workshops.

6.17 Conclusion

The chapter highlighted the enabling conditions for instructional leadership in primary schools and showed how these conditions were present and practiced in these two schools in which the research was undertaken. Instructionally-minded leaders require these responsibilities to promote teaching and learning in schools and to increase the performance of learners. For instance, instructional leaders require an understanding of instructional leadership tasks and how to create a positive and an enabling climate for effective teaching and learning. Instructional leaders not only create enabling conditions for the smooth functioning of the school, but also supervise and evaluate the actual teaching and learning process.

7 Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

There is consensus among scholars (McEwan, 1998; Gupton, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2000) that at the core of school effectiveness and learner achievement is instructional leadership. Research also indicates that the rigid command and control leadership tendencies, like the old apartheid system, stifles individual and team creativity, which in turn impedes quality teaching and learning, as well as learner performance. Scholars have therefore convincingly demonstrated that educational institutions need effective instructional leaders if they are to be effective and successful (Krug, 1992). This led to a more critical look at the instructional responsibilities of school leaders and, more specifically at what they do in their day-to-day activities to achieve the purpose of teaching and learning.

The school improvement movement of the 1980s saw the Principal as the main actor in improving schools. Accordingly, works pertaining to the achievement of school academic goals were seen to be the responsibility of the school Principal. In this era the Principal was thus seen as the main focus of the instructional process in schools. Scholars such as Sergiovanni and Spillane et al. (2001) alternatively advocate distributive leadership across all the membership of the school community. They see the work of leading as a responsibility stretched over senior level personnel in the school and not restricted to one individual.

Drawing on the works of Spillane et al (2001), and also from Harris (2002), the DoE (2000) and KZNDEC (2000), and employing a qualitative case study approach in two primary schools, this study has consistently argued that the work of school leaders and indeed those of the school Principal have become unmanageable, due to the increased number of responsibilities brought by the recent restructuring process in the education sector. School-based decision-making, a result of new education policy reforms, has brought added responsibilities to school principals. The reform process has brought so many managerial responsibilities to school principals that they are no longer able to perform adequately the core business of schools. The responsibility of supervising and supporting the educative task of teaching and learning has often been sacrificed for administrative responsibilities. In this study I have tried to show that collaborative

actions among SMT members is much more beneficial and enhances effective delivery of the new curriculum (C2005), thereby enabling the school to adequately meet its educative function and promote student achievement. This study, therefore, contends that school principals need to consider the argument that instructional leadership is part of their leadership responsibility. However, because they have other equally important duties, they should develop collaborative practices around the instructional process in order to be effective and achieve the goals of the institution. As a result, it is proposed that school principals need to delegate some of these responsibilities to their colleague members of the SMT – deputy Principal and HoDs and even subjects heads, in order to free some time for the most important function of the school.

Much of the research and literature on instructional leadership is characterised by the promotion of principal behaviours as distinct from the behaviours of other members of the SMT. Instructional leadership is thus often seen as the sole domain of school principals, but as McNeill et al (2003) contend, a more realistic model of instructional leadership needs to acknowledge that within the school there are multiple layers of instructional leadership, not just those ascribed to principals, especially in the context of C2005 and OBE. The SMT, acting as a group, plays a critical role in bringing about changes necessary to increase the effectiveness of schools. A good and collaborative SMT is one that is directly linked and focused on student's work and achievement.

The conceptual framework (collaborative practice) applied in this study, showed that successful instructional leadership is simply not a function of school principals alone. Instead, Connolly et al (2004) assert, instructional leadership involves the practices of multiple individuals and occurs through the complex network of relationships and interactions among the entire school staff and SMT. Cooperative relationships are thus a critical component of a productive workplace. Real collaboration in schools involves shared instructional practices among faculty members. In a professional community, teachers and their SMTs collaborate on schoolwide projects and are widely engaged in school improvement efforts. Such practices foster sharing of expertise as faculty members call on each other to deal with core issues of practice (Bryk et al, 1999). The study also affirmed that collaboration in instructional practices increased members' sense of affiliation with each other and with the school, and

reinforced their sense of mutual support and responsibility for effective teaching and learning.

7.2 Conclusion

Instructionally-minded leaders, according to this study, are those that take an active and leading role in managing school curricular activities. The SMTs of both schools demonstrated that they were effective instructional leaders by immersing themselves in school curricular development and ensuring effective classroom instruction by: assisting educators in resolving curricular issues and enhancing teacher effectiveness through staff development and creating a climate that promotes a strong culture of teaching and learning. The study thus revealed that instructional leadership of the SMT is an essential element for improving teaching and learning. With little training and multifaceted responsibilities, SMTs can make a difference in enhancing student performance. Finally, the study showed that effective schools depend on the quality of collaboration among their leaders to achieve their goals. In these schools, the leaders gave instructional practices and academic standards high priorities, which supported increased learner performance and produced high academic results.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

This study was undertaken in only two schools in the Gauteng province, one of nine provinces in South Africa. It is hereby suggested that many case study researches could be conducted in other provinces, to ascertain the replicability of the findings in this study. This should ultimately culminate in a national study to explore the instructional leadership practices of SMTs in all South African public primary schools and how this influences teaching and learning and the impact on learner performance.

The contributions of parents to the improvement of teaching and learning cannot be overemphasised. However, as previously indicated, the active parental participation and involvement in school level activities does have a positive impact and indeed contributes to the instructional improvement of learners. Future research around instructional leadership practices in schools should therefore take into account the parental involvement factor as an essential component in the instructional process.

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