

Chronicling the Barriers to Translating Instructional Leadership Learning into Practice

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ABSTRACT This paper presents and discusses the barriers that some school principals experience when translating instructional leadership learning into practice at their respective schools. The paper is based on research that was conducted among school principals that had completed the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Weber's model of instructional leadership for school leaders was utilised in trying to understand the principals' leadership practices. Qualitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. Krueger's framework analysis was used as a tool to analyse the data. The results show that the barriers to translating instructional leadership learning into practice comprise educator apathy, high workloads, lack of support from various stakeholders, poor parental involvement, challenges in leading and managing change, teacher unionism and lack of resources.

INTRODUCTION

A plethora of studies have affirmed the positive correlation between good leadership practice and school effectiveness (Brundrett and Crawford 2008; Hornig and Loeb 2010). Effective leadership is considered a prerequisite for high quality education. In fact, good leadership is known to have significant impact on student learning and is second only to the quality of the teachers' instruction in the classroom (Sebastian and Allensworth 2012; Grobler and Conley 2013). Consequently, in order to build effective leadership capacity among school leaders in South Africa, a two year leadership qualification, the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL) was conceived and introduced by the then Department of Education in 2007 (DoE 2008). As part of building leadership capacity, the ACE:SL programme or qualification sought to empower school principals to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to lead and manage schools effectively and to contribute to improving the delivery of education across the school system (DoE 2008). Specifically, the qualification aimed to provide professional leadership and management

of the curriculum, thereby ensuring that schools provide quality teaching and learning for improved standards of achievement for all learners (DoE 2008). Contrary to the positive intentions of the ACE: SL programme, improvements in the outputs of schools whose principals have completed this qualification is not immediately visible. Bush et al. (2011), in their evaluation of the ACE: SL, observe that in the majority of the case study schools in which the school principal had completed the ACE: SL there had not been any significant school improvement. Rather, in some schools, there has been a decline in output. Given this scenario, the researchers aimed firstly to interrogate the possible barriers that school principals who completed the ACE: SL faced in enacting their roles as instructional leaders in schools and secondly, to understand how they mitigate such barriers.

In this paper, barriers to instructional leadership refer to factors that negatively impact on the school principals' role in leading teaching and learning. It must also be pointed out that, when the researchers refer to leadership in this paper, the term management is subsumed in that discourse owing to leadership and management being related concepts. This paper is significant in that it may add to the debate on why the ACE: SL has not resulted in immediate significant improvement in student outcomes. Further, it may possibly provide clarity on institutional and structural barriers that serve as obstacles in preventing school principals from enacting their

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roles as instructional leaders. The next section of this paper provides an overview of the theoretical framework, namely models of instructional leadership that underpin our study. Thereafter, an account describing the methodological issues involved in the empirical study is presented. Using a thematic approach the results and discussion on the barriers to instructional leadership are explicated upon. The paper ends by presenting pertinent recommendations, limitations and the implications for further research on the ACE: SL programme.

Models of Instructional Leadership

The paper examines the barriers that school principals experienced as they attempted to translate leadership learning into practice. Despite the various conceptions of instructional leadership as explained in the introduction, there is convergence among many scholars about its role in supporting effective teaching and learning in schools (Berkhout 2007; Sim 2011; Sebastian and Allensworth 2012; Grobler and Conley 2013; Naicker et al. 2013; Bhengu and Mthembu 2014). They agree that Instructional Leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behaviour of teachers in working with learners in order to achieve improved academic outcomes. Consequently, various instructional leadership models seem to focus on the pivotal role of school principals in the leadership of the teaching and learning process. To analyse data, the researchers used Weber's (1996) Five domains of instructional leadership model because of its congruence to the roles and responsibilities of school principals in instructional leadership as outlined in the ACE: SL programme. Weber (1996) identifies five essential domains of instructional leadership. These domains are: defining the school's mission; managing curriculum and instruction; promoting a positive learning climate; observing and improving instruction; and assessing the instructional programme. *Defining the school's mission* is a dynamic process of cooperation and reflective thinking to create a mission that is clear and is understood by all stakeholders. The mission of the school should bind the staff, students and parents to a common vision (Weber 1996). *Managing curriculum and instruction* entails the principal's instructional practices and classroom supervision which offers teachers the needed resources to provide

students with opportunities to succeed. Leaders *promote a positive learning climate* by communicating instructional goals, establishing high expectations for performance, establishing an orderly learning environment with clear discipline expectations, and working to increase teacher commitment to the school (Weber 1996). *Observing and improving instruction* starts with the principal establishing trusting and respectful relationships with the school staff. Weber (1996) proposes that observations should provide opportunities for professional interactions geared at supporting improved academic achievement by the learners. The fifth factor (*assessing the instructional programme*) entails the instructional leader initiating and contributing to the planning, designing and analysing assessments that evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum (Weber 1996). This continuous scrutiny of the instructional programme enables teachers to effectively meet learners' needs through constant revision and refinement. This model enabled us to look at the extent to which principals in the study were able to interact with staff and learners in a way that supported endeavours to facilitate effective teaching.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this is a qualitative study situated within the interpretive paradigm. Scholars who use this paradigm are interested in meaning, that is, how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences and how they structure their social world (Cohen et al. 2011; Bertram and Christiansen 2014). The researchers of this paper were interested in making meaning of how the school principals who had undergone development in the ACE: SL experienced translating their leadership learning into practice and mitigated the barriers to their instructional leadership. Employing a mixed methods approach the researchers generated data using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (Schenkul 2012). In the first part of the study, after piloting the open-ended questionnaire, 65 questionnaires were administered to randomly selected school principals from a population of 140 who had completed the ACE: SL between 2009 and 2010. Of the 65 questionnaires, 25 (38%) were completed and returned by the participating school principals. Literature considers this a satisfactory return rate (Cohen et al. 2011).

After analysing the 25 returned questionnaires, the researchers then purposively selected six school principals based on the richness of their responses to the open-ended interviews. The six school principals were interviewed for deeper probing (Schensul 2012). All six interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed *verbatim*. Participating school principals were interviewed once at their respective schools after working hours. Each interview lasted about one hour. In order to 'bring meaning' to the responses to the open-ended questionnaires and interview transcripts, the researchers adopted Krueger's 'framework analysis' as adapted by Rabiee (2004) and this entailed identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; and mapping and interpretation. Familiarisation entailed the repeated reading of all questionnaires and interview. Secondly, identifying a thematic framework involved the writing of short phrases, ideas or concepts in the margins that arose from the reading of the texts. Thirdly, indexing comprised sifting the data, highlighting and sorting out *verbatim* quotes. Fourthly, charting involved lifting the *verbatim* quotes and re-arranging them under the newly-developed themes. Lastly, mapping and interpretation entailed being creative and analytical in order to see the relationship between the *verbatim* quotes, and the links between the data as a whole.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented under six key themes that emerged from an inductive analysis of the data namely, teacher apathy; principals' workloads; lack of support from various stakeholders; change management; teacher unionism and lack of resources. The discussion of the results is presented in the subheading below.

Educator Apathy

Educator apathy seemed to be a recurring theme that emerged from both the questionnaire data and semi-structured interviews. The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire referred to the high levels of demotivation that prevail among the teachers.

This was corroborated by five of the six participants in the interviews. Some of the interview participants indicated:

At the township schools I do find that we have problems of educators who are not motivated ... they do not want to go to class... they absent themselves (Principal B).

The teachers are apathetic... they are demotivated because they do not know what to do in the classroom. With all the changes, they don't know what is expected of them as teachers (Principal E).

At school the morale is generally low... we work with multi-grade classes. Implementing the changes in multi-grade classes has been daunting. The educators find the volume of work too much to handle (Principal D).

In many instances, the school principals were able to identify the causes of the apathy as well as its manifestations. In terms of the causes of the apathy a number of the school principals referred to the uncertainty, volume and pace of the changes (see comments above) that teachers were expected to implement in their schools. One questionnaire respondent aptly sums this up:

Teachers are fed up with all the changes within the education system and consequently I find it hard to keep them motivated.

It is a challenging task to get teachers who are demotivated to buy into the school's vision. It is only through identifying with the school's vision (Weber 1996) that teachers can work with other stakeholders in the realisation of the school's goals. Teachers need to realise that change in education is inevitable. This said change in education is no longer what it used to be. According to Southworth (2005), change in education has itself changed.

Where once it was one thing at a time, serialised and episodic, today it is multiple and simultaneous. In South Africa there have been a number of changes in education. These changes have left many teachers feeling as though they are no longer in control. Professionally, teachers are accustomed to being in control (Southworth 2005; Fullan 2006). For some, any sense of a loss of control is uncomfortable and, sometimes, psychologically 'disturbing'. The Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) reports that many teachers have been disoriented by needless and sometimes repeated changes to wider teaching systems in South Africa. According to some of the participants in the study, the resultant effect is the demotivation of teachers which manifests itself in teachers arriving late

for duty, departing early or absenting themselves for lengthy periods from school. The general secretary of the largest teachers' union in South Africa, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) declared that teachers were overloaded with work owing to the constant changes in education (Reddy et al. 2010). This is impacting on their morale and is resulting in high absentee rates among teachers. Reddy et al. (2010) report that, on any given school day, between 10% and 12% of the teachers in public schools were not in class to discharge their duties. The school principals have indicated that they draw on their learnings from the ACE: SL in order to address the apathy among teachers. As leaders they motivate staff in various ways such as providing positive reinforcement, ensuring equitable treatment of staff, promoting teamwork and encouraging social gatherings. Some excerpts from the questionnaires allude to this:

I conduct staff gatherings where we motivate one another in terms of our work ... I encourage good ideas among the staff ... I provide positive reinforcement ... reward them for a job well done ... I administer fair treatment to all without favouritism.

Having social events such as secret pals, stokvels, birthday celebrations and year-end functions. Teamwork promotes togetherness ... and team spirit among staff.

One interview participant indicated that he even has a special function to honour the achievement of teachers:

We have introduced in our school achiever's day where we acknowledge the good that has been done by our teachers that have excelled in different fields. They are awarded certificates. It has revitalised teaching at my school... it has created healthy competition ... they know that if they do well consistently, they may get a reward at the end of the year (Principal F).

These school principals realise that good instructional leaders are motivators. After all, effective leadership involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by the leader to steer people in the right direction (Bush, Bell and Middlewood 2010). Through the various strategies that these school principals use, they attempt to get teachers on "board" in order to identify with the school's vision.

Principal Workload

The weight of school principals' workloads seems to militate against them discharging their core instructional leadership responsibilities. A key issue which many respondents raised in the questionnaire was the teaching load carried by school principals. Some of them teach as many as five subjects. This is in accordance with the *Employment of Educators Act, of 1998* which stipulates that school principals are expected to be classroom teachers and may carry a teaching workload of between 10% and 80%, depending on the size of the school (Republic of South Africa 1998). Additionally, many of them indicated that they do not have the requisite support staff such as administrative staff to handle day-to-day administrative issues. Further, in smaller schools they do not have key school management personnel such as deputy principals and HODs to assist them in managing teaching and learning. Some excerpts from the questionnaire indicate:

I teach five subjects ... it becomes hard to play a role in other things ... I do admin work and teaching and in most cases I am unable to meet deadlines because of workload. Being a classroom-based principal without an admin clerk is a great challenge ... the time is always against you.

Too much of paperwork compromises quality time for the core function of monitoring teaching and learning.

The data from the interviews corroborate the questionnaire data. In addition, school principals spoke of some of the day-to-day activities that keep them away from their core responsibilities as instructional leaders. The school principals indicated:

In a small school like mine ... you don't have a deputy principal ... you don't have an administration clerk. As a principal you are expected to do all the administrative tasks yourself. There is school administrative information package (SA-SAMS) that we need to do, there is financial management, governance, procurement ... a lot we have to do and at the same time I am still expected to be in class teaching (Principal B).

With me I do not have a secretary... I do not have a HOD. So much of the burden falls on me. I have to multi-task. Sometimes there is no time to manage teaching and learning because we

have other issues to deal with. For example when a child is ill I have to see to it the child gets proper attention (Principal D).

The volume of our administrative responsibilities militates against us managing teaching and learning. For example, I am expected to go to the district office or the regional office when a teacher has not been paid for quite some time... I have to ensure that we get quotations for the procurement of goods and services... These activities consume much of your time (Principal F).

Wanzare (2012), writing in the Kenyan context, proclaims that school principals may not have time to devote to curriculum and instructional leadership because they are too busy with other day-to-day operations in their schools. This is consistent with the findings of Hoadley and Ward (2009) who indicate that on average school principals in South African secondary schools spend only 16% of their time overseeing teaching and the curriculum. Much of their time is spent on administration and departmental reporting (29%), disciplining learners (25%) and classroom teaching (19%).

The school principals indicated that they have to be creative in working around their onerous workloads. Almost all the questionnaire respondents and interview participants indicated that they distribute leadership in order to ensure monitoring of teaching and learning. This is consistent with the observations of Hoadley and Ward (2009) who proclaim that the notion of distributed leadership has become prominent in the instructional leadership literature. The questionnaire respondents stated:

I used to do everything myself but I have learnt to delegate ... I liaise with chairpersons [of subject committees] or co-ordinators ... I encourage senior educators to join SMT meetings.

I encourage teachers to take on leadership roles throughout the year ... each educator is responsible for some activity.

I work through my HODs who gather together with their staff and decide on teaching and learning problems.

Effective learning-centred leaders can influence learning either directly or indirectly (Southworth 2005). Given their burdensome workloads, these school principals find it difficult to make time available to directly influence learner out-

comes. Rather, they do so indirectly, through other formal and informal leaders which are considered effective ways to influence teaching and learning (Southworth 2005). The majority of school principals in this study work with and through other leaders in the school such as HODs, subject heads and teacher leaders to ensure effective teaching and learning.

Lack of Support from Stakeholders

In addition to teacher apathy and increased principals' workloads, the lack of support from various stakeholders emerged from both the questionnaire respondents and the interview participants as a barrier to the principals enacting instructional leadership. The lack of support from the education department officials, multi-grade teaching, as well as parental support in the SGBs, especially in the rural areas, were highlighted by the respondents as some of the barriers to effective curriculum delivery. The following extracts from the questionnaires highlight some of problems raised:

Many departmental officials are clueless about their functions;

Multi-grade teaching caused by low enrolment is a great problem because teachers have to deal with different forms of instruction.

Parents in SGBs are not fully committed to supporting the schools.

Similarly, the interviews corroborated the lack of support from the Department of Education in the province and its impact on the principals' ability to provide adequate support to the teachers. The lack of support was experienced differently in schools. Some principals maintained that the Departmental officials were unable to provide professional support because they did not understand their schools' curriculum needs. In this regard the principal of School E said:

We are a special school; we don't see them assisting as far as the curriculum and teaching is concerned; the personnel in the district office need to be developed themselves.

In some schools, support was viewed to be selective with secondary schools receiving more attention than primary schools. The principal of School B had this to say:

There is lack of support especially at the GET Phase. When we need subject advisors sometimes we don't get them, unlike in the FET.

Interestingly, interviews did not elicit any additional information about multi-grade teaching. Participants highlighted the lack of parental involvement in the schools' activities as crucial as it negatively affected teaching and learning. The principal of School C, for instance argued that "we find a problem of learners not doing assignments and homework", attributing this to the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. Principal F attributed the lack of parental involvement to parents' poor levels of education especially in rural communities. On this issue, this principal said:

Most of our parents are illiterate and do not know what they must do to support their children in schools (Principal F).

The role that parents play in supporting their children's education is widely documented (Koonce and Harper 2005; Van Wyk and Lemmer 2009; Zedan 2011).

Therefore, it important that anything that undermines this must be dealt with. It is worth noting that some principals made attempts to lessen the effects of the lack of support, especially that of the DoBE. For instance, when they realised that the education department was not providing information about the latest developments regarding the new curriculum, some sought assistance from within the institution through collaborating with staff. On this issue, Principal E argued that:

Working with the SMT and the teachers helps a lot, because when they attend the workshops we make sure when they return they give feedback... I make sure that they give a report-back both in verbal and written form.

The above extract indicates that due to the lack of support from the DoBE, principals are forced to rely on the cascade model as a survival strategy. Through this, principals acquire the knowledge resources so that they are able to manage the curriculum and instruction (Weber 1996) effectively. However, the cascading of information to the principals is not an ideal model to communicate information (Sinicka 2010). Scholars such as Sinicka (2010) and Dichaba and Mokhele (2012) suggest that cascade models do not work effectively when not used in conjunction with other methods of communication in organisations. Nonetheless, principals are being creative in order to keep themselves informed of curriculum changes.

Leading and Managing Change

Change as a barrier to enacting instructional leadership manifested itself in two ways. Firstly, there was resistance to the school authorities' delegation of tasks. One questionnaire respondent mentioned:

Some educators do not do duties delegated to them, because they say they are not paid for these. Others deliberately do the activities wrongly in order to fight with the principal.

Secondly, the principals experienced difficulties dealing with change. The extract from the interview below depicts this scenario:

These (curriculum) changes take place now and again. While the teachers are not yet clear with this thing, then it changes to another thing before they even grasp the first thing. So, this makes the teachers not to teach effectively.....The changes that are taking place in our system affect us as managers because we are also not clear about all these things (Principal A).

We have to unpack curriculum changes ourselves as managers and personally I found it extremely daunting because it's long changes that I feel were not necessary (Principal D).

The two extracts highlight two challenges for the schools. The first one has to do with the frequency of the changes. Most of the participants in the interviews raised concerns about the fact that too many changes were taking place within a short space of time. The second concern has to do with curriculum changes that appear to have cumbersome and unnecessary details and prescriptions. Literature on educational change posits that the role of principals in driving change is important (Fullan 2006; Yukl 2006). For instance, Fullan maintains that to be able to implement sustainable reforms, principals must be equipped with skills to handle complex and rapidly changing environments. Unfortunately, the data shows principals were not adequately capacitated for this task. As a way of mitigating the challenges of lack of information about new curriculum changes, principals tried a number of strategies like downloading some of the policy documents from the internet, collaborating with other SMT members, and even forming small communities of learning in the form of clusters.

We are networking. We are forming clusters in our area. I think that helps a lot when we engage in those clusters (Principal A).

In addition to the above, some principals decided to adopt positive attitudes to change as a mechanism for coping with rapid changes. For instance, Principal F highlighted the need for change in mind-sets in order to manage change. He argued that dealing with change is an individual person's issue and that:

Changes require us to adapt...you must know that as long as you are living in this world, changes will always be there. So you must be positive.

The principals' activities especially where they unpack the curriculum forms part of their curriculum leadership responsibilities as contained in Weber's (1996) five domains model (managing curriculum and instruction). To manage curriculum and instruction implies that instructional leaders need to know about instructional methods and trends; provide informed advice and communicate priorities for improvement in a class or programme; share with the teachers an understanding of instructional goals and common language for describing and analysing teaching practice (Weber 1996). In varying degrees, principals in this study made attempts to mitigate the effects of the barriers to enacting instructional leadership in their schools.

Teacher Unionism

The devastating and acidic impact of teacher unionism as a barrier to turning leadership learning into practice also came out as another constant theme in both the questionnaire data and interviews. Below are a few extracts from the questionnaire data to illustrate this:

Some teacher unions encouraged their members to defy legitimate instructions from school authorities, for example, by not cooperating with the school principals/HODs when they wanted to conduct class visits to ensure professional accountability.

By refusing to have learners' schoolwork and teachers' workbooks to be supervised.

Deliberate incorrect application of 'work to rule principle' during teachers' strikes.

And instilling a general sense of fear/intimidation among both teachers and learners.

The above questionnaire findings were also corroborated by the interviews which lamented the advent of teacher unions in the education sector since it has resulted in highly unionised employees. Some of the participants said:

Teacher unions have destroyed our schools...teachers attend union meetings during teaching time while others do not even want to go to class and teach... Principals are afraid and do not know what to do to manage schools because if you reprimand the teacher for any wrong-doing, the teacher/s threaten to report you to their teacher union/s and principals are afraid of teacher unions (Principal A).

...if a teacher gives you a circular indicating that there is a meeting at 10:00 in the morning, there is nothing that you can do to stop it because if you do not release the teachers, you are going to receive threatening calls from the union leadership accusing you of betraying the struggle. If they issue you with that circular, you need to comply (Principal F).

These above actions were adversely impacting on management of teaching as the school principals were unable to quality assure what was being taught in the classroom. Similarly, numerous studies on teacher unions and their corrosive impact on education in South Africa have been conducted recently (Diko and Letseka 2009; Fleisch 2010; Letseka et al. 2012; Pattilo 2012; Zengele 2013). These studies also note the negative effect on the principals' confidence in enacting their leadership learnings. This directly impacts on the management of the school and the learners suffer in the long run.

Another finding was that the teachers' loyalties were divided between the DoBE and their teacher unions and it appeared that the loyalty to a particular teacher union was stronger. This could be attributed to the strong influence this teacher union was perceived to wield within the DoBE. This participant said:

Some teachers are listening but others do not. Some are cooperating but most of them take their loyalty to the teacher union first, then the education department (Principal E).

The above participant was therefore of the view that she was fighting a losing battle. Zengele's (2013) study also reiterates a similar finding where a senior teacher union official was interviewed and stated that when they take decisions, the union's interests come first, before those of the DoBE and the learners it serves. The notion of education being in the doldrums is also supported by scholars such as Bloch (2009) and Fleisch (2010) who state that education in South Africa is in a compromised and parlous state owing to the irresponsible con-

duct of some teacher unions. However, these principals have learnt to be astute negotiators and, to mitigate the negative impact of teacher unions, the following principals said:

I tell my staff that we have to consider the child that is our goal first and foremost (Principal D).

I call the teacher/s concerned and talk to them. I tell them that before you are a union member, you are a teacher first, so we have to put the teaching profession first before the teacher unions (Principal A).

Appealing to teachers' consciences to elevate learners' interests above their own was not easy, as they sometimes lost the negotiation battle.

Lack of Resources

Another major finding was the negative impact of the lack of resources in the schools. The challenges of poverty of resources ranged from physical, financial to human resources. Below are a few extracts from the questionnaire data listing those challenges:

Shortage of classrooms; insufficient toilets for learners; insufficient sports fields; limited state allocation to schools; few or no computers in the majority of schools to no access to internet) to financial and human resources (one teacher teaching Mathematics from Grade 8-12; understaffing; employing un-qualified teachers and some HODs not empowered to do the work they were employed to do.

The above questionnaire data was also corroborated by the interviews, a few of which are provided below:

The problem I have is that of physical resources. It is really bad. In some of the classes we have combined classes which are taught under one roof. It is not working at all (Principal A).

The resources we receive are not enough. The DoBE expects each learner to have a book but because we do not have enough funds, you find that one book is used by up to three learners. The other challenge is that of infrastructure like toilets and classrooms (Principal C).

These statements suggest that, generally, all the interviewed participants were experiencing a myriad of challenges and this was posing a barrier to their attempts at enacting leadership learning acquired in the ACE: SL in their schools. Similarly, the study by Bush and Oduro (2006)

also points out the challenges of managing schools in developing and difficult contexts like those faced by the school principals in the studied schools. These authors found that a shortage of school equipment; physical resources; lack of staff accommodation; playgrounds facilities and other resources made it very difficult for principals and teachers to enact their instructional roles. However, the school principals, employing the skills they had learnt in the ACE: SL, claimed to have acquired coping skills to face the challenges of resource scarcity. They had learnt to be creative and were even sourcing resources outside of the DoBE to supplement what they were receiving from the state. Others had even started networking and or twinning with other schools to ensure staff development. One participant said:

I think the ACE: SL Programme has assisted me a lot in terms of how I manage people and resources. I communicate, involve and delegate to teachers to acquire their buy-in to whatever I do (Principal B).

In concurring with the above, another participant also said:

The ACE: SL programme helped me to become very forceful and to have a voice as a principal. I have written out to sponsors to come on board and to help us develop our school... The school is currently being revamped and have acquired many other resources (Principal D).

Viewed from Weber's (1996) model of instructional leadership (*leaders promoting a positive learning climate* at schools), these principals are harnessing whatever resources they can from the different networks/sources they have established to maximise the goals of teaching and learning. They were developing school-community partnerships (Sanders and Lewis 2005; Sanders 2006) and raising resources for the school through the skills they had learned from the ACE: SL programme.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the school principals have learnt school leadership and management knowledge and skills from the ACE: SL programme. However, the contexts within which some school principals work seem not to be friendly to the application of their instructional leadership learnings in a seamless way. The results articulated above bear testimony to this. Given the diverse contexts in which they work,

these school principals seem to be in their fledgling stages of translating their instructional leadership learnings into practice. The researchers also acknowledge that the implementation of instructional leadership learning is not an event; rather, it is a process requiring consolidation of knowledge, values and skills learnt. Simultaneously, the thrust is to get the various education stakeholders to buy into a novel vision of leading teaching and learning. This said, the environment within which principals operate is hostile to the implementation of instructional leadership. For instance, the results show that one teacher union was so powerful that they could frustrate whatever principals attempted to do. There was no evidence that the DoBE has done anything to address these environmental factors. Because of such conditions, whether you attended the ACE: SL programme or not becomes irrelevant. The researchers are therefore posing the question: given these conditions, is the ACE: SL really preparing school principals for the instructional leadership realities confronting our schools?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above-mentioned results, this study therefore recommends that these barriers to instructional leadership become case studies for what needs to be done in terms of comprehensive preparations for the training of future cohorts of school principals in the ACE: SL programme. In other words, there is a need for the DoBE to pay special attention to the conditions under which schools operate and ensure that skills that are provided to school management are implementable at school level.

LIMITATIONS

The results of this paper are limited to the six schools and six school principals that have studied the ACE: SL at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, the paper focuses only on the barriers experienced by these principals in translating instructional leadership learning into practice.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The paper is limited to the barriers to translating instructional leadership learning into prac-

tice. This focus evidently shows that factors that support instructional leadership learning for instance are not addressed. This creates space for further research on this aspect.

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