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How Heads of Departments Understand Their Roles as Instructional Leaders: A South African Study

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on a qualitative study that explored instructional leadership in selected schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Numerous studies emphasize the principals' role as an instructional leader and the influence of instructional leadership on learner achievement. The researcher's premise is that instructional leadership is not limited to the principal but extends to heads of departments. The study focuses on how heads of departments understand their instructional leadership role; how they lead the teachers in their departments; and what they do to ensure effective teaching and learning. Data were generated using semi-structured interviews with nine heads of departments. The findings revealed that the heads of departments perceived their instructional leadership responsibilities as task-oriented focusing on monitoring and controlling teachers' work. Their leadership involved modelling, motivating teachers and establishing good interpersonal relationships. The strategies used by the heads of departments varied due to the absence of standardized training.