TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy)

PROJECT TITLE: Managing curriculum and instruction in South African secondary schools

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Introduction

This project was initially focused on considering the training needs of principals in the South African schooling system. There has been, however, relatively broad consensus since Tsukudu and Taylor (1995) around what principals need to know, especially in relation to new roles and responsibilities assigned to them in the post 1994 education dispensation. Subsequent research has emphasised in particular the need for training in financial management and human resource management. A new ACE in Educational leadership has been introduced this year by the Department of Education to replace all other management training courses. This will be evaluated, and any study on training would therefore run parallel to a process already on track.

Part of this emphasis on training and development is a growing conception that good teachers don’t necessarily make good managers. There is a risk inherent in this view of technicising the role of the principal, and delinking the relationship between school leadership and teaching and learning. At the same time there is consensus around the importance of leadership to improved student outcomes. Although the link between school leadership is found to be indirect and mediated, its importance in the literature is asserted. It is generally agreed that it is primarily principals who create the conditions of possibility for quality teaching and learning.

The project proposed here specifically considers the management of teaching and learning. The focus is not on what the principal should be doing in this regard, there is plenty in the literature to suggest this, but rather whether and how curriculum and instruction is managed in South African secondary schools. The term instructional leadership is often deployed in the literature in a consideration of the relationship between pedagogy and curriculum and leadership. The project aims to gain greater specificity around what this means in the South African context. It is hoped that some evidence to inform the training of managers around this specific area will flow from the research.
The proposal begins with a review of the relevant South African and international literature on leadership. It briefly sketches out the different approaches that have been taken to the study of school leadership. It then looks specifically at the literature on instructional leadership. The focus is on the empirical findings in the field, as well as the theoretical approaches taken to the consideration of leadership. The purpose of the literature review is to inform the research design and research questions. These are presented after the review. The rest of the proposal attends to the operational aspects of the project.

Review of the literature

The context of studying school leadership in South Africa

It is necessary to locate a study of leadership within the broader context of the decentralisation of education in South Africa, and in particular, the intended democratising of school management through the establishment of School Governing Bodies. Sayed (2002) and the ministerial review of school governance (Department of Education, 2004), both point out the contested nature of this decentralising, the lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of actors at various levels, and the way in which this kind of decentralisation benefits certain groups in society. Many parents and school personnel have little or no experience in school governance, and there has been inadequate preparation for SGBs taking on governance roles and responsibilities. Sayed (2002) argues that in an inequitable society, the need for stronger state intervention may be more appropriate than a decentralised system. The DOE further shows that in schools where parent capacity is low, it is the principal who maintains centralised control over the governance of schools, though with greater difficulty concerning their roles and authority in this regard.

Decentralisation, with new roles and responsibilities for ‘self-managing schools’ or ‘site-based management’ is often accompanied by what is referred to as ‘new managerialism’, characterised by strong accountability and auditing mechanisms. Blackmore (2004) argues that the result of increased responsibility is increased risk for individual schools and principals, often in the context of fewer resources and minimal system support (p. 440). In this, Blackmore identifies a tension between performativity (‘being seen to be good’) and passion (for ‘doing good’). Principals, especially those in disadvantaged settings have to struggle

“with competing demands between, on the one hand, their passion for leading and teaching to effect more equitable and socially just public schooling in ways that addressed the needs of all their students and , on the other, the necessity to adhere to the new performativities required by markets and management for their school’s survival” (2004: 441).

Given the South African education system’s recent emergence from a dysfunctional state of schooling under apartheid, we know that equitable and socially just schools are far from being established in the main (Christie, 1998). Further, in relation to new
performativities, accountability is currently realised in a relatively weak form in South Africa, mainly through three mechanisms – increased standardised testing (especially through continuous assessment tasks and the matric exam), the production of curriculum standards (the National Curriculum Statements or NCS), and the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). The IQMS is particularly notable in the linking of quality and accountability, and the management of teaching and learning in schools. Although the emerging accountability system is weak in terms of rewards and sanctions attached to adhering to requirements, it is onerous in terms of the demands placed on schools, especially in their administrative components (Chisholm et al, 2005).

Together with the devolving of powers to the school, and the increase in demands for site-based management, centralised control reasserted itself through these mechanisms. How, in this context, do schools manage curriculum and instruction? What are the responsibilities of various role-players in the school in the complexity of a time of intense school reform? And especially, how is this managed in schools facing tremendous social pressures from poor school communities on the one hand, and scarce resources within schools on the other?

The consideration of leadership in the South African context also has an important historical dimension. Fleish and Christie (2004) remind us that in three core functions apartheid undermined the authority and activity of principals, giving them “... no budgetary authority or influence over the flow of resources such as textbooks, little or no influence over the hiring and firing of staff, and almost no curriculum decision-making powers” (p. 102).

So in three key areas of principalship, financial management, instructional leadership, and human resource management principals in South African schools have little experience, and there is bound to be substantial confusion around who is responsible for what. Fleish and Christie make the argument that this is related to political legitimacy and authority of principals in contributing to change which is rooted historically. But it is presently further complicated by the dynamics of school reform described above.

In considering leadership, schools contend with a number of dynamics: new relations to communities; policy change and increasing accountability; and a broader pressure to lead teaching and learning in their schools.

The review begins by defining the difference between leadership and management. It goes on to look at the international research base in studies of principalship, and the broad approaches taken. The review will then focus on both the international and South African research literature related to instructional leadership.

Definition of terms – leadership and management
The distinction between leadership and management is often made in the literature. Leadership tends to be equated with vision and values and management with processes and structures. Although Schon (1984) argues that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, he distinguishes between them in the following way:

Leadership and management are not synonymous terms. One can be a leader without being a manager. One can, for example, fulfill many of the symbolic, inspirational educational and normative functions of a leader and thus represent what an organisation stands for without carrying any of the formal burdens of management. Conversely one can manage without leading. An individual can monitor and control organisational activities, make decisions, and allocate resources without fulfilling the symbolic, normative, inspirational, or educational functions of leadership (Schon, 1984:36).

A more useful distinction, made by Lingard et al (2002), is that leadership can be exercised throughout the school, by different people at different levels. Management, in contrast, is a structural position, which carries with it specific roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the present study is concerned with management positions, and is also interested in the leadership exercised from these positions. Thus both terms are used, to indicate the positioning of managers within the organisation, as well as their exercise of leadership in the various aspects of their role.

Spillane et al’s (2004) definition in relation to instructional leadership specifically is useful, containing both bureaucratic and administrative (practical and rational) components as well as more symbolic aspects. They define instructional leadership as “the identification, acquisition, allocation, co-ordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning” (p. 11). This is a broad definition which will be used in the consideration of the management of curriculum and instruction.

The focus of this study is on the principal. Louise et al (1996) point out that the principal is in the best position to deal with conflict and negotiate structural changes to support learning. The South African DOE ministerial report also identifies the central role of the principal in managing and decision-making in schools in the context of the establishment of school governing bodies. Further, Leithwood (2004) through his review on leadership and learning emphasises that the principal is the most influential source of leadership. However, Elmore (1999) argues that direct involvement in instruction by principals is among the least frequent of their activities, and one would expect that to be the case in South Africa as well. This division of labour in schools has been remarkably stable over centuries. Further, in their research study, Bush and Joubert (2004) show that a large sample of principals in Gauteng do not regard themselves as instructional leaders. Thus, how leadership of curriculum and instruction is dispersed across the school needs to be considered.

**Conceptualising leadership – different approaches**
Both international and South African research literature has identified the role of the principal as key in contributing to better student outcomes. There is consensus in the US and European literature, and increasingly South African research, that school managers play a crucial role in creating the conditions for improved instruction (Marsh, 2002; Spillane, 2004; Taylor, 2007). What is less understood is how the principal contributes.

In the introduction I referred to the growing perception, represented in South African policy and training documents, that good teachers don’t necessarily make good managers. In this regard, Grace (2000) distinguishes two different approaches to the consideration of management and leadership. One focuses on occupational trainability, and the other is based on professional education and formation. He identifies the ‘cultural relays’ for these two approaches as Education Management Studies in the former case, and Critical Leadership Studies (CLS) in relation to the latter. EMS develops in the context of a dominance of a management and market culture in education. He argues that EMS shifts the focus away from the head teacher’s prime relation with knowledge and the curriculum, and with students, teachers and pedagogy. In its place ‘new managerialism’ pays more attention to ‘budget control and forecasting, to public relations and market research, to the measurement of performance indicators and quality control and to human resource management’ (p. 234), thus rendering it technicist and reductionist. CLS, in contrast, goes beyond managerial considerations, and places emphasis on the morals, values, and conceptions of the common good in thinking about leadership. Leadership in this version is complex and contested. It moves the focus of study away from ‘the specifics of educational management to the principles and dilemmas of educational leadership’ (p.237). He identifies a number of different approaches within CLS, including those that focus on ‘ethical practice’, ‘democratic practice’, feminist approaches, and education leadership in relation to spirituality, morality and philosophy. He argues (Grace, 2001) that he is presenting ‘ideal types’ in order to sharpen the identification of different approaches to leadership and management. Grace’s (2000) article draws attention to the tensions existing in a consideration of school leadership – between more technicist managerial approaches and an approach that recognises context, and the moral, ethical and fundamentally social ways in which leadership in schools is constituted. This tension is present in most of the approaches discusses below.

Classifying approaches

There are various ways in which the leadership literature is classified by different authors. Some categorise it in terms of the assumptions that underlie different approaches on the one hand, and another is a more normative literature which focuses on delineating different ‘styles’ of leadership. Lingard et al (2002) summarise the approaches in the literature in terms of trait theories, situational theories and transformational leadership. Similarly, Spillane et al (2004) identify five different approaches in leadership studies: trait studies; sets of behaviours, or leadership
styles; contingency or situational approaches; a cognitive tradition; and institutional theory. Gunter’s (2001) classification is one of the most useful, pointing out the key questions of the different approaches and some exemplary texts in tabular form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Management techniques. Leader as ‘Management engineer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Social and interpersonal resources. The leader as ‘Human engineer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Expert knowledge about education. The leader as ‘Clinical practitioner.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Focusing attention on what is important. The leader as ‘Chief’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Building a unique school culture. The leader as ‘High Priest’</td>
</tr>
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Leithwood and Duke (1998) provide a different typology through their survey of journals covering the UK, North American and Australian and New Zealand contexts. They identify six ‘models of leadership’: instructional leadership; transformational leadership (a focus especially in the North American context); moral leadership; participative leadership; managerial leadership; contingent leadership.

The point of the typology is to identify the different assumptions that underpin these different approaches. Heck (1998) also presents a typology which draws out the epistemological positions, lenses and research orientations. Both Leithwood and Duke and Heck set out to question the validity of these models in cross-cultural contexts, a means by which we may inquire about “the extent to which these models reflect the values associated with different social cultures” Leithwood and Duke (1998:45) contend that the six models provide a comprehensive framework for cross-cultural leadership studies, but this is in what they term ‘Western social cultures’. What these mean, and their usefulness in Eastern or developing world contexts, is not a focus of the review.

Transformational leadership
Transformational leadership has for a while been a dominant approach, and has had significant influence on leadership studies (Gronn, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Although acknowledging that there is no unitary definition of transformational leadership in the literature, Leithwood & Jantzi (1999) offer the following meaning: transformational leadership “aims to foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals on the part of leaders’ colleagues. Increased capacities and commitment are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999:453). Transformational leadership grew out of a concern with the symbolic and emotional aspects to successful leadership (Lingard et al, 2002). It has a strong moral dimension. It entails an active commitment to goals. It is variously described, and entails many complex and varied definitions, but in its simplest terms rests on the assumptions that people will follow a person who inspires them; a person with vision and passion can achieve great things; and that the way to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) provide eight dimensions of transformational leadership: ‘building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modelling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions’ (p. 9).

There are a number of criticisms of the concept of transformational leadership. Some are concerned with its variable definitions and lack of clarity, and others with its normative approach, not amenable to empirical verification. With its emphasis on vision and vision building, moral principles and active commitment, Lingard et al (2002) point out the danger of romanticising these concepts. They argue that in this normative approach the possibility of negative instantiations of visions and shaping organisational culture is ignored. Gunter’s (2001) comprehensive critique of the approach draws together numerous criticisms, and asserts that transformational leadership is not transformational: “the current shaping of transformational leadership enables and supports existing power structures to be maintained and developed, and in particular is a ‘top-dog theory’ that meets the needs of management” (p. 73).

There are two issues that emerge from this literature that are useful to signal. The one is a tension that is drawn out between the managerial and pedagogical aspects of principal’s roles. The other is dealing with the distinction between explanations that focus on structure on the one hand, and agency on the other. Some interesting theoretical approaches attempt to deal with this. Several studies draw on the theory of Bourdieu (see, for example, Lingard et al, 2003; Gunter, 2001), in particular his notions of field and habitus, which allow for a consideration of the contested nature of leadership, located within different fields which structure, and are structured by, what agents are able and willing to do. Like the critical policy work of micropolitics ((Ball, 1997; Gershon, 2000)) this theorizing places an emphasis on power relations which play out in complex social spaces. In micropolitics, the
interrelationships between external policy and internal power relations based on class, race and gender are considered.

Another theoretical approach, discussed further below is, is based on socio-cultural activity theory (see Gronn, 2000). Engstrom’s human activity system, in particular, allows for the representation of “the complexity of activity, including patterns of power, processes, and meaning making, and locates them historically and socially” (Gunter, 2002:132). Activity is understood as conjoint-activity, dealing with the structure agency divide, and also placing an emphasis on social relationships. It allows for the consideration of the interdependency of instruments, rules, community and division of labour.

School effectiveness studies

The discussion above has focused on how leadership is conceptualised in the literature. What about the empirical evidence on its effect on student outcomes? Although an important strand in current education policy, only small and indirect effects on student achievement have been shown (Barker, 2007). More generally, Hallinger and Heck (1998) show through a review of 41 studies in the UK, since 1980, why principal effects are small and hard to detect. In particular, in relation to new privileged notions of leadership, clear relationships between improved student performance and “collaborative, democratic and distributed forms of leadership” have yet to be established (Harris, 2005:13).

Some, like Kruger et al (2007) argue that the indirect effect on student outcomes is the direct impact on instructional organisation and culture. They attempt to create a sophisticated chain of variables to link them directly, but show how these chains can be very long and complex.

Lingard et al (2002) found no relationship between their measures of ‘productive leadership’ and student performance. One of the reasons they offer for this is the fact that the relationship between student performance and leadership is indirect, and when data is aggregated to the level of the school, variations in teachers, school environment and resourcing may mask any relationship between leadership and students performance (p?). Hallinger and Heck (1998) emphasise that it is not exactly clear how the principal’s role contributes to school effectiveness; that the influence on learning is indirect. Leithwood et al (2004) come to the same conclusion, illustrating by way of a model the number of independent variables in making the connection (see Figure 1).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) argue that researchers’ questions have shifted from whether principals make a difference, to ‘not only if principals have effects on school outcomes, but more particularly the paths through which such effects are achieved’ (p.187). They contend that the principals’ primary influence on schooling outcomes is in shaping the school’s direction the setting of visions, missions and goals. IN the introduction I referred to this as principals creating the conditions of possibility for
teaching and learning. Another way of putting it is the establishment of a containment which enables teaching and learning and the setting of a climate of expectations.

There is a further issue that is referred to in passing in the discussion of what matters in the work of principals in relation to student achievement. It is speculative, and has to do with political economy issues, and how the teacher labour market operates. Good principals attract teacher capital, and good teachers and consequent good student results concentrate in particular schools. The empirical base for this interpretation is almost nonexistent, although is hinted at in the work of Phurutse (2007). Through his review of the literature he suggests that schools with reputable leadership even if located in poor communities are able to recruit appropriately qualified teachers. That is, the right principal can be the reason that teachers are attracted to his/her school and stay in teaching, even in low socio-economic communities where teaching conditions are sub-optimal. Lingard et al (2002) found a similar phenomenon in the uneven distribution of ‘teacher capital’ (the knowledge, skills and dispositions that teachers hold) across schools, also suggesting that low and high performing teachers concentrate in different schools.

Figure 1: Independent variables in linking leadership to learning (Leithwood et al., 2004)

What emerges from this review of the literature is that more normative definitions, such as transformational leadership, contain few aspects which are easily
measurable, and which are closely linked to teaching and learning. Much of the literature renders principals’ work as technical and managerial, leaving out what Thomson (2001) refers to as “principals as embodied moral subjects dealing with complex and shifting realities” (p. 5). Thomson provides the following succinct summary and critique of a body of educational administration literature in Australia:

The habits of categorisation are alive and well in much of the educational administration literature, in which there abound multiple varieties of leadership (transactional, transformational, heroic, liberation, effective, situated, moral, constructive, employee centred, entra-and intra-preneurial, collaborative, collegial, distributed, educational, instructional – to name some) and various foci for management (human resources, finances, organisational culture, public relations, planning and decision making, quality assurance, performance – and so on). These scholarly abstractions, because of their imbrication with the work of educational administrations and bureaucracies, indeed become active in the construction of principals as technicians; they become disciplinary (p. 16).

What Thomson (2001) also points out is the neglect in this literature of the pedagogical aspects of principals’ work, as well as the policy analysis work that principals do. Some of the work that does consider these aspects is considered in a later section of this review. In the next section the South African research base on leadership is briefly considered.

South African studies on leadership

The South African leadership research base is very limited. In relation to the management of curriculum and of teaching and learning there are no studies specifically focused on principals. Some of the research does focus on financial management in schools (Bush, 2005; Bush & Heystek, 2007). There have also been a limited number of studies on human resource management (Soudien, 2001), in particular in reference to the redeployment processes of the late 90s (Gilmour, 2001; McLennan, 2000). Much research on the foregoing issues focuses on policy rather than actual practice. Another line of research has been a consideration of the training and development availability and needs for school managers (Krause & Powell, 2002; Mistry & Grobler, 2002; Sayed, 2000; Tsukudu & Taylor, 1995; Van der Westhuizen; Mosogo, & Van Vuuren, 2004). What these studies show is that most principals have not received adequate specialist training, especially in financial management and instructional leadership. Bush et al (2006) in their review of research on leadership and management argue that most of the research into leadership is “not conceptually rich”, and assert the need for a theory of leadership relevant to the South African context.

There is a different order of clues offered in relation to school management by the early school effectiveness studies in South Africa, however. These are dealt with in more detail below. In short, a number of school level management practices are associated with better than expected student performance in South Africa. In the next
section I focus more closely on the management of curriculum and instruction. The literature around the management of instruction, or ‘instructional leadership’, both internationally and in South Africa is considered.

Studies in instructional leadership

In the international literature there is a concerted focus on what is generally termed ‘instructional leadership’. Much of the US literature focuses on a number of key concepts: instructional leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership (Spillane, 2004) in relation to the issue of principals’ role in instructional improvement. Increasingly the argument made in the US is that instructional improvement should be the main responsibility of school leaders (Murphy, 2002). In general, the view is that it is possible to improve teacher quality and instruction by building professional communities of educators and focusing on instructional leadership (Burch, 2007).

Researchers have pursued different lines of enquiry in this regard. There are a number of useful reviews of the field as well (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al, 2004, for example). Southworth (2002) concurs with these writers that there is a lack of agreement around what the term means. Southworth also argues that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support agreed upon definitions. It is possible, however, to distinguish in this literature, between broad and narrow views of instructional leadership, the former taking into account teacher cultures and school organisation, and the latter focusing on teacher behaviours that influence student learning (Southworth, 2002:77). This distinction is linked to the distinction between direct and indirect effects raised in the previous section.

There are five themes in the instructional leadership literature that I wish to highlight in this section which offer useful pointers for a consideration of the leadership of teaching and learning. These refer to the issues of pedagogical expertise; distributed leadership; linkages; social context; and categories for instructional leadership. These themes encapsulate some of the central issues in the literature, and are also productive approaches in considering the design of the present study.

Pedagogical expertise

There are a number of studies that call attention to the importance of leaders understanding and knowledge of curricula, pedagogy and subject knowledge, what I have termed ‘pedagogical expertise’. Stein and Nelson (2003) raise the question as to whether generic studies of leadership suffice in deepening our understanding of what it means to lead a school. They argue that “[w]ithout knowledge that connects subject matter, learning and teaching to acts of leadership, leadership floats disconnected from the very processes it is designed to govern” (p. 446).
In their focus on a principal's depth of subject knowledge they argue that this is necessary for the principal to know good instruction when they see it, to encourage it when they don’t, and to facilitate appropriate on-going learning for staff (p. 424).

Elmore (2000) recruiting the notion of loose-coupling, argues that such a vision for school management is unlikely. He asserts that: “Loose-coupling explains the elusive and largely unsuccessful quest over the past century for school administrators who are ‘instructional leaders’ (p. 7). The loose-coupling is the outcome of the principal taking on the main task of buffering the instructional core from outside disruptions and intrusions into the technical core; and also protecting this from scrutiny and keeping up appearances of rational management of the technical core.

Elmore also argues that “if the purpose of leadership is the improvement of teaching practice and performance, then the skills and knowledge that matter are those that bear on the creation of settings for learning focused on clear expectations for instruction” (p.20). The dominant theories of leadership, he argues, institutional, political, managerial and cultural, do not posit a direct relationship between what school leaders should be doing and the core function of the organisation: teaching and learning. Indeed, much of the US literature is less focused on issues of teaching and learning, knowledge and curriculum than the UK work. This is possibly historically rooted, where head teachers in the UK were a feature of schooling for a longer period (REF).

Both Southworth (2002) and Hill (2001) stress the importance of leaders’ understanding of learning. Hill (2001) argues that principals’ knowledge is often dated, based on ‘increasingly distant memories of a former life in the classroom’ (p. 1). In the South African context, a study by Roberts and Roach (2006) on five effective schools, found that principals in these schools maintained what they termed a ‘connection to the classroom’. In these schools all principals carried a significant load with respect to teaching. They all taught examinable subjects, and at the grade 12 level.

Principals’ own pedagogic expertise, how and whether it is deployed, is raised, therefore, as key in a consideration of the management of teaching and learning.

**Distributed leadership**

Starting with Gronn’s (2000) preliminary taxonomy, the notion of distributed leadership has become prominent in the instructional leadership literature, as well as in management studies, development and training bodies. Spillane et al (2004) provide perhaps one of the most theoretically developed accounts of this notion of ‘distributed leadership’, which is at the core of instructional leadership. Their notion of distributed leadership is developed within activity theory and situated cognition. Their interest is not only in what constitutes leadership in a school, but *how* leadership is enacted. They are concerned to show how leadership operates in the interaction between “leaders, followers and the situation” (p. 3). The theoretical
frame developed by the authors is interesting in a number of ways. Firstly, it asserts that leadership is a property of a number of actors at the school level, and is not invested in the principal solely. In their terms, leadership is ‘stretched over’ a number of roles, including ‘followers’ and also over situations, which include artefacts and organisational structures within the school. Secondly, the situated aspect of their view of leadership comprises a particular understanding of situation, as “more than a backdrop or container for leaders’ practices, we consider socio-cultural context as a constitutive element of leadership practice, an integral defining element of that activity” (p. 11). Drawing on Giddens and Wertsch, they assert that structure is both constitutive and constituting. They demonstrate this through a discussion of artefacts (such as memos, policies and agendas), and organisational structures, how this is so. What the work offers is a sound and carefully worked out theoretical frame which allows for an investigation of leadership that goes “beyond a consideration of the roles, strategies, and traits of the individuals who occupy formal leadership positions to investigate how the practice of leadership is stretched over leaders, followers, and the material and symbolic artefacts in the situation” (p. 27, emphasis in original).

Spillane et al’s (2004) analysis, however, is relatively a-contextual. It also neglects the relationship between power and the distribution of leadership (Hartley, 2007). It fails in the end to move beyond the normative stance of much of the literature. In general, the concept of distributed leadership is criticised for being poorly defined, with little consensus around its precise meaning. Hartley (2007) argues that its “conceptual elasticity is considerable. And this lack of conceptual clarity does not allow for a clear operationalisation of the concept in empirical research” (p. 202). Alluded to above, other criticisms include the fact that it ignores the micro-politics of the school, as does not take account of the socio-economic context of the school, and its impact.

What is useful, however, is the notion of ‘dispersal’ of leadership, not just across different actors, but also structures and artefacts.

**Linkages**

A study which is located outside of the US/UK frame is that by Lee and Dimmock (1999) who consider curriculum management in Hong Kong. From their review of the literature, they identify three key themes related to the curriculum leadership. The first is the extent to which the curriculum is actually managed, or whether it ‘just happens’ through teachers working interdependently. The second is the degree to which principals are involved in the management of curriculum, or whether it is left to HODs and teachers. And thirdly, when principals are involved, how they bring their influence to bear (Lee & Dimmock, 1999:458-459). These questions are interesting in that they do not assume that principals do or should take leadership. They also draw attention to linkages in an investigation of the connections between management and curriculum and instruction. There are four dimensions to these linkages:
• Their characteristics – tight-loose, direct-indirect, formal-informal)
• The structures involved
• The means of communication employed
• The match between intention and practice

A focus of linkage draws attention to how vision and missions translate in practice. It also focuses on the nature of linkages in relation to structures and communication systems.

Social context

A number of authors in the literature call attention to the importance of considering context. Those aspects relevant to context are: geographic location of the school (urban, suburban, rural); level of schooling (secondary primary); small and large schools; the student population including socio-economic level and support agencies; the historical context; and the policy context. There are fewer examples, however, especially of empirical work, that takes these issues into consideration. An exception is the Queensland study (Lingard et al, 2002). The Queensland study is concerned with the relationship between ‘productive pedagogies’ and ‘productive leadership’. They attempt to unpack the complexity of leadership, defining it thus: “leadership involves the complex interplay of the personal / biographical, the institutional / organisational, and the broader social, political and economic context”.

The project works with two dimensions for analysing leadership in schools: productive leadership and density of leadership (considering dispersal of leadership through the school). The productive leadership model is derived from the literature, interviews with principals and teachers and analysis of observed leadership practices in their study schools. The concept contains nine dimensions each on an axis of variation: a focus on pedagogy; a focus on structures and strategies; a focus on culture of care (emotional economy and risk-taking); a focus on supporting professional development and learning community; the nature of change commitment; ‘Hot/cold’ knowledge as basis for change in relation to pedagogy; ‘Hot/cold’ knowledge as basis for change regarding political aspects; a commitment to dispersal of leadership; involvement in relationships amongst school community (teachers, students, parents, administrators and others). What the construct usefully attempts to get at is the distinction between issues at the individual level and those at the structural level.

The work was further developed conceptually in Lingard et al (2003), which I will return to at the end of the review. What the Queensland study offers is a useful way of thinking about leadership that links it to context. It also provides a useful theoretical approach in the work of Bourdieu. Drawing on the concepts of social/structural position, disposition and field, they are able to consider “the intersection of the structural location of the principal within the field(s) of education”, and how they develop particular dispositions. These field are fields of social relations, within and extending beyond the boundaries of the school. Taking
into account both the individual and structural elements of principalship, they attempt to deal with the structure/agency divide.

Categorisation of effective instructional leadership

Finally, much of the literature provides lists of what constitutes effective leadership. A few examples are provided below. Stein and Nelson (2003) stipulate the precise role of administrators with respect to leading instruction, that they take responsibility for:

- Understanding the learning needs of individuals
- Arranging the interactive social environments that embody the right mix of expertise and appropriate tasks to spur learning
- Putting the right mix of incentives and sanctions into the environment to motivate individuals to learn
- Ensuring that there are adequate resources available to support the learning

Elmore (2000) also provides a list of functions that principals focused on instructional improvement should undertake:

- Design school improvement strategies
- Implement incentive structures for teachers, support personnel
- Recruit, evaluate teachers
- Broker professional development consistent with improvement strategy
- Allocate school resources toward instruction
- Buffer non-instructional issues from teachers

Spillane et al (2004) identify several functions that are important for instructional leadership from the literature:

- Constructing and selling an instructional vision
- Developing and managing a school culture conducive to conversations about the core technology of instruction by building norms of trust, collaboration, and academic press among staff
- Procuring and distributing resources, including materials, time, support and compensation
- Supporting teacher growth and development, both individually and collectively;
- Providing both summative and formative monitoring of instruction and innovation
- Establishing a school climate in which disciplinary issues do not dominate instructional issues

Some argue that Hallinger's (2000) model is the most researched, and consists of three sets of leadership dimensions – Defining the School’s Mission, Managing the Instructional Program, and Promoting a Positive Learning Climate. Leithwood et al (2004) (Leithwood et al., 2004) paraphrase, and simplify these into three core sets of
practices for successful leadership: setting directions; developing people; and redesigning the organisation.

There is in fact remarkable consistency across this literature around what constitutes effective leadership of curriculum and instruction. Leithwood et al (2004), however, caution us to be sceptical about the “leadership by adjective literature” (p.6). They argue that we need more robust understandings of leadership practices, of responses to external policy initiatives and to local needs and priorities. The lists are useful, however, in drawing attention to the possibilities of instructional leadership, and to some of the aspects we may look for in research. In the next section we look at the South African research base on instructional leadership.

The South African research base

One of the few large-scale African studies around leadership is reported by Heneveld (2007). In a school effectiveness study across three African countries, Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar, researchers found that although head teachers oversight of teachers was generally perfunctory, with little observation of teaching taking place, “schools with better student results tended to have heads who pay more attention to the teachers’ preparation for teaching and the regular assessment of students than heads in schools with lower results” (p. 14). How the head teacher communicated with the community in which the school was located also had an impact on student results. Interestingly, inconclusive negative findings were the weak association between results and external supervision of schools, the presence of learning materials (especially textbooks) and school infrastructure. This gives some credence to the growing consensus that it is not the presence of resources, but rather their management and use, that contributes to better schooling outcomes.

What is the South African research base on the management of instruction? Bush et al (2006) in their comprehensive review argue that there is very limited material on the management of teaching and learning’ in South African schools. In particular “there are no accounts of how school principals, and other school managers, exercise ‘instructional leadership’ in their schools and seek to develop an effective culture of teaching and learning” (p.11).

Roberts and Roach (2006) attempt this in their study of what makes an effective leader. They divide leadership into different domains. In the ‘leadership of learning’ they include the following: vision of teaching; philosophy of learning; setting high performance expectations; communicating expectations; maintaining an improvement focus; innovations in teaching and learning.

In their study of five effective schools, in which they attempted to identify good leadership practices, they found little erosion of teaching time by non-academic activities; learners and teachers moving quickly to class; and a low tolerance for loitering and unattended classrooms. They were unable to say anything about visions and values and expectations, but did address the issue of ‘connection to the classroom’ referred to earlier. These schools also employed specific instructional
improvement strategies, such as afternoon classes or Saturday extra lessons and employed data-driven decision-making.

Our knowledge of how principals manage curriculum and instruction in schools in South Africa is limited. Although we have detailed normative frameworks (often from elsewhere) there is little consideration of the reality of the work of principals in particular contexts, and what they do do.

As noted above, the establishment of school governing bodies, who take significant responsibility for some of these aspects of school governance, in particular aspects of financial leadership, further complicates the discussion. It is not clear who is responsible for what.

The small number of school effectiveness studies in South Africa, however, do tell us something about effective leadership practices. Resources are important, but it is ‘not only the presence of school resources but how these are used which contribute to learning differentials’ (Taylor, 2007). Taylor (2007) argues that:

‘...key to the success of achieving any meaningful change in the quality of schooling for the majority of poor children is finding ways of ensuring these schools to use their resources more efficiently. This is a central problem in South African schooling and one which we know least about’ (p. 536)

What has been shown to be significant in terms of management variables, however, in relation to improved student outcomes include the following:

- The regulation of time (Gustafsson, 2005; Van der Berg, Burger, & Yu, 2005)
- The monitoring and support planning and delivery in relation to curriculum coverage (Gustafsson, 2005; Kanjee & Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005; Van der Berg et al., 2005)
- The procurement and management of books and stationery ((Gustafsson, 2005; Kanjee & Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005; Van der Berg et al., 2005)

This lends greater specificity around what we might look for in terms of what effective principals do in schools. The variables are also consistent with the components in the broader literature. The first is time regulation, which has been pinpointed in a number of studies over a period of time (Gustafsson, 2005; N. Taylor, 2004).

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1 See the case of Schoonbee and Others vs MEC of Education, Mpumalanga and Another. Here, in a case of the principal and school governing body being suspended for mismanagement of funds, the judge ruled in favour of the principal, deputy principal and SGB, stating “The principal is an educator who manages the school professionally... Managing the finances is something that you cannot expect from him (the principal). The contention is that the principal should be held accountable for the finances is an absurd proposition” (cited in Measry, 2004:129). Measry’s (2004) conclusion is that “To many principals, educators and parents the question of who is ultimately responsible and accountable for school finances remains unclear”
Muller, & Vinjevold, 2003). In particular, a recent study by (Chisholm et al., 2005) shows how principals’ time is largely consumed by administrative activities.

The second factor is curriculum leadership and management, where management oversight of teachers constructing their plans, the monitoring of curriculum coverage and the management of textbooks and stationery was associated with positive effects on student performance (Kanjee & Prinsloo, 2005; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005; Van der Berg et al., 2005). Taylor (2007) also cites the work of Gustaffson (2005) who shows that more advice to teachers from management is beneficial.

The signals emerging from these studies have led van der Berg (2005) and Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2006) to speculate about the importance of harder-to-measure aspects of student achievement such as a school management and teacher quality. Again, these analyses are generally conducted with school-level data and such variables are not well measured in the available school-level data sets (Lam, Ardington, & Leibbrandt, 2007). This makes it hard to be definitive about these factors. Although we don’t have sharp answers to what makes a good principal in relation to student learning in South African schools, we certainly have some clues.

Conclusion – towards a research design

In summary, drawing on the literature, there are several dimensions that would be key to a consideration of the management of teaching and learning in the South African context. These include the following.

The embeddedness of managerial and pedagogical aspects of leadership are clear in much of the literature discussed above, especially the South African school effectiveness findings. The tension often cited in the literature and flagged above between the managerial and pedagogical aspects of principal’s work therefore is less helpful in determining what it is we should look for in schools. As Thomson (2001) points out: “Buying new school furniture involves thinking pedagogically, dealing with the micropolitical power circuits in the school and considering furniture against other school priorities” (p. 16). The literature suggests that we take a broad rather than a narrow view (Southworth, 2002) of instructional leadership in schools, considering mediated and indirect ways in which principals and other leaders impact on teaching and learning.

A contextualised account is necessary, considering the historical and policy context, devolved school management, the school’s location within a particular social setting, and sets of relations, among other things. It is necessary to think about the ways in which “principals respond to their school environmental contexts as they seek to shape organisational processes and outcomes” (Heck, 1998:52). Social relations, and the division of labour within schools is key. The tension between leaders’ management of the bureaucratic demands of accountability systems, and their contribution to instructional achievement needs to be considered.
Within the school setting it is also key to consider how leadership is dispersed. It is unlikely that principals will regard themselves primarily as instructional leaders. At the same time, we need to take into account the pedagogical expertise of the principal, and the particular ways in which the linkages between visions and missions of the school are translated into practice through various means, or not at all, as the case may be. Organisational aspects, such as the management of time, are also of importance in creating ‘containers’ for quality teaching and learning, and establishing particular expectations within the school.

In order to sharpen this broad sweep of the issues emerging from the literature, in the final section of the review I draw on the work of Lingard et al (2003) in order to develop a preliminary framework for the study.

A preliminary framework for the study

In a review of the schools in their research, Lingard et al 2003 develop a common topology that school leadership must attend to. This topology is presented at a higher level of abstraction than many of the lists in the literature, and can be used to encapsulate a number of the features of leadership identified above. Usefully, this topology is premised on Bourdieu’s theory of field, and the metaphor of the game. In this way, the topology allows for an analysis of what they term a ‘leadership habitus’. This entails “having a feel for the game’ of leading the school as a field” (p. 88). I have drawn substantially on the topology they provide, and elaborate the categories both in the authors’ terms, and in terms of the literature reviewed above. I also draw on the authors’ elaboration of the categories in terms of the Bourdieuan theory that they recruit in the study. The categories of the topology provide useful ‘orienting concepts’, a term derived from Layder (1998) to describe specific concepts that are used to ‘orient’ the researcher in approaching both data collection and initial analyses of the data.

The topology consists of six components, which are outlined below.

1. A focus on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as the central activities of the school

This refers to the extent to which the focus of the school is on improving student outcomes, both social and academic. It involves the diagnosis and analysis of challenges, and ways to deal with these. It may entail specific strategies for instructional improvement, such as homework policies and Saturday or afternoon classes, and extra-mural activities. In Bourdieu’s terms it refers to the ways in which schools produce specific values, and the extent to which social, cultural and academic capital is built in the school. Monitoring and support of teachers’ plans, curriculum coverage and assessment would be included in this.

2. Vision, purposes and goals of the school
This refers to the extent to which the school establishes a common purpose and direction (including a direction for change). Referring to Bourdieu, “this involves building a shared sense of the position of the school in the larger field of schools, a sense of shared intention in the game as a whole, and the formation of symbolic capital” (Lingard et al, 2002:87-88). This may be incorporated in a school mission and vision which places emphasis on learning. It may also be encapsulated in the ways in which schools see their future direction, building on past successes or failures. Also seen in the culture of expectations established in the school.

3. Dispersal of leadership

This refers to the spread of leadership practices throughout the school. Who makes decisions, and who participates in processes of change? In Bourdieu’s terms it is about how different actors shape the game, and influence the values and capitals in the school. This is about the dispersal and centralisation of power, and attends to the division of labour within the school. Principals’ pedagogical expertise and its deployment is also considered.

4. Social relations within the school

In Bourdieu’s terms this is about the positioning of different agents, and power struggles between them. It also refers to the internalisation of social structures and the development of habitus. Relations between staff and students, and between teachers and managers are crucial. In general terms, the culture or ethos of the school is captured by these considerations. The nature of social relations would also emerge in considerations of discipline, of disturbances in the school, and levels of satisfaction of the working environment.

5. Management structures and strategies

These include organisational processes that ensure smooth running of the school. Crucial in relation to this in the South African context would be the management and protection of time for teaching and learning. It would also include the effective management and distribution of learning materials, as well as the appropriate recruitment and deployment of teachers in the school in different subject areas and the retention of teachers. In Bourdieu’s terms it addresses how “the game is structured and played in day to day ways” (Lingard et al: 88).

6. Relationships outside the field

This is a consideration of the school as a field in relation to other fields. Key relationships considered here are between the school and the education department, the school and parents, and the community and other interest groups. Lingard et al identify working across the boundaries of the school as a key leadership task. Finally, a crucial relationship to be considered is that between the principal and the school,
and the School Governing Body, which in South African policy is mandated to carry final responsibility for the governance of the school. In recent times, this has included responsibility for student results (Pandor, speech). Here we would consider the nature of the relationships, and the responsibilities carried by various actors. In terms of the education department and the policy field we would need to consider the school leadership’s mediation of policy and its implementation (for example curriculum reform; the IQMS), as well as the ability of the school to recruit and retain appropriate staff. In terms of the relation with the community, the focus would be on the identification and analysis of challenges, and the strategies to deal with these that have potential for optimising good schooling outcomes, both social and academic.

Although the project will seek to relate leadership to student outcomes over time, the focus is also on a conceptually coherent and useful description of how instruction and curriculum is actually managed in different schools. The foregoing provides the basis for the development of a conceptual framework for addressing the question how curriculum and instruction is managed in South African schools.

References


