

**PRIMARY SCHOOL SUBJECT LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES AND
PERCEIVED COMPETENCE ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work submitted here is the result of my own investigations and that all sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that the work is submitted for the first time at this university towards a Master's in Education degree and it has never been submitted to any other university for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

I hereby cede copyright of this product to the University of the Free State.

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MP MOEKETSANE

.....

DATE

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife, Melita Moeketsane, and my son and daughter, Mahlomola and Tlokotsi. I feel that I stole family time from them for my studies, but I am so grateful to them for their understanding in this. To my mother, Merriam Moeketsane, who used to give me moral support and always reminds me that, “hard work pays and perseverance always leads to a success”.

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- ❖ I am indebted to the heads of the subject departments (HODs) from all the sampled primary schools who agreed to participate in this research study. Each of you remain anonymous but, in raising your voices, you contributed to the improvement of the education profession through value-adding research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The interpretation of instructional leadership by stakeholders in the South African education sector influences the quality of teaching and learning, including in primary schools. From the literature, it can be seen that instructional leadership is treated as the ambit of principals alone. However, the critical role played by heads of departments (HODs) as subject leaders in instructional leadership also needs to be considered. Owing to the criticisms and prospects of other stakeholders in education regarding the application of instructional leadership by HODs and/or subject leaders, their role became more complex and was interpreted differently. This study explores the primary school HODs and subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence in instructional leadership in order to develop suggestions for the improvement of instructional leadership among HODs and subject leaders.

The key premise is that the instructional leadership practices of HODs and subject leaders are constructed from their knowledge, understanding and beliefs about what instructional leadership is and is not. Therefore, the study investigates the nature of instructional leadership in primary schools.

The study was quantitative in nature and followed a post-positivism paradigm. A descriptive research design with a stratified sampling method was applied, and 20 primary schools were selected to represent each of the five districts in the Free State Province. Data collected using a questionnaire that was sent to 231 HODs from the sampled schools in September 2016. The final sample included 205 teachers who lead subjects in primary schools and who responded to the survey. All the respondents possess a minimum teaching qualification and up to 20 years of experience.

The findings give empirical evidence that HODs and subject leaders perceive instructional leadership as the jurisdiction of all stakeholders involved in education and the distribution of instructional leadership roles among staff members is preferred. The study also revealed that monitoring and control of teachers' work is the main daily activity carried out as part of their roles, while other instructional leadership roles seem to be neglected. This provides empirical evidence that there is a need for the development of HODs and subject leaders in other features of instructional leadership as well as to increase the distribution of instructional leadership roles. It is

recommended that HODs and subject leaders be developed in the aspects of instructional leadership, and that their development be carried out through formal training offered by accredited higher education institutions (HEIs).

Key words: Instructional leadership, distributed leadership, heads of departments, subject leaders, perspectives, professional development.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
KBIL	Knowledge and Beliefs on Instructional Leadership
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
SL	Subject Leader
SLR	Subject Leader's Role
SM	Senior Manager
SMT	School Management Team
ST	Subject Teacher
SD	Standard Deviation
Std.	Standard
PC	Perceived Competence
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Committee
UFS	University of the Free State

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SECTION 1: ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Recent literature (Ghavifekr, Hoon, Ling & Ching, 2014; Rajoo, 2012) suggests that the position of the head of department (HOD) is often a neglected level of management, as most interventions and support programmes tend to target senior school management, particularly the principal. Furthermore, some researchers (e.g., Hallinger, 2009; Mugisha, 2013) argue that very little reference is made to teachers, departmental heads or even deputy principals as instructional leaders and there is often little or no discussion of instructional leadership as a distributed or shared function. This study targets this imbalance by focusing on HODs as the subject leaders. The researcher investigated the perceptions, beliefs and knowledge of HODs, who mostly serve as subject leaders and their perceived competencies in relation to instructional leadership.

Kruger (2003) describes instructional leadership as the principal's influence on classroom instruction and student learning, whereas Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2013) are of the opinion that instructional leadership refers to the way school cultures and structures are shaped. The variety of definitions of instructional leadership shows that it most likely involves diverse practices and implementation strategies. For this study, the concept of instructional leadership refers to a set of leadership activities that deliberately influence teaching and learning processes for improved results.

Detailed knowledge on instructional leadership is likely to encourage HODs. It provides an understanding of the various activities that need to be executed at the departmental level in order to maximise achievement of the school vision and mission (Evans, 2014). Busher and Harris (1999) confirm that knowledge of instructional leadership makes work easier as it provides a reliable authority to the teachers and impacts learner achievement.

However, the emerging central goal of uplifting the standard of education in schools depends largely on the leadership for teaching and learning or what is often referred to as instructional leadership (Jaca, 2013). Learner performance and the advancement of teachers' instructional practice have a significant impact on the general performance

of the school, and this signals the need to focus on the supporting role of HODs (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014). Learner performance seemingly deteriorates annually in South Africa, according to the recent reports of Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & McLeod Palane, 2017) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Reddy, Isdale, Juan, Visser, Winnaar & Arends, 2016). Thus, subject leaders' knowledge and their capacity to adequately support and mentor other teachers remain in question. The study therefore proposed to explore what the perspectives of HODs are on instructional leadership and to examine their leadership practices within the subject departments.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The research was partly prompted by a number of international and national reports, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Report (Davidson, 2012) and the Annual National Assessment (ANA) Diagnostic Report (DoE, 2012), that show a decline in learner performance, especially in specific primary school subjects such as mathematics and languages. Some observers see this decline as evidence that the standard of education is deteriorating and leading to a number of challenges faced by the system (Hanushek, Peterson & Woessmann, 2012). These challenges include, among others, teachers with insufficient knowledge of subject matter and an inability to meet the diverse needs of learners in the subjects they teach (Evans, 2014). Furthermore, it has been argued that HODs lack knowledge on how to provide sufficient support to the teachers and to manage their departments effectively (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2013; Fluckiger, Lovett, Dempster & Brown, 2015).

A report issued by the Centre for Development Enterprise (CDE) proposes that HODs and other instructional leaders need to be able to fulfil leadership roles and set school policies, procedures and practices that facilitate the effective delivery of the curriculum (Spaul, 2014). There appears to have been little or no uptake of suggestions on instructional leadership, thus the gap continues (Yasin et al., 2016). An important question is how to equip HODs and/or subject leaders fully with adequate strategies to execute instructional leadership roles effectively in their subject departments.

Perspectives of HODs and other subject leaders about their role as instructional leaders determine whether the school vision and mission will be attained (Tam, 2015). My experience in South African schools suggests that in primary schools, HODs are allocated according to their expertise. However, various departments within the same school are often managed differently. Some HODs appear to prefer to consult with the principals before making decisions for their subject departments, while others make decisions more independently. This may indicate differences in terms of the acquired skills and knowledge on instructional leadership. The gap in knowledge on instructional leadership may be a result of the initial perception that instructional leadership is the ambit of principals alone, as implied in previous research (e.g., Bas, 2012; Bush, 2013; Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010). This view results in disengagement by HODs and other subject leaders from instructional leadership and thus their isolation from the instructional leadership intervention programmes. Consequently, limited knowledge exists on what and how HODs contribute to the general instructional leadership functions of the schools. The present study therefore, sought to focus on the perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) and practices of HODs and other subject leaders on instructional leadership.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are many expectations placed on HODs and subject leaders in terms of departmental leadership. HODs are expected to execute all practices, as highlighted by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA, 1998) and the Revised Personnel Administrative Measures (DoE, 2016). Yet, the literature (e.g., Bipath et al., 2013) suggests that they do not have the required skills and competencies to fulfil their leadership role since they may not be adequately capacitated for the job. Jaca (2013), who suggests that HODs and subject leaders often “learn on the job” and rely on their own judgement to develop an understanding of the duties they have to perform, confirms the lack of skills and/or competence by HODs. As a result of this heavy reliance on their own knowledge, some individuals may learn more quickly while others struggle. Furthermore, HODs tend to work under pressure and often have insufficient time to complete their duties (Bambi, 2012). As a result, Fluckiger *et al.* (2015) suggest that there is a need for continuous capacity building for middle management leaders.

A deeper knowledge among HODs is important for the transformation of primary schools from underperforming to performing schools (Naicker *et al.*, 2013).

The literature is however largely silent about the programmes or procedures in place to strengthen the capacity of the appointed candidates and how this ought to be done. Scholars (Qualter & Wallis, 2012) point out that the promotion of teachers to an HOD position in South Africa appear to be more of a “reward” given to teachers for good performance in their duties and responsibilities rather than an acknowledgement of their competence to lead.

According to the Employment of Educators Act number 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998), when HOD posts are advertised, the requirements only focus on the Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 13 as the minimum teaching qualification and teaching experience of at least three years. No other evidence of specific preparation or pre-knowledge of instructional leadership is required of the interested candidates. Candidates’ knowledge may be tested during structured interviews conducted by the members of the interview panel. However, in reality most panel members are themselves unfamiliar with instructional leadership, including parents who may have little knowledge of the need for this kind of leadership. The pre-determined questions asked to test knowledge during interviews often do not examine or confirm the practicality of instructional leadership knowledge. According to Bambi (2012), the interview panel sometimes over-scores a candidate and personality factors may cloud the decision of the panel. In view of this problem, the study investigated and sought to gain a thorough understanding of the HODs and subject leaders’ perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) on instructional leadership and their perceptions of their competence in the application of instructional leadership practices in order to explain existing practices and be able to recommend improvements thereon.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study explored the perspectives of primary school HODs and subject leaders on instructional leadership and their perceived competence thereon. The following research questions posed:

1. What are the primary school subject leaders and/or HODs' perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) on instructional leadership?
2. What are the primary school subject leaders and/or HODs' perceptions of their competence with respect to instructional leadership activities in their day-to-day leadership roles?
3. How do primary school subject leaders' perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) of instructional leadership correlate with their perceived competencies?
4. What suggestions can be made to enhance the knowledge and practice of instructional leadership in primary schools?

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study aims to describe the perspectives of subject leaders and their perceived competence in instructional leadership. In order to realise this aim, the following objectives have been set:

- Describe the perspectives of the primary school subject leaders and HODs on instructional leadership.
- Analyse the perceived competence of subject leaders and HODs in key instructional leadership practices.
- Correlate subject leaders' perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) of instructional leadership with their perceived competencies.
- Develop suggestions for the improvement of instructional leadership among HODs in primary school.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Two recent studies by Bipath et al. (2013) and Jaca (2013) have been conducted in South Africa to examine the roles of HODs and subject leaders in relation to instructional leadership and what is happening in the classroom. The blind spots in research are evident in the issues of perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) and perceived competence in instructional leadership, and have only been partially addressed in these and other recent studies.

HODs and subject leaders' perspectives on instructional leadership have a direct impact on teachers within a subject department, and this affects learner performance (Barton, 2013). As a result, the concept of instructional leadership is crucial for teachers and learners, and a gap becomes apparent if it is not fully executed by all stakeholders. Considering the perspectives of affected stakeholders (e.g., HODs), some literature (Hallinger, 2009) asserts that very little reference is made to teachers, departmental heads or even deputy principals as instructional leaders and there is little or no discussion of instructional leadership as a distributed or shared function. The application of instructional leadership by HODs and subject leaders at the level of the subject department thus remain in question.

Therefore, this study examined the current implementation of instructional leadership practices by HODs and/or subject leaders in the primary schools. This may help to determine the current condition of instructional leadership among HODs as subject leaders by focusing on its implementation in primary schools, and then making recommendations for improvement.

This research is also significant to teachers, learners and policymakers within and outside the country as the findings may help in future education policymaking and planning. Most importantly, it may provide HODs with suggestions and methods of improving instructional leadership in their subject departments for the benefit of teaching practice and learner outcomes. Consequently, the study sought to offer recommendations on aspects of instructional leadership that need more attention. The study was helpful for the researcher in building personal capacity, gaining a better

understanding of instructional leadership as a practice at the level of the subject department to benefit the whole school, and in developing advanced research skills.

1.7 THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

There are numerous theories for dealing with instructional leadership, but they mostly focus on principals as instructional leaders in schools and not on teachers and/or HODs (Bas, 2012; Bush, 2013; Louis *et al.*, 2010; Mugisha, 2013). This leads to uncertainties over how to theorise leadership of other members of the school management team (SMT), such as the HODs (Hallinger, 2009).

Two key concepts underlie the conceptual framework for the present study: instructional leadership and distributed leadership. For this reason, the study explores the concept of instructional leadership in the context of the three dimensions of instructional leadership roles, as adopted and adapted from Ng, Nguyen, Wong and Choy (2015), and the duties of HODs, as highlighted in the legal document called the Revised Personnel Administrative Measures (DoE, 2016). These dimensions and duties are integrated and classified according to the instructional leadership roles of HODs. The successful implementation of these roles influences teaching practice and enhances learner performance. As a result, instructional leadership roles develop in accordance with the principles of distributed leadership to enhance the benefits of leadership in schools.

Distributed leadership is about the decentralisation of leadership activities to include formal and informal leaders in a school (Printy, 2010). The execution of distributed leadership within the subject department has benefits for the relationship between HODs and teachers. As a result, the interaction of teachers within the same subject department stimulates networking and mutual capacitation. This also benefits teaching practice and improves learner performance. The concepts of instructional leadership and distributed leadership are, therefore, central to the understanding and practice of subject leadership in schools, and thus they are relevant to this study.

Considering that it is often recommended that instructional leadership roles be executed through a distributed practice, Fluckiger *et al.* (2015) highlight the need to

introduce an organised programme designed to create opportunities to develop HODs and advance them with the relevant knowledge and skills. This may help them to integrate instructional and distributed leadership in their daily practices.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

The study explores the perspectives and perceived competence of primary school HODs and/or subject leaders on instructional leadership. The concept of perspectives and the competence of HODs and other subject leaders is rooted in the post-positivism paradigm, which is described by Creswell (2014) as the school of thought that challenges existing hypotheses to attach meaning to the absolute truth. The knowledge claims made according to this paradigm assert that we cannot always be completely certain of our claims, especially when studying human behaviour and actions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Researchers working under a post-positivism paradigm focus on searching for and establishing reliable evidence for the existence of phenomena (Johnsons & Christensen, 2014). In this case, reliable evidence is founded on the perspectives and perceived competence of HODs and subject leaders on instructional leadership. This is significant as the study intends to add value to the way instructional leadership is interpreted and implemented.

A quantitative research approach is applied in this study. Maree (2016) describes this approach as the systematic process of objective measurements and analysis of data collected from an identified population, which is performed numerically and statistically. A descriptive survey design assisted the researcher to examine perspectives (perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge) and competences on instructional leadership. A survey design also allowed access to a larger population of respondents (Mouton, 2015).

1.8.1 RESEARCH SAMPLE

For this study, the researcher employed a probability sampling method to select the research sites. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) indicate that, by using a probability sampling method, each element of the population has a possibility of being selected.

The probability sampling method was used to divide the population into a number of homogeneous, non-overlapping groups called strata (Maree, 2016).

Initially, the researcher planned to select 20 primary schools from each of the five education districts in the Free State Province of South Africa as the research sites. This would make up 100 schools. The researcher thus had a high number of target primary schools to focus on and included HODs of various subject departments to make up 200 subject leaders from 100 schools within the Free State Province. All education districts were considered as the natural subgroups and all districts were allocated equally. This method gave equal selection opportunity to all members of the population and provided fair representation for each district. Participating HODs fell under various districts, and these districts were regarded as the strata, while the HODs represented the population group in their particular districts. The number of HODs accommodated per sampled school depended on the size of the school. This sampling method allowed for a fair representation in each district since it was difficult for the study to reach all individual HODs within the province.

1.8.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection refers to the general way of gathering information about the particular topic or research question and the method of gathering data should always correspond to the type of data required (Mouton, 2015). The questionnaire, in conjunction with the Likert scale, was used to collect data. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) define a questionnaire as a pre-defined series of questions used to collect information from individuals. The questionnaire contained various options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, and the respondents selected answers that best suit them. The data collection instrument consisted of five interrelating sections with closed and open-ended questions. The first section of the questionnaire covered biographical information including gender, age and experience as well as the location of the school. The second section collected information about the beliefs and current knowledge of subject leaders on instructional leadership. The third section focused on perceived competence on instructional leadership activities in their daily practices. The fourth section probed the way participants perceive their role as instructional leaders. Lastly,

respondents were asked to recommend ways of advancing instructional leadership in primary schools.

Group administration of a questionnaire and the distribution of the survey by email were used to collect data from the sampled group. During group administration of a questionnaire, respondents were brought together at the same place and time to complete the questionnaire while the researcher waited for the whole group to finish. The advantage of this strategy for the present study is that it saved time and the researcher had the opportunity to explain issues of concern to respondents (Maree, 2016). During the mass group administration of the questionnaire, the respondents were informed of what the study requires of them before they started answering the questions. For the email surveys, the questionnaires were sent to respondents with instructions on how to fill them in. After completing the questionnaire, respondents returned them by email. This method was also advantageous for the present study because respondents got a chance to consult their personal records where necessary to confirm their answers and it was an inexpensive method (Mouton, 2015).

1.8.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis and interpretation of the data are important for the transformation of information into credible evidence for the purpose of problem-solving (Creswell, 2014). The study dealt with a large number of respondents and the frequency, mean ranks and percentages were calculated as part of the data analysis. The computer program called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 24) used to resolve and analyse complex data and to avoid bias. After the collection of data, the information was analysed through descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics is a collective name for statistical methods that are used to organise and summarise data in a meaningful way (Johnsons & Christensen, 2014). Data gathered through the questionnaire presented graphically for easier interpretation. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) describe various ways of presenting quantitative data graphically, and the present study used frequency tables to present data, as they are simple to interpret. In the frequency table, the categorical, nominal and ordinal data were summarised and shows how often a particular variable occurs in a set of data.

1.8.4 ETHICAL ASPECTS

The research conducted in line with applicable research ethics. Permission to conduct the study was firstly sought from the University of the Free State (UFS) and the Provincial Department of Education (DoE) which administers the targeted primary schools. Permission to conduct the study was also requested from the respondents and schools sampled.

All documents used for communication during the study were written in clear and understandable language, and discrimination of any kind was avoided. Respondents were informed about the research goals and that they were free to choose whether to participate in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). They were notified of their right to withdraw from participation at any time if they so wished. The confidentiality of respondents' information and their schools was respected, and they remained anonymous throughout the study to protect their identities. After the collection of data, the information was saved on a computer and the files locked by means of a password to ensure confidentiality.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS

With regard to delimitations, firstly, the study focuses only on the permanent HODs and/or subject leaders in order to gather the most relevant results. The researcher was aware that certain HODs might be in an acting position during the course of the study. As they were not permanently appointed to this position, they might have insufficient experience and/or interest in this field and were, therefore, excluded from the study.

Secondly, the research only examined the position of HODs at the primary school level, and no other SMT positions were considered, such as those of the deputies and principals. Principals and deputies are not directly involved in the leadership of subjects at the level of the subject department, as per their job description, and they mostly receive reports from HODs about the delegation of work in their subject departments. Where the deputy or principal is involved in departmental meetings, they only serve in their role as teachers if they are assigned certain subjects to teach, and thus do not often lead in such cases.

Lastly, the study does not focus on secondary schools or intermediate schools that offer grade 8 to 12. Those grades are excluded, and the focus is only on the primary school grades (i.e. grade 1 to 7).

1.10 LIMITATIONS

About 200 HODs and subject leaders from 100 primary schools in one province of South Africa (the Free State) are included in the study, and the findings are, therefore, limited to the perceptions of those HODs and subject leaders who participated. The findings might not accurately reflect the opinions of other HODs and may not necessarily be generalised to the entire population of HODs in the province or the country as a whole. However, commonalities between individuals in the sample and individuals not included in the sample may exist, but this cannot be assumed without question.

Respondents in the study represent various demographic groups in terms of gender, age, qualifications, experience and location, among other factors. The researcher is aware that respondents might claim to have knowledge that they do not actually have, and/or which they do not apply in their subject departments. In light of this, all responses were examined with care.

1.11 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

i. Subject leader

Subject leaders are experienced teachers with important skills, who are assigned responsibility to lead subjects within subject departments. Owing to their expertise, subject leaders are allocated authority over teaching and learning of school subjects in their subject departments (Turner, 2003).

ii. Head of Department

Heads of departments are the teachers with the leadership expertise, who are responsible for the effective functioning of subject department by organising relevant curricular activities as to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and education of learners is prompted in a proper manner (RSA, 2016).

iii. Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is the leaders' influence to the classroom instruction and student learning through coherent management of school goals, curriculum, instructional practices, resources, assessments, professional development and the learning climate. Effective instructional leadership ensures that educational programmes make a desired impact (i.e. enhanced teaching and learning).

iv. Professional development

Professional development is an organised programme designed to create opportunities for HODs to advance themselves by providing the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their capacity and to enhance their pedagogical leadership.

1.12 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION SECTIONS

This is an article-based dissertation that presents two related publishable articles instead of the traditional chapters. The titles of articles are as follow:

- (i) Correlates of South African subject leaders' perspectives and their perceived competencies on instructional leadership

- (ii) Mapping instructional leadership practices and perspectives of primary school HODs in South Africa

Notes:

- 1 Each article is presented in a format that is required by the specific journal for publication purposes.

- 2 The titles and sequence of the articles as captured in the CTR were modified after data collection and analysis, as stated above.

1.13 SUMMARY

This introductory section has given an overview and background to the study. It described the fundamental basis of the study and referred briefly to the literature that provides a context for the study. The rationale and significance of the study were highlighted. The conceptual framework that guides the overall study was briefly explained. The knowledge gap has been identified through a consideration of recent literature that will be discussed separately in each article developed in section two of this report.

The problem statement was formulated in a way that highlights the need to record the perspectives of HODs and/or subject leaders on instructional leadership and their perceived competence in the application of instructional leadership practices.

To address the identified problem, certain aims and objectives have been set. A short overview of the methodology is also given as well as the delimitations that set the boundaries of the study and the limitations of the study. Finally, definitions of the operational terms and concepts informing the study were given as well as the report layout and titles of the two article with a brief summary of their focus.

SECTION 2: PRESENTATION OF THE TWO RESEARCH ARTICLES

The key findings of the study are reported through the two articles named below:

- ❖ CORRELATES OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUBJECT LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES AND THEIR PERCEIVED COMPETENCIES ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

- ❖ MAPPING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HODs IN SOUTH AFRICA

ARTICLE 1: Correlates of South African subject leaders' perspectives and their perceived competencies on instructional leadership

CORRELATES OF SOUTH AFRICAN SUBJECT LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES AND THEIR PERCEIVED COMPETENCIES ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Too often, instructional leadership is perceived as an area of competence for principals alone, and not subject leaders. However, increasingly, the critical role played by subject leaders is being acknowledged. The key premise is that the instructional leadership practices of subject leaders are constructed from their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions about what instructional leadership is and/or is not. This study, therefore, investigated the perspectives of subject leaders and their perceived competence in instructional leadership as a basis for its correlation.

Two hundred and five (205) subject leaders from a stratified sample of 100 primary schools across the five education districts of the Free State province in South Africa were surveyed on their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of instructional leadership, which was compared with their perceived competence.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients and regression. The results revealed that beliefs about instructional leadership correlate negatively with perceived competencies and have no impact. On the other hand, knowledge and perceptions showed significant correlation and are considered as the predictors of subject leaders' competencies. The findings on regressions demonstrate that perceptions have a high impact on perceived competence. However, the paper recommends a deliberate intervention, focusing on subject leaders' perceptions of instructional leadership to promote a more distributed practice.

Keywords: instructional leadership; distributed leadership; perspectives; heads of departments; subject leaders; South Africa

Introduction

The emerging central goal of uplifting the standard of education in schools depends largely on the leadership for learning and teaching, or what is often referred to as instructional leadership (Jaca, 2013; Louis, Drezke & Wahlstrom, 2010). Under the umbrella of instructional leadership, there is subject leadership, which is referred to as a combination of authority, power, initiative and suitable professional action to enhance teaching and learning (Field, 2002). Experienced teachers are assigned responsibility to lead subjects within subject departments and they are referred to as subject leaders.

As part of the school management team, subject leaders serve as the key source of support for learners and subject teachers when it comes to addressing problems related to learning and teaching in the classroom (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014). It is expected of them to have sufficient knowledge to lead subject departments effectively. Being subject leaders, they may have responsibilities towards the whole school as their role impacts on the activities concerning schooling, i.e., teaching and learning (DoE, 2016). Thus, it is important to look into what role the subject leaders perform in relation to instructional leadership.

Among other roles, subject leaders are expected to monitor teachers' work and give feedback as "facilitative leaders" (Lashway, 2002). Monitoring and giving feedback on teaching and learning are variables that characterise instructional leadership and have a significant impact on the teachers' practice and learners' performance respectively (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014). As instructional leaders, subject leaders spend time observing and helping teachers to improve performance (Bambi, 2012). They are also expected to encourage communication among subject teachers whereby they discuss their work-related problems and thus prevent isolation (Blasé & Blasé, 2004).

In consideration of the crucial roles that subject leaders perform, some studies (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2013; Rajoo, 2012) suggest that the position of the heads of department, as subject leaders, is a neglected level of management, because most interventions and support programmes tend to target school senior management, particularly the principal. Some scholars (Hallinger, 2009; Printy, 2010) claim that very little reference is made to teachers, departmental heads or even deputy principals as

instructional leaders and there is often little or no discussion of instructional leadership as a distributed or shared function. Therefore, other stakeholders in the school management team, including subject leaders, are uncertain about their contribution to the general instructional leadership of the whole school. This notion also disengages subject leaders from instructional leadership and promotes isolation in terms of instructional leadership intervention programmes. Thus, there is a gap in the application of instructional leadership in schools (Davidson, 2012).

Owing to the existing gap in the literature, some scholars (Fluckiger, Lovett, Dempster & Brown, 2015; Hallinger, 2009) argue that subject leaders have a lack of instructional leadership knowledge and there are very few, if any, capacity-building programmes in place to develop them. Knowledge of instructional leadership provides an understanding of the activities that need to be executed at the departmental level to maximise achievement of the school vision and mission, which consequently gives confidence to the subject leaders. Evans (2014) confirms that knowledge of instructional leadership makes work easier as it provides a reliable authority to the teachers and impacts learner results. Furthermore, beliefs about instructional leadership can have an impact on some leadership behaviours (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin & Jackson, 2008). Therefore, the way instructional leadership is applied in the subject department is prompted by the beliefs of subject leaders on what instructional leadership is and/or is not. The beliefs about instructional leadership also influence the perceptions of subject leaders, which, in turn, serve as a guide to their behaviour and influence the working climate of the subject department (Smith, Mestry & Bambi, 2013). The literature is silent or says very little about correlating the perspectives of subject leaders with their perceived competence in instructional leadership, as it is the main issue that influences the execution of subject leaders' roles. For these reasons, this paper seeks to uncover such correlations by answering the following questions:

- What are the subject leaders' beliefs, perceptions and knowledge of instructional leadership?
- How do subject leaders' perspectives (knowledge, beliefs and perceptions) of instructional leadership correlate with their perceived competencies?

- To what extent do subject leaders' knowledge, beliefs and perceptions of instructional leadership predict their perceived competencies?

These questions were created with acknowledgement that subject leaders' perspectives inform their perceived competence. Firstly, however, it is important to recognise the perspectives that subject leaders have regarding the execution of instructional leadership practices in schools. From there, determining the level of correlation between perspectives and perceived competence may follow.

The paper presents the detailed discussion of perspectives, competence and correlations between the two concepts as theoretical ideas that underpin the study. This is followed by the research design outlining how the study was executed and empirical findings based on the respondents' feedback. A discussion of the results is presented with recommendations.

Subject leaders' perspectives on instructional leadership

Leadership in schools is organised according to subject departments. The departments function as sectors that frame teachers' professional experiences in an important way (de Lima, 2008). The leadership of every subject department rests upon the shoulders of the subject leader. For this reason, the core purpose of subject leadership is to provide professional leadership and management for subjects to secure high-quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of teaching, learning and achievement for the students (Fletcher & Bell, 1999). The role of subject leaders has received increasing attention as it determines the purpose of schooling.

In the context of the global economy, the success of the nation depends largely on the fundamental knowledge, competencies and skills of its people (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Thorpe & Tran, 2015). To ensure competence in subject leadership, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in the UK set out requirements and a number of expectations for subject leaders. The key areas of knowledge for subject leaders are classified into four categories, namely, teaching and learning; strategic direction and development of the subject; effective deployment of staff and resources and leading and managing

staff (TTA, 1998). These categories fall under the umbrella of instructional leadership and subject leaders' roles revolve around these knowledge areas. The instructional leadership practices of the subject leaders are determined by the level of knowledge they have (Evans, 2014).

In the South African context, some literature points out that there is a decline in learner performance as they have not mastered the knowledge and skills appropriate to their grades (Davidson, 2012). The knowledge of instructional leadership that subject leaders possess should be considered in how they execute their roles. Although the literature is not vocal enough about the relationship between instructional leadership knowledge possessed by subject leaders and their competence in its application, it is important to note that the existing body of knowledge influences the beliefs of individuals.

In a study that investigated the beliefs of teachers on instructional leadership, Tam (2015) found that belief is a state of mind whereby individuals view something to be a reality, based on the knowledge possessed. As the beliefs serve as a "filter" that sifts possibilities, there is a remarkable interaction between subject leaders' self-efficacy beliefs and execution of their instructional leadership roles (Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi & Kouhsari, 2017). Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to the leadership of subject departments in two important ways, namely, resolution in the case of problems and consolidation of efforts towards a particular action (Paglis, 2010). Both are vital behaviours for subject leaders. In the case of problems within the subject department, effective subject leaders apply their own measures based on their efficacy beliefs about how to resolve such problems.

On the other hand, sharing positive beliefs with the teachers about the improvement of teaching practice and the learning process can unfold the strategies for the application of instructional leadership within the subject department. Negative beliefs about an instructional leadership role lead subject leaders to avoid satisfying or to ignore the requirements of their roles, as described by the TTA (1998). They may be more interested in satisfying certain roles if it agrees with their personal interests. Therefore, subject leaders' beliefs originate from what they know and their beliefs predict their perceptions about instructional leadership.

Other studies have been conducted to explore perceptions about the instructional leadership roles of subject leaders (Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough & Johnson, 1999; Smith et al., 2013). These studies reveal that senior managers perceive the role of subject leaders as less innovative, and that subject leaders lack the skills to run their subject departments. In contrast, the subject teachers perceive subject leaders as a source of information for improving learning, teaching and job performance (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014).

Although stakeholders in schools differ in terms of perceptions regarding the instructional leadership roles of subject leaders, it is important to note that the contextualisation of instructional leadership in subject departments is determined by the perceptions of the immediate subject leaders (de Lima, 2008). The subject leaders' perceptions hold a power to influence the climate of the subject department either positively or negatively, depending on how subject leaders perceive instructional leadership (Allen, Grigsby & Peters 2015). As a result, positive perceptions can improve competence, while negative ones decrease competence and impact on learning and teaching.

Perceived competence in instructional leadership

Some authors (Ng, Nguyen, Wong & Choy, 2015) maintain that to compete on the international knowledge market, it is important for countries to fulfil the increasing demand for highly skilled and competent workers. Therefore, the leadership competence of subject leaders in schools is important for the attainment of effective learning and teaching outcomes. The level of competence in instructional leadership is probably dependent on the degree of leadership content knowledge, and the beliefs and perceptions of subject leaders. The literature makes the claim that the role of subject leaders as instructional leaders is negatively influenced by contextual factors, such as the overall school policy, the lack of support when appraising teachers and the school's financial position which limits the availability of resources for each subject (Fletcher & Bell, 1999). These claims affect the instructional leadership practices of subject leaders and lead to them being perceived as incompetent (Santamaria, 2014).

In the South African context, where the competence of subject leaders is still lacking (Bipath et al., 2013; Davidson, 2012), performance standards have been introduced in the form of an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) to address the level of competencies possessed by employees within schools (DBE, 2009). As for the subject leaders, three performance standards have been introduced in addition to those of subject teachers and these focus on the administration of resources, personnel as well as decision making and accountability. Evaluating subject leaders' competencies using this model does not seem to be producing valid results as it is conducted within the school and no external stakeholders are involved in monitoring the effectiveness of its implementation. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the level of perceived competence of subject leaders in instructional leadership against their perspectives and to study the relationship between the two features.

The relationship between subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence needs to be specified as it has a direct impact on the performance of students and subject teachers, and on the entire school context (Finley, 2014). In this regard, individuals' competence in instructional leadership is grounded in their perspectives. It is likely that subject leaders with sufficient knowledge, positive beliefs and perceptions about instructional leadership perform better in their subject departments, and that can lead to their executing leadership roles with confidence. They can make sound decisions for their subject departments to the benefit of learners and teachers. Glover et al. (1999) argue that their competence can be seen in the outcomes. Nevertheless, instructional leadership competence, as perceived by subject leaders, may determine the impact of perspectives in its application.

As for subject leaders with negative viewpoints towards instructional leadership, they tend to neglect some of their instructional leadership roles, and their subject departments are inclined to show poor learner performance (Fluckiger et al., 2015). The Annual National Assessment indicates a deterioration in learner performance in the primary schools (Davidson, 2012). The cause of this decline might be the influence of subject leaders' perspectives towards instructional leadership. This decline raises the question as to whether there is a correlation between subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence in instructional leadership. This paper investigates these issues.

Method

Correlations between subject leaders' perspectives and their perceived competence in instructional leadership are explored as a basis for understanding their practices. A quantitative method using a survey was chosen for the research in primary schools in the Free State province of South Africa. A questionnaire was appropriate for this study because it can reach a significant number of people in a relatively short period of time and at a lower cost (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The questionnaire contained interrelated sections and closed-ended questions with a set of responses from which the respondents chose one answer (Maree, 2016). A five-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used, and the respondents selected answers that best suited their views. This made it easier for the respondents to complete the questionnaire (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The first section of the questionnaire gathered biographical information about respondents, while the second section collected information about the current knowledge and beliefs of the respondents on instructional leadership. The third section probed the way respondents perceive their role as instructional leaders, and the fourth section focused on their perceived competence in their daily practices and instructional leadership roles. The questionnaire was designed in this way to make it easy to complete and analyse (Creswell, 2014).

The instrument was adapted from questionnaires by other scholars (Rajoo, 2012) and criterion validity was used as it permitted modification of an existing instrument to help in answering the research questions (Mouton, 2015). The questionnaire was then tested in a pilot study to confirm that it was of a good standard and to verify whether it was able to elicit the required data (Mhlanga & Ncube, 2003).

The split-halves reliability test was used as it allowed the instrument to be divided into two separate sections of items and scores that can be associated by means of a correlation coefficient (Maree, 2016). The reliability of the instrument was tested for sub-items, namely, perspectives (Cronbach alpha = 0.755) and perceived competence (Cronbach alpha = 0.784). An overall results show a Cronbach's alpha of

0.749, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for the scale used for the survey data according to the benchmark provided by De Vellis (2003).

The study targeted only permanently employed subject leaders in the primary schools. The reason being subject leaders in acting positions might have little knowledge and understanding of their role, and they may not be able to identify all the challenges surrounding the position, which is the main concern of the paper. Verification of the respondents' position in the school was done with the principals of the sampled schools before the process of collecting data commenced.

Permission to conduct this research was sought from the Department of Education (DoE) which oversees all the schools, from the University of the Free State, from the sampled schools and from the participants. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of human rights, honesty, fairness, respect for individuals' reputation and confidentiality of collected information to ensure the respondents are not exposed to any risk by taking part in this study (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

A descriptive research design with a stratified sampling method was applied, and 20 primary schools were selected to represent each of the five districts in the Free State province. A total of 100 schools were sampled from farm areas, semi-rural areas, townships and towns. Participants were considered from all primary school phases (foundation, intermediate and senior phase). This helped the researcher gather information on the perspectives of subject leaders from various school contexts and phases. In some schools, one subject leader was responsible for all school subjects, while in other schools work was distributed equally among available subject leaders. What was common among the schools was that all subject leaders shared the same job description and were expected to perform the same instructional leadership roles.

The total number of subject leaders in all the sampled schools was 231 and the researcher personally distributed questionnaires to all participants in the sampled schools. Most of the completed questionnaires were handed back to the researcher while others were returned by email. The total number of returned surveys was 205, and that total (N = 205) was used to represent the entire population of the study.

Data analysis

As the study deals with a large number of respondents, after the collection of data, the information was analysed using descriptive statistics. The frequency, mean ranks and percentages were considered to describe the perspectives of the respondents on instructional leadership and their perceived competence. Correlation analysis were also done to explore the relationship between subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence using the Pearson Correlation coefficient.

Findings

This paper explored the relationship between subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence in instructional leadership. Knowledge, beliefs and perceptions about instructional leadership were investigated as the main perspectives and correlated with the perceived competence in instructional leadership, as previously discussed. The study assumes that subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence will be highly correlated. However, the null hypothesis is that there will be no or low correlations between perspectives and perceived competence in instructional leadership. The research findings for each perspective are given in the table below.

Table 1: Perspectives on instructional leadership

Knowledge of instructional leadership (N = 205)		
Sub-scales	M	SD
Making plans and implementing them	4.20	0.770
Initiating a teacher support programme	4.20	0.785
Spending more time in the teaching role	4.36	0.831
Systematic organisation of teaching and assessment of learners	4.31	0.781
Effective monitoring of the curriculum	4.30	0.781
Collaborative decision making	4.33	0.774
Reporting progress to senior management	4.36	0.758

Representing the school	3.95	0.800
Overall knowledge of instructional leadership	4.25	0.808
Beliefs about instructional leadership (N = 205)		
Sub-scales	M	SD
School leadership as the responsibility of the principal alone	1.86	0.823
Requesting help from senior managers ensures more effective decision making	4.15	0.746
Learner achievement is likely to improve if subject leaders are knowledgeable on instructional leadership	4.33	0.879
Overall beliefs about instructional leadership	3.44	0.266
Perceptions about instructional leadership (N = 205)		
Sub-scales	M	SD
Instructional leadership as focused on effective management of the curriculum	4.59	0.625
Addressing problems related to teaching and learning diversity	4.31	0.773
Significance of knowledge of instructional leadership as relevant to change management	3.85	0.626
Overall perceptions about instructional leadership	4.25	0.540

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = uncertain; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Knowledge of instructional leadership

Table 1 above presents the sub-scales used to explore knowledge of instructional leadership according to the highest mean scores: spending more time in the teaching role (M = 4.36, SD = 0.831) and reporting progress to senior management (M = 4.36, SD = 0.758) reported high. Collaborative decision making (M = 4.33, SD = 0.774), systematic organisation of teaching and assessment of learners (M = 4.31, SD = 0.781) as well as effective monitoring of the curriculum (M = 4.30, SD = 0.781) followed.

Making plans as well as implementing them and initiating a teacher support programme are next, with the mean scores (M = 4.20) and standard deviation (SD) of 0.770 and 0.785 respectively. The least reported sub-scale is representing the school to external stakeholders (M = 3.95, SD = 0.800). The overall mean score for knowledge

of instructional leadership ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.808$) demonstrates an assurance of responses. Generally, responses on overall knowledge of instructional leadership indicate that respondents report sufficient knowledge of instructional leadership.

Beliefs about instructional leadership

The beliefs of subject leaders about instructional leadership were investigated using three different sub-scales from the highest mean score, namely, learner achievement, which is likely to improve if subject leaders are knowledgeable on instructional leadership ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.879$). This is followed by the sub-scale indicating that requesting help from senior managers ensures more effective decision making ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.746$).

Although the least-reported sub-scale was that instructional leadership is believed to be the responsibility of the principal alone ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.823$), the SD value for the sub-scale was significantly high and this indicates a positive reply. The overall beliefs of respondents about instructional leadership accumulate a higher mean score ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.266$), which shows a dependability in responses. In summary, the overall SD is lower and it indicates that beliefs contribute negatively to the subject leaders' competencies.

Perceptions about instructional leadership

As seen in Table 1 above, the perceptions of subject leaders about instructional leadership were explored using three sub-scales, and the outcomes are presented here from the highest mean score to the lowest. Instructional leadership as focused on effective management of the curriculum received the highest mean score ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.625$), and instructional leadership as addressing problems related to teaching and learning diversity followed ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.773$). Although the significance of knowledge of instructional leadership as relevant to change management was ranked the lowest ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.626$), the overall perception of respondents about instructional leadership was very high ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.540$). This also indicates that perceptions have a high impact on competencies in instructional leadership.

Perceived competence in instructional leadership

The way subject leaders perceive their competence in instructional leadership was explored in terms of six different aspects, as demonstrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Perceived competence in instructional leadership (N = 205)

Sub-scales	M	SD
Improving learner performance	3.89	0.881
Unlocking career opportunities for teachers	3.66	0.970
Distributing instructional leadership roles through delegation	4.00	0.810
Organising capacity-building programmes	3.49	1.083
Effectively managing time	3.98	0.819
Minimising disruptions during learner contact time	4.09	0.818
Overall perceived competence	3.85	0.784

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = uncertain; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Table 2 above highlights the competencies of instructional leadership as perceived by the subject leaders. Minimising disruptions during learner contact time (M = 4.09, SD = 0.818) was rated very high, and is followed by distributing instructional leadership roles through delegation (M = 4.00, SD = 0.810). Effective time management (M = 3.98, SD = 0.819), and improving learner performance (M = 3.89, SD = 0.881) were also reported often. Unlocking career opportunities for teachers (M = 3.66, SD = 0.970), and organising capacity-building programmes (M = 3.49, SD = 1.083) were the least-often reported sub-scales. For perceived competence in instructional leadership, the accumulated mean score was 3.851, with a standard deviation of 0.784. This demonstrates that the results are reliable.

Correlations between perspectives and perceived competence in instructional leadership

It is important to verify the claims of the respondents about their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions regarding instructional leadership by relating them to their perceived competence. As the study also sought to explore the relationship between subject leaders' perspectives (knowledge, beliefs and perceptions) of instructional leadership

and their perceived competencies, correlation coefficients were calculated. Table 3 below presents the findings.

Table 3: Correlation analysis between perceived competence and subject leaders' perspectives (N = 205)

		Perceived competence	Knowledge of instructional leadership	Beliefs about instructional leadership	Perceptions about instructional leadership
Perceived competence	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**	.107	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.128	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 3 above, the correlations were significant and positive between perceived competence of instructional leadership and subject leaders' knowledge of instructional leadership ($r = .586$, $p = .000$) as well as perceptions about instructional leadership ($r = .734$, $p = .000$) at the significance level of 0.01 respectively. However, the correlation between subject leaders' beliefs about instructional leadership ($r = .107$, $p = .128$) and perceived competence was found to be insignificant. This seems to indicate that beliefs about instructional leadership have nothing to do with perceived competence. As a result, beliefs are considered an inappropriate predictor of subject leaders' competencies in instructional leadership.

Regression analysis was performed to include only the two perspectives (knowledge and perceptions) and to explore to what extent the subject leaders' knowledge and perceptions of instructional leadership predict their perceived competencies. The outcome of the analysis is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Summary of regression analysis of subject leaders' perspectives (knowledge and perceptions) on instructional leadership

Sub-scale	Coefficients			F-test	
	Unstandardised	Standardised	Sig.	F	Sig.
(Constant)	0.605		0.28	137.401	.000
Knowledge	.289	.240	.000		
Perceptions	.759	.595	.000		

Significant at $P < 0.01$; Multiple $R = 0.759$, $R^2 = 0.576$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.572$

As shown in Table 4 above, an approximate average of the difference between perceived competencies and perspectives about instructional leadership is explained by the variations in the knowledge and perceptions about instructional leadership. The F-test ($F = 137.401$, $p < 0.01$) related independent variables (knowledge and perceptions) and show that they were significant, indicating that perspectives (knowledge and perceptions) inform perceived competence, which is the dependent variable. In agreement with the standardised coefficients, the regression is specified by:

$$\text{Perceived Competence} = 0.605 + 0.289 \text{ Knowledge} + 0.759 \text{ Perceptions.}$$

This indicates that perceptions appear to be a stronger predictor of subject leaders' competencies when compared to knowledge of instructional leadership. Although knowledge and perceptions are both predictors of subject leaders' competence, the study has shown that the impact of perceptions is more prominent in subject leaders' competencies in instructional leadership.

Discussion

The study sought to investigate subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence and correlate these with instructional leadership. Generalisations in this paper are limited to the subject leaders who participated in the study and not necessarily to the entire population. The National Standards for Subject Leaders (TTA, 1998) emphasise that subject leaders' responsibilities demand that they be knowledgeable of various subjects' content and that they lead the teachers who teach these subjects effectively.

The results of this study show that the subject leaders are knowledgeable in terms of planning for their subject departments, supporting teachers, systematically organising teaching and learning activities, imparting teamship and reporting progress to senior managers, as required by the National Standards for Subject Leaders (TTA, 1998), with an overall mean score of 4.25. Therefore, there is an assumption that they understand their role, as specified in the Personnel Administrative Measures (DoE, 2016). This outcome does not align with the specific view of Fluckiger et al. (2015) that middle leaders have insufficient knowledge of instructional leadership.

The results show that subject leaders' beliefs have an insignificant impact on perceived competence in instructional leadership. However, other results of this research indicate that subject leaders do not ascribe to the belief that the school leadership only focuses on the principal as the head of the institution, as suggested by some scholars (Bas, 2012; Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Louis et al., 2010; Yasin et al., 2016). Therefore, it is believed that instructional leadership is the jurisdiction of all stakeholders in schools regardless of their position.

It is also important to note that subject leaders believe in consulting with senior managers for effective decisions within their subject departments. This verifies that subject leaders are not fully independent in the implementation of instructional leadership roles, as highlighted by Bipath et al., (2013). However, their subject departments run according to the wishes of their seniors. The reason might be that there are certain challenges that obstruct them from executing their professional role in a meaningful way. This also supports other literature (Hallinger, 2009) which indicates that middle leaders are not given a chance to "run with the ball" for the benefit of learning and teaching.

From the outcomes of this study, it is apparent that the subject leaders perceive instructional leadership as focusing on the management of the curriculum in the school to benefit learning and teaching. This supports some literature (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Hairon, Goh & Chua, 2015) indicating that subject leaders make a great contribution to the general instructional leadership of the whole school. For that reason, any progress in instructional leadership at the level of the subject department affects the reputation of the school. Furthermore, respondents perceive instructional leadership as a useful tool to address the problem of learning and teaching diversity in the school. On the other hand, instructional leadership is perceived as significant to facilitating the implementation of changes to the curriculum.

The study investigated which perspectives are more powerful in influencing subject leaders' competencies. The purpose was to distinguish whether there is a constant relationship between different perspectives and if they contribute at the same level to the subject leaders' competencies. However, a correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between perspectives in instructional leadership and perceived competence. The results also show that not all perspectives contribute to

competencies in instructional leadership, but the beliefs contribute negatively towards competencies, while the knowledge and perceptions contribute positively. Therefore, the competencies of subject leaders can be determined by knowledge and perceptions. This denotes that, when trying to influence perceived competencies in instructional leadership positively, knowledge and perceptions should be considered.

The results from the regression analysis also confirm that subject leaders' perceptions about instructional leadership contribute the most to perceived competence, compared to subject leaders' knowledge of instructional leadership. This study establishes that perceptions have more power to influence subject leaders' perceived competence of instructional leadership. This is in line with another study (de Lima, 2008) which indicates that perceptions hold the power to determine the contextualisation of instructional leadership in subject departments. However, it is recommended that perceptions be considered more than knowledge as an influencer of competencies in instructional leadership.

Implications

This study presents several recommendations for instructional leadership in South African primary schools. Although the concept of instructional leadership has been associated with senior managers for a very long time, the results of this study offer evidence that all stakeholders at schools contribute to the general instructional leadership of the school, and subject leaders have sufficient knowledge to execute their instructional leadership roles in their subject departments. Therefore, this study firstly recommends that subject leaders be given a chance to apply their knowledge in practice and lead their subject departments as they see fit for improved learning and teaching. This does not necessarily mean that senior managers would have no say or not give advice, but they would show trust in subject leaders while holding them accountable for their responsibilities.

Secondly, subject leaders form part of the school management team, and they are engaged in managing and leading subject departments. It is thus recommended that they are fully included in the programmes related to instructional leadership to improve the quality of instructional leadership in schools, including when the senior managers are not there. This prepares them to become expert senior managers in future. Consequently, it is noted from the outcomes of this study that subject leaders

are not independent in executing some instructional leadership roles. However, the study recommends a comprehensive intervention designed to support subject leaders in the aspects of instructional leadership to promote a more distributed practice. In addition, interventions may focus on subject leaders' knowledge and perceptions about instructional leadership as it directly affects their competencies.

Conclusion

Instructional leadership has a significant potential to influence teaching practice and learning outcomes and its usefulness within the subject departments depends on the subject leaders' perspectives. The concept of instructional leadership has been associated with senior managers alone for a very long time, and it will take time for subject leaders to assume the full responsibility of instructional leadership that should be assigned to them.

This study identified perspectives influencing the role of subject leaders in executing instructional leadership and correlates them with their perceived competence. The outcomes confirm that certain perspectives can influence the competency of subject leaders in instructional leadership. However, not all perspectives have a direct influence on the subject leaders' competency. The results of this study indicate that, among various perspectives influencing perceived competence in instructional leadership, they do not have the same power to influence subject leaders' competence in instructional leadership. This research also confirmed that perceptions play a major role in determining competencies in instructional leadership compared to knowledge of instructional leadership. Nevertheless, perceptions can serve as an area of focus to improve the competencies of subject leaders in instructional leadership.

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ARTICLE 2: Mapping instructional leadership practices and perspectives of primary school HODs in South Africa

MAPPING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HODS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Concerns have been raised over the instructional leadership roles of heads of departments (HODs) in South African primary schools. These concerns originate mainly from research that suggests that primary school learners have not achieved to the expected levels and that the causes of this poor performance may be related to the way instructional leadership roles are executed by HODs, among other reasons. Prompted by the diverse challenges of implementing instructional leadership in primary schools, and the raging scholarly debates thereon, this paper presents findings on the dominant instructional leadership practices and the perspectives of primary school HODs in South Africa.

The study surveyed 205 HODs from a stratified sample of 100 primary schools across the five education districts of the Free State province in South Africa. The major findings suggest that “monitoring” and “control” are the most dominant practices of instructional leadership for the sample of HODs, almost to the exclusion of other forms of instructional guidance provision. Even though the majority of respondents perceive their instructional leadership practices as effectively executed in their subject departments, it is evident that they only apply a few practices and, likely, these are the ones with which they are most comfortable. Furthermore, the practices of defining the school mission and promoting the school learning climate are proposed as the main areas in need of professional development for the respondents. The paper thus recommends for an urgent intervention in the form of accredited professional development, designed to empower this group of primary school leaders in the country on effective distributed and instructional leadership practices.

Keywords: Heads of departments, HODs’ practices, HODs’ perspectives, instructional leadership, distributed leadership, professional development.

Introduction

For effective participation in the global knowledge economy, most countries are grappling with the increasing demand for highly skilled and knowledgeable employees (Ng, Nguyen, Wong & Choy, 2015). To achieve this goal, the UK Teacher Training Agency (TTA), for example, identified instructional leadership as one of the key factors to ensure that schools can deliver on the goal of producing highly skilled and knowledgeable employees. Accordingly, the TTA (1998) issued the National Standards to promote efficient professional development for instructional leaders, with the purpose of improving leadership for teaching and learning in schools.

As instructional leaders, the members of a school management team (SMT) are assigned various roles and responsibilities according to their positions, namely, the principal, deputy principal and HODs to ensure the attainment of school goals. At the school level, HODs are allocated subject departments in which they are expected to execute their instructional leadership roles. HODs are the main source of support and guidance for teachers when addressing issues related to teaching and learning (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014).

Within the subject departments, HODs are often referred to as consultant teachers, subject managers and curriculum specialists (Hammersly-Fletcher, 2004). These roles reflect what their job entails. Their daily practices have a significant impact on the teachers and learners (Gamage, Adams & McCormack, 2009). As a result, HODs serve as curriculum administrators in the subject departments and as the teachers in their respective classrooms. They administer all activities related to the curriculum, such as distributing work accordingly within their subject departments, mentoring new teachers and managing instruction. Apart from that, HODs are class teachers as per the demands of their job description (Ghamrawi, 2010).

Considering the dual role of HODs in primary schools, there are certain instructional leadership practices that appear to be common among many HODs. These include framing the school goals, communicating, supervising teaching and learning, curriculum coordination, mentoring and modelling, monitoring progress, supporting a culture of learning through visibility, protecting instructional time and providing professional development opportunities for subject teachers (Prytula, Noonan & Hellsten, 2013). Locally, the South African Department of Basic Education

(DBE) prescribes certain fundamental duties and responsibilities for HODs that revolve around teaching, co- and extra-curricular activities, personnel, general administration and communicating (DoE, 2016). All these practices and responsibilities fall under the umbrella of instructional leadership and HODs are expected to execute them effectively in their subject departments. This requires HODs to have broader knowledge and understanding of instructional leadership as a practice. The concern of this paper is on whether and how HODs perform their expected roles and their understanding of instructional leadership roles in general.

A number of studies have been conducted locally on the role of HODs as instructional leaders (Mestry & Pillay, 2013; Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013; Smith, Mestry & Bambi, 2013). Most, if not all, studies emphasise that HODs are expected to perform well in all instructional leadership practices within a school and carry the prescribed workload of teaching, as specified in the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (DoE, 2016). However, some scholars (du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018; Mpisane, 2015; Ng et al., 2015) have observed that a number of challenges, which, in turn compromise the focus on instructional leadership, often surround the position of the HOD. In primary schools, some HODs are able to execute certain roles effectively, while others lag behind due to among others, the challenges of insufficient knowledge on how to execute other instructional leadership practices, limited time to perform all the practices, excessive workloads and a lack of support from their supervisors (Mpisane, 2015). This may create problems and affect learning and teaching, leading to poor performance of teachers and learners (Davidson, 2012).

The performance of HODs in schools is often measured through learner results (DBE, 2012). However, the recent findings of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Howie et al., 2017) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (Reddy et al., 2016) indicate that primary school learners in South Africa fail to satisfy the minimum required academic standards in the key subjects that involves reading and Mathematics. Furthermore, the South African Department of Basic Education tracks primary school learner performance through the Annual National Assessments (ANA), and the results also indicate that learner performance is inadequate (DBE, 2016).

However, efforts initiated to develop HODs may be ineffective, as their current practices were not considered in advance (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2013). Currently, the research is silent or says very little about the dominant instructional leadership practices of the primary school HODs in the South African context and their perspectives surrounding their daily practices. For this reason, this paper sought to uncover such practices by responding to the following research questions:

- What are the instructional leadership practices of South African primary school HODs?
- What are the HODs' perspectives with respect to instructional leadership activities in their day-to-day leadership roles?
- How do HODs' practices relate to perspectives on their role as instructional leaders?

These questions are informed by prior research that suggests that in South Africa, HODs often face a number of problems in executing their roles (du Plessis & Eberlein, 2018; Mpisane, 2015; Ng et al., 2015). However, this paper explores the dominant instructional leadership practices of the HODs according to their perspectives in relation to the execution of their instructional leadership roles. Furthermore, the identified practices and perspectives are related to draw conclusions.

Following this introduction, the paper presents a detailed discussion of HODs' practices and perspectives as the two concepts that underpin the present study. This is followed by a description of the research method, outlining how the study was executed and then the presentation of the empirical findings. The paper then closes with a discussion of the findings, implications and conclusion.

Instructional leadership practices of HODs

In schools, HODs hold a crucial position that demands that they serve as the leaders in delivering the curriculum and giving guidance and support to learners and teachers, while also keeping the school vision and mission in mind (Bambi, 2012; Mpisane, 2015). The instructional leadership practices of HODs are therefore critical and they

play a key role in determining whether the vision and mission of schooling can be attained.

Some scholars (Manaseh, 2016; Ng et al., 2015; Prytula et al., 2013) have applied the comprehensive model of instructional leadership practices, as initiated by Hallinger (2000), to define and characterise the practices of instructional leaders. The model consists of three interrelating broad dimensions of instructional leadership practices, namely, (i) defining and creating the school mission, (ii) managing instructional programmes and (iii) promoting a positive climate for learning. This paper uses that model to explore the instructional leadership practices of the primary school HODs.

The first dimension consists of three instructional leadership practices such as framing the school goals, communicating such goals and coordinating the curriculum (Ng et al., 2015). This dimension revolves around the first stage of leadership practice where instructional leaders begin to plan for their subject department. Nguyen and Ng (2014) regard this stage as the starting point where HODs work collaboratively with teachers and plan the running of the subject department. Goals are drafted and discussed at this stage, and it is where the instructional leadership roles are distributed accordingly to the subject teachers. At this stage, Yasin et al. (2016) emphasise that instructional leaders should use the opportunity to ensure that teachers understand the goals of subject department and take ownership of it.

The second dimension comprises three key leadership practices that include coordinating the curriculum, monitoring learner progress and supervising instruction (Hallinger, 2000). The management of learning and teaching is at the core of every subject department and it is necessary to guarantee that all departmental activities are directed towards the school goals. Bush, Jourber, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2010), who assert that the management of learning and teaching starts with the assessment of classroom practice, also describe this dimension.

The third dimension includes four instructional leadership practices, such as maintaining high visibility, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development and giving incentives to teachers for outstanding work. Being available to teachers when they are in need of help, as part of instructional leadership practices, is critical. The research conducted by Goddard and Miller (2010) shows that success

in this dimension empowers teachers to effectively deal with the challenges they come across in their teaching practices. Various authors further emphasise that giving incentives is one of the means of providing ongoing support to the teachers. In this regard, Ghavifekr, Hoon, Ling and Ching (2014) highlight this dimension for its practice of providing an environment for collaborative professional development that stimulates teachers' interest and improves the school climate. However, when investigating the role of instructional leaders in managing the instructional programme, Manaseh (2016) reveals that HODs are sometimes shown to be ineffective in executing this practice due to a lack of knowledge.

In the South African context, where there is still a concern about the deterioration of learner performance (Davidson, 2012), the question is whether HODs in schools are able to engage in the instructional leadership practices as highlighted in the three broad dimensions as discussed above. The DBE has tried to establish a structured guide, the PAM (DBE, 2016), in relation to the three dimensions identified by Hallinger (2000), in order to clarify the practices that HODs are expected to perform when managing and leading instruction in their subject departments. Such practices revolve around teaching and assessing, co- and extra-curricular activities, and personnel, administrative and communication aspects. Several scholars (see Bambi, 2012; Bipath et al., 2013; Jaca, 2013; Seobi & Wood, 2016) have deliberated on the roles and responsibilities of HODs, as described by the PAM, and they mainly focus on the roles that HODs are expected to perform and the boundaries of their roles. Further research is needed to explore the dominant instructional leadership practices that HODs are responsible for and their perspectives thereon.

HODs' perceptions of their role as instructional leaders

High-quality leadership in schools is a key priority for many education systems around the world (Ng et al., 2015). As part of the school leadership structure, HODs in schools serve as ideal leaders of the curriculum due to their roles and responsibilities (Ghavifekr et al., 2014). However, the execution of HODs' roles and responsibilities is influenced by various factors that include competence, knowledge, perceptions and the availability of developmental opportunities.

The position of the HOD is complex, as it demands that the individual possesses certain competencies in order to execute their roles and responsibilities effectively (Jaca, 2013). HODs are expected to demonstrate competencies in many or all the practices as per the three broad dimensions of instructional leadership practices discussed earlier. Effective teaching, learning and improved results serve as indicators which determine whether an HOD is competent in the execution of instructional leadership or not. Furthermore, other stakeholders at school (principal, teachers and parents) may observe the way subject departments are run and formulate their own conclusions about the competence of the HOD. It is likely that HODs who are able to execute their instructional leadership practices with confidence in their subject department are regarded as competent. Their daily practices revolve around the three dimensions of instructional leadership practices and they are confident in their roles.

Karisa (2015) attests that HODs who are less confident and execute fewer instructional leadership practices may be regarded as incompetent in their role. Such HODs tend to neglect some of their instructional leadership roles, and their subject departments are inclined to show poor learner performance. Seobi and Wood (2016) maintain that the main contributing factor to HODs' incompetency may be that they struggle to interpret the boundaries of their instructional leadership roles. This makes it difficult for them to execute their roles effectively within a coherent framework of their daily roles. There is thus a gap in the knowledge of instructional leadership, which creates confusion and impacts on teaching and learning (Fletcher & Bell, 1999).

The question remains on the exposure of HODs to instructional leadership developments after appointment to their positions. Some scholars (Hallinger, 2009; Printy, 2010) explored the views of HODs regarding the execution of their role as instructional leaders. They argue that HODs perceive themselves as holding a neglected position where there is little or no support. Exclusion from developmental programmes demotivates HODs and decreases their level of efficacy. Bipath et al., (2013) is of the view that there is perhaps very little training in place to capacitate HODs after appointment. Thus, Fluckiger, Lovett, Dempster and Brown (2015) recommend that current and newly appointed HODs need to be trained to enhance their instructional leadership practices and to be prepared for senior positions.

Tuner (2003) asserts that HODs perceive their instructional leadership role as negatively influenced by contextual factors such as the overall school policy, the school's financial position which limits the availability of resources for each subject, the lack of influence for appointments of staff in their subject departments, the population in each classroom and teachers who are not cooperative. Further studies conducted by Du Plessis and Eberlein (2018) show that HODs from schools in which distributed leadership is evident, perceive themselves as being well supported by their seniors (principal and deputy principals), as compared to their counterparts in schools where distributed leadership practices are less evident. Effective distribution of instructional leadership roles is seemingly a good backup for HODs in their roles.

To contribute further to the emerging body of scholarship on HODs' practices, this study sought to unpack the dominant practices of primary school HODs and to relate them to their perspectives on instructional leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning in schools.

Methodology

Instructional leadership practices are interrelated and not meant to be carried out in isolation (Javadi, Bush & Ng, 2017). To explore the instructional leadership practices of HODs and their perspectives, a quantitative approach using a survey was adopted. A questionnaire was deemed appropriate for this study as it can reach a significant number of people in a relatively short period of time and at a lower cost (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The questionnaire contained interrelated sections with closed- and open-ended question items. The first section of the questionnaire probed respondents on their dominant instructional leadership practices in their daily roles, while the second section contained six questions investigating how respondents perceive their role as instructional leaders. The five-point Likert scale with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used in this section and the respondents rated their level of perceived competence in instructional leadership practices. The third section contained three open-ended items that explored the nature of training received after appointment, knowledge gaps and lastly, an opportunity to make suggestions to

improve instructional leadership practices in primary schools. The questionnaire was designed in this way to make it easy to complete and analyse (Creswell, 2014).

The instrument used was adapted from previous studies (Rajoo, 2012). To ensure validity and reliability of the questionnaire items, the instrument was tested in a pilot study to confirm whether it was of a good standard and to verify whether it was able to elicit the required data (Mhlanga & Ncube, 2003). The results of the pilot study allowed the researchers to align the instrument accordingly to enable respondents to bring about various viewpoints that assist in answering the research questions.

A descriptive research design with a stratified sampling method was applied and 20 primary schools were selected to represent each of the five districts in the Free State province. One hundred schools were sampled from farm areas, semi-rural areas, townships and towns. Participants were considered from all primary school phases (foundation, intermediate and senior phase). This helped the researchers to gather data from various school contexts and phases.

The total number of HODs in all the sampled schools was 231 and the researchers personally distributed questionnaires to all these HODs in the sampled schools. Most of the completed questionnaires were handed back to the researchers while others were returned by email. The total number of returned surveys was 205 and that total (N = 205) was used to represent the entire sample of the study.

As advised by Creswell (2014) and McMillan and Schumacher (2014), the study was conducted in line with applicable research ethics. Permission to conduct this research was sought from the University of the Free State, from the Department of Education, which oversees all the schools, from the sampled schools and from the respondents. The researchers adhered to the ethical principles of human rights, honesty, fairness, respect for individuals' reputation and confidentiality of the collected information to ensure that the respondents are not exposed to any risk by taking part in this study. The confidentiality of respondents' information and their schools was respected and they remain anonymous throughout the study to protect their identities.

Data analysis

After the collection of data, information was analysed through descriptive statistics and data presented graphically for the ease of interpretation. The study uses figures and frequency tables to present data, as they are simple to interpret (Maree, 2016).

The frequency, mean ranks and percentages were considered to describe the perceived competence of the respondents in instructional leadership. As for the open-ended questions investigating the instructional practices of HODs and suggestions to improve instructional leadership, a process of coding was carried out to make the data easier to interpret. The data were broken into meaningful segments that can be interpreted individually (Mouton, 2015). I used *a priori* coding to divide all responses into meaningful segments and coding enabled the researchers to retrieve all data associated with the subject or idea of concern quickly (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

Findings

The data gathered from respondents were used to explore the instructional leadership practices of primary school HODs in South Africa, their perspectives about their daily instructional leadership activities and to relate such practices with their perspectives. The research findings are presented below.

Instructional leadership practices of HODs

Figure 1 below displays instructional leadership practices of the primary school HODs as reported in terms of the frequencies and percentages.

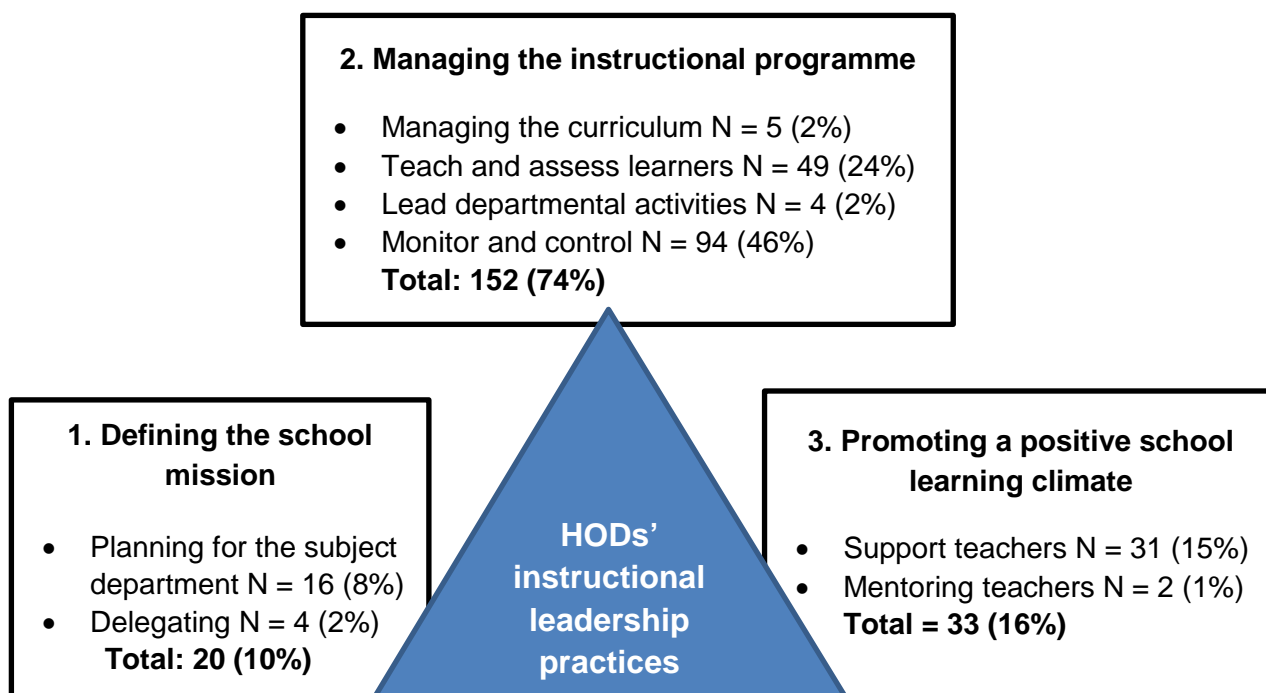


Figure 1: HODs' instructional leadership practices

Figure 1 above presents the dominant instructional leadership practices of HODs, as indicated by the respondents in terms of the frequencies from the highest percentages. Monitoring and control are reported as the dominant practices of instructional leadership in HODs' daily roles by the majority of respondents (N = 94; 46%). This is followed by teaching and assessing learners' work with 49 respondents and an average of 24%. Thirty-one respondents with a proportion of 15% indicated teacher support, while 16 respondents (8%) reported planning for their subject department as a dominant practice in their daily role. Very few respondents claim that they are engaged in curriculum management (N = 5; 2%), delegating responsibility (N = 4; 2%), or leading the subject department (N = 4; 2%).

Interestingly, only two respondents (1%) consider mentoring teachers as a dominant instructional leadership practice in their daily role. Generally, responses on the overall instructional leadership practices indicate that respondents execute different instructional leadership practices in their subject departments. The variety of practices implemented by HODs may confirm the concern of Bush et al. (2010) that HODs tend to follow the practices that they are comfortable with and leave others aside.

As the respondents highlight their dominant practices in instructional leadership, it was in the best interest of the study to explore their perceived competence, areas lacking development and the preferred strategies for development, as the three perspectives that influence their daily role of executing instructional leadership practices. Table 1 below presents the results.

Table 1: Perspectives in instructional leadership

Perceived competence in instructional leadership		
Sub-scale	M	SD
Improving learner performance	3.89	0.881
Revealing career opportunities for teachers	3.66	0.970
Distributing instructional leadership roles through delegation	4.00	0.810
Categorising capacity-building programmes according to needs	3.49	1.083
Effectively managing time	3.98	0.819
Decreasing disruptions during learner contact time	4.09	0.818
Overall perceived competence	3.85	0.784
Areas lacking development		
Sub-scale	N=205	Average (%)
Curriculum management	38	18.5%
Monitoring and control	17	8.3%
Teacher support	84	41%
Distributed leadership	66	32.2%
Preferred strategies for development		
Sub-scale	N=205	Average (%)
Formal training for HODs	95	46.4%
Day workshops	56	27.3%
Professional learning committees	54	26.3%

Perceived competence in instructional leadership

Table 1 above displays the competencies in instructional leadership, as perceived by respondents, according to the mean score. Decreasing disruptions during learner contact time (M = 4.09; SD = 0.818) was rated very high and is followed by distributing

instructional leadership roles through delegation (M = 4.00; SD = 0.810). Effective time management (M = 3.98; SD = 0.819) and improving learner performance (M = 3.89; SD = 0.881) were also reported often. Revealing career opportunities for teachers (M = 3.66; SD = 0.970) and categorising capacity-building programmes according to the needs of teachers (M = 3.49; SD = 1.083) were the least-often reported sub-scales.

For perceived competence in instructional leadership, the overall mean score accumulated was 3.85 with a standard deviation of 0.784. This demonstrates that respondents generally perceive themselves as highly competent in terms of executing instructional leadership practices in their subject departments. The findings of Ghamrawi (2010), which indicate that HODs often perceive themselves as competent in instructional leadership by only looking at certain areas of their expertise, are thus confirmed. However, the respondents appeared to be aware of their need to be developed in other instructional leadership practices.

Identified areas lacking development

Table 1 above also displays the areas lacking development, as identified by the respondents. Teacher support was identified by most of the respondents (N = 84; 41%) as an area in need of development. Distributed leadership follows this major focus area with 66 respondents and a proportion of 32.2%. Curriculum management was specified by 38 respondents equating to 18.5% while monitoring and control (N = 17; 8.3%) were selected by a few respondents. This shows that programmes initiated to develop HODs on instructional leadership should perhaps focus mainly on teacher support and distributed leadership.

Preferred strategies for development

Considering the urgent need for their development in instructional leadership, the respondents also described various ways in which developmental programmes for HODs can be offered. Table 1 above, further demonstrates that the highest number of respondents (N = 95; 46.4%) prefer to be developed through formal training, followed by day workshops (N = 56; average: 27.3%). Some respondents (N = 54; 26.3%) prefer professional learning committees (PLCs) as the strategy to capacitate HODs in instructional leadership. The results of this study, thus, seem to suggest that formal

training is perceived as the most appropriate technique to be used for developing HODs, as the majority of the respondents prefer it.

Relations between instructional leadership practices and perspectives

Further analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between HODs' practices and their perspectives (perceived competence, areas of development and strategies for development), as stated above. The practices of HODs are grouped together under the relevant dimensions and related to their perspectives. Table 2 below presents the results.

Table 2: Relationship between practices and perspectives

Dimensions of instructional leadership practices	Areas of practice	Perspectives on instructional leadership		
		Competencies	Areas need development	Preferred strategies for development
Framing and creating school vision	Planning for department, communicate goals and distributed leadership	3.60 (0.810)	32.2%	Formal training Workshops PLCs
Managing instructional programmes	Coordinating curriculum, teaching and assessing, monitoring and control, and leading departmental activities	4.10 (0.683)	26.8%	
Creating a positive climate for learning	Teacher support, and mentoring	3.57 (0.561)	41%	

As shown in Table 2 above, it is appropriate to indicate that almost all respondents perceive themselves as competent in all instructional leadership practices, as executed in their daily roles. The practices revolving around the second dimension (managing instructional programmes) were reported high with the mean score of 4.10

and the standard deviation of 0.683. This is followed by the practices of the first dimension (defining the school mission) with a mean score of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.81. The third dimension (promoting a positive climate for learning) was reported less often ($M=3.57$, $SD = 0.561$). Even if the respondents perceive themselves as competent in all instructional leadership practices for all three dimensions of practices, it is important to note their level of competency is not equal in all dimensions. This shows that the dominant practices of most of the HODs in the coupled schools of South Africa revolve around the second dimension of instructional leadership practices and less in other dimensions.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the third dimension is also specified as an area in need of development by a large proportion (41%) of respondents in the sample and is followed by the first dimension with the proportion of 32.2%. However, fewer respondents at 26.8% prefer the practices under the second dimension. Thus, development of HODs may focus mainly on the first and third dimensions. Formal training, workshops and PLCs were recommended by a larger number of respondents as the preferred strategies to develop the primary school HODs in instructional leadership.

Discussion

This study sought to explore the dominant instructional leadership practices and perspectives of primary school HODs in the Free State province of South Africa. The purpose was to relate the current practices and perspectives and make recommendations for the improvement of instructional leadership in subject departments. The general ideas in this paper are only limited to the HODs who participated in the study and may not necessarily apply to the entire population.

The most obvious result that emerges from this study is that monitoring and control, which belong to the second dimension of instructional leadership practices (management of instructional programme), are considered dominant practices of HODs in their daily roles. According to Ghavifekr and Ibrahim (2014), monitoring and control are supervisory roles that revolve around the learning process and teaching practice. This gives the impression that the majority of HODs from the sample

understand what is happening in the classrooms through monitoring progress and controlling teachers' work. Through monitoring and control, it is relatively easy for them to track the progress made by learners and teachers towards the achievement of the school goals. However, it is important to note that not all aspects of the second dimension are dominant, managing curriculum and leading departmental activities were suggested dominant by fewer (N=9) participants. This supports the view of Bush et al. (2010), which suggest that mostly HODs overdo the practices that they know and with which they are comfortable. Interestingly, instructional leadership practices under the first dimension (defining the school mission) and the third dimension (promoting a positive school learning climate) were suggested as dominant by fewer participants with 20 (10%) and 33 (16%) respectively.

HODs form part of the SMT and it is important for them to have sufficient knowledge about how to frame and create the school mission as the fundamental dimension whereby planning and distribution of work occurs. The findings of this study show that only one out of ten HODs claim that they apply the practices of planning and distributing instructional leadership roles to the teachers regularly in their subject departments. The reason for this might be a lack of knowledge on how to plan thoroughly and distribute instructional leadership roles, as suggested by Jones and Green (2017).

As there is a concern about the decline in learner performance in South African primary schools (Davidson, 2012; DBE, 2012), it is also important to note from the findings that the creation of a positive school climate is a dominant practice for only 16% of respondents. This means that there is a possibility that HODs have some challenges in the execution of practices within this dimension and/or they might consider it as a responsibility of their seniors, and not themselves.

The study further explored the perspectives of HODs with regard to the execution of their instructional leadership practices. The results show that HODs perceive themselves as endeavouring to ensure that instructional leadership practices are effectively executed in their subject departments. Even as the majority claims to be competent in the execution of instructional leadership practices, very few of them strongly agreed on this point. This shows that their competence is not applicable to all dimensions of practices as discussed previously. Generally, the practices of second

dimension (managing instructional programme) are executed by many HODs (N=152, 74%) while other practices falling under the groups of “defining the school mission” and “creating a positive school climate” are lacking and/or dominant in the roles of fewer respondents (N=53, 26%). For this reason, respondents are aware of their need to be developed in terms of other instructional leadership roles and so they appeal for a deliberate intervention focusing on the improvement of instructional leadership in the primary schools.

It can be seen from the findings of this study that the respondents highlighted several areas in need of development, but to different extends. The majority suggested teacher support and distributed leadership while fewer highlight curriculum management and monitoring as well as control. Among all the areas with knowledge gaps, defining the school mission and promoting a positive school learning climate are the areas that need more attention, as indicated by the majority of the respondents (N=150, 73%). This means that the development of participants may revolves around the practices of first and third dimensions.

The study further examines various ways of developing HODs and the formal training, workshops and professional learning committees (PLCs) found as the suitable strategies. The formal training is proposed by more respondents as the best means of professional development compared to the other forms of training. This seems to indicate that the respondents believe (and hope) that accredited institutions have a better chance of providing teacher leaders with the much-needed instructional leadership skills.

Implications

This paper covers a number of instructional leadership practices of HODs in South African primary schools. Although HODs are expected to excel in all instructional leadership practices, according to the Revised Personnel Administrative Measures (DoE, 2016), the results of this study offer evidence that the practices of HODs are mostly based on the teaching and assessing as well as monitoring and control functions. These practices serve as the chief components of the management of an

instructional programme, which is the second dimension of instructional leadership practices.

This study thus recommends, firstly, that there be professional development programmes to empower HODs in other instructional leadership practices. This will help HODs to gain broader knowledge for executing their roles of leadership from the first stage (defining the school mission), the second stage (managing instructional programmes) and to the third stage (promoting a positive climate for learning), as described in previous research (Manaseh, 2016; Ng et al., 2015; Prytula et al., 2013).

Secondly, respondents raised a number of suggestions as areas in need of development. Further detailed research and needs analysis is recommended to uncover the areas of specific needs and intervention.

For the effectiveness of the professional development, it is important to follow a process that is beneficial for the type of knowledge required and for the recipients of that knowledge (HODs) and which service providers can offer it. Thirdly, the study recommends that formal training, workshops and PLCs should be explored as the preferred strategies for development. Such training should be sustainable with consistent follow-up sessions and regular monitoring to ensure proper take-up and implementation.

Conclusion

The execution of instructional leadership practices have a direct impact on teaching practices and students' learning as it determines whether the mission of schooling (quality results) will be achieved. Furthermore, the current practices of HODs in the subject departments are central to successful instructional leadership in schools. This paper explored such practices with the aim of understanding better how instructional leadership is applied into practice in a selection of South African primary schools.

The results of this study begin to shed light on the dominant practices of HODs as instructional leaders and help to identify gaps in the execution of instructional leadership within the subject departments. It is evident from the findings that the professional development offered to HODs, if any, perhaps fall short of their current

needs and expectations. Policymakers may wish to consider the possibility of empowering the primary school HODs immediately after appointment in their positions to strengthen the knowledge and skills on leadership.

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SECTION 3: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This is the final section of this article-based dissertation. This section summarises key findings of the study and it is divided into four sub-sections according to the research questions. The data related to each of the four research questions is thus presented separately. A discussion of the findings is also presented in this section, followed by implications and conclusion.

3.1 DISCUSSION

3.1.1 Research question one: Subject leaders and/or HODs' perspectives on instructional leadership

What are the primary school subject leaders and/or HODs' perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) on instructional leadership?

To answer this research question, the study explored three components of the perspectives of subject leaders on instructional leadership, namely, their beliefs, perceptions and knowledge.

The results of the study demonstrate that subject leaders and/or HODs do not subscribe to the belief that the school leadership revolves only around the principal as the head of institution, as emphasised by other scholars (Bas, 2012; Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Louis et al., 2010; Yasin et al., 2016). They seem to believe that instructional leadership is the responsibility of all stakeholders in a school, regardless of the position they hold. It is also important to note that subject leaders and/or HODs believe in consulting with senior managers for effective decision-making in their subject departments. This may confirm that they are not fully independent in the implementation of instructional leadership roles, as highlighted by Bipath et al., (2013). The reason might be that subject leaders and/or HODs often confront challenges that limit their scope of action in schools. This may supports Hallinger (2009) who suggests that middle leaders are often not given a chance to "run with the ball" for the benefit of learning and teaching.

From the findings of this study (as seen in Table 1 of the first article), it can be seen that the subject leaders and/or HODs perceive instructional leadership as focusing on the management of the curriculum in the school to benefit learning and teaching. This supports some literature (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Hairon, Goh & Chua, 2015) which suggests that subject leaders make a great contribution to the general instructional leadership of the whole school. Furthermore, findings on perceptions suggest that respondents perceive instructional leadership as a useful tool to address the problems encountered on learning and teaching diversity in the school.

Table one of the first article has shown an acceptable level of response with an overall mean score of 4.25 for the sub scales of knowledge of instructional leadership which include: planning for their subject departments, supporting teachers, systematically organising teaching and learning activities, imparting teamship and reporting progress to senior managers. This finding indicates that the subject leaders indeed have knowledge of instructional leadership and may possibly execute it in their subject department. Therefore, we may assume that they understand their role, as specified in the Personnel Administrative Measures (DoE, 2016). This finding does not align with the specific view of Bipath et al., (2013) and Fluckiger et al. (2015) which suggests that middle leaders have insufficient knowledge of instructional leadership. The reason why subject leaders are considered to have insufficient knowledge to execute their role might be that they are afforded fewer opportunities to apply their knowledge in practice. As they are closer to teachers and learners, according to their job description, allowing them to decide and implement decisions based on their knowledge might benefit the learners and teachers.

3.1.2 Research questions two: Subject leaders and HODs' perceptions of their competence in instructional leadership

What are the primary school subject leaders and/or HODs' perceptions of their competence with respect to instructional leadership activities in their day-to-day leadership roles?

To answer this research question, perceived competence of HODs and subject leaders was investigated and rated in terms of six descriptors focusing on the performance, career opportunities, delegating, capacitating teachers, punctuality and time management and protection of teaching time.

The findings from Table 2 of article one and Table 1 of article two have shown that respondents feel they are competent in the application of instructional leadership practices in their daily role with the mean score of 3.85. It is also important to note that HODs and/or subject leaders perceive themselves as endeavouring to ensure that instructional leadership practices are effectively executed in their subject departments. This trend is common across the six items of perceived competence in their daily leadership roles. Even as the majority claims to be competent in the execution of instructional leadership practices, very few of them strongly agreed on this point. This shows that subject leaders and/or HODs' competence is not applicable to all dimensions of practices as discussed previously in the second article. This supports some literature (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014; Hairon, Goh & Chua, 2015) indicating that subject leaders and HODs make a great contribution to the general instructional leadership of the whole school.

4.1.3 Research question three: Correlation between perspectives and perceived competence

How do subject leaders' perspectives (beliefs, perceptions and knowledge) of instructional leadership correlate with their perceived competencies?

To answer the third research question, I look at the first article, which compares the perspectives of subject leaders with the perception of their competence on instructional leadership.

Although the majority of respondents indicate that they are competent in the application of instructional leadership within their subject departments, the study also investigated the relationship between respondents' perspectives and their competencies. The purpose was to differentiate whether there is a consistent relationship between different perspectives and if they contribute at the same level to the HODs and subject leaders' competencies. The correlation analysis revealed positive relationships between perspectives on instructional leadership and perceived competence. However, the results also show that not all perspectives contribute to the competencies on instructional leadership and that "beliefs" appear to contribute negatively towards competencies, while "knowledge" and "perceptions" seem to contribute positively. Therefore, the competencies of subject leaders appear to be determined by knowledge and perceptions. This may suggest that when trying to

influence the perceived competencies on instructional leadership positively, knowledge and perceptions should be considered first.

Considering the power of both components of perspectives, the results from the regression analysis thus confirms that perceptions on instructional leadership contribute most to the perceived competence when compared to knowledge of instructional leadership. This is in line with the study by De Lima (2008), which indicates that perceptions have the power to determine the contextualisation of instructional leadership in subject departments.

3.1.4 Research question four: Suggestions for the improvement of instructional leadership

What suggestions can be made to enhance the knowledge and practice of instructional leadership in primary schools?

In answering the fourth research question, I took from the second article which invited respondents to come up with suggestions to elevate knowledge and practice of instructional leadership in primary schools.

The findings of this study also reveal that there are some efforts made to develop HODs after appointment into their positions. However, the development often focuses on the concerns with the curriculum, while most instructional leadership issues often receive little attention. This observation may support Bipath et al., (2013) who found that there is no programme in place to capacitate HODs in instructional leadership.

The results further reveal that monitoring and control, which belong to the third group of practices, are dominant in the practices of HODs in their daily roles. As monitoring and control are supervisory roles (Ghavifekr & Ibrahim, 2014), an impression is created that the majority of HODs know what is happening in the classrooms. However, this may be because it is relatively easy for them to monitor the teaching and learning process for tracking progress made towards the achievement of the school goals. On the other hand, some important practices, including leading subject departments, managing the curriculum and delegating, seen to be executed by fewer participants (less than 2% of the HODs who participated in the study). Therefore,

participants are aware of their need to be developed on these other instructional leadership roles. Thus, there is an appeal for a deliberate intervention focusing on the improvement of instructional leadership in the primary schools.

Several areas in need of development were highlighted and they include teacher support, mentoring, distributed leadership and curriculum management. Among the areas with distinct knowledge gaps, many participants (41%) proposed teacher support and mentoring as an area of need. This confirms the view that HODs and subject leaders often lack confidence in their practice of creating a positive learning climate. The results of this study further reveal that the participants proposed several ways of developing HODs including formal training, through meetings, day workshops and professional learning committees. Formal training is recommended by more participants as the most important way of developing HODs, compared to the other ways of training. Accredited institutions, such as universities, need to heed this call to action by the group of middle managers in primary schools.

3.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study contributes in a number of ways to research on instructional leadership as an approach to leading the subject department and its impact on learning and teaching.

Firstly, the study provides evidence that all stakeholders at schools (e.g. principal, deputy principal, HODs and/or subject leaders and teachers) contribute to the general instructional leadership of the school and subject leaders have sufficient knowledge to execute their instructional leadership roles in their subject departments. Therefore, this study recommends that subject leaders be given a chance to apply their knowledge in practice and lead their subject departments as they see fit for improved learning and teaching. Other stakeholders may give necessary support to the subject leaders while holding them accountable for their responsibilities.

Secondly, HODs and/or subject leaders serve as part of the school management team and their role demands of them to execute management and leadership tasks within their subject departments. The study thus recommends that HODs and/or subject

leaders are fully included in the programmes related to instructional leadership to improve the quality of instructional leadership in schools, including when the principals are not there, as per their responsibility according to PAM (RSA, 2016).

Thirdly, it is noted from the results of this study that HODs and/or subject leaders prefer to enquire from their seniors for decision making and execute practices that are mostly based on the second dimension (managing instructional programmes), while other practices are partially neglected. However, the study recommends a comprehensive intervention designed to support HODs and subject leaders in the aspects of instructional leadership to promote a more distributed practice. Interventions may focus on their knowledge and perceptions about instructional leadership as it directly affects their competency on instructional leadership. This will help HODs gain a broader knowledge for executing their roles of leadership from the first stage (defining the school mission), the second stage (managing instructional programmes) and the third stage (promoting positive climate for learning).

Consequently, the results of this study offer evidence that not all developmental strategies are effective for the professional development of HODs and subject leaders. However, it is recommended that formal training, workshops and PLCs should be explored as the preferred strategies for development. Such training should be sustainable with consistent follow-up sessions and regular monitoring to ensure proper take-up and implementation.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Instructional leadership has significant potential to influence teaching practice and learning outcomes, and its usefulness within the subject departments depends largely on the subject leaders' perspectives. Furthermore, the current practices of HODs in the subject departments are central to successful instructional leadership in schools. The implementation of instructional leadership determines whether the mission of schooling (quality results) will be achieved. This study explored perspectives and perceived competencies of HODs and subject leaders on instructional leadership in order to understand better how instructional leadership roles are applied into practice in South African primary schools.

The quantitative data presented in both articles demonstrate that HODs and subject leaders are knowledgeable in terms of executing instructional leadership roles. Unfortunately, the challenge of being excluded from instructional leadership programmes often limits their role and obstructs their desire to prove themselves. However, this study shows the need to stimulate that enthusiasm by empowering HODs and subject leaders for better instructional leadership in the primary schools.

The study further shows the common instructional leadership practices of the primary school HODs and areas that need development. Therefore, the study serves as a tool for conducting a needs analysis on how to intensify instructional leadership practices to ensure its sustainability. Drawing from the results, this study recommends that a professional development programme be initiated for the primary school HODs to develop them in framing the school vision and creating a positive school climate as their main areas of concern. Mainly, the focus can be on the knowledge and perceptions as the common perspectives that determine competencies. Developmental programmes can be conducted through long-term training that is accredited by higher education institutions and follow-ups should be done to ensure progress.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: HOD QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PRIMARY SCHOOL SUBJECT LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES (BELIEFS, KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS) AND PERCEIVED COMPETENCE ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
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By completing this questionnaire, I agree to participate in this study based on the fact that confidentiality of all my responses provided below considered. I also understand that I may benefit through the impact of this research by providing my knowledge on instructional leadership in respect to my departmental duties.

For office use				1. Thabo Mofutsanyana 2. Lejweleputswa 3. Fezile Dabi 4. Motheo 5. Xhariep
Respondent numbers according to districts:				

SECTION A: Biographical information (BI)

This questionnaire aims at collecting background information from you pertaining to instructional leadership at primary schools. Just circle appropriate number to suits your response.

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age

20 to 30 years	1
30 to 39 years	2

40 to 49 years	3
50 to 59 years	4
60 years and above	5

3. Highest qualification

Teacher's Certificate	1
Teacher's Diploma	2
First Degree (e.g. B.A, B.Ed., B.Sc., B.Com etc.)	3
Post-graduate Diploma or Certificate	4
Post-graduate degree Honours	5
Post-graduate degree Masters or PhD	6
Other (specify): _____	7

4. Experience as an HOD

0 to 5 years	1
6 to 10 years	2
11 to 15 years	3
16 to 20 years	4
Above 20 years	5

5. Teaching experience prior to HOD position

0 to 5 years	1
6 to 10 years	2
11 to 15 years	3
16 to 20 years	4
Above 20 years	5

6. Number of Subjects or Learning Areas in your department

1 to 3	1
4 to 6	2

7 to 9	3
Above 9	4

7. Department you are heading

Sciences Department	1
Department of Humanities	2
Language Department	3
All Foundation Phase	4
All Intermediate Phase	5
All Senior Phase	6
Both Intermediate and Senior Phase	7
Other (specify): _____	8

8. Number of teachers in your subject department

1 to 3	1
4 to 6	2
7 to 9	3
10 and above	4

9. Location of your school

Farm school	1
Township school	2
School in town	3

SECTION B: Knowledge and beliefs on instructional leadership (KBIL)

The following statements designed to pursue knowledge and beliefs of HODs and/or subject leaders regarding instructional leadership activities in your subject department. For each statement, circle the category that best suit your agreement or disagreement according to the following Likert scale:

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Uncertain

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	U	D	SD
10	Leadership of teaching and learning focuses on the effective management of curriculum.	5	4	3	2	1
11	Educational leadership addresses learning diversity in the school.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I believe that the concept of leadership at school only focuses on the principal as the head of institution.	5	4	3	2	1
13	I think that enquiring from senior managers helps us in making genuine decisions at departmental level.	5	4	3	2	1
14	I believe that primary schools demonstrating growth in learner achievement are more likely to have HODs who are knowledgeable on instructional leadership.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I think my knowledge of instructional leadership is significant to the implementation of change at school.	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION C: Subject Leaders' Role (SLR)

The following statements intended to seek understanding of your role as the subject leader. For each statement, circle the category that best suit your agreement or disagreement according to the following Likert scale:

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Uncertain

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	U	D	SD
16	I have departmental year plan in place and stick to it.	5	4	3	2	1
17	I include the staff development sessions in my year programme to support teachers.	5	4	3	2	1
18	I spend most of allocated time teaching and assessing learners' work.	5	4	3	2	1
19	Teaching and learning tasks are systematically organised in my department.	5	4	3	2	1
20	The curriculum monitored effectively in the subject department I am heading.	5	4	3	2	1
21	I manage to encourage the participative decision-making through teamship among the teachers.	5	4	3	2	1
22	I report departmental issues to senior management as planned.	5	4	3	2	1
23	Senior managers award me opportunity to communicate with other stakeholders on behalf of the school.	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION D: Perceived Competence (PC)

The following statements designed to seek for degree to which you perceive your competence on instructional leadership. For each statement, circle the category that best suit your agreement or disagreement according to the following Likert scale:

5= Strongly Agree

4= Agree

3= Uncertain

2= Disagree

1= Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	U	D	SD
24	Since appointed in the current position, there is a great improvement in learner performance.	5	4	3	2	1
25	I have unlocked opportunities for diverse career pathways for the teachers.	5	4	3	2	1

26	I excellently manage to distribute instructional leadership in subject department.	5	4	3	2	1
27	I do regularly organise capacity-building programme to develop teachers.	5	4	3	2	1
28	I have instilled the concept of managing time effectively for both teachers and learners.	5	4	3	2	1
29	I managed to minimise disruptions to contact time with learners.	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION E: Recommendations and Suggestions for Improvements (RSI)

The following questions designed to seek for your recommendations and/or suggestions to enhance knowledge and practice of instructional leadership in primary schools. Answers, comments and suggestions can be written on the spaces provided in each question. For question 30, you select and circle the appropriate answer.

30. Have you ever capacitated and developed on instructional leadership?

Yes	1
-----	---

No	2
----	---

31. If yes, describe the nature of developmental program above.

32. If no, suggest aspects that can be included in the developmental programme for the current and newly appointed subject leaders in primary school.

33. In reference to your current position, briefly describe the dominant instructional leadership practices you apply on your daily activities.

34. Suggest ways on how instructional leadership can be improved in the primary schools.

Thank you for the information you have shared. The current information will be treated confidentially. The researcher wishes you all the best and success in the current task of leading your subject departments.

APPENDIX B: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM THE FREE STATE DOE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



P.O. BOX 17

Phuthaditjhaba South

9867

Free State Department of Education

Private Bag x 847

Bloemfontein

9870

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

I hereby request permission to conduct research with HODs in Primary Schools within the province. My name is ***Moeketsane Maribaneng Petrus***, and I am presently studying Master's degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Masters programme, I am required to conduct the research on an aspect of interest with a view to making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research study is:

Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership

The study will involve questionnaire with HODs, which is expected to last for 20 minutes of which teaching time will not be disturbed.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect respondents from physical and/or psychological harm. No names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any reports of the research. All respondents will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Education and Training with a copy of the research report and to share my findings with the HODs in the schools if necessary.

If you need any further information and/or have suggestions to do, do not hesitate to contact me directly and or my supervisor Professor Loyiso Jita at jitalc@ufs.ac.za or call +27 51 401 7522.

Yours Sincerely

Moeketsane M.P

Email: moeketsanemp@gmail.com

Cell: +27 83 980 8994

APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOLS



P.O. BOX 17

Phuthaditjhaba South

9867

The Principal

XXX Primary School

Private Bag x 847

Witsieshoek

9870

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

I hereby request permission to conduct research with HODs in your school. My name is ***Moeketsane Maribaneng Petrus***, and I am presently studying Master's degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Masters programme, I am required to conduct the research on an aspect of interest with a view to making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research study entitled:

Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership

The study will involve questionnaire with HODs, which is expected to last for 20 minutes of which teaching time will not be disturbed.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect respondents from physical and/or psychological harm. No names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any reports of the research. All respondents will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish.

Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Education and Training with a copy of the research report and to share my findings with the HODs in the school if necessary.

I have already received permission from the Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the study. If you need any further information and/or have suggestions to do, do not hesitate to contact me directly and or my supervisor Professor Loyiso Jita at jitalc@ufs.ac.za or call +27 51 401 7522.

Yours Sincerely

Moeketsane M.P

Email: moeketsanemp@gmail.com

Cell: +27 83 980 8994

APPENDIX D: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY TO HODs AND SLs WITH CONSENT FORM



P.O. BOX 17

Phuthaditjhaba South

9867

HOD and/or Subject Leader

XXX Primary School

Private Bag x 847

WITSIESHOEK, 9870

Dear Sir/Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I hereby invite you to participate in the research study. My name is **Moeketsane Maribaneng Petrus**, and I am presently studying Master's degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Masters programme, I am required to conduct the research on an aspect of interest with a view of making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research study is:

Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership

The purpose of the study is to understand how Primary school subject leaders and/or HODs implement instructional leadership aspects in their subject departments respectively. You have been identified as one of subject leaders and/or HODs who are leading subject departments within the school. The study has a potential to benefits you and other HODs in primary schools by pointing out challenges, successes and the needs for supporting instructional leadership in primary schools. The study will involve questionnaire with subject leaders and/or HODs, which is expected to last for 20 minutes of which teaching time will not be disturbed.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect all respondents from physical and/or psychological harm. No names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any reports of the research. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you wish to do so. Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Education and Training with a copy of the research report and to share my findings with the HODs in the school if necessary.

I have already received permission from the Ministry of Education and Training to conduct the study. If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, do not hesitate to contact me directly and or my supervisor Professor Loyiso Jita at jjtalc@ufs.ac.za or +27 51 401 7522.

Yours sincerely

Moeketsane M.P

Email: moeketsanemp@gmail.com Cell: +27 83 980 8994

If you agree to participate in the study entitled:

Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership

Please complete the attached concern form

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study.
- I understand what the study is about, why I have been approached to participate.
- I understand what the potential benefits and risks are.
- I give researcher permission to make use of the information collected from my participation for research purposes only.

Participant signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX E: DOE LETTER GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Enquiries: BM Kitching
Ref: Research Permission: Moeketsane MP
Tel. 051 404 9283 / 9221 / 082 454 1519
Email: berthakitching@gmail.com and B.Kitching@edu.fs.gov.za



MP Moeketsane
11317 Section 2
Mandela Park
WITSIESHOEK, 9868

Dear Mr Moeketsane

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

1. This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

Research Topic: Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership.

Schools:

Xhariep District:

Motheo District:

Lejweleputswa District:

Thabo Mofutsanyana District:

Fezile Dabi District:

Target Population: 200 HODs in total from all the schools.

RESEARCH APPLICATION MOEKETSANE MP PERMISSION 24 AUG 2016

Strategic Planning, Policy & Research Directorate

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Room 318, Old CNA Building, 3rd Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein

Tel: (051) 404 9283 / 9221 **Fax:** (086) 6678 678

2. **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2016. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours.
3. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document or a CD, should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The attached ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely


DR JEM SEKOLANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 05/09/2016

APPENDIX F: UFS ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Faculty of Education

18-Aug-2016

Dear **Mr Maribaneng Moeketsane**

Ethics Clearance: **Primary school subject leaders' perspectives and perceived competence on instructional leadership**

Principal Investigator: **Mr Maribaneng Moeketsane**

Department: **School of Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2016/0967**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Juliet Ramohai