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DISTRICT-LEVEL POLICY AND PRACTICE FOR SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP BY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

VUSUMZI HERTZOG CHUTA

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

(PhD Education)

in

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION STUDIES

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

BLOEMFONTEIN

SUPERVISOR: Professor L.C. Jita

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr M.S. Mosia

JANUARY 2018

DECLARATION

I, Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled *District-level Policy and Practice for Supporting Instructional Leadership by School Principals in South Africa*, is my own work. All the resources I used or quoted from have been properly acknowledged by means of complete citations, and it contains no plagiarism. I further declare that the work is being submitted for the first time at this university towards a PhD in Education, and it has never been submitted to any other university for purposes of obtaining a degree.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, who believed in me, even when I was losing hope and focus of ever getting educated; my beautiful and loving wife, Mathoto, and my two daughters, Vuyolwethu and Unathi. I thank them for keeping up with my temporary absence in their lives, so that I could achieve success.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without God, all man's work is in vain. I wish to thank my almighty God and redeemer for His mercies and care over me during my two years of study, because, without Him, I would not have come this far.

My appreciation and acknowledgements also go to the following persons and institutions for their support and assistance:

- Prof. L.C. Jita, my mentor, for his unreserved support, patience and motivation. Thank you for your time and valuable feedback; know that you are indeed a God-sent supervisor and mentor. May our unfailing and unchanging God protect and save you for others to come.
- The Free State and Gauteng provincial Departments of Education, for the permission granted to me to conduct research in their districts and schools.
- The Lejweleputswa, Sedibeng West and Johannesburg South education district officials who participated in the research study. Thank you for the time you afforded me; may God give you renewed strength and wisdom in your endeavour to change people's lives.
- I give special thanks to all the school principals who participated in this research study, for their time, support and words of encouragement during our engagements.
- I thank Prof. J. Selesho, for the voluntary guidance and coaching that he provided because of his passion for education. May God bless you.
- To Prof. E. Schall, for the professional and detailed statistical analysis conducted for me. May you be richly blessed.
- My office staff, Mesdames P. Kareli, D. Mohlala, and N. Zwane, for the constant motivation and support that they provided. May God bless you and your families.
- My loving mother, for her constant prayers during my studies, since my primary school years. You have been my pillar of strength and I know that you are a special mother that God provided for me. May you live to see more of my achievements. God bless.

ABSTRACT

Instructional leadership, as an approach to improve learning outcomes, has a long history dating back to the 19th century, when it involved an inspection system in countries such as England and Australia. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, the focus was on how people in leadership positions can influence or improve learners' scholastic performance. South Africa was not excluded from this trend. Leadership that helps to improve learner performance initially referred to school principals, but today the interest is in the way leaders at the level of districts support instructional leadership to improve learning outcomes. Instructional leadership has become even more important due to poor learning outcomes that persist despite ongoing supervision of schools by districts.

The question being answered by this study is, what are the district-level policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa?

The design adopted for the study was a mixed methods sequential explanatory case study of three South African education districts. The data collection process involved a questionnaire survey consisting of closed questions, which was complemented by the use of one-on-one interview discussions held with the participants who responded to the questionnaires (school principals and district officials). The analysis of data followed a thematic approach, and involved codes being clustered into code families, or superordinate themes, which formed the basis of the discussion of the research findings.

Among the key findings of this study is that there is confusion regarding the existence and knowledge of the district vision, to the extent that district officials communicated various messages on instructional matters to schools. Few district officials are knowledgeable about policies that support instructional leadership, and attempts to establish systems to coordinate and regulate instructional programmes have generally failed. Existing structures that support instructional leadership are not well coordinated; hence, schools receive conflicting messages, resulting in duplication of roles and support to schools.

Instructional leadership practices for supporting instruction, if they exist at all, are not well planned and fully known by district officials directly assigned to support instructional

leadership by school principals. Individuals serving in structures meant to support instructional leadership by school principals lack capacity and knowledge of the kind of practices and policies needed to support school principals.

Regarding the structures that support instructional leadership by school principals, the study established that those serving in these structures lacked specialised knowledge and skills to support instructional leadership by school principals.

Among the key recommendations of this study is that districts should be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge on instructional leadership, so that staff are able to interpret policies and develop practices that support school principals to improve learning. In the wake of ever-changing demands on education districts to improve learner performance, there is a great need for regular refresher courses that are specially designed to support district officials designated to support instructional leadership by school principals. There should be intensification of recruitment and selection programmes, especially for district-based officials, so that they can support instructional leadership by school principals. Further research, specifically on the role and impact district directors and chief education specialists have on instructional leadership by school principals, is recommended with a view of suggesting realignment of recruitment and selection processes for both positions, with the ultimate goal of improving teaching and learning.

Keywords: instructional leadership, district officials, school principals, district management team, circuit managers, exploratory mixed methods design, two-phase mixed methods design

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPS   Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement

DBE   Department of Basic Education

JHB   Johannesburg

NCS   National Curriculum Statements

PLC   Professional learning community

CHAPTER 1: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the demand for accountability for learner performance has reignited a focus on instructional leadership, particularly by school principals (Hallinger, 2005). Scholars agree that instructional leadership is the most fundamental tool for creating an environment that is conducive to learning that our schools need (Walker & Hallinger 2015; Spillane & Healey, 2010). Barret & Breyer (2014) suggest that instructional leadership has a considerable effect, direct and indirect, on learner outcomes. Research shows that instructional leadership plays a pivotal role in scholastic achievements of learners, because of instructional leaders' strengths in relation to curriculum and instruction (Printy 2008; Quinn 2002; Southworth 2002; Supovitz and Tognatta 2013). Hence, instructional leadership is categorised as a hands-on type of leadership that is involved with curriculum and instruction (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

The findings of research studies on instructional leadership point to the role and responsibilities of the principal, which are viewed as central to the performance of learners, and that of heads of departments and deputy principals at the school level. Little is reported on the role districts play in supporting schools to improve learning. Hence, in the study conducted by Firestone and Martinez (2007), the role of districts in improving schools' effectiveness became a subject for discussion. When this specific role of districts is mentioned, the focus is mostly on superintendents and how they support school principals (Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton & Newton, 2010). Reflections by Marsh, Kerr, Ikemoto, Darrilek, Suttorp, Zimmer and Barney (2005) indicate a need for districts to play a meaningful role in improving learner performance, by supporting school instructional leadership. However, one of the challenges schools face today is an absence of the kind of instructional leadership practices districts should employ to support instructional leadership by school principals (Honig & Coburn,2008).

Understanding the strategic role districts play in relation to schools helps to develop the kind of practices needed to support instructional leadership by school principals, with the aim of improving learning. Therefore, in order to contribute meaningfully to an ongoing

discussion about the role instructional leadership plays to improve learner performance, this study seeks to investigate the kind of policies, practices, and structures that exist at the level of districts, which support instructional leadership by school principals, and the role and capacities of various individuals directly responsible for supporting instructional leadership.

Protheroe (2008) identifies the effective use of resources, and decentralising accountability to the office of the principal, as practices that could support schools to improve learning, however, little is said about how districts support school principals in that regard. Furthermore, Honig (2008) and Russell (2015) indicate that, for districts to support schools to improve learning, there is a need for a total shift from what districts currently focus on, especially in curriculum and instruction. Therefore, the study investigated the kinds of policies and practices at the level of the district that support instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa, in order to understand how officials at the level of the district, who are directly responsible for supporting principals, go about supporting such instructional leadership in schools.

1.2   BACKGROUND

Collaboration between district officials and school principals is important if the aim is to improve implementation of policies and practices for better learner performance. Spillane and Diamond (2007) concur that it is through such collaboration between stakeholders that teaching and learning can be improved. A study conducted by Chrispeels, Burkae, Johnson and Daly (2008), on district effectiveness, found that improved learner performance is inevitable in situations where there are clear goals and collaboration among stakeholders. This is emphasised by Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci and Cagatay Klinic (2012), who report that it is vital to establish a clear and agreed-upon understanding of what the education system expects of those who are, or aspire to be, instructional leaders working to improve teaching and learning.

Elmore (1993), as cited by Johnson (2008), posits that there is inadequate evidence to confirm the claim that districts play a meaningful role in instructional improvement for improved learner performance. His findings are supported by Neumerski (2013) and

Mangin (2007), who claim that the nature of collaboration between districts and schools, especially on instructional matters, has not been studied fully, particularly in respect of the way districts support instructional leadership by school principals. Where they exist, studies on how districts support and influence instructional leadership by principals to improve teaching and learning are criticised for not being comprehensive enough (Mangin, 2007).

Research by Russell (2015) postulates that the role of districts in supporting instructional leadership is an important activity for improving teaching and learning. Studies conducted by Honig (2008) and Russell (2015) indicate a need to transform the district's roles, so that it supports schools to develop a district-wide teaching and learning focus. Honig (2012) joins the argument on the role of districts, and states that collaboration and support between the district and schools bears the promise of a strengthened educational system, improved teaching and learning, and better results for learners. Earlier studies, by Fullan, Bertam and Quinn (2004) and Johnson (2008), on school and district effectiveness, suggest that high levels of achievement by learners are possible when there is well coordinated support by districts for schools. In spite of interventions to promote support for schools to improve instruction, knowledge on the best way for district officials and school principals to interface, remains limited (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010).

Support by districts of instructional leadership by school principals is, indeed, a key aspect of achieving improved learner performance, as it brings about commonality of practice and a clear, shared sense of vision. Despite facts gained by research conducted on the importance of districts' support for instruction, there is still evidence of districts failing to work with schools (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006). According to Johnson (2008) and Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull and Armstrong (2011), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 in the United States of America placed the district back at the forefront, as state accountability mandates increasingly hold districts responsible for achieving improvements in teaching and learning.

According to Brazer and Bauer (2013) there is currently no clear indication in the United States of America with respect to what practices districts are involved in to support instructional leadership. Consequently, the need to investigate the nature of practices

districts embark upon to support instructional leadership by school principals remains a pressing issue, especially in South Africa's education context. Van der Berg *et al.* (2011: 5) advance the idea that effective schools in South Africa require carefully selected individuals as principals, who go on to fulfil their roles as leaders of instruction in order to ensure an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Neumerski (2013) argues that there is limited evidence of the kind of practices districts employ in support of instructional leadership by school principals to improve teaching and learning. Supovits, Sirinides and May (2010) suggest that defining a vision, and focusing attention on instruction, are two important elements of improving instructional leadership by districts. Biancarosa *et al.* (2010) report that not enough attention is paid to the way districts improve instruction, and this claim is confirmed by the continued poor quality of teaching and learning, where results do not correspond with efforts by school principals to improve instructional leadership. Therefore, consistent underperformance by many schools in most districts of South Africa raises questions about the way districts support schools to improve instructional leadership by school principals.

Research conducted by Louis, Dretzke, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) reveals the extent to which influence exercised by various stakeholders impacts on instructional leadership, and suggests that learner achievement benefits from influence by all stakeholders. However, Neumerski (2013) postulates that there is no conclusive evidence regarding the way various leaders work together to improve teaching and learning, in particular between districts and schools. She, thus, pleads for a paradigm shift, to a more comprehensive and integrated approach to examining district-based support initiatives for instructional leadership. The relationship between school and district-based leadership is determined by policies and practices at district level (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Hence, this study examines instructional leadership practices and policies that support instructional leadership by school principals, instead of concentrating on leadership activities by individuals at levels of schools or districts. A study conducted by Printy, Marks and Bowers (2009) suggests an urgent need for clearly demarcated and meaningful interaction between districts and schools to improve teaching and learning. One of the intentions of this study is, therefore, to investigate the existence of practices

and policies employed by districts, and structures that are in place to support instructional leadership by school principals.

1.3   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The growing interest in learner performance, particularly in South Africa, has generated interest in the way district leaders support instructional programmes and develop policies to improve learning. Not all schools under the supervision of districts have shown significant learner improvement as a result of district support. This is confirmed by the study conducted by Anderson (2003), which found that districts didn't necessarily influence practices in classrooms when they supported schools. In some instances, districts' and school principals' knowledge and understanding of what constitutes support for instructional leadership by school principals may also be a factor contributing to good practices that improve learning. Furthermore, there is evidence in studies on support by districts for instructional leadership by school principals, especially studies by Honig (2012), and Edwards (2013), that there has not been a significant improvement in teaching and learning and, subsequently, learner performance.

Although the reasons for establishing districts in South Africa were mainly to bring services and support closer to schools, and to improve efficiency, Bantwini and Diko (2011) did not indicate clearly how districts should go about supporting instructional leadership by school principals to improve the quality of learning.

Furthermore, the policy on Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Districts (DBE, 2015a), as amended, does not indicate how districts, especially officials, directly linked to supporting principals as instructional leaders, should go about doing so to improve learning.

Experience shows that the challenges facing effective teaching and learning have not been resolved, despite the administrative and management support given to schools by districts. There is a dire need, especially in South Africa's context, for a study that provides clear insights on what could constitute district support for instructional leadership by school principals. Hence, this study sought to investigate how district support of

instructional leadership to improve learning is understood by both districts and principals. During the study it became clear that no research has been done on this topic in South Africa.

Although studies have provided some information on what principals, as instructional leaders, do to improve learning (Firestone & Martinez, 2007; Rorrer, Skrla & Scheurich, 2008), there seem to be gaps in the understanding of instructional leadership support by districts to improve learning efficiency. It was this particular challenge that encouraged me to investigate how districts go about supporting instructional leadership by school principals, to determine the capacities officials at the level of districts have to support instructional leadership, and how resources, if any, are distributed to support instructional leadership.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale for this study stems from my long experience as a teacher, school principal and, eventually, a district director of education. This experience led me to realise that school principals are, in most cases, as good or as ineffective as their districts. I believe that, if teaching and learning is to be improved, instructional leadership is central to both districts and schools. Hence, this study sought to explore the nature of policies and practices employed by districts in their support of instructional leadership by school principals to improve learner performance.

In my engagement with literature, I asked a number of questions about what really constitutes district support for instructional leadership, which enabled me to identify a gap in the research to position my own study. Further consideration of the literature revealed that developing a fundamental understanding of the role districts play in support of instructional leadership by school principals merits further exploration, as a shift, from mainly management to instructional leadership, is fundamental to improving learning (Honig, 2012).

The study is likely to help districts of education, particularly in South Africa, to improve conceptualisation of the support districts provide to improve learning. In other words, this

study will translate into the kind of practices and policies districts should develop to support school principals to improve learning. It will, further, assist education authorities to modify their induction programmes for both district officials and school principals, so that they can meet the demands for learner performance. Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) allude to the importance of districts taking strategic steps to improve their support of school principals to improve leaner performance; this became one of the findings motivating research on the kind of practices and policies at the level of districts that support school principals to improve learning.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question addressed by the study was: What are the district-level policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa?

The following research questions guided this study:

1.   What is the district policy and regulatory framework for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?

2.   What are the district-level structures for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?

3.   What kinds of practices exist at district level to promote and support school principals' instructional leadership?

4.   How can the policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by districts be explained?

1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to investigate ways in which education districts support school leadership in general and instructional leadership in particular, as part of districts' quest to improve performance of schools in the respective districts. Pursuant to this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the available district policies and regulatory framework for supporting school principals' instructional leadership,

- To investigate the existence and role played by district-level structures for supporting the school principals' instructional leadership,

- To identify practices for the support of school principals' instructional leadership, and

- To explain the findings on the policies and practices available to support instructional leadership by South African education districts.

1.7   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overall research design adopted for the study was a mixed methods design, which is viewed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) as a research procedure of which the primary focus is obtaining qualitative research data to help complement the initial quantitative data aspects or findings. The approach was employed primarily to enable a platform for triangulation and to use the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to respond to the research questions. A sequential explanatory design involving three education districts, that is, Sedibeng West, Lejweleputswa and Gauteng South, was used. In the quantitative phase, a survey questionnaire was administered to purposefully selected district officials and school principals.

The sampling selected participants with experience of working at primary or secondary schools or districts, and who could provide a range of information on instructional leadership that is needed to improve performance. In the first phase, a Likert scale questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data, which are reported as frequencies, correlations, percentages and mean values. This information was used to answer the third research question, as indicated in Paragraph 1.5.

In the second phase, participants were purposefully sampled and data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which were arranged in themes relating to the research questions. The qualitative data provided in-depth findings that enhanced the understanding of the data gathered from the survey questionnaires. This approach was

driven by the insights of Gall *et al.* (2010), who note that questionnaires do not usually probe deeply into participants' opinions, beliefs and inner experiences, so, interviews were meant to help fill a potential explanatory data gap. The second phase assisted me to understand finer details, so that I could explain the trends established in the quantitative phase. Data from interviews were transcribed into texts and categorised further into themes for generating the narrative accounts that assisted to explain statistical data.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in the investigation of the value of district-level policies and practices that support school principals' instructional leadership. Therefore, the study has the potential to benefit current and future district leaders, by providing them with insights on best practices for supporting instructional leadership to improve learning.

It also provides the Department of Basic Education with insights on how to possibly realign induction programmes for districts officials. The study aligns with the National Development Plan in South Africa and its intentions for education, particularly in relation to leadership to improve instruction.

This study, furthermore, provides responses on whether the current focus and work by district officials in support of schools helps to resolve the challenges experienced by schools in improving learning. The study furthermore proposes changes to the approach by district officials to supporting school principals to improve learning.

The significance of this research is, among other factors, the contribution it will make in the field of instructional leadership and districts, as more needs to be understood regarding the direct contribution of districts to promoting and improving learning.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is about support provided by district officials for instructional leadership. The three districts that were identified as the sites for the study are in two provinces of South Africa, of which the basic organisational structure is familiar to me, hence, it was convenient for the logistical arrangements for data collection.

Conceptually, the study did not seek to explore instructional leadership in schools, but focused on support by district officials, relating to the nature of the work, and which has a bearing on teaching and learning.

The sites, thus, provided vital insights, given the diversity of the populations from which the participants originated in terms of their demographic and socio-cultural values. Support for instructional leadership by school principals was confined to that provided by district directors, chief education specialists, deputy chief education specialists responsible for curriculum delivery, and circuit managers. At school level, only principals, and no other instructional leaders, were involved.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this study, limitations refer to the features that I had no control over (threats to internal validity). This study was limited to in-service district staff officials (only those officials working directly with school principals), and school principals. I had no control over whether participants provided unbiased, balanced and honest responses. The fact that the study was conducted in only three districts in two provinces may be a limitation with regard to circumstantial richness.

The study required me to interpret the data, and this process might have been influenced to some extent by my values and experience in working at the level of the district. In order to minimise the biases often associated with adopting a single research approach (quantitative or qualitative), I collected quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) data, and the process enabled me to permit the results of the study to emerge from the data. The fact that only willing participants were part of the study was one limitation beyond my control. I might have missed vital data that could have been provided by potential participants not selected due to their subordinate positions in the organisations chosen as the sites for the study.

1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is fundamental, at this stage, to define key terms as they are used and understood in this study.

Instructional leadership refers to those intentional and coordinated activities and roles relating to teaching and learning, executed by those with authority to do so in order to create a conducive learning environment. According to Smith and Andrews (1989, as cited by Lyons, 2010), instructional leadership is simply the provision of resources in order to achieve a school's academic goals. It is provided by a visionary leader who creates a visible presence for learners, staff and parents, to improve learning. Blasé, Blasé and Phillips (2010) state, further, that instructional leadership is the ability of leaders to involve their colleagues collaboratively in mutual learning and development, with the central purpose of improving teaching and learning. In this study, instructional leadership, thus, implies all practices and policies by district officials that deal with learning and teaching in support of school principals in the execution of their roles.

District-level practices are all activities and roles discharged by district education officials, that is, district directors, chief education specialists, deputy chief education specialists, and circuit managers, that relate to teaching and learning but which emanate from district offices.

District-level policies refer to all policies specifically crafted to guide instructional activities so as to effect effective teaching and learning.

School refers to a public or independent institution that has learners enrolled in grades R to 12 (DBE, 1998).

District office refers to a management sub-unit of a provincial education department for education in the district responsible for the provision of education to schools and Early Childhood Development Centres in the district (DBE, 2013).

Support refers to provision of an enabling environment for education institutions within a district area, so that people can do their work in accordance with education law and policy (DBE, 2013).

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The chapters of this study are structured as follows.

Chapter 1: The research problem and its setting

This chapter presents a setting, and provides an introduction to the study, background of the research, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, aims and objectives, research methodology, significance, delimitations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of related literature

This chapter reviews the literature that was considered to be relevant and fundamental to this study and provides a theoretical grounding for the study. A detailed overview with respect to the evolution of instructional leadership is presented. The chapter examines the role districts play in supporting instructional leadership, that is, who are involved in support of the principal's instructional role, what capacities those involved possess, and what structures there are to support the instructional leadership of the school principal.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter focuses on research methodology and, further, outlines the procedures and processes followed in the collection and organisation of the data. It also provides detailed information on the instruments used and justifications for the choice of such instruments. The data collection and presentation procedures, as well as the ethical considerations of the study, are also examined in this chapter of the study.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion

This chapter presents the data gathered from the questionnaire survey and the semi-structured (one-on-one) interviews held with the participants. The chapter uses tables, graphs, descriptive statistics as well as narrative articles and reports to present the data.

Chapter 5: Findings, conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 5 deals with a discussion of findings from the study drawn from Chapter 4. Furthermore, discussions in this chapter are aligned with the literature review in Chapter 2. Recommendations are made and conclusions are drawn from research findings.

1.13 SUMMARY

Chapter 1 surveyed the background of the study, elucidated the statement of the problem, purpose, rationale, delimitations and limitations, and provided definitions of terms. Chapter 2 will examine the literature related to the problem, with a view to providing an in-depth understanding of the concepts and issues related to the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter operationalises the aim of the study by reviewing literature for the purpose of providing a conceptual and theoretical basis for the study. In so doing, the chapter starts with a review of literature on the genesis of instructional leadership, and traces its development chronologically for two main reasons: Firstly, to argue for and establish the existence of a gap in literature on the roles of educational districts towards supporting principals as instructional leaders; and, secondly, to construct an appropriate theoretical conception for the study. Furthermore, a synthesis of South African literature is presented to promote understanding of current practices of educational districts in supporting principals to perform their instructional leadership roles. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to provide a contextual basis for understanding how the districts under investigation perceive their roles.

2.2   GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The genesis of instructional leadership has been understood as presenting a critical breakthrough for educational organisations, due to its link to learner performance (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Though the aim of instructional leadership is to influence teaching and learning practices, challenges continue to threaten effective teaching and learning. Chang (2001) views factors, such as limited training, lack of access by principals to professional development, and lack of mentorship to support school principals, as being the main factors that influence effective teaching and learning by school principals. Murphy and Hallinger (1992), as cited by Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford (2006), believe that it is important for principals to be trained on instructional leadership, because instructional leadership is a mandatory function of the principal. These developments on instructional leadership influenced this study, in that they sought to establish the kind of practices districts employ in supporting instructional leadership by school principals, particularly in the area of professional development.

According to Gurr *et al.* (2006), the idea of instructional leadership has its origins in the 19th century, under the inspection system that existed in North America, England and Australia. Instruction was, at that time, equated to teaching, and because the school was under the leadership of a school principal, it was termed instructional leadership. The Australian case linked instructional leadership to the work done mostly by teachers and school leaders working through teachers to improve learning, with the focus being mainly on how principals demonstrated instructional leadership to influence learner performance (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010a). Though the principal's leadership was viewed as indirect – as supporting and improving learning – the findings of the study confirm that principals' vision was understood and supported by communities, and seen as improving learner performance. Furthermore, the principals were seen as being instrumental in supporting and improving the quality of instruction, and that leadership sustainability and preparation were essential for improving learning performance (Drysdale & Gurr, 2010). While these findings may be fundamental for understanding the role of the principal as an instructional leader, what continues to be missing from the literature is the specific role local education authorities (districts) play in supporting school principals as instructional leaders to improve learner performance.

The emergence of instructional leadership in the United States of America in the 1950s was different from the Australian case, in that it located instructional leadership as the shared wisdom of superintendents, school principals, parents and teachers on what constituted good schools, and it was presented as a practice-related concept, rather than theory-driven concept (Hallinger, 2015). It is during this era, at the genesis of instructional leadership, that the role of the principal was recognised as not being the only role that was important – those of other partners in education were afforded value too, with particular focus on "back to basics" to improve scholastic achievement.

The literature suggests that the emergence of research on instructional leadership in the 1970s sought to investigate the good performance of some schools, despite their challenging circumstances, to improve scholastic achievement (Neumerski, 2013). One of the fundamental findings of this research was the good performance results of some schools on learning outcomes, compared to other schools in comparable

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neighbourhoods. The literature suggests that the re-emergence of instructional leadership in the 1980s was influenced by the Effective Schools Movement, whose approach was evolutionary in nature, and sought to detect features, processes and manifestations of conditions in the schools that performed better than expected. One of the critical findings of this research strengthened the importance of leadership as exercised by the principal, which had the potential to help schools overcome inequalities resulting from socio-economic conditions facing learners and schools (Hallinger, 2015). According to Lezotte (1999), the principles of the Effective Schools Movement included a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission/vision and frequent monitoring of student progress. What was missing from the Effective Schools Movement, was the specific role of oversight and support by districts, and, hence, this study sought to investigate the kind of policies and practices at the level of districts that are aimed at supporting leadership by school principals. The research by Phillips (2009), Hoy and Miskel (2005) illuminate the need for support of school principals, by indicating that, despite demands for high standards to improve learning, instructional leadership by school principals was seldom practiced due to, among other factors, lack of training of principals as instructional leaders.

While we know that instructional leadership by school principals can improve learner performance, in all periods of investigation of instructional leadership, less is known about the conceptualisation of instructional leadership with respect to a district's role in supporting school principals to execute their instructional mandate effectively and efficiently, that of improving scholastic achievement of learners. As a result, it would be challenging to establish any reliable measurement of what makes principals perform in the manner in which they do to improve learner performance. This investigation into districts' role in supporting instructional leadership by school principals makes a contribution to reducing the misconceptions between prescription and practice when it comes to districts.

The question of what constitutes support for instructional leadership by school principals to improve learning frames my overall investigation on district level policy and practice for

supporting instructional leadership by school principals. It is, therefore, my contention that the question of knowledge and competency of district officials on instructional matters, especially in relation to supporting instructional leadership by school principals, is not well understood.

A study conducted by Hallinger (2015) indicates that the evolution of instructional leadership by school principals took a turn in the 1990s, due to the socio-political context of education and the expected role principals were to play. At this time, the emphasis was on the restructuring of schools and teacher development for school improvement. Compared to research studies of the 1970s and 1980s, this turn of events presented a radically different approach to the role played by the principal, by locating it as transformational rather than instructional. According to Southworth (2002), despite the assertion by research during the 1990s that instructional leadership by school principals was politically incorrect, reviews thereafter continued to refer to the importance of the principal's leadership and, in particular, instructional leadership. Studies conducted by Chang (2001), Phillips (2009) and Lahui-Ako (2001) continued to indicate that, even though school principals, as instructional leaders, can make a difference in learner performance, the major challenge is that instructional leadership has not been fully implemented by school principals due a number of factors, such as lack of professional development and allocation of insufficient resources to improving learning. It was on this basis that this investigative study on district-level policy and practice to support instructional leadership by school principals was undertaken.

Therefore, considering the confines of this study, it is important to note that it is important to encourage professional relations between districts and schools, in an attempt to improve the quality of instruction; and to note that instructional leadership is understood to refer to those activities that are targeted at supporting learner performance.

2.3   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the study justifies the application of instructional leadership as an approach for improving learner performance, and synthesises ideas and models on instructional leadership as suggested by scholars in the field, to make sense of support

for instructional leadership by districts. In the work by Kombo and Tromp (2009), a conceptual framework is described as a set of broad ideas drawn from relevant studies and used as a map for a study.

In research by Hallinger and Murphy (1986), instructional leadership is described in terms of observable practices and behaviours that principals can implement to improve learner achievement. Southworth (2002) urges against using only certain practices of the principal to define instructional leadership, but recommends that the principal's level and skill in curriculum and instructional matters is critical for improving learner performance. In this study, two of the outstanding models, that is, instructional and transformational leadership, are highlighted. Therefore, the next section of this study draws a distinction between instructional and transformational leadership models, and compares ideas in order to understand the kind of policies and practices districts use to support instructional leadership by school principals, and their effects.

In research on instructional leadership of primary school principals, Mestry, Moonsammy-Koopasammy and Schmidt (2013) define instructional leadership as actions the principal takes to advocate growth in learner performance. They furthermore explain that the principal is expected to ensure educational achievements practically by prioritising instructional quality. The inclination by other researchers in the educational field has been to view instructional leadership as a practice by superintendents and principals, and less by other levels of leadership (Southworth, 2002). Studies, such as those conducted by Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Quinn (2002), sought to illuminate what principals regarded as instructional leaders do, what others do not do, and what the association with improving learning is. Although there is knowledge about what principals do as instructional leaders, there is still a need to locate the direct role played by districts in supporting principals in the execution of their instructional leadership responsibilities to improve leaning.

Accordingly, much is known now about what constitutes instructional leadership, but little is known about transformational leadership in relation to practice in schools, especially in South Africa (Seobi & Wood, 2016). The reason for including a discussion of the transformational leadership model in this study was to compare it to instructional

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leadership, so as to justify my investigation into the kind of practices district offices use to support instructional leadership by school principals.

In recent research by Hallinger (2015), transformational leadership is defined in terms of school restructuring, modelling for followers, inspiration, and teacher development. This definition corresponds with that of Gunter (2001) and Bush and Glover (2014), who view transformational leadership as being more about building common interests between and among leaders, and with followers. Literature by Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) suggests that, though the instructional leadership model has swung towards transformational leadership, there has not been significant changes in practice in South African schools. Neumerski (2013) suggests that, despite substantial developments in the instructional leadership model, knowledge of how the transformational leadership model improves teaching and learning remains limited, even though there is an overlap of the two models' features, such as modelling and inspiring.

Though I take cognisance of the importance of transformational leadership, in this study, the instructional leadership factor becomes profound, especially in improving learning. The fact is that the principal cannot be the sole instructional leader in a school, who has to improve learning on his/her own; instead, for the purpose of this study, the focus on district support for instructional leadership by the principal to improve learning is of the essence. Hence, in this research I adopted a model that outlines similar instructional leadership concepts as those embedded in the research by Hallinger and Murphy (1987), which I believe can help me clarify the role districts play in supporting school principals as instructional leaders.

Instructional leadership could be explained in terms of tasks, traits and processes that an individual is expected to apply in a quest to improve teaching and learning (Southworth, 2002). According to Alig-Mielcarek (2003), the instructional leadership models developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) after thoroughly planned interviews and observation processes with selected principals, provide researchers with a base from which to develop theoretical or conceptual frameworks for research studies. The instructional leadership model as presented by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) originates from various studies on instructional leadership, and came as a result of a need to determine the

central purposes of the school, with special focus to the role principals play in working with the staff to improve learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 2005). The instructional leadership model proposes three dimensions, namely, defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive school learning climate.

The foregoing literature review helped me to start thinking about instructional leadership models that could be useful for understanding education district support for instructional leadership, especially for school principals, to improve learner performance. Figure 2.1 presents a model of instructional leadership.

Maintain High Visibility

Visit schools and classrooms to discuss school issues with principals

Protect Instructional Leadership

Limit interruptions of instructional time by public address and announcements

Promote Professional Development

Ensure that in-service activities attended by staff are consistent with the district's goals acquired during in-service training

Incentives for Learners

Recognise learners who do superior work with formal rewards, such as an honour roll or mention in the district newsletter

Incentives for Teachers

Reward special efforts by principals with opportunities for professional recognition

Frame School Goals

- Collaboratively develop goals that are easily understood and used by principals.
- Run awareness campaigns of district policy to support instructional leadership by principals.

Create a Positive School Climate

Define Mission

DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Manage Instructional Programme

Communicate Goals

- Communicate and ensure that there is alignment of district's academic goals with departmental policies
- Ensure that the district's academic goals are displayed and communicated through posters or bulletin boards emphasising academic progress

Supervise and evaluate instruction

Conduct regular informal observation to support principals

Coordinate curriculum

Put in place systems and structures to coordinate the curriculum across grade levels

Monitor student progress

Discuss academic performance of results with the school to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses

Figure 2.1: A model of instructional leadership as adapted from Hallinger and Murphy (1985)

In a study conducted by Haris *et al*. (2010) on the role districts play in providing direction on instructional matters, the authors found that districts offered crucial levels of support, especially in framing school goals to improve performance. Emerging from the study was acknowledgement of the need for practices by districts to impact on learner achievement. Accordingly, I embrace the finding by Hornig and Rainely (2012), in a study conducted on district office leadership support for principals, that there was little that the study could offer in terms of insight into district support to school principals, hence, identifying a need for further research. Earlier research, conducted by Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010), confirms that districts fail to create conditions favourable for school principals to support learning, as districts enforce solutions without developing principals. In this study, I seek to close this gap, by contributing to the emerging literature on districts' support for instructional leadership to improve learning. While there have been some significant studies on districts' role in supporting schools in South Africa, for example, studies by Moorosi and Bantwini (2016) and Mavuso (2013), none of the research work focused on the kind of practices and policies at the level of districts intended to support instructional leadership by school principals. The ensuing section will clarify how instructional leadership by principals find expression in district support.

This study is guided by the instructional leadership model advocated by Hallinger, Dongyu and Wang (2016). The model explains instructional leadership as core among several educational leadership approaches that influence and improve the learning and teaching culture. Educational leadership researchers claim that instructional leadership is directly linked to the teaching and learning process (Blasé & Kirby, 2000; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; King, 2002). According to Honig (2012), the theoretical framework provides guidelines for the way district offices could provide support for instructional leadership by school principals to improve learner performance. It furthermore promotes the notion that purposeful and coordinated support by districts to schools promotes effective teaching and learning for improved learner performance, through monitoring of teaching and learning activities, protection of teaching time, and professional development. The framework postulates that instructional leadership is an interactive activity that promotes effective teaching and learning, provides clarity on who are involved at the level of

districts, what capacities such individuals possess, and what structures exist for the provision of support for instructional leadership by school principals (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008).

The difference between instructional leadership and other models is based on the nature of instructional leadership, and focuses on the direction of influence, instead of its nature and source. The growing interest in and emphasis on leading teaching and learning as the core activities in educational institutions, encouraged me to choose this model for my study. Other models, for example, transformational leadership, are essential for self-led and managed schools, and focus more on processes that seek to influence institutions' outcomes, instead of on the direction of the outcome (Bush, 2007).

Instructional leadership emphasises the direction of the influence process, with particular focus on the behaviour of leaders when they deal with teaching and learning. The theory informs this study on the meaning of central activities that provide a supportive framework for effective teaching and learning, and is thus utilised as a point of reference to justify the availability or non-availability of district-based policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. It is predicted that leadership at effective schools can only take place and improve learning when there is adequate and relevant support provided by districts to schools.

In research conducted by Bush and Heystek (2006) and cited by Bush (2007), school principals indicated instructional leadership as an approach to improve learner performance. According to this theory, teaching and learning are regarded as core activities of any educational institution; thus, instructional leadership is viewed as essential for improving teaching and learning (Southworth, 2002). On the basis of this insight, it is important for instructional leadership at district level to facilitate the process of capacitation through the introduction and application of instructional leadership policies and practices to support school principals.

The centrality of the instructional leadership model is due to its ability to provide direction and support. As custodian of education on behalf of the national and provincial spheres of government, district-based leadership has the duty to develop a framework within

which development of principals takes place for learning and training, in order to make a valuable contribution to the restoration of a culture of teaching and learning and development of schools as centres for learning. This sentiment finds expression in the study by McLennan and Thurlow (2003), which explains the importance of districts' role in the restoration of the culture of learning and teaching ,which has been eroded, in order to help school principals acquire skills and knowledge to improve learning. Accordingly, the focus on the essential activities of influence that are intended to affect learner growth, is appropriate in this research to support instructional leadership to produce school leaders who implement practices to improve learning.

The provision of direction and support was found to be important for improving learning, and is acknowledged by the DBE (2007). In research conducted by Jita and Mokhele (2014) the importance and value of support was viewed as the reason for the accrual of content knowledge and improved skills by school leaders. District leadership was, therefore, examined, not only in relation to their support to schools, but also in relation to their ability to formulate policies and set up structures that would form a support base for instructional leadership by school principals. This view is supported by Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008), who argue that support to schools should be focused on the development and strengthening of school principals' skills to improve learner performance. When districts continuously expose school principals to practices that support learning, a situation characterised by strong and self-reliant school leaders is realised. The relationship between districts and principals for promoting effective teaching and learning has, for a long time, been neglected, with an emphasis on what is expected of schools, and little attention being paid to the quality of and extent to which districts support school principals to improve learning.

The theoretical framework portrays a reality, that desire alone cannot ensure that instructional leadership is practiced in schools, and that effective teaching and learning are enjoyed at schools without the provision of support by districts (Keefe & Jenkins, 2000). This theory foresees that districts' support for instructional leadership by school principals will enhance effective teaching and learning. On instructional leadership, Kruger (2003:207) argues, "Instructional leadership supports the culture of teaching and

learning, where practices reflect a commitment to quality teaching and learning". Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) posit that instructional leadership helps both districts and schools to interpret practice in light of their beliefs and experiences. The theoretical framework under discussion holds that support of instructional leadership by districts is important for improving, enhancing and employing practices focused on teaching and learning, and building capacity among principals. The capacity of school principals for handling some teaching and learning challenges is vastly improved when they become acquainted with practices that are aligned to teaching and learning.

Arrington (2014) confirms that the district's support for instructional leadership by school principals is crucial for enabling principals to deal with organisational issues and to create an environment conducive to learning and achieving improved learner performance. The district's role in improving learning, for example, has been the subject of discussion by many scholars, and continuous research in the field could help outline the kind of practices districts can employ to support instructional leadership by school principals. Education districts certainly play a pivotal role in instructional leadership, vision development and support, primarily by forming school cultures that encourage an efficient and effective instructional leadership and management system (Hallinger & Lee, 2012). Within a framework of instructional leadership, one of the suggestions by Bush and Middlewood (2013) is that district support staff are engaged with supervision, coaching, staff development, monitoring and modelling for school principals, with all activities designed to influence principals' thinking and practice in terms of instructional leadership initiatives.

There is strong evidence that clearer district support for instructional leadership by school principals could improve learning. Furthermore, Mafuwane and Pitsoe (2014) argue that, globally, successful instructional leadership is an issue of current debate, and has increasingly been considered as a key factor in an efficient and effective schooling system. Notwithstanding the fact that instructional leadership was historically posed as a bureaucratic proposition for school improvement (Purinton, 2013: 250), it has been described as the glue that binds together district and school-wide goals, school principals'

and district officials' predetermined objectives, and teachers' needs and learner learning (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) argue that powerful instructional leadership involves more than just a generic focus on instruction, in contrast to what some leaders tend to impress upon their followers. Many recent studies, for example, studies by Neumerski (2013), Sofo, Glen and Jay (2013), Purinton (2013), Lai and Cheung (2013), Urick and Bowers (2013) and Hallinger and Lee (2012), show that instructional leadership emphasises the development of improved learning environments, and focuses on the ability of districts to stimulate principals' innovative practices. Despite the abundance of studies on instructional leadership, few have attempted to explore the role of districts with regard to school development and support using the lens of instructional leadership (Hallinger & Lee, 2012).

Mafuwane (2011) examined the contribution instructional leadership makes to learner performance, before concluding that South Africa's Department of Basic Education certainly needs to empower school principals with the requisite skills to enable them to create a vision and develop the staff at schools. It is important to note that what is central to the study by Bush and Joubert (2004)is the view that, in order to become effective instructional leaders, district-based officials should be more knowledgeable about and be more involved in the development of their schools' instructional leadership practices than they have been in the past. In this context, if substantial progress is to be made with school development and support, it is essential to rethink and explore the leadership role and capacities of district personnel through the lens of instructional leadership theory. Pursuant to this, the study emphasises the concept of instructional leadership is conceptualised; trends, challenges and prospects of instructional leadership are explored; and a proposal is made for a shift towards more efficient and effective instructional leadership by school principals in school development and support.

From the conceptual framework, support for instructional leadership by school principals is understood to be the formal and intentional process that depends on all role players for its success. I now move on to discussing district instructional leadership practices that support school principals.

2.4   DISTRICT-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The district's support for instructional leadership has found expression in several studies, such as those by Biancarosa *et al.* (2010) and Mhlongo (2008). However, the nature of support provided by the district with regard to instructional leadership by school principals has not been investigated adequately in terms of its practical implementation to improve learner attainment. The study conducted by Rorrer *et al.* (2008), on districts' ability to contribute to systematic reform in education, found that provision of instructional leadership by districts is among the prime roles of district leadership. According to Honig (2012), district offices were originally established to carry out largely regulatory and basic functions, and not to support teaching and learning improvements. Although much is known about the district's support for schools in relation to management and administration, as well as the context of school-based efforts to improve learning, the way districts go about supporting school principals in the execution of their instructional leadership practices to improve learning has received less attention.

The current study is guided by findings, among others, that of Pickeral, Evans, Hughes and Hutchins (2009), that district offices were subject to policy demands to improve teaching and learning and, hence, in this study, district officials were seen to be central to the success of policies and practices that support instructional leadership by school principals. This study is one of the efforts to assess the extent to which districts support instructional leadership by school principals, and borrowed from Hallinger's model to illuminate the type of practices through which principals could be supported to improve learning, such as development of a vision, communication, coordination of curriculum programmes, monitoring of learning and teaching, maintaining high visibility, provision of incentives for learning and teaching, supporting curriculum, protecting instructional leadership, and promoting professional development.

A study conducted by Marsh *et al.* (2005), whose focus was on districts' promotion of instructional leadership by principals by specifying curriculum and promoting data-based decision-making, found that schools receiving inadequate support by districts showed a decline in learner performance. Accordingly, I adopt the view of Waters and Marzano (2006), that high learner performance levels could be achieved if districts set effective,

achievable targets, communicate them to schools, and ensure implementation. The focus on the fundamental policies, practices and structures that support school principals' instructional leadership is important in this study. Although a focus on school principals is necessary, as discussed by De Grauwe (2010), a much broader view of the district's support for instructional leadership – support which is inclusive of all school-based instructional leaders – is critical if it is to influence the entire organisational culture, and improve learning.

Although districts and schools are complementary, views on the role of districts in instructional leadership lack consensus (Firestone & Martinez, 2007). Some scholars suggest that districts have no mandate to coordinate instructional leadership practices, because they are viewed to be removed from what takes place in the classroom (Rorrer *et al.*, 2008). However, Camburn, Kimball and Lowernhaupt (2008) and Printy (2008) argue that districts cannot be ignored in as far as school leadership is concerned, because districts influence communication of the vision to schools. It is this latter view of districts' role, that of communicating a vision to schools, that informed the current research on district support for instructional leadership. A research study by Pickeral *et al.* (2009) asserts that district policymakers and education leaders are better positioned to identify strategies that can be used to improve teaching and learning, and that constant interaction with school leaders will provide a platform for districts to gain information from school leaders on their challenges, and thus contribute to the improvement of learning.

Accordingly, a study by Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) suggests that supportive districts regard communication as fundamental for vision articulation to improve learner performance. Such communication is informed by the district's attitude towards schools' development, and the support provided (Mangin, 2007). Constant communication of clear goals and achievement targets has the potential to increase levels of accountability and ownership of practices aimed at improving teaching and learning.

Investigating the role the district plays to support instructional leadership to improve learning, enabled me to pay attention to the extent to which instructional time is protected to improve learner attainment. A study conducted by the National Education and Commission on Time and Learning, as cited by Leonard (2008), identified inadequate

attention to instruction by districts as deleterious, particularly for the way schools use their instructional time, and recommended the implementation of better policies and practices to improve learning. Although little is known about the way districts go about protecting instructional time to improve learning, several studies investigated the practice of protection of instructional time in order to improve learner performance (Corcoran, Fuhrman & Belcher, 2001; Grissom, Loeb & Master, 2013). Bottoms (2010) drew attention to the fact that such support was sometimes provided by districts through the development of tools and processes that could be used by principals to ensure that instruction is delivered adequately.

A variety of studies that explored the field of instructional leadership provide evidence that the role districts play to support instructional leadership by school principals to improve their instructional leadership performance needs urgent attention in order to improve learner attainment. Work by scholars, such as Pickeral *et al.* (2009), single out district leadership as being strategically placed, not only to identify and prioritise activities needed to improve learning, but to provide adequate support by continually monitoring the implementation of the vision and examining existing curriculum and assessment policies.

Accordingly, Neuman and Wright (2010) report that the concept of district leadership has received attention in studies such as that of Biancarosa *et al.* (2010) and Matsumura *et al.* (2010), but the concept has not been investigated adequately in terms of practical monitoring of implementation of policies and practices to support learning and the knowledge levels required of district officials in supporting instructional leadership. It is important, therefore, that studies pay particular attention to the *how* of leadership, instead of the *what (*Spillane & Diamond, 2007). This study follows the suggestions of such research, by focusing on the *what* and *how* of the current study. There is, therefore, an indication that a culture of monitoring learner performance and predictable processes to track the impact of such efforts at the district level, is likely to enhance performance and stimulate the confidence of school principals, which could result in improving learner performance. The literature suggests that, for effective improvement of learner

performance, the districts continuously monitor progress to attain set goals (Forner, Bierlein-Palmer & Reeves, 2012).

Other studies, by Camburn *et al.* (2008) and Coburn and Russell (2008), found that the performance of leaders at the level of schools cannot be handled separately from policies at the district level. They found that the district influenced who is qualified as a school leader and who is not. Furthermore, they found that district policies define the support to be given to school principals; hence, there is a need to examine how district-level policies and practice are crafted and implemented to support instructional leadership by school principals.

Professional development programmes vary in terms of their format and content, though they share a common aim, that of improving professional practice. Mokhele and Jita (2012) argue that, while there is an established history of professional development in most developed countries, in South Africa, the systematic skilling of workers is fairly recent. This revelation does not exonerate principals, as they are also regarded as workers. In a study conducted by Mathibe (2007) on professional development of school principals in South Africa, the author found that, unlike the United Kingdom and United States of America, in South Africa the appointment of principals placed not only the management of the school at risk, but also the leadership, due to the fact that people appointed as principals mostly lacked the technical expertise required for the job; hence, professional development is essential to improve learner performance. Although Mathibe's (2007) study acknowledges the importance of professional development for improving principals' competency levels, little is said with regard to the districts' role in developing principals as instructional leaders. However, an earlier study conducted by Salazar (2002), as cited by Hussin and Al Abri (2015) and Xiao Jun (2014), refers to instructional roles for which principals could be developed as instructional leaders, such as provision of a vision, promoting an instructional environment, mentoring and supervision, and creating a supportive environment. Research conducted by Xiao Jun (2014) reveals significant instructional leadership practices that are associated with professional development to improve learner performance, such as mentoring and supervision. Other studies in the field of instructional leadership, such as those by Youngs

and King (2002), suggest practices such as programme coherence as an important variable between instructional leadership and learner performance. It is in the area of district leadership that this study seeks to find deeper insights into the way districts apply professional development to support school principals to improve learning.

According to Pickeral *et al.* (2009), Mitchel and Castle (2005), Sim (2011), Levin, Datnow and Carrier (2012), and Du Plessis (2013), district leadership is positioned to pinpoint strategies that can be used to improve teaching and learning, and they are fundamental instructional actors in the provision of instructional leadership by school principals, policy coherence and reorientation of the organisation. This study clears debates about the specific policies, practices and structures needed to support schools to improve learner performance.

The idea of vision development is one of the facets of instructional leadership. Studies conducted on instructional leadership portray vision development as a prime instructional leadership practice. These studies on instructional leadership did not investigate how, or the extent to which districts support school principals to develop a comprehensible vision for the school – this aspect is a contribution of the current study. Waters and Marzano (2006) claim that a district's support enables school principals to be goal oriented in their approach to improving learning. Camburn *et al.* (2008) concur, and portray district leadership's role in the development of a vision as being influential and important for improving learning. The type of policies and structures at the level of districts that support instructional leadership by school principals, particularly in the development of a school vision, still need to be investigated. The study conducted by Bottoms (2010) reaches the overarching conclusion that districts are failing to support schools in the development of a vision that would enable school principals lead improvements effectively.

A number of previous studies on instructional leadership have produced generic positions on ways districts could support schools; however, the challenge is still determining what works, that is, the practice. By examining instructional leadership in the context of district leadership, this study makes a unique contribution to the kind of practices that monitor learner achievements, reward teachers and learners, and promote professional

development, that is, practices districts employ to support schools to improve the quality of instruction.

In a study on monitoring group or individual work to improve learner performance, De Grauwe and Carron (2007) view monitoring as the process of assessing, evaluating and controlling, for the purpose of identifying gaps and formulating practical steps to mediate a challenge. In order for the district to bring about effective change that improves learner performance, literature by Forner *et al.* (2012) suggests that districts continuously monitor the district's progress in attaining its goals. According to Rodgers (2009), monitoring teaching and learning could be attained through effective and efficient interaction between districts and school leadership. This argument is congruent with that advanced by Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004), namely, that relationships between districts and schools are fundamental for improved learning.

The importance of supporting the monitoring of learner performance found expression in studies by Van der Berg *et al*. (2011) and Kruger (2003). In these studies, credible monitoring processes by the district were found to be critical for informing decision-making and supporting learners and teachers to improve performance. Later, a study by Forner *et al.* (2012) posited that consistent monitoring of a district's progress is important for attaining its goals in relation to better performance. Findings on the value of monitoring are important for this study, as they shape an argument about district practices that support instructional leadership by school principals to improve learner performance.

According to Abdalla Al Hosani (2015), the literature suggests that provision of incentives to improve learning and teaching is one of the critical practices that support instructional leadership by school principals to enhance performance, especially when acknowledging talented learners and teachers for achievements. In addition, there is a growing interest in education on the role incentives play in improving performance, and that general consensus on the subject is that these incentives are crucial to obtaining the expected results (Neal, 2011). Gilman and Anderman (2006) found that sustaining a reward system resulted in high motivation among learners and teachers, thus influencing psychological, social functioning and academic performance levels. However, a study conducted by Scott (2015) contradicts the findings of Gilman and Anderman (2006), and claims that

rigorous evaluation of the impact of incentives to improve leaner and teacher performance is yet to be investigated and evaluated. The foregoing review of the literature helps me to start investigating how districts go about supporting instructional leadership through provision of incentives to improve learning, as there is currently limited exposition of how districts may achieve this.

Development of policy is a critical role of districts. Such policies may include coordination of teaching and learning aspects of the curriculum, how learner progress is monitored and supported, and progression requirements across the grades. According to Rorrer *et al.* (2008), districts have a responsibility to establish policy that is linked to the needs of learners, and those of schools, to support and improve learning. In the process of policy development, it is prudent for districts to have clear goals with respect to how school principals should be assisted to improve learner performance.

Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010a) carried out a study to determine how district leaders support policy development, with an emphasis on goals and initiatives that surpass minimum expectations of learner attainment. The study found that policy makers needed to engage more strategically in determining how support for learner development can be provided. This study by Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010b) informed the current study in that I pay particular attention to measures that improve and enhance learner performance, such as policy on support for schools that fail to meet minimum state targets. The present study widens the scope to district support for instructional leadership by school principals to investigate the availability and development of policy at the level of districts that support learning.

A research study by Waters and Marzano (2006) reiterates the fundamental role of district leadership, namely, that effective superintendents (district leaders) involved all stakeholders, including district staff and school leaders, in the establishment of policy directions for district support for instructional leadership. How district leadership involved all stakeholders in the formulation of policy that supports instructional leadership was not made clear, hence, this study investigates how districts go about developing policy that supports instructional leadership by school principals. A similar position was suggested by Neumerski (2013), namely, that an integrated approach to policy development is a way

to improve learning and support instructional leadership at the level of schools. This study, by investigating the nature of policies that exist at the level of districts to improve learning, provides useful insights into this field of research.

Studies have also shown the importance of districts using data to support instructional leadership by school principals (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Levin & Datnow, 2012). These studies found that, through use of data, districts and school principals were able to make decisions regarding leaners' groupings and placement and about the kind of interventions needed to improve learning. Researchers generally agree that reinforcement of data usage for decision-making purposes is an important practice for improving learner performance (Luo, Albrecht & Neil, 2015; Halverson, Grigg, Prichett & Thomas, 2005). Although the study by Kim (2012) acknowledges the importance of data-driven processes, it postulates that data-driven processes may fail to draw the principals' active involvement, due to limited information flow and sharing, poor communication, and the centralisation of this specific practice. To understand the importance of data-driven decision-making processes, it is important to investigate how they are used by districts to support instructional leadership by school principals.

One of the critical roles districts play in support of instructional leadership is in the area of capacity building. In this study, capacity building by districts implies not only availing resources, such as personnel, time and electronic devices to support instructional leadership by school principals, but training, monitoring, and supporting activities aimed at improved learner performance.

According to Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010) districts are viewed as providers of ongoing professional development programmes, with particular focus on learner performance. In support of the finding by the two sresearchers, Blank and De las Alas (2009), Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson and Orphanos (2009) postulate that job-embedded professional development has positive effects if it is linked properly to the curriculum of the school, district standards and assessment of learners' learning, and if it is initiated to address instructional needs. Jita and Mokhele (2014) view capacity building as a critical area of professional development, and hence Honig (2003) refines capacity building as one of the instructional roles of districts, by indicating that it is the sole

responsibility of districts to possess the necessary knowledge and understanding of instructional projects at the level of schools.

Spillane (2004) and Honig (2003) argue that only healthy, interactive instructional relations between districts and schools can produce better results for learners. Massel (2000) traced the work of Rorrer *et al.* (2008), who refer to knowledge and skills as crucial components of capacity building that involve three primary actions that districts must take cognisance of, namely, personnel mobilisation, development of functions linked to change, and making school-district linkages. Blank and De las Alas (2009) concur that the entire process of teacher development and quality, inclusive of improvement of teacher effectiveness, forms the central focus of districts in improving performance and producing quality in all schools.

In South Africa, the DBE (2011a) has sought to address the limitations of traditional capacity-building programmes, such as once-off workshops with few follow-ups, and by introducing district teacher-development centres, where well-planned and goal-oriented workshops can be coordinated. Bergeson and Heuschel (2004: 3) indicate that,

> *Districts that have improved are those that devote their energies to providing continued teacher developmental programmes, which are classroom based, as well as establishing support structures, such as professional learning communities to anchor teachers' skills and knowledge base.*

Districts' failure to attend to classroom practice or instruction results in continued underperformance by learners. Hence, it is vital for districts to emphasise the principle of instruction and consistently communicate performance expectations unambiguously to schools and teachers.

Honig (2012) supports the statement by Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001), that job-embedded support by districts to assist principals to become better and more productive instructional leaders, has become a priority in teacher development. The emphasis on support of this nature refers to a joint working approach, where principals and district officials develop and cooperatively monitor programmes and projects aimed at improving instructional leadership. A study undertaken by Massel (2000) concerning

teacher leaders emphasises the concept of decentralised capacity building in support of instructional leadership for school principals. Seashore Louis *et al.* (2010b: 318) emphasise the importance of capacitating school principals, and refer to shared leadership as being fundamental to reducing teacher-management tension and increasing teacher participation and commitment. Research on job-embedded development is more descriptive and less investigative, and makes it impossible to identify factors that contribute significantly to effective job-embedded development programmes (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers & Killion, 2010). A study by Burgess (2012) suggests a need to investigate the impact of professional development on school principals. This study attempts to follow up such suggestions by investigating, not the impact, but the nature of practices and policies at the level of the district that support instructional leadership by school principals.

The current research base provides important guidance to the development of job-embedded programmes or activities (Penuel, Fisherman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007). Croft *et al.* (2010) list three key aspects related to teacher development, namely, teachers' opportunities to learn, professional learning in the community and as a community, and facilitator skills. Table 2.1 was adopted from Croft *et al.* (2010), and provides examples of job-embedded professional development activities that districts can present in various ways, such as one-on-one guidance meetings in teams or alone, in order to support instructional leadership.

Table 2.1: Examples of job-embedded learning opportunities

	Job-embedded		Not job-embedded	
Alone	Takes place in the school, in real time, and focuses on issues of practice.	Takes place in the school, and is based on issues of actual practice.	Takes place in the school, and not related to principal's instructional practices.	Takes place in or outside the school, away from instruction, and is based on issues not related to instruction.
			A district official analyses the work of one or two principals and writes a conclusive report.	
With one-on-one guidance	In the middle of the coaching, the mentor observes the principal in practice and begins to interact with the principal. Prior to the coaching, an objective is discussed with the principal.	A mentor meets with beginner principals during the planning of a coaching meeting, and after observation, principals are supported in describing strengths and weaknesses.	One-on-one meetings not related to instruction or the principal's instructional leadership responsibilities.	Curriculum guidance is not regularly provided and is not informed by results and planning

Districts decide on instructional guidance, which, according to Spillane (2015), includes, but is not limited to, the following: supervising teachers and developing staff, and providing curriculum guidance, material and student assessment. The view that curriculum and instruction are two sides of the same coin is strong among a number of scholars of instructional leadership across the education academic discourse. Hallinger (2005) indicates that the three leadership functions, namely, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress, play a major role in determining the best way districts and schools, as service points, could improve instructional leadership at schools.

Traditional practices of capacity building possess limitations in the area of management and coordination in the district, and are focused on miscellaneous aspects of school support, which leaves less time for follow-ups aimed at assessing the impact of workshops and monitoring implementation. In her investigation into instruction and curriculum, Massel (2000: 4) emphasises the fact that the current charged environment

of accountability and performance prompts districts to align their curriculum management programmes with instruction in order to improve student performance. The present study differs from others on instructional leadership and districts, especially in South Africa's context, in that it investigates practices by districts, and not those of school principals, that anchor the work of a school principal as an instructional leader, for improved learner performance.

2.5 DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: SOUTH AFRICA'S EXPERIENCE

A number of projects were initiated by the South African government in partnership with research organisations to develop effective districts. Owing to such initiatives, a need arose for a policy to manage the existence of and support provided by districts to improve teaching and learning (DBE, 2013. In the work of De Grauwe and Carron (2007), it is clear that districts were mainly created to improve efficiency and effectiveness in relation to teaching and learning.

A study conducted by Plowright and Plowright (2011), on successful school improvement in South Africa, found that districts played an intermediary role, between the national education department and schools, by ensuring that, among other matters, poor quality facilities, and monitoring to improve teaching, were addressed. Later, a study led by Roberts (2012) concurred that education districts' core purpose in South Africa is to anchor the delivery of curriculum in order for learners to receive good quality learning opportunities. This means district offices are expected to create conditions conducive to schools' development and improvement. However, thus far, especially in South Africa, there is little literature that deals with the specific role education districts play in relation to practices and policies that support school principals to improve learning. Research by Mohlala (2007) which explored district work, could not specify the kind of role districts are expected to play in supporting instructional leadership to improve learner performance. However, what it does present, is that districts were established to bring education closer to schools and communities. This contention affirms that the primary reason for the existence of education districts in South Africa remains open to argument. What is still

not clear is how the support granted to schools anchors the work of principals to improve learning.

Mavuso and Moyo (2014) argue that the purpose of establishing districts should not be merely to serve as resource centres for schools, but as centres to support learning and teaching. Their views are corroborated by Schoeman (2004), who suggests that the above-mentioned role of districts was never the intention of the South African government, instead, government's intention was to establish districts to ensure provision of quality teaching and learning through instructional leadership.

Extrapolating from the insights contained in the Government Gazette No. 39827 (RSA, 2016: 25), the Department of Basic Education (the district) should provide the necessary training and guidelines, not only regarding the professional duties of school principals, but also for instructional leadership aspects. Among the practical skills that the Department of Basic Education (district) should inculcate in principals are training in those aspects of the legislative policy that support teaching and learning. Additional practical skills include how to evaluate the school culture, improving academic performance of learners, effective use of data to inform interventions, and managing complex curricula for schools (Bush Bisschoff, Glover, Heystek, Joubert & Moloi, 2006).

At the moment, education district offices are tasked with establishing working relations with schools on educational access, provision of professional support, and management, and, to a lesser extent, with providing support for principals as instructional leaders who have to improve teaching and learning (DBE, 2015a).

A study conducted by Bantwini and Diko (2011) reveals growing discontent among principals and teachers about the lack of support by local education districts for effective teaching and learning. Jansen (2004) argues that, despite the current challenges districts face in developing policies and practices that support instructional leadership by school principals, they are tasked with implementing a series of policies and, especially during the post-apartheid era in South Africa, these policies were more focused on administration than instruction.

According to Roberts (2001), there has been a series of debates regarding the functions of districts, which mainly focused on the administration and management of district offices and less on the core business of teaching and learning. In South Africa, a new policy on the organisation, roles and responsibilities of education districts was developed and it focuses, in particular, on reconfiguring districts for better communication and leadership in schools (DBE, 2013).

The McKinsey Report (2007) indicates that districts, as mediating layers, are expected to provide support for the implementation of practices that support instruction by schools and facilitate best practices between schools. Arguably, in South Africa, the bulk of the attention is on information sharing, while other ways of strengthening schools' performance, such as supporting principals as instructional leaders, remain unexplored.

Garson (2000) contends that the voice of districts in schools is fundamental for building a culture conducive to teaching and learning. Hence, Kruger (2003) states that instructional leaders provide direction, support and resources for all teachers and learners at their institutions, in order to improve teaching and learning. Schools in South Africa currently face numerous challenges, such as establishing fresh relations with surrounding communities, dealing with demands for escalating accountability on the principals' part, changes in curriculum policies and, most importantly, mounting pressure on principals to improve standards of teaching and learning.

Although little research has been done in South Africa to support instructional leadership by districts, there is a definite need for district offices to train and develop South African principals on instructional leadership (Hoadley *et al.*, 2009). Bush *et al.* (2006) indicate that, even though there is a need for instructional leadership training, a major challenge exists regarding the development and availability of material relevant to instructional leadership. These scholars indicate, further, that the South African district situation concerning instructional leadership is complicated by the fact that adequate and valid reports on the best way districts can support principals in instructional leadership are lacking. This study stands among such reports and observations, in that it attempts to contextualise the challenges faced by school principals in South Africa, and suggest ways

districts can provide the necessary support for instructional leadership by school principals.

The study by Bush and Joubert (2004), on Gauteng principals, found evidence that a large proportion of them do not regard themselves as instructional leaders. As a result, few schools were able to differentiate between management and instruction. The study emphasises the importance of strong instructional leadership by the principal to influence the establishment of a sound teaching and learning environment supported by districts.

Kruger (2003) concurs that the implementation of relevant instructional leadership practices results in the establishment of a sound culture of teaching and learning, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of the school. It is the intention of this study to investigate the understanding, through researchers, of instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning.

2.5.1　Instructional support

The impact districts make on learner performance through the support they provide to school principals can never be doubted. The study by Marsh *et al.* (2005), on the work of districts to reform schools, confirms that districts have the capacity to bring about improvement in the professional work of a principal. The study suggests that a supportive and developmental district is characterised by the following features:

- **Focuses on teaching and learning activities, with clear expectations regarding learner outcomes**: District personnel responsible for supporting schools are knowledgeable about instruction, and are able to lead implementation of curriculum standards and instructional improvement.

- **Sets standards that support instruction**: Monitors the alignment of implementation of curriculum activities to improve standards.

- **Has a clear and focused programme of professional development, and fresh approaches to teacher development**: Professional programmes for principals are supported, with special attention to monitoring instructional programmes, and protection of teaching and learning time.

- **Uses data effectively to support instructional programmes and promote accountability**: Data is systematically collected and analysed to encourage informed decision-making processes and measure the impact of instructional programmes on teaching and learning.

- **Support for programmes developing principals as instructional leaders**: Coaching, conducting focused staff meetings, supervision of personnel, and development of a strategic vision for schools are fundamental activities in this regard, and serve a motivational purpose.

This study maps out significant instructional leadership practices required from districts that will support instructional leadership by school principals, and expected outcomes thereof. Table 2.2, adapted from the study by Marsh *et al.* (2005), finds expression in this study.

Table 2.2: Role of districts in fostering instructional improvement

Supporting instructional leadership	
DISTRICT SUPPORT PRACTICES	**OUTCOMES FOR PRINCIPALS**
Professional development seminars	Are knowledgeable about instruction
Conducting instructionally focused principals' meetings	Are able to provide desired support to teachers and learners
Instructionally focused supervision of principals	Provide feedback to teachers and adopt good classroom practices for improved learning
Use of data for instructional improvement	Individual principals at all levels are better positioned to identify areas of need to improve teaching and learning

(Source: Marsh *et al.*, 2005)

A study conducted by Bergson (2004) into the characteristics of improved districts indicates that such districts are known for their good and ongoing provision of professional development programmes, which are geared specifically to improve the principal's role as an instructional leader and to improve learner performance.

2.5.2 Departmental policies in support of instructional leadership

In terms of the Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities for Education Districts (DBE, 2015b), district offices play a crucial role in ensuring that all learners have access to quality education. Districts are, therefore, expected to provide support for the development of practices at schools that will improve teaching and learning. The expected roles of districts are captured in legislation, namely, the South African Schools' Act of 1996 (DBE, 1996) and the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (DBE, 1998). The guideline on the South African Standard for Principalship in South Africa (DBE, 2015b) and the Education Law Amendment Act of 2007 (DBE, 2007) will form the basis of the discussion in the sections to follow.

The insertion of Section 16A of the South African Schools' Act of 1996 outlines the roles and responsibilities of the school principal. These roles and responsibilities include professional leadership and management of the school, drawing up an academic plan and setting out how learners' performance will be improved. The DBE's acknowledgement of the principal's crucial role in the performance of learners is a clear indication that the principal plays an important part in learner achievement and in instructional matters of the school.

The gap in the above-mentioned legislation, of clear guidance by district offices for principals regarding instructional leadership, poses a serious threat to the academic performance of schools, because principals end up focusing on all areas except instructional matters. Recent reforms in the education arena have challenged governments, including South Africa's government, in particular the Department of Basic Education, to start a process of shaping the delivery of quality education in all schools. Hence, Hill (2000) argues that, to ensure high standards in education with the end goal of national prosperity, political leaders need to develop an interest in education. Governments must develop future-inclined policies to support instructional leadership that promotes the effective delivery of curriculum at all schools. These policies will influence learner assessment, evaluate programmes and monitor curriculum delivery. Support for instructional leadership by school principals is vital for ensuring that there is effective teaching and learning. Diko, Haupt and Molefe (2011) contend that,

The role of the instructional leaders (district officials) is to help establish, develop and maintain a teaching staff that will provide the best opportunities for teaching and learning.

Owing to their specific role as instructional leaders, district officials are valuable assets in schools' quest to achieve improved learner performance. Officials' role is to stimulate and support principals, to encourage teaching personnel to teach better and the learners to learn better. Principals' particular skills and knowledge are needed to drive teaching and learning programmes. Harris and Muijis (2002) contend that sustaining improvement requires leadership capabilities that are more likely to be achieved when the principal's leadership in a classroom is focused.

If effective teaching and learning is to occur, a critical area for instructional leaders' attention is ensuring that the district office recruits knowledgeable and competent principals who are fully committed to the leadership of the school (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Successful education districts, as measured by support for instructional leadership, constantly encourage their principals, teachers and learners to perform well; and through the implementation of policies and leadership practices at their disposal, the schools are, indeed, likely to perform well.

Christie (2001) explains that a number of policies that have been crafted at national and provincial levels have finally been implemented at the level of schools through district offices, despite various complex challenges faced by schools, especially in relation to the implementation of such polices. For example, one of the challenges could be that principals at particular schools are not entirely ready to assume instructional leadership roles, because the socio-economic situation hinders the effective delivery of the curriculum. The principal plays a critical role in shaping the pattern teaching and learning should take, that is, translating policy into practice. The principal's fundamental role in the implementation of policy is the interpretation of policy, ensuring that s/he is familiar with the content of the policies and, thus, able to interpret and implement policies based on departmental guidelines. A number of policies on curriculum implementation exists. It is crucial that district officials familiarise themselves with the content thereof to support their

principals with the implementation of effective teaching and learning approaches and assessment.

2.5.2.1 The Constitution of South Africa

A study of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) in relation to the provision of effective and compulsory education, is crucial, because it is not only a legal document, but reinforces many of the arguments for and against national intervention in local spheres of government (districts). Guided by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the government established the provincial departments of education as implementing spheres of government. The Constitution provides for the establishment of two levels of management and governance of education, namely, national and provincial education systems, whose powers are vested in the minister of Education, the director general and member of the Executive for education in the province, as well as the head of the Department.

The Constitution does not make provision for education control and function to the local sphere of government, that is, the district. The Constitution further provides that education across all levels, exclusive of tertiary education, is the function of national and provincial Departments of Education. Therefore, there is an indication that the Constitution provides space to national and provincial education departments to develop policy in support of the local sphere (district) of government to improve education. Chapter 2 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996) Subsection 29, promotes the right to basic education, access, irrespective of origin, creed or language, to effective education. Though the Constitution does not necessarily refer directly to instructional leadership or district structures as alternatives for effective education, by implication, it is the responsibility of education structures, especially districts, to ensure that leadership is provided to safeguard the right to education.

2.5.2.2 South African Schools' Act No. 84 of 1996

The dawn of the new, post-apartheid era in South Africa inspired all South Africans to build a new and democratic dispensation in the country and to restructure the education

system, which was previously configured into different education departments serving different categories of South Africans. Therefore, the introduction of the South African Schools' Act No. 84 of 1996 paved the way for other legislative frameworks aimed at improving education at South African schools. The role of districts on instructional leadership has not found clear expression in the Act, except in Section 6A, where it states that it is mandatory for the minister to determine minimum standards for assessments and outcomes for improved learner performance.

In terms of the South African Schools' Act (DBE, 1996) school principals are directly accountable to the head of Education in the province, with districts being mere communication structures through which information, especially regarding administration, are communicated. This diluted approach to instruction prevents districts from giving significant support to schools on matters that would directly influence the core business of the Department of Education, namely, teaching and learning and improved curriculum delivery.

The South African Schools' Act of 1996 (DBE, 1996), as amended, places the principal in a dual role, that of being a manager and a leader of the entire school. In executing these roles, the law expects the principal to, firstly, prepare and provide the head of the Department of Education with an annual academic report in respect of the institution's academic performance – a report that is in line with the minimum standards, outcomes and procedures used for assessment. Secondly, the principal must prepare and provide the head of the Department with a report on the use of resources, to evaluate the impact such resources have on the quality of teaching and learning. Thirdly, if the head of the Department identifies the principal as an underperformer whose school's academic results have failed to meet the minimum standards, the principal must implement, without delay, the educational programme and curriculum activities of learning support material and policy as well as legislation aimed at improving teaching and learning. Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008) concur that principals are now expected to play a role in liaising with other members of the school governing body to develop and share the school's vision and mission and, furthermore, to design strategies to promote teaching and learning at acceptable standards.

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The South African Schools Act (DBE,1996: 32), though not explicitly referring to the role of districts on instructional leadership, indicates that the Department's responsibilities, through districts, regarding monitoring of programmes and resources to support teaching and learning, must,

> *In reasonable manner, with a view to enhancing professional capacities in monitoring and evaluation, raise standards of education provision for improved learner performance.*

The responsibility of ensuring that the envisaged developmental plan, as compiled by the principal, is monitored and implemented by school principals for improved learner performance, is delegated by the head of Education to districts. This is the juncture where districts are expected to support principals as instructional leaders to improve learner performance, especially regarding instructional leadership practices.

2.5.2.3 Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998

In terms of the Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 (DBE, 1998), with special reference to Personnel Administrative Measures, there is no direct reference to districts' role in support of instructional leadership by school principals. Though the recruitment and selection processes are viewed as practices in support of teaching and learning, how districts go about supporting instructional leadership by school principals by using recruitment and selection processes, is not openly stated.

Because districts are provincial hubs of education, all schools are under their direct supervision. Therefore, the role of districts in the provision of effective education finds expression in the roles attached to school principals. In order for school principals to effectively monitor, guide and supervise the work of teachers, they need direct support from the education department through its districts.

The Employment of Educators Act (DBE, 1998), in reference to duties and responsibilities of office-based educators (districts), states, furthermore, that it is the district's responsibility to support schools in their facilitation of the implementation of curriculum to improve learner performance. Though the Act does not directly refer to instructional

leadership, it clearly indicates that districts are expected to provide an environment that fosters confidence and commitment, develops systems for monitoring, provides guidance for learner assessment, and supports the effective delivery of curriculum for improving learner performance.

Furthermore, districts are also expected to implement structures and systems that are compatible with curriculum delivery objectives, assist in reasonable distribution of the workforce and resources in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning, develop and maintain systems for monitoring learner progress to achieve the planned targets, and support initiatives to improve numeracy and literacy, so that learners can access the broader curriculum.

2.5.2.4 Education Laws Amendment Act of 2007

The provisions of the Education Laws Amendment Act (DBE, 2007), with special reference to Section 16A, seeks to locate specific instructional leadership roles with districts and schools. In particular, school principals are expected to participate in an endeavour to improve and promote effective teaching and learning. However, what is clearly missing in the legislation is an in-depth outline of the role districts play in support of schools (principals) to improve teaching and learning, specifically as instructional leaders. In the absence of this guidance, district officials are consistently caught up in spending more of their time and energy focusing on day-to-day managerial and governance tasks, instead of on the instructional role of improving teaching and learning, as is expected of them.

The Education Laws Amendment Act (DBE, 2007) indicates the areas that need to be improved by schools and supported by districts. These areas include implementing all programmes relevant to the improvement of teaching and learning, effective curriculum delivery, managing and providing leadership for all teachers and support staff, and management and effective use of all learning support materials and other academically related resources.

The contents of the above-mentioned Act do not clearly indicate how districts are expected to support instructional leadership by school principals to improve and promote teaching and learning in South Africa's schools.

2.5.2.5 **The Guideline for the Standard of Principalship in South Africa**

The office of the head of a school has been ignored for a long time and has not received the attention it deserves with regard to specific standards and competencies expected from the office in relation to the delivery of quality teaching and learning. Although few definitions and expectations are outlined in other regulatory documents, such as the Personnel Administrative Measures and Integrated Quality Management System, more needs to be done to define and develop an understanding of what South Africa expects of those individuals entrusted with the leadership of an important institution.

Bush (2012) concurs that the core purpose of the office of the principal is to provide effective and efficient leadership in all areas of the school in order to create conditions favourable to high quality teaching and learning, thereby promoting the highest standards of learner attainment. Based on this requirement, the DBE developed a draft document called The Guideline for the Standard of Principalship in South Africa, which clearly defines the role and competencies expected of a school principal. According to the DBE (2015b), the principal is expected to, firstly, effectively promote the delivery of the best quality teaching and learning in order for learners to obtain the highest levels of performance, not only for their own good, but also for the community in general. Secondly, s/he has to create a safe, cultivating and caring learning environment to enable effective teaching and learning to take place. Thirdly, s/he has a fundamental responsibility to implement school plans and policies that permit the school to translate its vision and mission into visible actions. Fourthly, it is mandatory for the principal to establish and strengthen communication among his/her staff and the community at large. Lastly, it is expected of the principal to provide purposeful and convincing leadership for the school in order to ensure that the school achieves its curriculum aims and goals.

Once again, what is clearly missing in the legislation is an in-depth description of the role districts play to support principals to improve teaching and learning, particularly as

instructional leaders. The policy focuses mainly on what South Africa expects of a school principal to improve teaching and learning.

2.5.2.6 **The Tirisano policy**

One of the important policy documents the South African government introduced regarding leadership is called Tirisano. This is a plan of action embarked upon by the South African government to mobilise citizens to build an education system for the 21st century. In doing so, the call to action attempted to address major problems facing the Department of Education, for example, the dysfunctional state of education, high levels of illiteracy, crime, drug usage, the plague of HIV/AIDS and violence (DBE, 2000). In South Africa, an increase in the number of dysfunctional schools prompted the government to introduce guidelines on leadership to assist school leaders and policy implementers to improve school environments, so that effective teaching and learning can take place.

In the Tirisano implementation plan (DBE, 2000), one of the seven projects concerns leadership of schools specifically, by emphasising the promotion of a common vision and quality teaching and learning, as well as the creation of a climate conducive to learning and teachers' professional growth. Although the policy is not specific to the instructional leadership role, districts are seen to play a critical role in promoting and supporting instruction. Bartoletti and Connelly (2013) are of the opinion that instructional leadership is second only to classroom instruction as a factor that contributes to what learners learn. Not much insight relating to districts as support hubs for schools, and support for principals as instructional leaders, is provided in the Tirisano document. The Tirisano document is the policy framework designed for all stakeholders in education, to galvanise support for promoting a sound culture of teaching and learning.

2.5.2.7 **National Curriculum Statement Policy**

According to the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) policy (DBE, 2011a), principals are expected to possess adequate knowledge of the curriculum, to lead by being creative and to promote harmony and a sound work ethic among staff. This policy provides for the

implementation and development of a curriculum for all schools, from Grade R to Grade 12. The policy is mainly learner-centred, with a strong focus on learners' skills, knowledge and values.

Advocates of curriculum policy view the policy as fundamental for creating unity in teaching and learning. The NCS sets out intentions for policy implementers. Therefore, it guides and informs teachers in their planning, proposes how teaching may be informed by particular principles and how teachers and schools may plan. It also guides and informs teachers and managers about the envisaged goals and the school-based assessment requirements for each subject. Above all, the NCS requires specific tasks to be performed in relation to planning. For example, there must be a subject framework in place to assist in the demarcation of content, such as the annual teaching plan.

It is important for district management to ensure that there are systems in place that will help realise the above policy intentions through effective implementation (DBE, 2008). Although covertly stated, the NCS describes the kinds of teachers, managers and leaders of the curriculum required to implement the aims and objectives as envisaged. It therefore sets an agenda for management, training and selection of teachers, in which processes managers play a critical role.

2.5.2.8 The Norms and Standards for Educators Policy

The Norms and Standards for Educators Policy promotes the seven roles of teachers, namely, researcher, lifelong learner, assessor, mediator, designer and, most importantly in this instance, leader and manager who develops appropriate levels of professionalism in the teaching fraternity (DBE, 2000). The policy emphasises the importance of leadership for improving teaching and learning. Therefore, it is expected of all leaders at the level of the district make appropriate decisions, to manage and lead the curriculum in a way that would assist the Department to achieve goals for learners and take part in all school decision-making structures. This policy also, indirectly, addresses the roles and responsibilities of district officials, particularly with respect to the support the districts are expected to provide to schools.

2.5.2.9 **Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts**

According to a Policy on the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of Education Districts (DBE, 2013) districts still lack exclusive powers over the management of schools, but operate in terms of national and provincial legislation to deliver education of high quality. Though the policy does not overtly refer to an instructional leadership role by the district, it indicates a role districts must play in relation to teaching and learning activities.

Districts play an important role in improving instructional leaders' skills and knowledge in relation to learner performance. Sherer (2008) indicates that setting of structures to support instructional leadership, is important for enhancing staff development and communication. In the study conducted by Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) it was found that formal structures at the level of districts were not as effective as they should be in terms of policy directives. Despite this finding, studies have been limited on the subject of the role structures play in improving performance, hence this study proposes that further studies examine the availability and impact of structures at the level of districts that influence effective learning.

2.6 DISTRICT-BASED STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

Teacher quality is an important matter that no education system, regardless of the circumstances, can overlook. It is important to note, therefore, that instructional leadership is equally important, due to its role in supporting effective curriculum delivery. This part of the research study attempts to respond to the research question relating to the existence of structures and the role of supporting instruction played by those involved at the district level. Figure 2.2 below sets out districts' organogram.
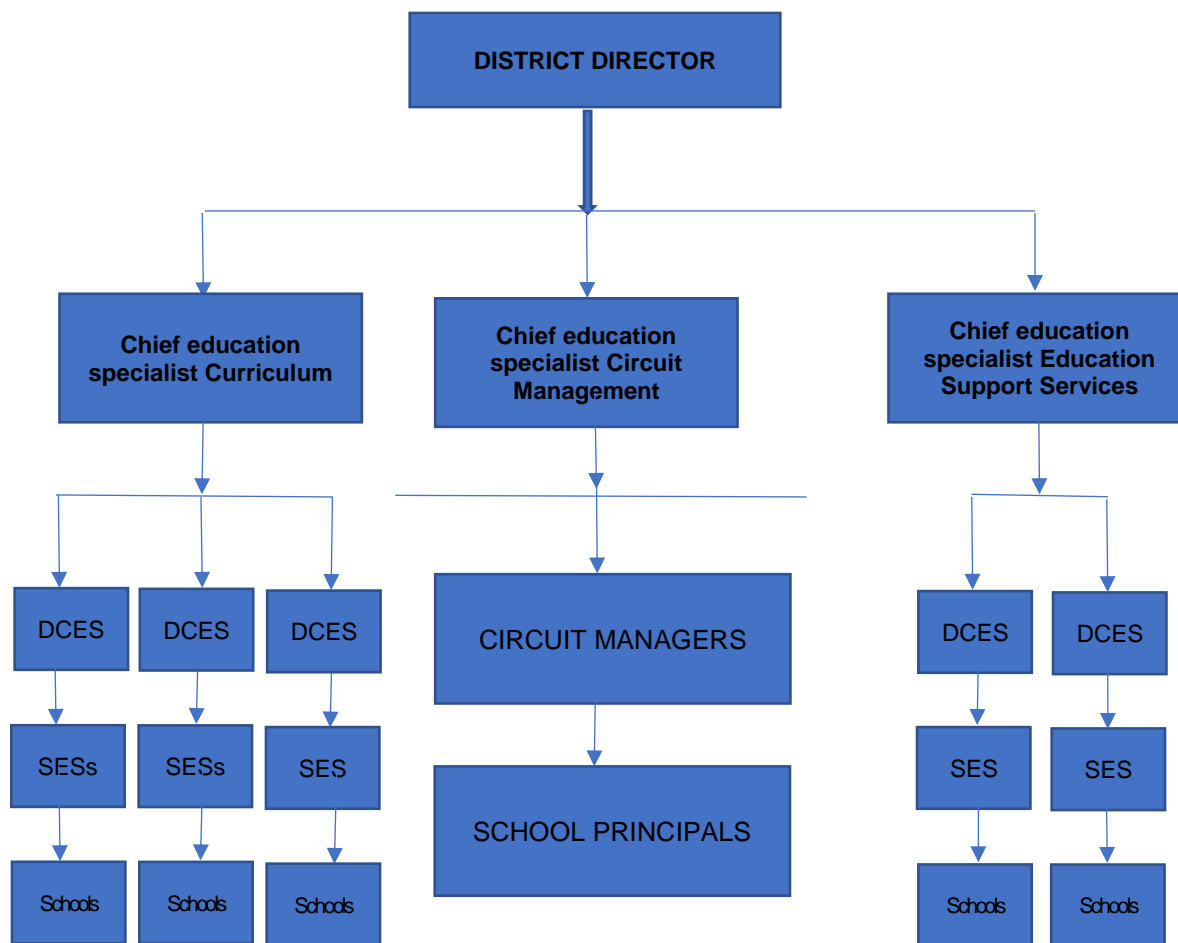
Legend: DCES – Deputy chief education specialist; SES – Senior Education Specialist

Figure 2.2: Organogram for instructional leadership of schools in South Africa

2.6.1   Curriculum support section by subject advisors

According to the Education Laws Amendment Act (DBE, 2007), personnel responsible for the execution of support programmes related to instruction provide this support by visiting schools regularly to demonstrate lessons to all teachers. This support is mainly executed through mini-workshops or direct discussions about lessons. There are other areas of support that curriculum sections of districts could provide to schools, such as supervision, monitoring, evaluation of the implementation of the curriculum, providing resources to schools, developmental training for teachers and ensuring that there is quality assessment of learners (DBE, 2012).

The section of the district in charge of curriculum implementation and leadership comprises the chief education specialist, as head of curriculum, and deputy chief education specialists, as second in charge of curriculum and responsible for the guidance and leadership of all staff and senior education specialists, who are responsible for related subjects. These senior education specialists are responsible for the effectiveness of the teachers and heads of departments of various subject groupings or subjects. It must be noted that the district director remains the chief leader of the curriculum in the district by virtue of his/her position as the head of the district.

According to the DBE (1998: 3c-16), the following are legislated functions and responsibilities of the district-based curriculum section: providing an environment that creates and fosters commitment, assisting teachers to identify, assess and meet the needs of learners, disseminating and encouraging the application of good practices in all areas of work, implementing systems and structures and presenting innovative ideas. Furthermore, the DBE (2013) provides that districts' curriculum sections assist schools with the implementation of national and provincial policies, and supply schools with correct learner and teacher support material for improving teaching and learning.

2.6.2 Leadership, management and governance section by circuit managers

Broadly defined, the concept of circuit manager describes the head of a circuit office who expedites prescribed functions using powers delegated to him/her by the district director (DBE, 2012: 11). However, the names given to these officials differ from one province to another, as illustrated in Table 2.3, which is adapted from DBE (2012).

Table 2.3: Terms used for officials' positions in different provinces

Province	Name of head of circuit
Eastern Cape	Circuit manager
Free State	Circuit manager
North West	Institutional support coordinator (ISC)
Gauteng	Institutional development and support officer (IDSO)
Western Cape	Circuit manager
Limpopo	Circuit manager
Mpumalanga	Circuit manager
Northern Cape	Circuit manager

According to the DBE (2012), several key performance areas are attached to the circuit manager's roles, including monitoring curriculum delivery by bringing all curriculum challenges picked up at the schools to the attention of the curriculum advisors. It is also within the circuit manager's role to develop staff, oversee office administration, provide administration services to schools, provide management support to schools by resolving all management problems encountered by the school principals and manage all the recovery plans in the circuit.

Accordingly, it is clear that there is a need to clarify specific instructional leadership practices districts are expected to implement, in order to improve teaching and learning. It is the intention of this study, therefore, to explore, among other matters, how officials, such as circuit managers, go about supporting the instructional leadership role of principals.

Schools require effective leadership and management to support and improve teaching and learning, and to ensure that teachers and principals are fully trained in curriculum delivery and leadership. However, this support requires the involvement of other district-based middle and senior leadership teams (Bush, 2007). In this regard, the extent to

which school leaders are able to adjust policies and develop substitute approaches, informed by schools' visions and missions, and supported and monitored by district officials, is of paramount importance. Bergeson and Heuschel (2004) contend that the district's leadership is expected to develop and monitor policies to ensure coherence among all schools and focus on quality teaching and support. The two scholars furthermore indicate that it is important for districts to support teaching and learning by ensuring that schools are provided with adequate and relevant resources to improve learning.

According to the DBE (1998), the key responsibilities listed below are attached to a section in charge of the leadership, management, and governance of curriculum delivery at all schools. It is the responsibility of this section at the level of a district to assist in the placement and appointment of staff at all schools to support teaching and learning, provide curriculum and career counselling to teachers and learners to improve instruction, in addition to ensuring that there are harmonious relations between and among school-based staff and parents in the promotion of effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the leadership, management, and governance section at the district supports schools in the monitoring and recording of learners' progress in the attainment of set goals, create support programmes for improving mathematics and language knowledge and skills, facilitate curriculum leadership regarding the wider curriculum, support management and development at all schools and support principals and teachers in learner assessment.

According to the DBE (2012) district officials are expected to support and monitor teaching and learning in relation to curriculum guidelines to improve teaching and learning. These roles include ensuring that subject advisors frequently visit schools for support purposes, ensuring that there are systems and structures at schools to support curriculum implementation and improve teaching and learning, as well as support teachers in identifying learner needs for curriculum support. Furthermore, it is expected of district officials to provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning for all teachers and learners and to promote, facilitate and monitor the implementation of

general education and training, further education and training, and early childhood development curriculum policies with the aim of improving teaching and learning.

Given the nature of our schools and their capacity to deliver an effective curriculum, Handler (2010) concludes that district officials need to possess a comprehensive understanding of the subject content and methodologies applicable to communicating subject matter to learners. Handler's research, further, indicates that it is important for the (instructional) leader to possess not only comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum, but also a system-wide comprehension of the curriculum.

Staff development and support are among the many functions of an instructional leader and the performance of these functions by circuit managers qualifies them to be instructional leaders (Hallinger and Heck, 2010). Furthermore, the enactment of the role of an instructional leader by circuit managers emphasises the complex and dynamic nature of this position.

2.6.3   District teacher-development section

Staff development is essential in all schools for implementing an effective curriculum and for improving teaching and learning. Principals and teachers have a significant role in and influence on school culture and the quality of learning (Harwell, 2003). The focal point of teachers' development is that curricular and instructional strategies have a considerable effect on learning (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Teacher development is done in such a way that it deepens the teachers' and principals' knowledge of a subject, sharpens leadership and management skills and keeps principals updated regarding developments around instructional leadership. The prime strategic reason for teacher development programmes is to strengthen the capacity of teachers and principals. Harwell (2003) agrees that professional development needs to focus on matters directly hampering effective implementation of the curriculum, and that the developmental programme should avoid providing information that is not beneficial to principals and teachers.

In order to strengthen teacher development further, the DBE (2011b) proposes the introduction of professional learning communities, better known as PLCs, as structures

within teacher development centres to strengthen professionalism in education. Croft *et al.* (2010) suggest that, in order to address the many challenges faced by the Department of Education in improving teaching and learning, particularly in support of instructional leadership, the introduction and full support of PLCs is of paramount importance. These scholars suggest certain activities to support teacher development, with reference to instructional leadership by the principal.

These activities include engaging in long-term planning for human capital development, especially by principals, supporting schools (principals) by providing support and evaluation, assisting principals to identify effective instructional leaders, supporting the development and enhancement of principals' planning and supporting skills in curriculum-related matters, and helping principals create or develop policies to improve their skills as instructional leaders. Researchers have constantly emphasised the importance of empowering teachers through a variety of means, including collaboration and development of a culture valuing shared responsibilities and values, through PLCs. The PLC model is based on two basic assumptions, as Caena (2011: 5) proposes: The idea of knowledge and learning as embedded in social contexts and experiences and promoted through interactive, reflective exchanges; and the assumption that participation in a PLC leads to changes in teaching practices and enhancement of student learning.

According to the Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DBE, 2011b), teacher development centres exist to help teachers (through PLCs) to integrate their professional experience and knowledge with current research findings regarding content and practice. The benefits of PLCs include the development of expertise by novice teachers in the analysis of learner results informed by evidence-based assessments, such as the NSC and the Annual National Assessment. Other benefits include determining their own developmental needs, developing an understanding of and using the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS), working together to learn how to utilise and interpret curriculum support materials and, finally, working together and learning from other colleagues' good practices. An instructional leadership strategy, particularly of the principal, goes beyond content and begins to address the gaps experienced by teachers in trying to improve

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teaching and learning. Hence, it is important for teachers' content training to guide them in relevant methodological aspects, so that, when they return to class, they are different persons in terms of curriculum delivery and they know what part of the content needs to be taught in accordance with the annual teaching plan.

2.7   IMPLICATIONS OF DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Caldwell (2002) and Hallinger (2010) indicate that schools, as organisations, have become less in need of control and more in need of support and capacity development. This view implies that schools need the support of the Department of Education in their endeavour to improve learner performance. The tiers of the Department that are closest to schools and well placed to provide the necessary support are circuit and district offices. Togneri and Anderson (2003: 23) and Anderson (2003: 8-11) provide valuable information with regard to the role of circuits, district offices and officials in providing support and school development initiatives, which, in turn, contribute to the improvement of school performance. They suggest accountability systems, curricular goals, the district's vision, and coherent curricular targets are some of the activities districts need to capacitate principals on to support instructional leadership.

Districts must move beyond the traditional once-off-workshop approach to professional development, and must put coherent, district-organised strategies in place to improve instruction. Districts must also ensure that there is a connection between school-based professional development activities and district-level professional development. The goals of the district regarding learner performance should be directly connected to the school-level practices and the needs of the learners. Districts should increase instructional leadership by building well-trained cadres of instructional experts between the teacher and principal corps. This view emphasises the fact that principals are not expected to lead alone and neither are teachers expected to work in isolation.

Fostering networks of instructionally proficient principals and teacher leaders (e.g. content specialists and mentor teachers) may enable districts to increase their capacity to improve instructional practice. Novice teachers need mentoring and the district has the obligation to provide support systems for these new teachers. In order for the district to provide the

necessary support to schools, strategic allocation of financial resources is imperative. Anderson (2003: 11) refers to this as, "investment in instructional leadership development at the school and district levels". Anderson (2003) adds that one of the hallmarks of districts that have succeeded in moving from low to high performance in terms of learner performance is an intensive, long-term investment in developing instructional leadership capacity at the school and at the district level.

Drawing from the above information, the circuit manager's support is, therefore, important for the holistic development of schools. Newman, King and Young (2001) emphasise the concepts of programme coherence, alignment and coordination of the curriculum. They argue against schools and districts/circuits acting independently. Their contention is that unrelated and unfocused school development programmes may have a negative impact on the holistic development of the school. The circuit managers should, therefore, provide support systems and school development models that enable principals and teachers to align and coordinate their school development plans for the holistic growth of their schools.

2.8   SUMMARY

Chapter 2 examined the literature related to the research objectives and unravelled, among other facets of the study, the theoretical framework for instructional leadership. It also examined the views surrounding district-level policy and practices and their bearing on school principals' instructional leadership processes, the types of practices existing at national, provincial, departmental, district and, to some extent, school levels, in support of instructional leadership by school principals. Furthermore, the way district-level policies and practices foster instructional leadership in schools was also examined. Chapter 3 will examine the research design and methodology adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

My quest to understand district-level policies and practices influencing school principals' instructional leadership practices guided me to opt for an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, utilising a questionnaire and individual one-on-one interviews as data collection tools. This chapter presents a comprehensive description of the research methodology adopted for this study, starting with a brief explanation and justification of the research paradigm, research design, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, data analysis method and ethical considerations.

3.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of this study was to investigate the district-level policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa. As indicated in Chapter 1, the following four research questions guided the study:

- What is the district's policy and regulatory framework for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?
- What are the district-level structures for supporting instructional leadership by school principals?
- What kinds of practices exist at the district level to support school principals' instructional leadership?
- How can the policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by districts be explained?

The broad objectives that guided this study were, firstly, investigation and identification of the type of policies at the level of districts that support instructional leadership by school principals; secondly, investigation of the type of structures at the level of districts to support the work of principals as instructional leaders; thirdly, investigation and identification of the kind of practices at the level of education district that supports the instructional leadership work of the school principal; and fourthly, explanation of the

implications for implementing the type of policies and kind of practices that support instructional leadership by school principals.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Guided by this study's research question, I had to study literature appropriate to the research paradigm, leading to the final selection of a paradigm relevant to my study. Researchers, such as Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), view a research paradigm as the worldview that guides research. This view had been emphasised earlier by Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark and Petska (2005), who suggest that it is important to place the paradigm that underlies the method or theoretical lens in research. The particular focus of the worldview of this research was on district policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. Pragmatism, as the chosen research paradigm for this study, was informed by the writing of Feilzer (2010), who views pragmatism as a commonly used approach associated with mixed methods research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) not only concur, but indicate that pragmatism focuses on solving practical research problems, rather than concerning itself with assumptions about the nature of knowledge. Earlier writers had viewed pragmatism important for mixed methods, due to its ability to fuse different approaches, challenging what is regarded as sterile and unproductive dualism (Maxcy, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). While Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) concur with other writers' views, the two researchers view pragmatism as an outcome-based approach, with particular focus on communication and shared meaning-making to create practical solutions for social problems. The study conducted by Feilzer, 2010: 9) reveals that pragmatism can be used, not only for deductive research designs, but also for grounded inductive research. The paradigm chosen for this study, pragmatism, helped me produce an integrated methodology for this study, and guided my understanding of the population under study and the importance of being continuously guided by my research questions.

In the words of Hanson (2008), pragmatism touches on the quantitative and qualitative divides and suggests that the focal point of research is whether it helped the researcher to find out what he/she wanted in research. Therefore, the key point in this research was

to establish whether districts had policies and practices in place to support instructional leadership by school principals, and if they did, what the implications for implementation are. Using pragmatism helped in providing understanding of how research needed to be conducted on support for instructional leadership by school principals, contribute to existing knowledge, and provide suggestions on how pragmatism supports research on district policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership. A mixed methods approach can facilitate answering practical research questions.

3.4 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to strengthen, understand and interpret this study's findings, and cultivate ideas for future studies, a mixed methods approach was found more suitable to investigate district-level policies and practices supporting instructional leadership by school principals, than a purely quantitative or qualitative approach. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) indicate that in a mixed methods approach, and the nature of the research questions, initiate the choice of the methods to be used. Nieuwenhuis (2012) defines mixed methods research as a procedure of mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in order to complement the advantages of each of the two approaches to respond to research questions. Hesse-Biber (2012) views this method as multi-methods, on account of it not being based on one approach, but involving a combination of the two research approaches.

In this study, a quantitative approach was used to identify and thoroughly investigate the kind of practices and activities at the level of districts that were viewed to be supporting instructional leadership by school principals. The qualitative approach explored the level of knowledge and experiences of participants, of the kind of policies and structures at the level of the education district that support instructional leadership by school principals. Both approaches are intended to strengthen and complement each other's findings. Peter (2010) notes that integration of quantitative and qualitative methods allows the researcher to obtain an alternative perspective from either of the two approaches, and thus increases the validity of the inferences made. Hence, the use of both quantitative and qualitative tools facilitated a high level of flexibility in this study, because I was able to have face-to-

face contact with participants in their own environments, where I collected rich data that assisted me in answering the research questions of this study. Clark and Creswell (2014) also note the adequacy of both quantitative and qualitative in order for the researcher to answer the research questions. A variety of research designs, such as explanatory sequential, convergent and exploratory sequential, are used in mixed methods approaches. Therefore, this study adopted the explanatory sequential design, which is discussed in the next section.

3.5 MIXED METHODS RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was designed to investigate district-level policy and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. The design connects the theoretical foundations and the methodological assumptions of the study, whilst preserving its validity and authenticity, and, thus, a sequential explanatory design was used (Creswell, 2007).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 166) state that a research design refers to a plan for selecting the subjects, the research sites, data to be collected and analysis procedures to address the research questions. I chose the explanatory sequential research design in order to respond to research questions effectively. The study was carried out in three districts in South Africa, namely, Johannesburg South, Sedibeng West, and Lejweleputswa. It involved the collection of quantitative data using a survey instrument, and it was followed by a qualitative data collection process involving interviews. The intention was to use qualitative results to clarify the quantitative results, which would enable me to interpret and explain relationships among variables in this study, which are policy, practice and instructional leadership as they relate to school principals. Creswell (2003) posits that this procedure of collecting data, especially for a mixed methods study, is generally popular and grounded in the fact that the qualitative data is collected after the quantitative phase for purposes of exploration of certain issues relating to the study. The quantitative and qualitative data were not mixed during the analysis process, but only at the interpretation of findings stage. This approach is supported by Kombo and Tromp (2009) and Clark and Creswell (2014), who view research design as the bond that holds together the research study through collection, analyses and interpretation of data. Like

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any other research approach, the use of the explanatory sequential design in this study faced its own challenges during the collection of data, such as time and resource constraints, decisions about what issues to follow up in the second phase, and selecting participants. However, I remained guided by the research questions and objectives, though I was aware of the issues emerging from the first phase when I had to determine the path interviews had to follow, even though the schedules were predetermined.

3.5.1   Research site

In this study, the research sites selected were district offices, and primary and secondary schools in three districts: Johannesburg South and Sedibeng West, both in Gauteng province, and Lejweleputswa in the Free State. The careful selection of research sites for this study was motivated by Kombo and Tromp (2009), who cite that the selection of sites determines the significance of the data collected. Therefore, the districts and schools were selected on the basis of convenience sampling, accessibility and availability. Districts are seen as education centres, doing work on behalf of provincial education departments, and are designed to be overseers of effective management of schools for improved teaching and learning. The districts selected comprised highly influential personnel, such as district directors, chief education specialists, circuit managers, and deputy chief education specialists responsible for curriculum delivery. These officials, by virtue of their positions, are regarded key in the education sector for providing support to school principals to improve learning.

All districts were accessible, hence, it was possible to purposefully select participants for this study. For three successive years two of the three selected districts (Johannesburg South and Lejweleputswa) featured among the top three achieving districts in their respective provinces in the National Senior Certificate and Annual National Assessment examinations.

3.5.2   Population

Lior (2012) asserts that a population of a research study refers to a group of people or events relevant to the study that a researcher wants to describe and understand. A

population is simply understood to be the larger group from which the researcher wants to generalise. Accordingly, Snelson (2016) concurs that a population comprises all those who belong to a particular category or events and who conform to particular criteria for the purpose of generalisation. The population is a specific group of people to whom findings may refer. In the current study, the population included three selected education districts officials and principals in South Africa, namely, Johannesburg South, Sedibeng West and Lejweleputswa.

The total population size was 199 representatives of three education districts and one circuit in each of the identified education districts across two provinces (Gauteng and Free State). The common defining feature of the selected population was that district officials had to be senior officials, serving in the district management teams working directly with principals on instructional leadership matters. The target population included district directors of the three participating districts, circuit managers, chief education specialists for curriculum and governance, and deputy chief education specialists responsible for curriculum management.

The target population of districts and school leaders was found helpful in providing data pertaining to districts' support for instructional leadership by school principals. I was interested in finding out what types of practices district officials were involved in and how they went about supporting instructional leadership by school principals. In relation to the selected principals, I also investigated how such support provided by district officials was received by school principals to help them improve teaching and learning standards at their schools.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The study used a questionnaire survey as data collection instrument in the first phase of the study. The questionnaire consisted of closed questions. The data collection procedure was influenced by views of Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007), who maintain that mixed methods studies often use surveys to collect data concerning a population by gathering numerical data and practices. In this study, the quantitative data gathered and its subsequent analysis provided me with an overall understanding of the research

problem, that is, whether district-level policies and practices, if they existed, influenced the practices of instructional leadership by school principals.

3.6.1 Questionnaire administration (quantitative phase)

In Creswell's view (2012), the process of collecting quantitative data is influenced by more than collecting data. For example, as a researcher I must decide who my participants are and what type of information is needed for my research. In this study, data was gathered from sampled district officials, primary and secondary school principals in the three identified districts. The questionnaire that was distributed was mainly descriptive in nature and intended to determine the level of knowledge among participants of instructional leadership practices to improve teaching and learning. The questionnaire survey was self-administered to districts and school-based participants. Due to my direct interaction with participants in this study, I developed professional relationships with participants, which assisted me to gain their commitment to the process. All participants responded to questions as tabled before them in their own time, without feeling compelled; where necessary, others asked me to wait while they responded to the questions. The average time it took to complete the questioning was 20-25 minutes.

Though the sample size was big, the questions were structured in a way that it would be easy for me to analyse the answers. Questions were structured in a manner that enabled easy organisation and generation of frequencies from responses by participants. Maree (2012) argues that the value of thorough preparation of a questionnaire is of the essence, to eliminate any possible confusion and time-constraint factors during the completion and distribution thereof. This factor was addressed in the preparatory phase and compensated immensely during the analysis phase, which became comprehensible and easy to manage.

The survey instrument comprised two sections. Section A included biographic information, and Section B comprised 10 closed-ended questions. The questions in Section B required responses on a five-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with uncertain in the middle (3), or, also on a five-point scale, critical (5) to not very important (1) with fairly important (3) in the middle.

3.6.2   Sampling procedure

According to Teddlie and Yu (2007) sampling is defined as the process of selecting units, for example, groups of individuals or institutions, with the specific intention of answering research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) refer to sampling as the selection of representatives of the target population and, for this study, ensuring that representation of different leaders is achieved. For the quantitative research, systematic sampling was used to identify participants, such as district directors, chief education specialists, deputy chief education specialists responsible for curriculum, circuit managers, and primary and secondary school principals, with each district official and school principal possessing at least five years experience in the position of district or school leadership. Furthermore, in each district, a circuit with 10 or more primary and secondary schools was chosen, and, hence, a circuit was selected from each of the three districts. In this way, the possibility of failing to have adequate representation of participants was controlled.

Table 3.1 shows the representation of different categories of participants.

Table 3.1: Representation of different categories of participants

Category of leader	Population	Number	Representation in terms of percentage
District directors	3	3	1.5
Chief education specialists	9	6	3
Deputy chief education specialists	12	6	3
Circuit managers	16	15	7.5
Primary school principals	95	30	15
Secondary school principals	64	30	15
TOTAL	199	90	45.2

Table 3.1 shows that more principals of schools than district-based officials were involved, because I intended to ask the recipients of support provided by districts, that is, principals of schools, to evaluate the support provided by districts, to establish whether there exist policies and practices at the level of the district that support instructional leadership by school principals. The reason I selected one director from each of the three participating districts, and two chief education specialists and two deputy chief education specialists from each district, was because of the nature of their areas of responsibility, namely, that of ensuring that there are policies and practices in place to support instructional leadership by school principals. Due to an unequal number of circuit managers in the selected districts, proportional allocation was used and, hence, 10 were selected from Lejweleputswa, three from Johannesburg South and two from Sedibeng West.

Figure 3.1 summarises and illustrates the overall sampling process as adopted by the study.
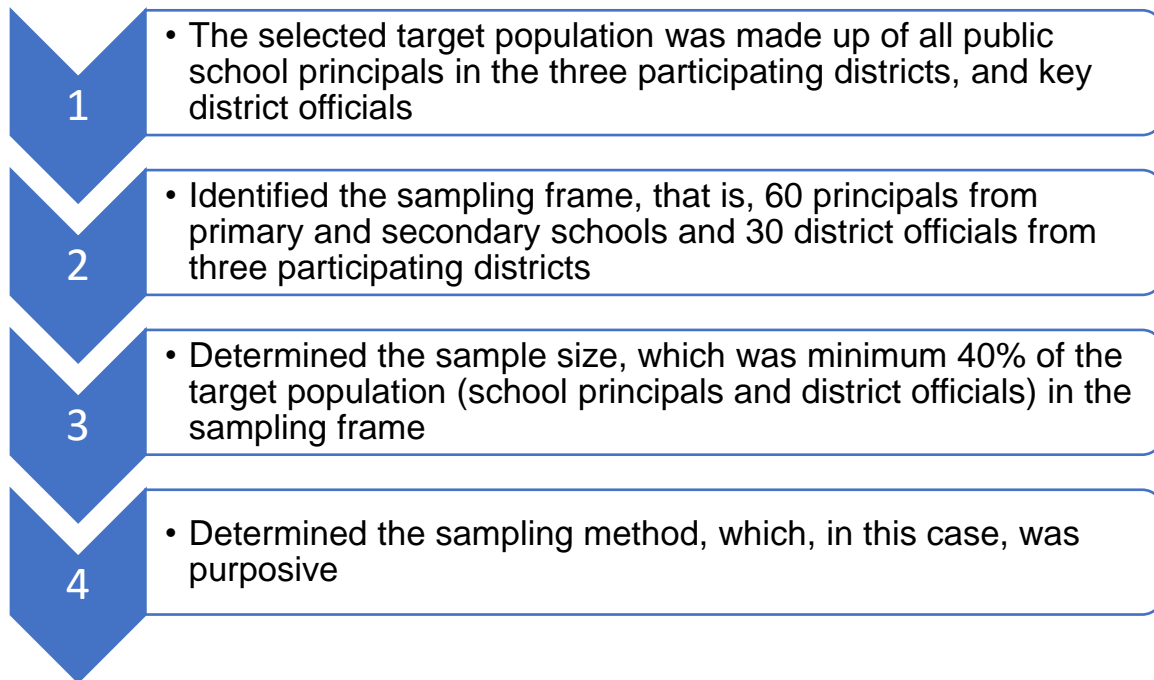
Figure 3.1: Graphic representation of the sampling process adopted

3.6.3   Pilot study

I conducted a pilot study to ensure that the accuracy and validity of the questionnaire were beyond reproach. All closed-ended questions were screened, and irrelevant questions were discarded during the pilot phase in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the study. The pilot study was done in Fezile Dabi education district in the Free State, which was not one of the three districts participating in the study. Four district officials and six school principals took part in the pilot study, and the contributions made by participants and the results thereof improved the quality, reliability and validity of the study. The pilot led to the introduction of a parallel five-point Likert scale that required participants to indicate the nature of their choices, on a scale ranging from critical to not very important.

Since interviews formed part of the research study, I then subjected at least two district officials and two principals in Fezile Dabi to the interview process, to test the questions. All participants in the pilot study were aware that they participated for the purpose of testing the validity, accuracy and reliability of the study. The time for interviews was set

at 30 minutes each, and that allowed me to discuss inputs with participants. The pilot succeeded in assisting me to improve my listening and questioning technique in order to gather rich data for the study.

3.6.4   Interviews (qualitative phase)

According to Alshengeeti (2014), using interviews in research prevents the researcher from viewing humans as beings that can be manipulated, and data as external to individuals. In an attempt to collect and analyse adequate data, interviews were also utilised, and this data enabled me to gain insight into policies at the level of districts that support instructional leadership by school principals. Furthermore, the interviews sought to extract information from participants in relation to the level of monitoring by districts through support visits to schools, the nature of development programmes offered by districts, the extent to which communication of the district vision is done to support instructional leadership, and the use of resources by districts to support instructional leadership by school principals.

This process also helped me understand how officials at the level of districts, who are entrusted with the responsibility of supporting instructional leadership by school principals, go about supporting principals, what capacities they possess for executing their responsibilities, and the nature of structures that exist at district level to support instructional leadership by school principals.

Given the nature of information required for this study, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used, because I needed clarity on certain issues. The interviews helped me to probe certain responses. Though interviews were sometimes time consuming, participants were willing to proceed, because, prior to the interviews, I had provided participants with a document (marked as Annexure Q), setting out the outline of the interview and purpose of the research. All interviews were carried out after working hours, usually between 16:00 and 17:00, as this time suited the participants best.

The interviews helped me respond to the first and second research questions on policies and structures intended to support instructional leadership by school principals. The

average time it took to complete the questioning was 30 minutes and this limitation eliminated trivial aspects unrelated to the study. Maree (2012) considers such interviews as important in a research project, because they help the researcher to validate data emerging from other data sources. The qualitative data strengthened the findings gathered during the questionnaire survey phase. In addition, qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained some of the statistical results obtained in the first phase, by explaining participants' views extensively. Each interview I conducted was transcribed for referencing purposes and so that I could draw conclusions at the end of the study.

Relatively small samples are recommended, especially in qualitative research using interviews. As a result, purposive sampling was found to be beneficial in this phase of the study for selecting participants who could provide in-depth information on aspects related to support for instructional leadership by school principals. Kombo and Tromp (2009) advocate for the use of purposive sampling, on the basis that it enables researchers to target a specific group of people who might be relevant and helpful to obtain specific information.

3.6.4.1 **Sampling procedure**

According to Kombo and Tromp (2009), it is advisable in a research study of this nature to target a group of participants who will provide reliable and specific information needed for the success of the research. Therefore, I decided to use purposive sampling; firstly, because it helped me select information that was rich for analysis at a later stage; secondly, it helped me choose participants with the relevant and right information needed for the study. In order to avoid sampling bias, I targeted participants from each category of leaders at least once. In this instance, I selected three district officials, of which one was the district director, at least the circuit manager and deputy chief education specialists at participating districts, and three principals from primary schools and three from secondary schools as part of the interview process. One of the defining criteria in the selection process was using the information as provided in the questionnaire, under both Sections A and B: I started by identifying participants at the level of districts with at least a qualification in leadership, knowledge of policies governing curriculum delivery,

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knowledge of structures and those participating in such structures, with 10 or more years of experience at the district level, and supporting principals directly.

A 30-minute interview helped me obtain information from participants about their knowledge of policies at the level of districts that support instructional leadership by school principals and the manner in which districts use the policies, practices and structures at their disposal for support purposes.

The depth of responses varied from one participant to another, however, most were keen to provide valuable information. They responded to questions eagerly, by responding to questions before they had been posed. Their responses showed their experience and knowledge of the sector they operated in. Data collection during in this phase involved audio-taping interviews after consent from all selected participants had been obtained.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

According to Martin and Gaskell (2000), data analysis involves a process that condenses the density of the information acquired and enables interpretation of the data, in order to respond to the main research question. Maree (2012) concurs and advocates that raw data lacks meaning until it is subjected to vigorous analysis to make it more comprehensible. After collecting data through quantitative and qualitative means, I reflected on my research questions and objectives in order to assign worth and meaning to the research. Data collected during the quantitative phase were analysed first, and this allowed me to build the process of collecting and analysing qualitative data.

3.7.1   Data analysis of first phase

For the quantitative phase, the analysis was based on the type of questions that were posed and the responses that were elicited from the participants in the study. It is important to note that the demographic questions were mostly used for statistical purposes. The statistical information was embellished by using inferential statistical analysis, and deductive reasoning led to findings and, ultimately, to the conclusions.

Kombo and Tromp (2009) regard data analysis as a well-planned process that includes examination of what has been collected, to yield deductions and inferences.

Included in the demographics section were questions related to number of years of experience in teaching, and leadership positions. These items provided me with data that were later used to purposefully select participants for the second phase of the study.

The questions in Section B (closed-ended Likert-scale-type questions) provided participants with a five-point scale, namely, strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with uncertain in the middle (3). The numerical values that were assigned to the responses to the Likert-scale questions allowed me to analyse the data quantitatively. Using the deductive approach proposed by Clark and Creswell (2014), I was able to code the questionnaires, categorise and segment text, and highlight and group the data for ease of analysis and discussion. Questions were coded from 1 to 10 to ensure confidentiality.

Data were presented using the simple descriptive statistical methods of mode, mean and standard deviation, to organise and reduce large numbers, and to measure emerging themes and trends in instructional leadership practices. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) are of the opinion that these statistical methods are capable of transforming a set of numbers into indices that characterise the data. Disagreement and agreement on questions were easy to observe in the statistical results.

3.7.2   Data analysis of second phase

As stated by Gall *et al.* (2010), researchers can apply interpretational analysis, which involves identifying patterns, themes or constructs. Based on this assertion, I analysed the data from the individual one-on-one interview discussions in combination with the notes that I had taken during the interviews and categorised into relevant themes. I coded themes from the notes and transcripts of the interview sessions. As soon as data had been collected, the analysis process started to help me seek further information and clarity on ensuing interviews. I first mapped out the relationships of the textual data to the research questions by building clear pathways between the research questions and the

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coding. In other words, the information was categorised and irrelevant information was removed.

The interview questionnaire was structured into biographic information, instructional leadership practices employed or known to interviewees, and policies that guided instructional leadership practices by school principals. The interviews covered the way districts had crafted their vision, communicated the vision, supported instructional leadership and monitored instruction to support the instructional leadership practices of school principals. I ensured that each section contained specific question/s that was/were congruent to the main research questions. The participants were coded and responses from similar questions grouped, presented and analysed.

3.7.3   Validity and reliability

For the purpose of reliability of the research study, I used a pilot study to ensure that questions on policies and practices used by districts to support instructional leadership by school principals were consistent with the research objectives. During the pilot study questions were refined to avoid ambiguity and confusion of participants. This process of ensuring that the research is reliable is consistent with the advice by Cohen, Manion and Morison (2007), who view reliability as a measure used in research to ensure consistency over time and over a similar sample.

By ensuring that the data that were collected and analysed addressed the research questions, I ensured that both face validity and content validity were achieved. The pilot study also assisted me to strengthen the validity of the study through examination of a questionnaire before it was dispatched to participants. Using purposive sampling during the quantitative phase, and more than one data collection instrument, enhanced the validity of the study. More importantly, all participants were exposed to the same questionnaire, which means the findings can be generalised.

3.7.4 Credibility and trustworthiness

According to Rossman (2003), trustworthiness has to do with the credibility of the data collected. In this study, the use of audio-tapes and transcriptions of interviews preserve the full description of the participants' views and ensures that readers recognise and interpret experiences as encountered, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of data collected. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches in this research enabled me to achieve a convincing level of triangulation. I had to play audio-tapes several times before views or feelings by participants could be captured, so that I could present readers with accurate transcriptions, so that they can assess the accuracy of conclusions I reached.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this research study, the following ethical issues were considered relevant: seeking permission, ensuring confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and transparent sampling processes. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), ethical issues include the implications of involving human beings in any research; thus, my responsibilities in this research study were to ensure that principles of integrity, honesty and respect towards all participants were applied.

In ensuring that the integrity of all those involved in this research study would be considered, I sought permission from the University of Free State, and later, the Free State and Gauteng Departments of Education, to carry out the research study. In the applications for permission I set out the objectives of the research study, I explained who was to be involved, what the data gathering process would involve, who would have access to the data gathered and how participants would be protected. These institutions were also assured that the data generated would be used for the purpose stated in the consent form, and no one, except the researcher, would have access to the data or other identifiable information.

It was only after permission had been obtained that I started with the process of gathering data. In the applications, especially the application for ethical clearance from the

University, I undertook to uphold participants' rights and anonymity, and promised that participation would be voluntary. I ensured that all participants were involved willingly, by requiring them to indicate in advance that their participation in the research study was voluntary – their informed consent was secured. No inducement for participating in the research was offered, and I ensured all participants that the findings of the research would be communicated to districts for the purpose of closing identified gaps. All those who decided to withdraw from the study were allowed to do so without being coerced to stay on.

All consent forms were attached to each questionnaire, and only removed once data gathering had been completed. Pseudonyms and a coding system for the questionnaires, for example, QA to QK, were used to ensure absolute confidentiality, and occupational titles were used when referring to participants during the quantitative and qualitative stages. Special care was taken to prevent any form of harm to participants, by avoiding emotive questions.

In carrying out this study, I was aware of my dual role as a researcher and as a district official, even though I was not attached to one of the districts under study. I ensured that my role did not unduly influence the direction of the study, by remaining reflexive throughout the study. I was open about myself, my occupation and the reason I was conducting the research from the beginning.

All forms of deception were avoided by ensuring that every participant received detailed explanations with respect to the aims of the research and the reason for their selection to participate in the study. In the entire study, only issues pertaining to district-level policy and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals were raised, no specific reference was made to a particular district or institution.

To ensure that statistical measures were not applied inappropriately, I secured the skills of a statistician at the University of Free State to analyse the data. Data were analysed and reported as averages or group data, so that it would not be possible to identify individual participants by their responses.

3.9 SUMMARY

Chapter 3 discussed the method, design, and procedures used to conduct the research study on district-level policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. The overall design of this study was clearly a sequential exploratory mixed method case design involving three education districts. This implies that the research used both quantitative and qualitative data sets to assess the experiences and views of education district staff members on the extent to which they refer to district-level policies and standard practices or procedures in support of the school principals' instructional leadership. Analysis techniques and measures to ensure reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, appropriate sampling procedures and ethics were considered and examined. Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire, while qualitative data were gathered through individual one-on-one interviews. The sampling for this study was systematic and purposive. The next chapter will present and analyse the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings on district-level policy and practices supporting instructional leadership. Explanatory sequential mixed methodology research was employed to present answers to the study's research questions. The data presented below were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with the aim of providing answers to the following research questions:

- What is the district's policy and regulatory framework for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?
- What are the district-level structures for supporting schools' instructional leadership?
- What kinds of practices exist at the district level to support school principals' instructional leadership?
- How can the policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by districts be explained?

The study aimed at investigating district-level policy and practices supporting school principals' instructional leadership, as well as school principals' perceptions of the instructional leadership support at district level. Descriptive aspects will be presented in a stratified manner, focusing on demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by analyses of responses to the questionnaire survey

The presentation, analysis and interpretation of the findings were summarised, and codes emerging from the analysis were clustered into code families or, what Nieuwenhuis (2012) calls, superordinate themes, as I sought to highlight the overall findings of the study.

4.2 THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE FINDINGS

4.2.1   Biographical information of participants

In order to provide context for the results of the study, the questionnaire items included biographical items, such as gender, age, qualifications, teaching experience and leadership and managerial experience, which aimed to establish the characteristics of participants in this research. The results are summarised and presented in tables below. Table 4.1 presents the frequency distribution and percentage frequencies of a variety of traits according to the gender of participants in the sample.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants by gender

Basic demographic information (n=72)			
Variable (overall)	**Item**	**Frequency N (%)**	**Total (N)**
Gender	Male	48 (67)	72
	Female	24 (33)	
Age	Under 29	2 (3)	72
	29-39 years	35 (49)	
	40-49 years	33 (45)	
	50-59 years	2 (3)	
Leadership and management experience	Less than 5 years	2 (3)	72
	5-10 years	20 (28)	
	11-20 years	35 (49)	
	21-30 years	10 (14)	
	31-40 years	5 (7)	
Qualifications	B.Ed	21 (29)	72
	Education Diploma	10 (14)	
	Degree course	7 (15)	
	Honours	9 (13)	
	M.Ed	25 (35)	

(Source: Survey data)

As shown in Table 4.1 above, 72 participants who completed the questionnaire, out of 90 who were targeted in the study. The majority were male participants, 48 (67%), and 24 (33%) were female. The disparities between number of men and women is in line with what Paustian-Underdahl, Walker and Woehr (2014) established, namely, that women's underrepresentation in leadership positions was as a result of under-evaluation of women's effectiveness as leaders. Brinia (2012) found the role of women in the leadership of schools crucial in a dramatically changing society – women contribute to schools'

success in facing the demands of the schooling system. The reason for under-representation of women was found, among others, to be overt sex discrimination by departments of education. This could suggest why fewer women than men were in leadership positions at schools, and this finding warrants a study for further research.

The biggest age group was between 29 and 39 years, 33(45%). Only two participants were 29 years (3%). Between 40 and 49 years was represented by 35 (49%) of the participants. The 50 to 59 group comprised 2 (3%) participants. The reason for the two groups with the highest age group representation could be because of the common belief that age plays an important role in leadership, especially in schools. Although a study by Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin and Marx (2007) found no correlation between leadership approach and age, Shultz and Adams (2007) found that older leaders with extensive work experience are able to maintain high levels of leadership due to their desire to make an enduring impact in the future. Though the issue of age was not the focus in this study, it worthy of further investigation in the field of education.

Participants' leadership and management experience varied from less than 5, to 40 years. The highest number of participants had between 11 and 20 years experience (35, 49%), followed by participants with between 5 and 10 years (20, 28%); and 10 (14%) with 21-30 years. The fewest participants had between 30 and 40 years experience (5, 7%). Instructional leadership experience is vital for assisting teachers and schools in their instructional practices (Waters & Marzano, 2006). It could, thus, be argued that instructional leadership experience is important for the implementation of instructional leadership policies and practices to improve learning.

The highest qualifications were reported by participants with Master's degrees in Education, 25 (35%) – this group also had the highest representation in the study. The second-highest qualification was an Honours degree, reported by 9 (13%) participants; followed by the B.Ed degree, reported by 21 (29%) participants. In the fourth place in terms of frequency of qualification, were participants with B degrees, at 7 (15%) – this group was the smallest. A further 10 respondents had diplomas in education (14%). It is assumed that leaders who possess high qualifications possess the necessary knowledge of the work. In a study conducted by Roller *et al.* (1987, as cited by Mapetere, 2015) they

argue that the capacity of instructional leaders is improved by basic qualifications relating to leadership.

4.2.2 District practices to promote and support instructional leadership by school principals

The data gathered from the 72 questionnaire participants were analysed separately from the biographical data in order to address the first research objective stipulated in Section 1.6. The Likert-scale-type questions are presented in two ways. The percentage of responses on each item, from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (for the agreement data) is given and, secondly, the percentages of 1 = not at all important to 5 = crucial (for the level of importance data) are presented. For this purpose, the data of all questions within a given questionnaire domain were pooled. The following questionnaire variables were grouped accordingly to address the following research question:

What are the district practices available to support and promote instructional leadership by school principals?

My first point of departure was to explore how Johannesburg South and Sedibeng West district officials frame and communicate school goals and evaluate instructions, and how they promote professional development and coordinate curriculum. The legend of the two plots shows the level of agreement by district officials in relation to their responses on the five variables, distinguished by differently shaped data points.
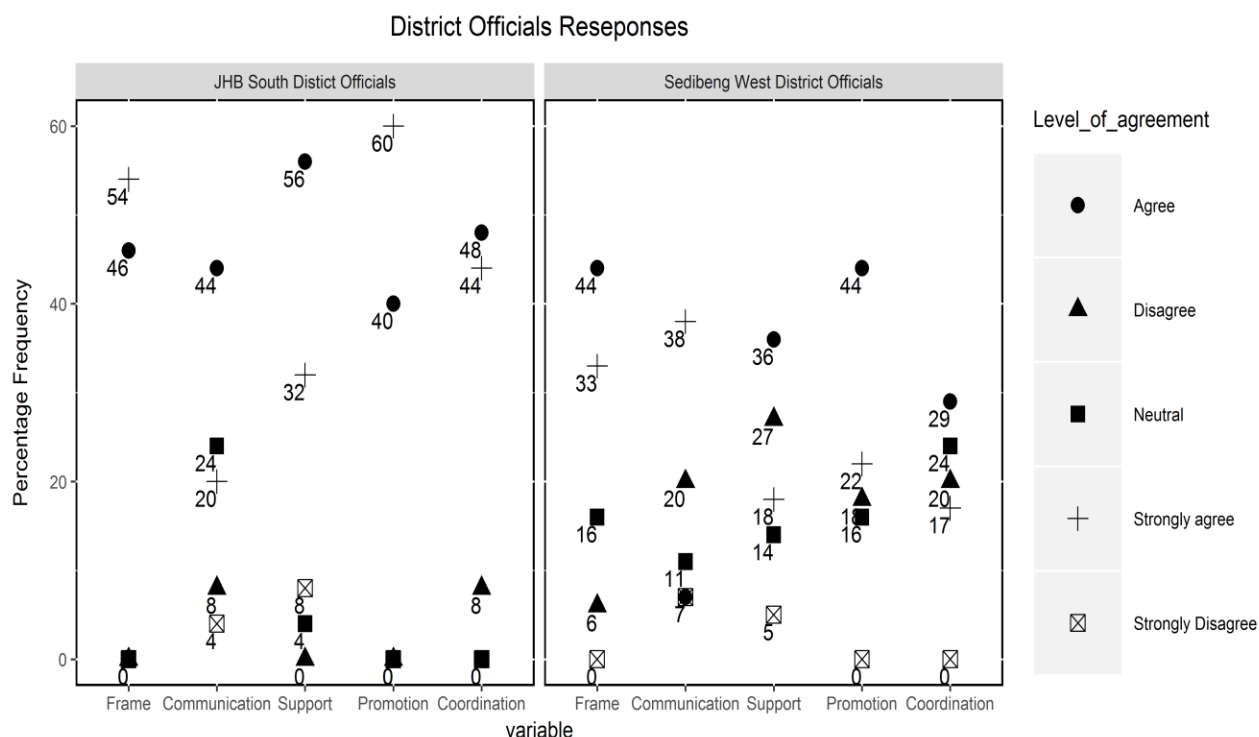
Figure 4.1: Practices at Johannesburg South and Sedibeng West districts to promote and support instructional leadership by school principals

As Figure 4.1 shows, Johannesburg South district officials' circular data points are higher for "strongly agree" and "agree" than other percentage frequency response data points for all five variables by Sedibeng West district officials. This could suggest that Johannesburg South district officials "strongly agree" (at 54%) and "agree" (at 46%) that the district helps principals as instructional leaders to frame school goals. Johannesburg South district officials "strongly agree" that school principals' instructional leadership is supported through promotion of professional development (at 60%), and coordination of curriculum (at 44%). The data also show that Johannesburg South district officials' responses on two of the five variables are higher for "agree" than that of Sedibeng West for support of curriculum (56%) and for coordination of curriculum (at 48%). Figure 4.1 also shows that the percentage points for Sedibeng West district officials are relatively lower for "strongly disagree" for all five of variables, framing of school goals (33%); communication of goals (38%); supporting curriculum (18%); promoting professional development (22%) and (17%) coordination of the curriculum.

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It is important to note, too, that the lowest response percentage points for "neutral" was against support for curriculum by Johannesurg South district participants (at 4%), Sedibeng West district participants for "disagree" against framing of school goals (at 6%).

This finding could be viewed and understood to suggest that the majority of Johannesburg South district officials (more than those of Sedibeng West) "strongly agreed" that district officials collaboratively develop goals that are easily understood and used by principals in the school, ensure that the schools' priorities for instruction are consistent with the goals and direction of the district, and that in-service activities attended by staff are consistent with the district's goals, acquired during in-service training.

Figure 4.2 shows Lejweleputswa district officials' results in percentage frequency on the five variables measured by the items of the administered questionnaire, namely, frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, support and evaluate instructions, promote professional development and coordinate curriculum. The five variables are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
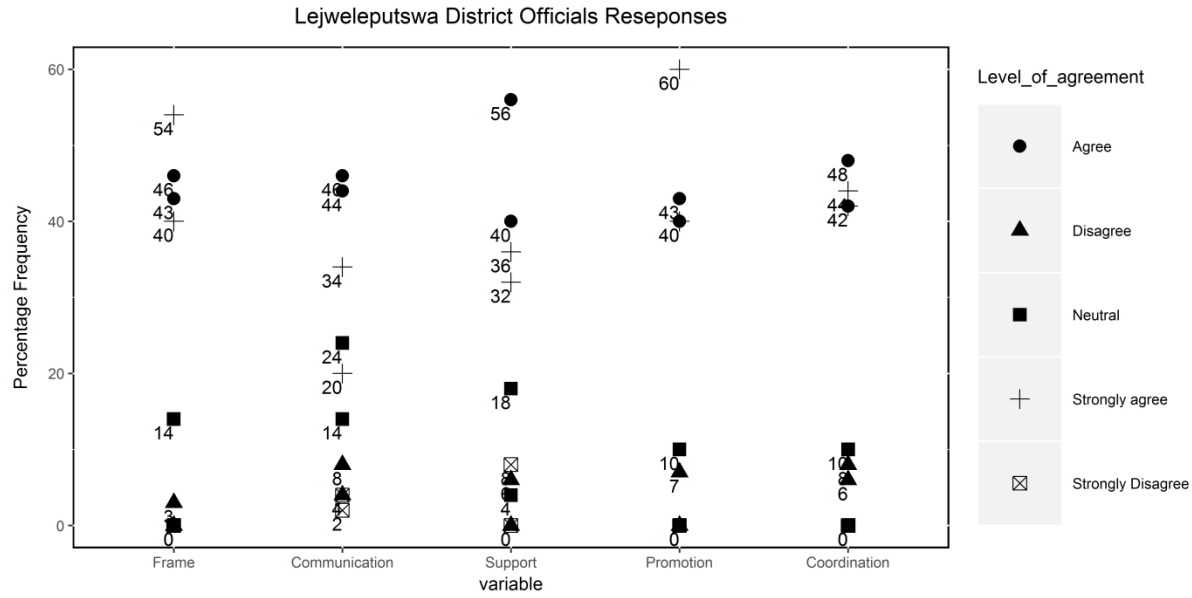
Figure 4.2: Practices at Lejweleputswa district to promote and support instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.2 shows that, for two of the five variables, Lejweleputswa district officials "strongly agree" that the district provides help to school principals through the framing of school goals (54%) and promotion of professional development (60%). Similarly, the district circular data points are higher for "agree" for two of the five variables, that is, supporting curriculum (56%) and coordinating curriculum (48%), than other percentage frequency response data points for all five variables. Of note regarding the data in Figure 4.2 is the fact that district officials "agree" (48%), though not strongly, that the district communicates the district's mission effectively to members of the school community, and discusses the district's academic goals with teachers. The lowest percentage point for "disagree" was for framing of school goals, at 4%, and for "neutral", at 4%, for support for curriculum.

Therefore, the data in Figure 4.2 indicate that Lejweleputswa district officials affirmed, among other matters, that leadership development strategies by the district focus on skills for goal setting, assessment and accountability; the district supports and encourages the establishment of structures for supporting school principals; and communicates the district's mission effectively to all affected and relevant parties.

Given percentage frequency response for "agree" on communication of goals by Johannesburg South (48%); Lejweleputswa (46%); and Sedibeng West (7%), it is suggested that district officials in Sedibeng West perceive communication of districts' mission to school principals to be ineffective and inefficient, and that promotion of the districts' vision through interaction with district officials and school principals is lacking.

Reasons for poor communication of goals as reported by Sedibeng West district will be discussed in detail under the qualitative section, through information gathered in the one-on-one interviews (see Section 4.3.1.2). The data in Figures 4.1 and 4.2, furthermore, show that Johannesburg South and Lejweleputswa district officials "strongly agree" about the framing of goals and promotion of professional development (54% and 60% by both districts on the two variables respectively), in comparison to Sedibeng West district officials, at 34% and 27% for the two respective variables. This could be interpreted as suggesting that Sedibeng district officials were, either, not particularly involved in helping their principals, or they did not understand the kind of practices they employed to support instructional leadership by school principals.

Green and Allen (2015) found professional development to be important in many ways. Firstly, it helps leaders impact positively on learner performance, and to understand and articulate organisational policies for improved performance. Secondly, it increases leaders' focus on learner performance, and, lastly, improves leaders' skills for dealing with major organisational challenges.

For all five variables the level of importance was also measured, to help me understand how participants viewed these instructional leadership practices by districts in support of school principals. A five-point Likert scale was used to investigate the level of importance against each variable (see Appendix A).

On the same note, it is important to indicate that all three districts' officials indicated that it was "critical" for districts to frame school goals: 63% for Johannesburg South, 63% for Sedibeng West and 50% for Lejweleputswa. The results, furthermore, show that more Sedibeng West district officials viewed promotion of professional development (at 60%) as "critical", than did officials of Johannesburg South (40%) and Lejweleputswa (49%).

Though all three districts agreed that districts communicated goals effectively to schools (though fewer in Sedibeng West), they all found communication of goals "important": Johannesburg South at 52%, Sedibeng West at 53%, and Lejweleputswa at 48%. There is a bigger difference between how Sedibeng West district officials perceived the support by the district office and the level of importance of communicating goals: 4% reported to be in support of communication in practice, in spite of this support of communication of goals being perceived to be "extremely important", at a level of 53% (see Appendix D).

Johannesburg South district officials viewed coordination of curriculum to be "critical" (at 68%), which was higher than other districts: Sedibeng West at 47%, followed by Lejweleputswa at 64%. While the most Sedibeng West district officials (51%) rated the the importance of coordination of curriculum as high; fewer Johannesburg South and Lejweleputswa district officials viewed the coordination of curriculum as "important", at 32% each. The most Sedibeng West district officials viewed promotion of professional development to be "critical" (at 60%), while the percentage for Johannesburg South was 40%; and for Lejweleputswa, 49%. The lowest percentage points were recorded for "fairly important" against coordination of curriculum (2%) and promotion of professional development (2%) by Sedibeng district officials; Lejweleputswa viewed coordination of curriculum (at 4%), and support and evaluation of instruction (at 18%) as "fairly important", compared to 2% and 4% respectively by Sedibeng West district officials. This could suggest that communication of goals by districts remains a challenge and needs attention, and that instructional leadership by school principals could be anchored by focused and well planned developmental programmes by districts.

The findings, especially with reference to the levels of importance of instructional leadership practices, where all participants rated practices from "critical" to "important", confirm the findings by Vally, Daud and Subramanian (2016), that a mission and communication of goals are important for the success of any organisation, and that leaders without clear vision and mission statements lead their organisations down the path of failure.

Figure 4.3 shows results for Johannesburg South and Sedibeng West district officials in percentage frequencies for the last five variables measured by the items of the

questionnaire, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The two plots' legend shows the level of agreement by district officials in relation to their responses on the last five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
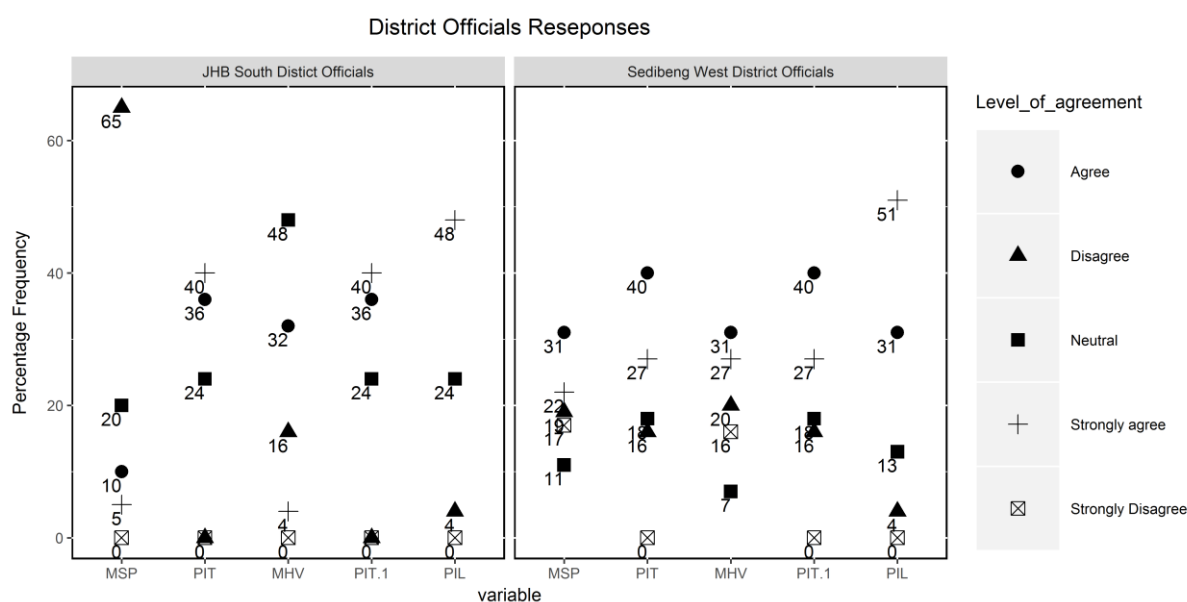

Figure 4.3: Practices at Johannesburg South and Sedibeng West districts to support instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.3 shows that, of the five variables, Johannesburg South district officials' response is higher for "disagree" for monitoring of learner progress (65%); Sedibeng West district officials' response is only 19% for "disagree". This could be interpreted as suggesting that district officials consider the district office to be not highly involved in monitoring teaching and learning activities to support instructional leadership by school principals, through constant discussions of academic performance results with schools to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses, or that they fail to meet with individual principals regularly to discuss learner progress.

It is also interesting to note that, compared to other agreement responses, Johannesburg South district officials registered the highest percentage (48%) for "neutral" on monitor high visibility, with Sedibeng West district officials at 31% for "agree". This could be

interpreted as suggesting that there is either no evidence or no clarity about whether district officials visit schools and classrooms to discuss school issues with principals and learners for support purposes, or that they regularly attended or participated in extra- and co-curricular activities in support of instructional leadership by school principals. Figure 4.3 also shows that the highest percentage point for "strongly agree" (51%) was registered for provision of incentives for learning by Sedibeng West district officials, which was at 48% for Johannesburg South district officials. The interpretation could be that Sedibeng West district officials at least recognise excellent school principals' achievement or improvement by inviting them to the office for motivation, and are consistently in contact with school principals to communicate improved or exemplary learner performance or contributions.

According to Figure 4.3 Sedibeng West district officials registered the highest percentage point (51%) for "strongly agree" for provision of incentives for learning, with Johannesburg South district officials' percentage being 48%. This response by district officials could suggest that the districts acknowledge the fact that they support school principals through recognition and/or rewarding contributions to and accomplishment by schools, and use meetings and other professional gatherings to recognise good performance by school principals.

Figure 4.3 also shows that Sedibeng West district officials "agree" that the district protected instructional time (40%) and provides incentives for teaching (40%); whilst Johannesburg South district officials, about the two variables "strongly agree" (40%). Figure 4.3 also shows that the highest percentage point for "strongly disagree" (16%) by Sedibeng West district officials was for maintain high visibility, which also elicited 16% of "disagree" responses. This could suggest that some of the district officials who work directly with school principals viewed district officials' visits to schools not being expected to discuss issues related to support for school principals, to assist in leading the school or to provide direct instructional support to school principals. This finding was explored during the interview session with selected district participants, especially from Sedibeng West district, to establish further reasons and to understand why other district officials

"disagreed" that the district supported instructional leadership by school principals by maintaining high visibility.

Figure 4.4 shows results for Lejweleputswa district officials in percentage frequency on the last five variables measured by the items of the administered questionnaire, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The plot legend shows the level of agreement by district officials in relation to their responses on the last five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
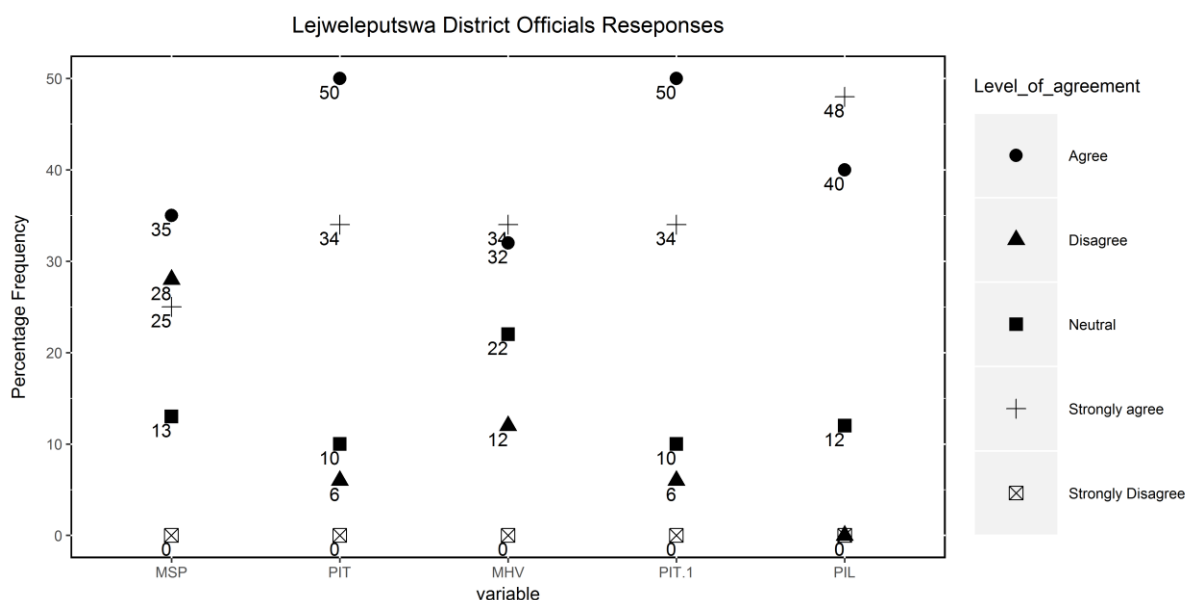
Figure 4.4: Practices at Lejweleputswa district to support instructional leadership by school principals

With reference to the circular data points in Figure 4.4, Lejweleputswa district officials regarded themselves as supporting school principals' instructional leadership by protecting instructional time (50%) and providing incentives for teachers (50%). The variable provision of incentives for learning received a higher percentage rating for "strongly agree" (48%). The highest percentage point registered for "neutral" was for maintaining high visibility (22%); monitoring learner progress was recorded at 13%; and provision of incentives for learning at 12%. Given the responses, this suggests that not

all district officials were convinced that the district provided support for instructional leadership through on-site assistance of school principals, visiting schools and classrooms to discuss school issues with principals and interact while on support visits to schools with principals and other staff members.

The questionnaire required all participants to indicate their level of participation in activities that support instructional leadership practices by school principals. One of the variables or practices by districts was monitoring learner progress, which did not elicit favourable ratings from the three districts' participants, Lejweleputswa district officials, 35% for "agree", Johannesburg South district officials, 65% for "disagree", and Sedibeng district officials, 31% for "agree". This could suggest that, although districts supported schools in framing school goals, there was no follow-up in the form of monitoring its implementation. In all three participating districts, provision of incentives for learning received the highest rating.

This could be interpreted as suggesting that district officials were in agreement that districts recognised excellent principal achievement or improvement by inviting them to their offices for motivation or providing particular incentives for good performance. Given the percentage points for "agree" for maintaining high visibility among the three participating districts and Johannesburg South officials (32%), Sedibeng West officials (31%), and Lejweleputswa district officials (32%), it could be interpreted, given lower percentage points, that all district officials found the visibility in support of principals lacking, because district officials did not frequently conduct on-site support visits and interact with principals.

Given these responses by district officials on the last five variables, a further investigation was made to establish the level of importance district participants reported for the last five variables. Of the three districts, only Johannesburg South district officials (35%) did not rate monitoring of schools highly as a critical instructional leadership practice in support of instructional leadership by school principals. Sebokeng West participants regarded the practice as being "critical" (58%), as did participants from Lejweleputswa (50%). This could be understood to suggest that districts found the monitoring of learner progress to be "critical", as they did for framing and communication of goals. (See Appendix E.) All

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district participants considered protection of instructional time to be "critical" for supporting instructional leadership by school principals, Lejweleputswa at 54%; Johannesburg South at 56%; and Sebokeng at 62%. What I deduced from the findings is that, quite often, district officials invited school principals to district offices during instructional time, and that might be the reason why district officials across the three districts viewed the protection of instructional time as being "critical".

Figure 4.5 shows responses by participants at primary schools in Orange Farm (Johannesburg South district) and Sebokeng primary schools (Sedibeng West district), given as percentage frequency for the first five variables measured by the items of the questionnaire, namely, frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, support and evaluate instructions, promote professional development and coordinate the curriculum. The plot legend shows the level of agreement by principals in relation to their responses on the five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
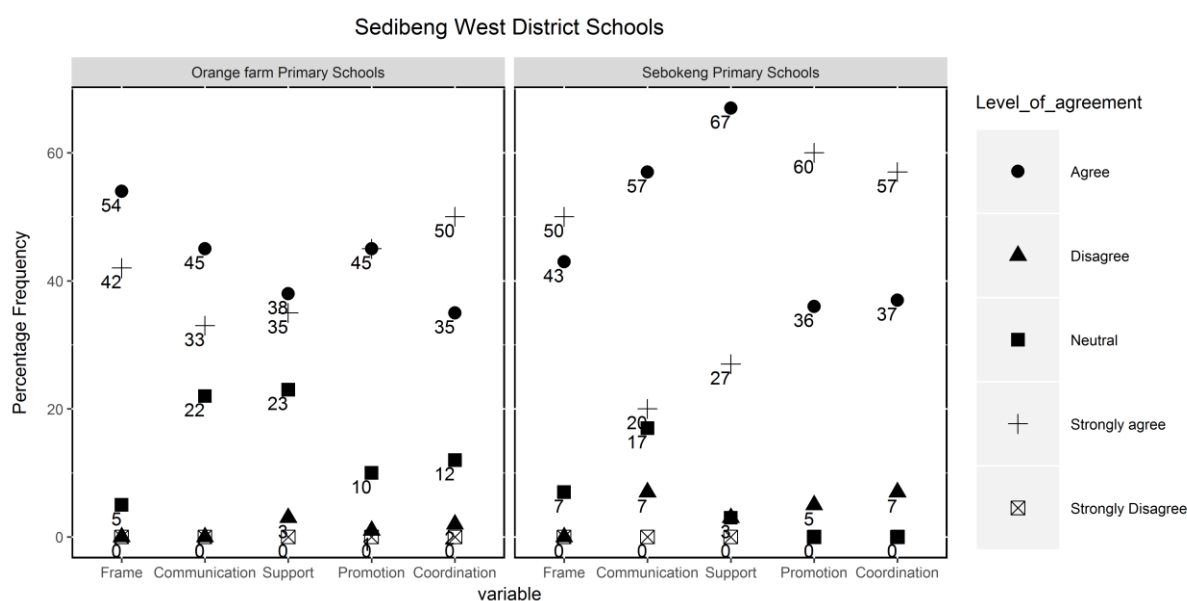
Figure 4.5: Practices at Orange Farm and Sebokeng primary schools to support instructional leadership by school principals

It is clear from Figure 4.5 that participants from Orange Farm primary schools selected the option "agree" more often than other levels of agreement. This could be viewed as confirmation that Orange Farm primary school principals believe the district provides

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support for instructional leadership by helping principals frame school goals (54%); communicate goals (45%); and promote professional development (45%). Figure 4.5 also reports that a high percentage points for "neutral" were registered in support of curriculum (23%); communication of goals (22%); promotion of professional development (10%); and coordination of curriculum (12%) by Orange Farm participants. This could suggest that some of the participants were not certain about the district's support for instructional leadership regarding these instructional leadership practices. A high percentage point for "strongly agree" was registered only against coordination of curriculum (50%). The deduction could be that Orange Farm primary school participants "strongly agree" that the district supported principals by putting in place clear systems, and identifying role players and structures that assisted in coordinating curriculum across grade levels.

Furthermore, Figure 4.5 shows that higher percentages of Sebokeng school participants selected "agree" for support for curriculum (67%); communication (57%); and frame school goals (43%) than for other variables. This could be interpreted to suggest that participants at Sebokeng schools found the district's support for instructional leadership helpful, in that it ensured that the schools' priorities for instruction were consistent with the goals and direction of the district, and that the district regularly conducted informal observation and evaluation at schools.

High percentages on "strongly agree" were also recorded by Sebokeng school participants for promotion of professional development (60%); coordination of curriculum (57%); and framing of school goals (50%). These percentages could suggest that the majority of Sebokeng school participants agree that the district supports instructional leadership by school principals by initiating and leading principals' in-service activities concerned with instruction, using results of district-wide testing to make curriculum decisions, and collaboratively developing goals that are easily understood and used by principals at schools. Though Sebokeng primary school participants rated highly practices such as communication and support for curriculum, a significant percentage of Sebokeng primary school participants recorded a rating of "neutral" for communication of goals (17%) and "disagree" against support for curriculum (5%). The interpretation could be that Sebokeng primary school participants, like other participants, did not experience equally

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the support by the district through communication of goals and support for curriculum, or they believe that some of the strategic goals are communicated only to selected schools, thus, there was lack of knowledge by some Sebokeng primary school participants.

Figure 4.6 shows responses by participants at Welkom primary schools, in Lejweleputswa district, in percentage frequencies for the first five variables, namely, frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, support and evaluate instructions, promote professional development and coordinate curriculum. Thus, "Frame", "Communication", "Support", "Promotion" and "Coordination" refer to the five variables respectively. The plot legend shows the level of agreement by Welkom primary school participants in relation to their responses on the five variables; the variables are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
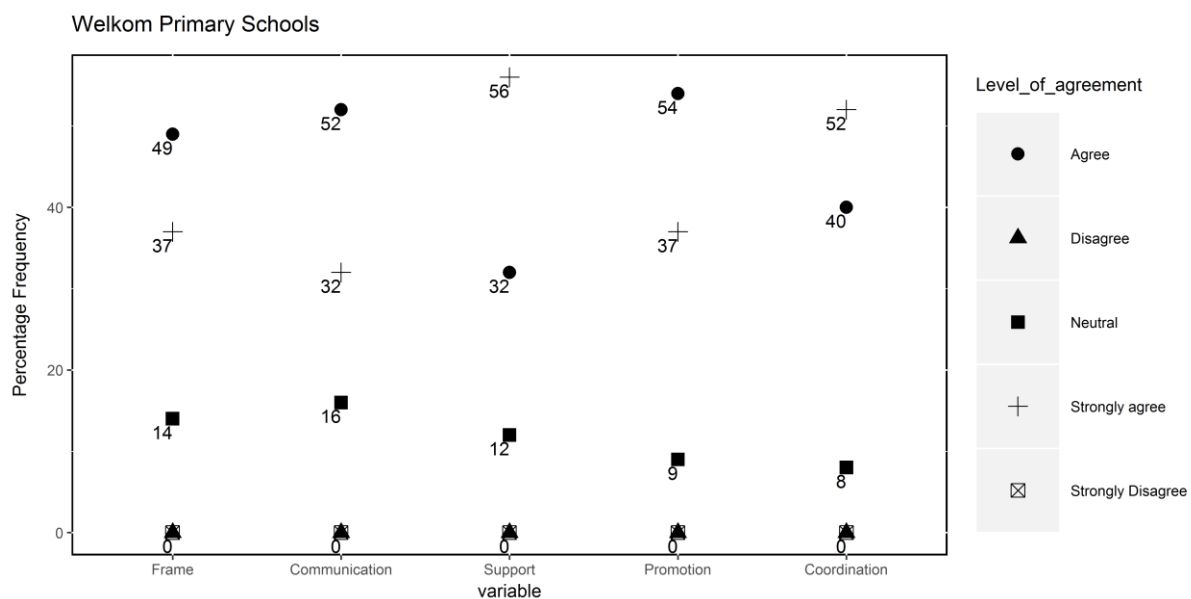
Figure 4.6: Practices at Welkom primary schools to support instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.6 shows that the percentage points for "strongly agree" were higher for two of the five variables: support for curriculum (56%) and coordination of curriculum (52%). For framing of school goals (37%); communication of goals (32%); and promotion of professional development (37%) the option "strongly agree" received lower percentages. This could be interpreted as suggesting that some Welkom primary school participants

understand the district's support for school principals' instructional leadership, as expressed through framing of goals, communication of goals, and promotion of professional development, as not being adequate in terms of discussion of the district's academic goals with principals at meetings, supporting and encouraging the establishment of structures such as PLCs for school principals, and promoting the district's vision through interaction with school principals.

It is also worth noting that 14% of Welkom primary school participants selected "neutral" for framing goals (14%); communicating of goals (12%); supporting and evaluating instruction (12%); promoting professional development (9%); and coordinating curriculum activities (8%). This could suggest that they were unsure whether the district effectively involved principals in providing input on goal development, assessing the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the district's achievement tests, and promoting the district's vision through interaction with school principals.

Instructional leadership practices develop schools, which ultimately present effective teaching and learning for improved learner performance. In their study on effective leadership, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu, van Rooyen (2011) support the view that effective leadership is critical for providing learning environments conducive to learners learning, and producing better learning outcomes. Similarly, Phillips (2009) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) hold the view that instructional leadership, if implemented effectively, help organisations change and improve learner performance.

Appendix F shows how important primary school participants perceived the first five variables to be. For example, primary school participants mostly viewed framing of school goals as "critical", at 55% for Orange Farm primary school principals, 57% for Sebokeng primary school principals, and 63% for Welkom primary school principals. Generally, across all variables, primary school principals viewed practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals as "critical" for implementation.

Figure 4.7 presents the responses of participants from Orange Farm and Sebokeng primary schools in percentage frequencies on the last five variables measured by the items of the questionnaire, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The plot legend shows the level of agreement by principals in relation to their responses on the last five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
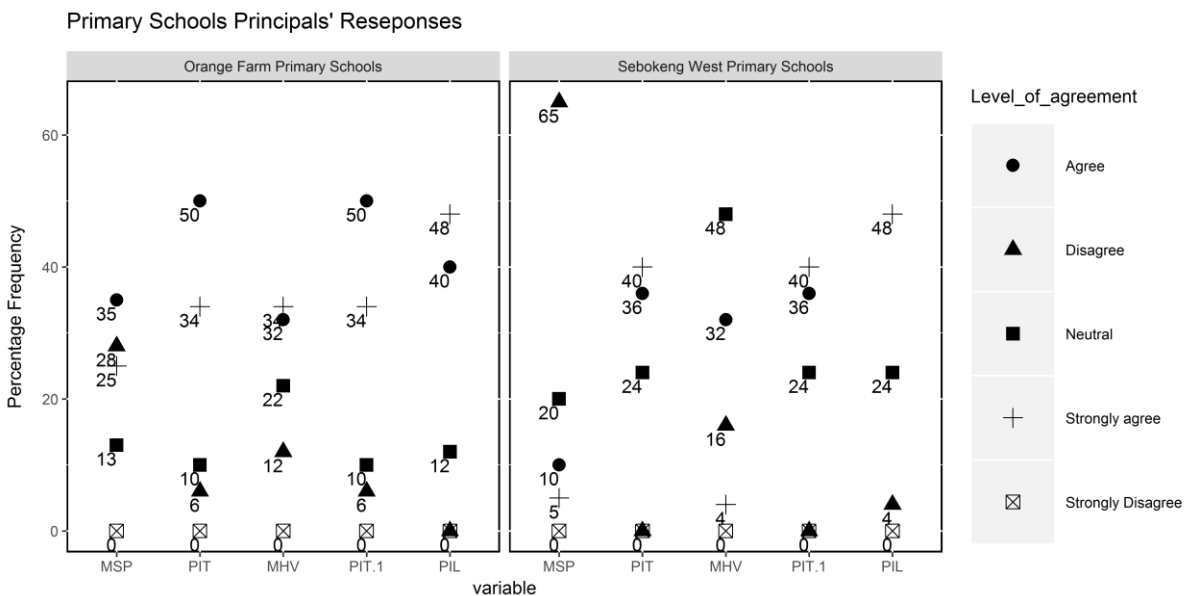
Figure 4.7: Orange Farm and Sebokeng primary school participants' responses to support of instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.7 shows that percentage points for "agree" are higher for two of the five variables for Orange Farm primary schools, namely, protecting instructional time (50%) and providing incentives for teaching (50%), which suggests that the district does not compromise teaching and learning time and limits interruptions of instructional time by public addresses and announcements; the district also focuses on motivating teachers by complimenting principals openly and privately for their efforts or performance. The value of provision of incentives for teachers to achieve improved learner performance is supported by DuFour and Marzano (2011), who suggest that, if implemented effectively, it helps institutions build positive, collaborative relationships and demonstrates support for principals.

It is worth noting that the highest percentage points for "disagree" were recorded by Sebokeng primary school participants for monitoring student progress (at 65%), with Orange Farm school participants at 28%. For protection of instructional time, Orange Farm participants registered 50% for "agree" and Sebokeng school participants, 36%. Ratings for "neutral" for maintaining high visibility for Sebokeng primary school participants was 48%, and 22% for Orange Farm school participants. Provision of incentives for learning was rated as "strongly agree" by 48% of both Orange Farm and Sebokeng primary school participants. Provision of incentives for teaching was rated for "strongly agree" by 40% of Sebokeng primary schools' participants and 34% of Orange Farm primary school participants.

Furthermore, Figure 4.6 shows that percentage points for "neutral" are relatively high for maintaining high visibility (48%) by Sebokeng primary schools' participants; and lower for protection of instructional time (24%); provision of incentives for learning (24%); and provision of incentives for teaching (24%). Of Orange Farm school participants 22% reported "neutral" regarding maintain high visibility, 13% for monitoring learning progress, and 12% for provision of incentives for learning. These percentages could be interpreted to suggest that Sebokeng and Orange Farm school participants are not aware of or not sure whether the district provides direct instructional support to principals by visiting schools and classrooms to discuss school issues with principals, rewarding special efforts by principals with opportunities for professional recognition, or recognised excellent principal achievement or improvement by inviting these principals to the office for coaching.

Figure 4.8 shows Welkom primary school participants' responses in percentage frequency on the last five variables, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The plot legend shows the level of agreement by principals in relation to their responses on the last five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
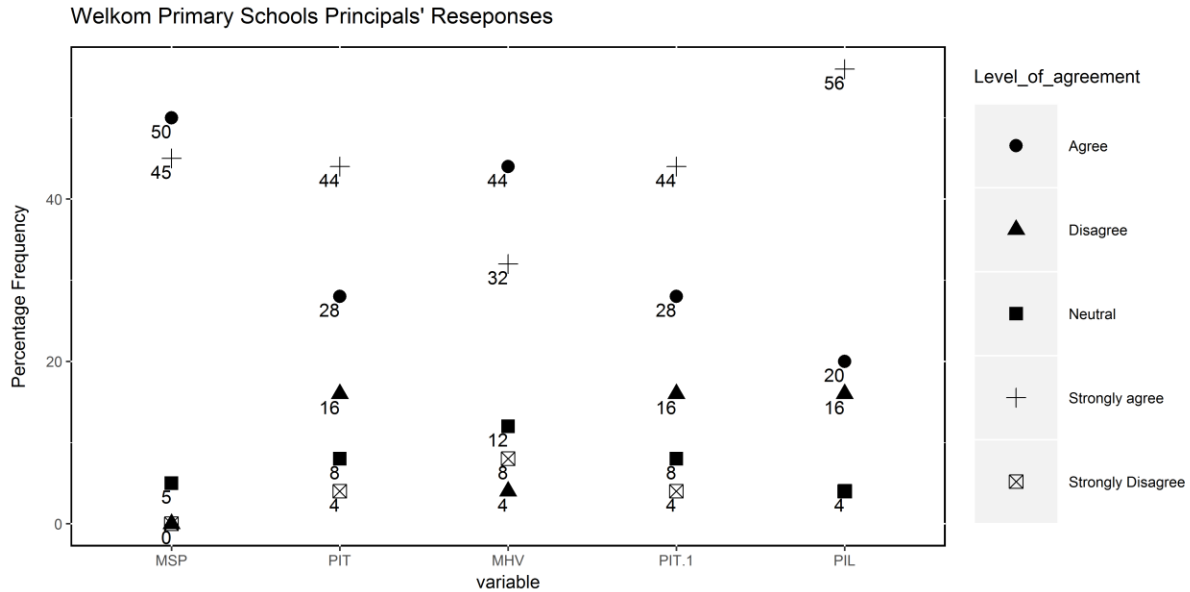
Figure 4.8: Welkom primary school principals' responses to support of instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.8 indicates "strongly agree" responses for at least four of the five variables, monitor learner performance (45%), protection of instructional time (44%), provision of incentives for teaching (44%), and provision of incentives for learning (56%). This suggests that Welkom primary school participants confirm the district's support for instructional leadership and deemed it instrumental in their work as instructional leaders.

Figure 4.8 also reflects a "disagree" option, at 16%, against three variables: protection of teaching time, provision of incentives for teaching; and provision of incentives for learning. This could suggest, due to low percentage points, that some of the participants' do not believe the district officials support their performance of their duties as instructional leaders of schools, among others, that the district does not recognise excellent achievement or improvement by principals, that districts do not present motivational sessions for principals, and that attempts are not made to limit interruptions of instructional time by meetings and public addresses during contact time.

Appendix N presents percentage frequency points for responses by all primary school participants in this study with respect to levels of importance on the last five variables of instructional leadership. The percentages show that, generally, most of the participants

found variables to be "critical" for implementation, monitor learner progress (69%), protection of instructional time (57%), maintaining high visibility (47%), provision of incentives for teaching (52%), and provision of incentives for learning (53%). Low percentage points for "fairly important" were against provision of incentives for teaching (12%), provision incentives for learning (13%), and protection of instructional time (at 7%).

Figure 4.9 shows results for participants from Sebokeng and Welkom secondary schools in percentage frequencies for the first five variables measured by the items of the questionnaire, namely, frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, support and evaluate instructions, promote professional development and coordinate curriculum. Thus, "Frame", "Communication", "Support", "Promotion" and "Coordination" refer to the five variables respectively. The plot legend shows the level of agreement by principals in relation to their responses on the five variables, which are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
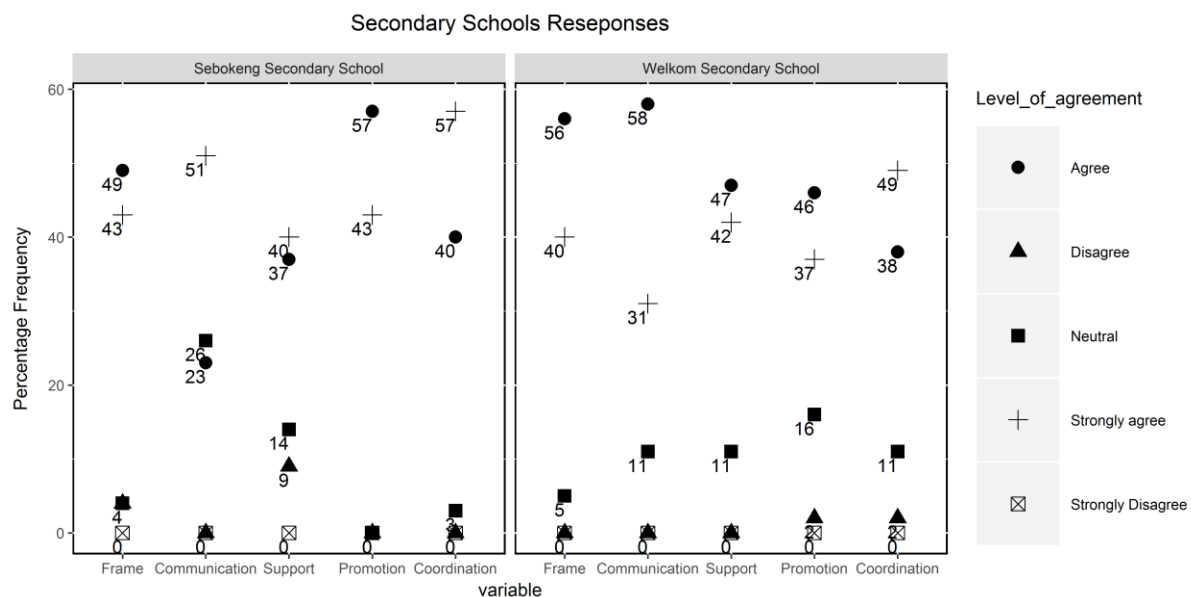
Figure 4.9: Sebokeng and Welkom secondary school responses to support of instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.9 shows responses by Sebokeng and Welkom's secondary school participants. According to Figure 4.9, Sebokeng secondary school participants "strongly agree" that the district provided support through promotion of professional development (57%),

coordination of curriculum (57%) and framing school goals (43%). A low percentage point (9%) for "disagree", was registered by Sebokeng school's participants in response to the question whether district officials supported school principals' instructional leadership by supporting and evaluating instruction.

Furthermore, Figure 4.9 shows that Welkom secondary school participants "agreed", in the main, that the district supported instructional leadership through the framing of school goals (56%); support and evaluation of instruction (47%); and promotion of professional development (46%). The variables eliciting the most "neutral" responses were framing of school goals (5%); communication of goals (11%); support and evaluation of instruction (11%); promotion of professional development (16%); and coordination of curriculum (11%). The fact that participants provided "neutral" responses in five variables could suggest that, either the implementation of instructional leadership practices to support school principals by district officials was not consistent across schools, or other participants were not observant enough, not quite sure of the relevance of such a support, or not clear about what instructional support by the district for principals constitutes. In a study conducted by Hoadley *et al.* (2009), it was found that few principals, especially in South Africa, consider instructional leadership as their main responsibility, instead, it is regarded as the work of subject advisors and heads of departments at the level of schools.

The variables shown in Figure 4.10 were used to investigate whether district officials (Johannesburg South) supported instructional leadership by school principals. Thus, Figure 4.10 shows further results for participants from Orange Farm secondary schools as percentage frequencies on five variables, namely, frame the school goals, communicate the school goals, support and evaluate instruction, promote professional development and coordinate curriculum; responses on the five variables are distinguished by differently shaped data points.

Figure 4.10: Orange Farm secondary school responses to support instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.10 reports high percentage points for "agree" on four of the five variables, promotion of professional development (71%); communication of goals (60%); frame school goals (56%); and support and evaluation of instruction (56%). This could suggest that Orange Farm school principals received support from the district and mostly agreed that the district guided principals' in-service activities concerned with instruction, embarked on leadership development strategies focused on skills for goal setting, assessment and accountability, and discussed the district's academic goals with principals at meetings.

However, Figure 4.10 also shows that the response option of "neutral" was registered for each variable, with promotion of professional development receiving the highest percentage points (at 25%); other variables with "neutral" responses are coordination of curriculum (16%) and communication of school goals (9%). This could be interpreted as suggesting that not all participants understood the kind of support the district provided to support instructional leadership to improve learner performance. During one-on-one interview sessions with selected participants more detailed information regarding the support districts provided to school principals on instructional issues was sought, and responses by participants will be discussed in the qualitative section, Section 4.3.

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Variables listed in Appendix I indicate the extent to which district support for instructional leadership is valued through levels of importance of each variable for implementation. The results show that, for monitoring of learner progress, both Sebokeng and Welkom secondary school participants rated it "critical" (61%). Protection of instructional time was rated highly as "critical" by Sebokeng secondary school participants (51%), followed by provision of incentives for learning (at 51%). Welkom and Sebokeng secondary school participants rated as critical provision of incentives for learning at 49%. Orange Farm secondary school participants regarded both monitoring learner progress "important", instead of "critical" (61%), and maintaining high visibility (at 64%). Higher levels for "fairly important" were reported against provision of incentives for teaching by Welkom secondary school participants (at 44%) and Orange Farm secondary school participants (at 11%). The reflections on responses above by participants suggest that secondary school principals consider implementation of instructional leadership support practices for principals by districts to be "critical" and "important" for improving instructional leadership for improved learner performance.

Figure 4.11 shows responses by participants from Sebokeng and Welkom secondary schools in percentage frequencies on the last five variables, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The plot legend shows the level of agreement by secondary schools' principals in relation to their responses on the last five variables, and variables distinguished by differently shaped data points.
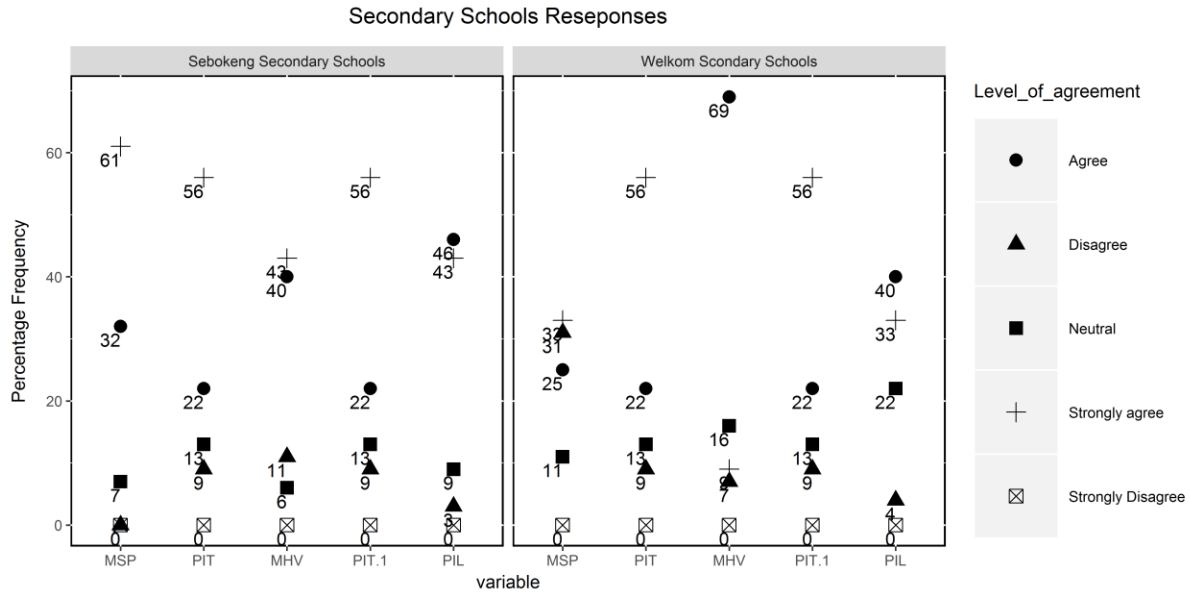
Figure 4.11: Sebokeng and Welkom secondary school responses to support of instructional leadership by school principals

Figure 4.11 displays relatively higher percentage points for "strongly agree" responses on three of the five variables by Sebokeng secondary schools: monitoring of learner progress (61%), protection of teaching time (56%) and provision of incentives for teaching (56%). Data for Sebokeng secondary school participants further show that "disagree" responses were reported for protection of teaching time (9%), maintaining high visibility (11%), and provision of incentives for teaching (9%).

Figure 4.11 also shows that percentage points for "neutral" were relatively higher for two of the five variables, protection of teaching time (13%) and provision of incentives for teaching (13%). The interpretation could be that some Sebokeng secondary school participants were of the opinion that the district did little to protect teaching time, provide incentives for teaching and reward special efforts by principals.

Figure 4.12 displays percentage points for responses by participants from Orange Farm secondary schools, namely, monitor learner progress (MIP), protect instructional time (PIT), monitor high visibility (MHV), provide incentives for teachers (PIT.1), and provide incentives for learning (PIL). The plot legend shows the level of agreement by principals

in relation to their responses on the last five variables, and variables are distinguished by differently shaped data points.
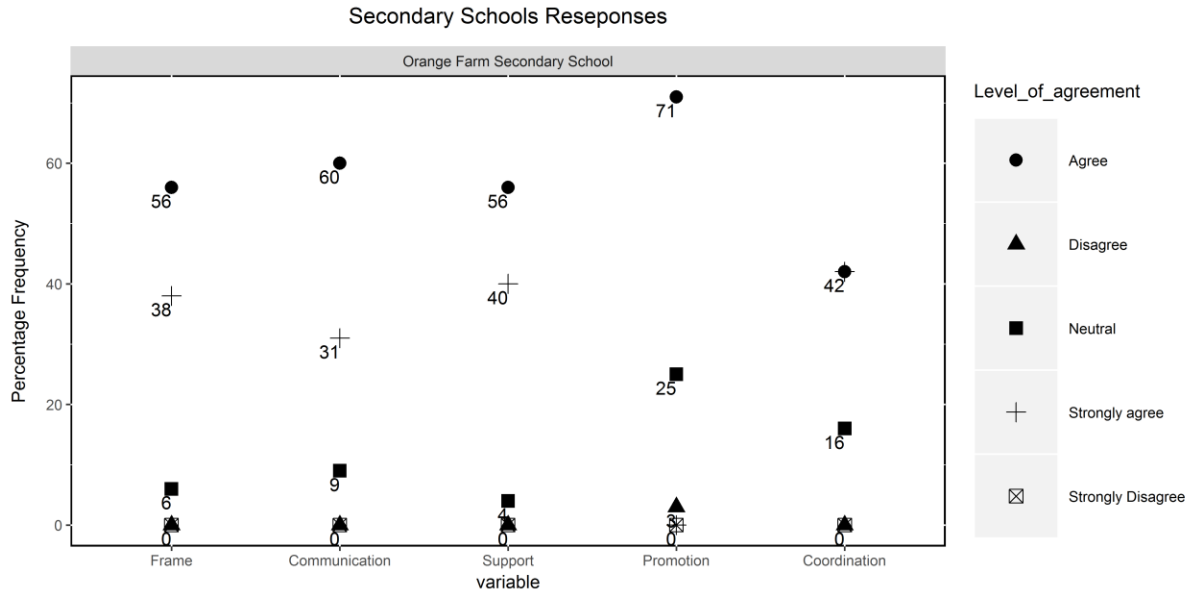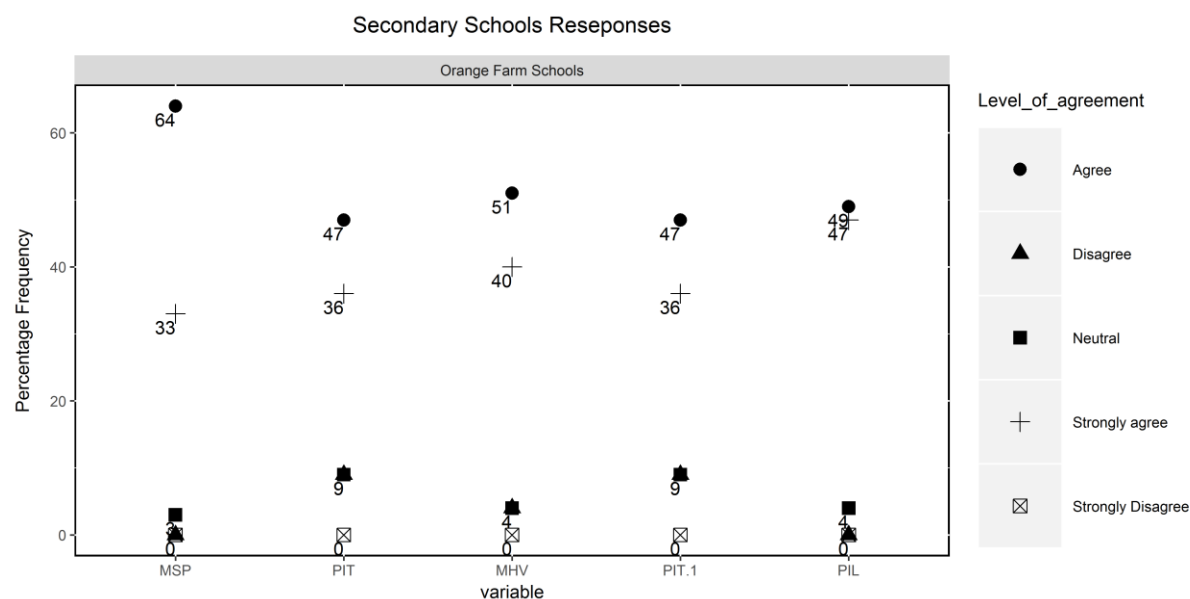

Figure 4.12: Orange Farm secondary school responses to support instructional leadership by school principals)

Figure 4.12 shows higher percentage points for "agree" responses on whether the district provided support for instructional leadership by school principals through monitoring of learner progress (at 64%), protection of instructional time (47%), maintaining high visibility (51%), provision of incentives for teaching (47%) and provision of incentives for learning (49%). Responses for "strongly agree" were reported for monitoring of learner progress (33%), maintain high visibility (40%), protect instructional time and provision of incentives for teaching (36%). The variables rated "neutral" were protection of instructional time and provision of incentives for teaching (at 9% each). This could suggest that the dominant opinion of participants was that the district supported school principals' instructional leadership mainly through monitoring of learner progress, and that district officials maintained relatively high visibility at schools. Findings by Bird and Wang (2013) emphasise that districts have the capacity to empower instructional leaders in their roles and responsibilities to improve learning. The reflections thus far seem to suggest that

district officials have not been playing their role of providing support for instructional leadership adequately.

Responses in percentage points on the levels of importance assigned to variables by secondary school participants are indicated in Appendix H. Both Sebokeng and Welkom secondary school participants rated monitoring of learner progress as "critical" (at 61%). The highest rating for "critical" was reported for maintain high visibility, at 78% by Welkom secondary school participants. Welkom secondary school participants reported the highest percentage point for "important", for protection of instructional time (62%), while Sebokeng (34%) and Orange Farm secondary school principals reported 42%. Significant percentage points for "fairly important" were reported for protection of instructional time, provision of incentives for teaching, and provision of incentives for learning (at 11%) by Sebokeng secondary school principals.

4.2.3 Summary of findings regarding selected instructional leadership practices as guided by the quantitative survey results

The primary purpose of the study was to establish the extent to which districts support school principals' instructional leadership. Table 4.2 promotes understanding and interpretation of the nature of support district officials provided school principals on instructional leadership practices.

For each group of participants, the Likert-scale responses (coded from 1 to 5) of the questions in each questionnaire domain were averaged. Thereafter, the mean of these domain averages was calculated by type of responder and district. The data are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Averages of responses to questions by questionnaire domain for district officials, primary school principals and secondary school principals

Questionnaire domain	District officials				Primary school principals				Secondary school principals			
	Consolidated Averages	Johannesburg South	Lejweleputswa	Sedibeng West		Orange Farm	Welkom	Sebokeng		OrangeFarm	Welkom	Sebokeng
B-Average	4.21	4.54	4.2	4.05	4.35	4.37	4.43	4.23	4.33	4.32	4.31	4.35
C-Average	3.83	3.68	4.06	3.67	4.07	4.12	3.9	4.16	4.22	4.22	4.26	4.2
D-Average	3.78	4.04	4.06	3.33	4.17	4.05	4.17	4.44	4.26	4.36	4.09	4.31
E-Average	4.08	4.6	4.16	3.71	4.36	4.32	4.5	4.29	4.07	3.68	4.43	4.17
F-Average	4	4.28	4.2	3.62	4.39	4.35	4.43	4.44	4.37	4.27	4.54	4.33
G-Average	3.23	2.53	3.58	3.23	4.3	4.19	4.46	4.4	4.12	4.31	4.54	3.61
H-Average	3.56	3.32	3.82	3.4	4.25	4.2	4.1	4.56	4.3	4.29	4.23	4.36
I-Average	3.54	3.24	3.88	3.33	3.93	4.02	3.8	3.88	4.06	4.27	4.14	3.8
J-Average	4	4.16	4.12	3.28	3.84	3.98	3.5	3.92	4.1	4.-0	3.91	4.24
K-Average	4.29	4.16	4.36	4.29	4.16	4.18	4.17	4.08	4.24	4.42	4.29	4.02

Table 4.2 reveals that the average responses on each questionnaire variable were compared between districts using the chi-squared test. A P-value associated with the null-hypothesis of "no difference between groups" is reported. In each case, the three groups, namely, districts, primary schools, and secondary schools were compared. The results of the test showed no significant difference between the three groups; all the P-values >0.05 (see Appendix A). What these results imply is that even the difference or outlier response by Johannesburg South district officials (2.53) on the monitoring of learner progress seems to be statistically insignificant, and thus a general conclusion could be made that district officials had the same perception of the monitoring of the progress (3.23). As De Grauwe and Carron (2007) state, monitoring is the continuous process of assessing to

improve performance, and all participants are of a similar view, that monitoring by the district takes place.

Table 4.2 shows, further, that some of the participants in this study could have opted for "strongly agree", primary school principals (4.12), secondary school principals (4.22), with the exception of district officials' mean average response (at 3.83) with reference to their views on whether district officials supported instructional leadership through communication of goals. With reference to coordination of curriculum, it could be suggested that all participants in this study "agreed", with some "strongly agreed", that district officials supported school principals' instructional leadership, as represented by average mean values of district officials (4), primary school principals (4.39), and secondary school principals (4.37).

As represented in Table 4.2, most of the participants, with mean values for district officials (4), secondary schools' principals (4.1), "agreed" that provision of incentives for learning by district offices was practiced, with the exception of primary school principals' mean value (3.84), which could suggest that some of the primary schools' principals were "neutral" with respect to the district office's support through provision of incentives for learning. The next discussion will focus on the general findings as gathered through semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants.

4.3   FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED DURING THE QUALITATIVE PHASE OF THIS STUDY

The research sought to investigate the district-level policies and practices available to support principals' instructional leadership. The purpose was to gain insight on how districts go about supporting instructional leadership and whether policies, if any, were employed to guide the support for instructional leadership. Furthermore, it was important to establish knowledge of structures engineered to support instructional leadership, and the extent to which individuals serving within such structures understood instructional leadership practices and policies for implementation.

The analysis of quantitative data yielded important themes and subthemes, which were used in the qualitative phase of the study, which pertained to district-level policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. Table 4.3 sets out the themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 4.3: Summary of themes emerging from qualitative data

Research questions, themes, subthemes and categories			
Research questions	**Themes**	**Subthemes**	**Categories**
What kinds of practices exist at district level to promote and support instructional leadership by school principals?	1. Implementation of Instructional leadership practices to support school principals	1.1 Knowledge and understanding of practices to support instructional leadership	Instructional leadership practices known to principals and district officials
		1.2 Leaders in instructional leadership practices at district-office level	District directors, chief education specialists, circuit managers, and curriculum management officials
What are the policy and regulatory frameworks at the level of districts that support instructional leadership by school principals?	2. Policies and regulatory frameworks to support instructional leadership	2.1 Knowledge and understanding of policies for supporting instructional leadership	Mentioning policies directly supporting instructional leadership
		2.2 Evidence for implementation of policies	Level of support provided to school principals
			Availability of policies and implementation
What are the district-level structures for supporting instructional leadership by school principals?	3. Structures at the level of districts to support instructional leadership	3.1 Activities in structures related to supporting instructional leadership	Level of monitoring, supporting and evaluation, professional development, effective communication, protection of teaching activities
			Knowledge of how structures support instructional leadership
		Role of individuals in structures	Provision of instructional support to principals
		Knowledge of structures at district level to support instructional leadership	District management team, circuit management unit, curriculum management unit

Source: Survey data

Table 4.3 reveals different themes, subthemes and categories that guided the qualitative phase of this study. Implementation of instructional leadership practices by district officials to support instructional leadership by school principals, availability of policies that guide instructional leadership practices, and structures at the level of district offices were considered important aspects of this study. The summary of subthemes and categories as established during one-on-one interviews with participants, are discussed below.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Implementation of Instructional leadership practices to support school principals

Subtheme 1.2: Knowledge and understanding of practices for supporting instructional leadership

This section presents an analysis of data gathered in response to the question:

> What are the district-level practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals?

The results of the qualitative analysis process indicate the general views of participants on the role districts play in supporting instructional leadership by school principals. Semi-structured interviews were employed to validate the findings of the quantitative data, and also to explore district officials' and principals' knowledge and understanding of the instructional leadership practices that support principals' instructional leadership. Data drawn from selected participants, through simple purposive sampling, present detailed information on how participants understood districts' role in supporting principals' instructional leadership.

Nine participants were drawn from the three participating districts. Three participants were district officials, of whom at least one was a district director. Three primary and three secondary school principals were selected from the participating districts. For purposes of anonymity and confidentiality of participants' identities, pseudonyms were adopted to report the interview results, namely, Mr Likobo, Mesdames Mphe and Hola (district officials), Messrs Madi, Mpone, and Ms Sheba (primary school principals), Mr Popo, Mesdames Kgwedi and Jwetsa (secondary school principals). Themes and subthemes

that emerged are supported by direct quotations from the interviewees and findings were interpreted using the literature study. It is worth noting that not all variables were considered for the qualitative phase – only five were included. The criteria for selecting the five variables were based on the findings of the quantitative phase, which inspired me to seek a deeper understanding of how participants understood district-level practices and support for school principals' instructional leadership.

4.3.1.1 Framing school goals

The setting of goals by the Department of Education to promote effective teaching and learning to support instructional leadership by school principals is fundamental to guiding the direction schools must take. Though there was a certain indication by participants that the district supported school principals' instructional leadership, my findings suggest that there was an imbalance between support for primary and secondary schools, and this was reflected in the selected participants' interview responses: Not all participants found it easy to articulate the district's support for principals' instructional leadership. When asked whether she was conversant with and aware of the district's goals as framed by the district to support her as the principal, Ms Sheba, a primary school principal in one of the sampled districts, had this to say,

> *The department's goals are presented during a once-off meeting with principals*
> *by the district but not linked to daily performance or activities at work.*

Further input was made by Mr Madi, a primary school principal from one of the participating schools. When asked whether he understood and knew how the district supports schools through the framing of a vision, he had this to say:

> *No, I am not sure how the district goes about in framing school goals, because*
> *as primary school principals we are at all times left out, and only secondary*
> *school principals are consulted.*

Another long-serving primary school principal, Mr Mpone, had a different response to the question posed to the three of the primary school principals with regard to the framing of goals. This is what he had to say:

We usually hold strategic planning meetings end of every year, where our circuit managers visit and give us guidance on how to do things differently in the following year. I am therefore not sure whether that is how the district must support us.

Given the above response by Ms Sheba, Messrs Madi and Mpone, it could be assumed that participants did not necessarily understand what it meant to be supported through the framing of school goals by district officials, though the quantitative results, on average (4.35), reflect that principals perceived the district to be providing support, to a certain extent, by empowering and motivating principals to achieve the vision and mission as set. Furthermore, the above extract gives an understanding of the challenges still facing primary schools with regard to balanced implementation of curriculum goals. For instance, what seems to be a concern for principals, such as Ms Sheba, is that framed school goals do not account for day-to-day activities at schools. This concern was confirmed when she said:

As you entered here I am certain that you saw on a notice board that 80% is focused on curriculum and the other 20% on other areas. That is not what is happening on the ground.

It can be inferred that the goals of 80% curriculum and 20% other areas, were visible to all who entered her office, as Ms Sheba certainly expected me to see this goal on the notice board. However, she was aware that such goals were not applied in classrooms due to lack of support by the district on how such goals could be achieved.

However, a response by Ms Kgwedi, one of the secondary school principals, presented the opposite view. This is what she had to say:

Yes, I am conversant with them [goals], what I can say is that as a district looking for better results I am supported very much. We are meeting on fortnight basis with our cluster coordinators [to] discuss mostly curriculum programmes, achievements and targets pronounced by the district and how certain challenges can be solved. Facilitators help teachers to address subject problems. They also conduct curriculum-related workshops for teachers and principals to understand what is expected of instructional leaders.

The above extract provides confirmation that the district office provides, to a large extent, support to secondary school principals through planned and consistent encounters in the form of meetings and workshops. In a further remark Ms Kgwedi had this to say:

> *The support is structured in a way that we meet fortnightly to discuss matters pertaining to learner performance.*

The manner in which secondary school participants appeared to have been enjoying the district office's support in relation to academic activities, was different to the way the district supported primary schools, as indicated by primary school participants. Ms Jwetsa, one of the secondary school principals, had this to say:

> *At the beginning of every year, the district would summon all Grade 12 teachers to discuss the performance of learners, and where the goals are framed and communicated to all principals*

This finding could suggest that the responses by secondary school principals in the questionnaire survey were congruent with the results of the interviews on the framing of school goals. The mean average score by secondary school principals, reported as 4.35, confirmed the district's efforts to support instructional leadership by school principals with regard to framing of school goals.

My next interest was to explore the self-perception of districts with regard to supporting schools to develop school goals. However, this is how Ms Mphe, a circuit manager in one of the sampled circuits, responded:

> *As the district, we operationalise goals for the implementation at circuit level. We take data to check gaps that exist and will thereafter develop targets for all schools in terms of learner performance. We meet also with all other partners in education to analyse learner performance and together formulate goals for better performance that would be driven from the level of the district.*

The above extract aroused my interest to explore how the district director in Ms Mphe's district viewed district support. Ms Hola, the district director, had served the Department of Education for more than 25 years. She indicated that she has a passion for issues relating to teaching and learning, and that instructional leadership by school principals is

at the heart of the curriculum. As a leader in her own right, she emphasised the role district officials and principals play in promoting learner attainment. In her response to a question about her knowledge and understanding of how district offices support schools to frame school goals, this is what she had to say:

> *I will talk to the board over there. When you look at that board, we have divided secondary schools into four, where we analyse the results and engage them within that structure, we call these groupings community of practice. It indicates learners' performances, which were analysed on quarterly basis. In our analysis with my CESs, we analyse how learners perform and thereafter meet with my principals to discuss the data as compiled. Those schools not doing well within the community of practices receive frequent support from district officials.*

On the basis of responses by the two district officials, I deduce that the support by districts on the framing of school goals for instructional leadership, was, in the main, focused on secondary schools, and mainly at Grade 12 level, and less on primary schools, as indicated by Ms Sheba, who said that support had been provided only once, in a principals' meeting.

Collaboratively developing goals that are easily understood and used by principals in the school is a very important action that any district team may consider if the framing of goals is to contribute to improving learner performance and coaching of the team is to continue to ensure that goals are attained. Consequently, a follow-up question was posed to the district director about the way the district ensured that district officials understood and supported instructional leadership by school principals. This is what she had to say,

> *As a district director, I have one-on-one meeting with subject advisors, circuit managers and principals to discuss the goals. The emphasis is on the why part of it. If people don't know their goals [they] will end up nowhere. Goal setting is at the heart of every programme in this district, hence, I rate the frame of goals crucial because this is about everything.*

From the above extract, it was evident that the district director provided some form of direction, though some participants confused it with roles. In all discussions with interviewees it was difficult to ascertain whether these goals were well known by all district

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officials and principals, because none of the district officials or school principals was able to refer to written sets of school goals as agreed upon and directed by the district. According to Kantabutra and Avery (2010), written goals are important, in that they present a point of departure for any organisation's transformation process, and should inform strategies and organisational intent. Therefore, the responses received through interviews in this section of the study extrapolate the fact that knowledge of framing of goals was limited by most the participants.

Based on this finding, I developed an interest in the way these framed goals are communicated, according to participants, to support instructional leadership by school principals. The next section deals with the way framed goals are communicated to school principals for support purposes.

4.3.1.2 Communicating school goals

The discussions captured in this section focus on placing in context the findings of the literature review and the first phase of the empirical (quantitative) study. The focus was mainly on how the district communicated goals to schools and whether school principals understood the manner in which goals were communicated to support instructional leadership by school principals. Mr Likobo, one of the circuit managers I interviewed, who had more than 10 years' experience as a supervisor of schools, acknowledged the importance of communicating framed goals to support principals as instructional leaders. The majority of district participants, two out of three, when asked to indicate how the district communicated framed school goals, agreed with Mr Liboko, who said,

> *In our district we ensure that goals are communicated at every district's gathering, in everything we do, the slogan is communicated. We have banners everywhere so that everybody knows and understands our slogan. It is in fact our game changer, and that's what makes organisations change, and influences the mission of the organisation.*

Given the response by Mr Likobo, it is evident that the district, at least, has some way of communicating goals to schools, so that there is alignment of the districts' academic goals with departmental policies.

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In light of this, Ms Hola, a district director, when asked how goals are communicated to schools to support instructional leadership, said,

> *As the district, we set targets at the beginning of each year and communicate such goals to principals during review and analysis of results. Circulars are also prepared on quarterly basis, especially for underperforming schools as a reminder of expected performance. Though the challenge is still on the capacity by the district, you need a particular strategy to communicate goals as widely as possible. Schools receive communication of such goals in an imbalanced manner, hence, I cannot conclusively say they are well communicated.*

Ms Hola's response could be understood and interpreted as suggesting that, even though there was an attempt by the district to support schools with regard to framing of goals, they still faced notable challenges in as far as communication of such goals was concerned.

Mr Popo, an experienced secondary school principal from one of the participating districts, when asked whether the communication of goals by the district was effective to support them as principals to improve their instructional leadership approach to improve learning, said,

> *Goals are mainly communicated to us as principals during workshops where sampled milestones are indicated to achieve set goals. However, not all district officials communicate and interpret set goals the same and that brings about confusion, hence, different school principals have different targets that do not speak to the goals the district had set.*

The extracts above resonate well with the previous findings with respect to framing of goals, namely, that there were no formally written goals, hence, the response by Mr Popo. The inadequate and imbalanced communication of goals by district officials has the potential to hamper learner performance and bring about confusion, as other school principals had already indicated. It was on this basis that a follow-up interview was conducted with one of the secondary school participants, which confirmed the experiences and observations of other school participants. Ms Jwetsa had this to say,

Mmmmm… we normally meet with the district director during Imbizo meetings, where we share progress on goals and though some of the goals framed by the district were not clear for implementation. He meets also with parents, teachers and learners to further communicate district goals and constantly monitor progress on set goals and provide further support.

Despite different views with respect to the communication of goals by district officials, Mr Likobo, a circuit manager, indicated that he finds the district's communication of goals efficient and effective, because all principals, through meetings and other district forums, are constantly informed about all goals the district promotes. He expressed his observation and views as follows:

To ensure that goals are communicated, we have the annual programme that encloses all activities and programmes that are to be implemented and communicated to schools to infuse them in their school plans, and circuit managers are also brought on board so that their goals are aligned to those of schools. In my view, district officials communicate effectively to all school goals, as expected.

Another circuit manager, Ms Mphe, expressed her views as follows with respect to communication of school goals by district officials:

At the beginning of the year we send all plans to schools, inclusive of strategic goals. Through our teams from the district, we meet with parents, teachers and SMTs [school management teams], whereby communication of our sections' goals is emphasised. Through community radio stations we frequently communicate our goals to the community at large.

All three primary school principals had similar observations about the communication of goals, and Ms Sheba, when asked, gave her observations with respect to communication of goals as follows:

The district, through circuit managers and subject advisors, very seldom meet with us to unpack annually, district's intentions especially with regard to issue of teaching and learning.

Based on her response, I posed a follow-up question about how effectively she believes goals are communicated by the district. This is what she had to say:

I cannot say justice has been done. The core responsibility of the Department is on curriculum. I think goals must be linked to nine performance of areas as contained in the Whole Evaluation School Evaluation document. When meetings are convened, there is no evaluation of goals as set, it is business as usual and much focus is on the issues of the day.

The statement by Ms Sheba, that goals, if communicated, were not linked to the nine performance areas as contained in the Whole Evaluation School Evaluation Framework, confirms statements by all other participants with respect to communication of goals, namely, communication of district goals occurred in a disorganised manner, which brought about confusion and influenced effective communication of goals.

The responses in this regard helped me unpack and understand the mean scores as reflected in the results of the questionnaire survey (Table 4.2), where the "strongly agree" option (4.12; 4.22 respectively), for communication of goals and monitor learner progress were mostly selected by secondary school principals, and "neutral" by district officials (3.83). What school principals perceived to be communication of goals, appeared not to be understood as such and, furthermore, district officials' rating of this practice confirmed that most of them were uncertain about whether a particular set of district goals was communicated to schools.

A study by Reitzug, West and Angel (2008) found that school performance is fundamental to the developmental process of learners, thus, coaching, mentoring and monitoring are critical for supporting the implementation and effective communication of strategic goals in the schooling system, and for improving learner performance.

4.3.1.3 Support and evaluation of instruction

Most principals appeared to be in agreement that they received some form of support and evaluation for instruction from the district office. When asked whether the district supported and evaluated instruction by conducting informal observation in schools on a

regular basis to support principals, Ms Sheba (a primary school principal) and Ms Jwetsa (a secondary school principal) responded. Ms Sheba said,

> *I get support as per district plans, also as an individual. But this type of support has a lot of red-taping, and in this manner the district will not reach its goals. Let me make an example, the school that needed support, if it does not communicate its needs to the district, there is a likelihood that such a school may spend the entire year without any support provided to it. I think things must be done differently, because units operate differently and that is a big challenge in our district, hence support may not be well experienced by most schools.*

However, Ms Jwetsa, in her response to the same question, had this to say,

> *District officials, especially circuit managers, meet with us during special visits to schools and in quarterly district meetings, and that is the only time challenges are discussed. Consequently, I feel supported because I always come back from such meetings feeling empowered.*

From the above responses, it appeared that school principals did not understand and receive the same support and evaluation of instruction from the district. A specific question, on support by the district in the form of regular on-site observations by district officials, elicited the response that few of them had received such support.

The abovementioned observation found expression in Ms Jwetsa's response to a follow-up question about whether classroom observations were conducted for support purposes. She said,

> *If one is running in short of LTSM [learning and teaching support materials] we are quickly assisted, especially after visits by subject advisors whenever they assist our schools on strategies to improve our school's performance and through our six weeks monitoring programme on the delivery of instruction. Though our units at the district do not seem to be working together, in providing support to school principals, especially between our circuit management and curriculum units.*

Neither Mr Madi nor Mr Mpone, primary school principals, seemed to have received any form of support from the district.

> *I [Mr Madi] have been a principal for more than five years, and have only been visited by few subject advisors and my circuit manager to check on compliance issues, and less on instruction.*

Mr Mpone, one of the longest-serving principals in primary schools, in responding whether the district provided support through support and evaluation of instruction practices, said,

> *The district used to visit us through teams such WSE, where the focus was on the entire operation of a school. Since then, very seldom the district officials visit schools, except when my circuit manager visits the school to check on compliance issues, which are merely administrative and managerial in nature.*

Mr Popo, one of the secondary school principals, shared the same sentiments with respect to the support and evaluation of instruction the district provides to principals as instructional leaders. This is what he had to say:

> *Like I have said, is business as usual. If you do things the same way, you will never get the results expected. The district's visits and support for the purpose of supporting instruction, are not assisting because my teachers and I experience the same problems we have been experiencing, with no change. They will leave a report that indicates challenges and nothing will come forth after their monitoring and support visits. It is on rare occasions they observe learning in classes or principals at workplace. For example, learners experiencing barrier to learning have had their reports submitted during monitoring and support of instruction and thus far no reports or results have been received back, and no meetings conducted by the principal were ever attended by the circuit manager. Much focus is placed on matric and more damage is done to lower grades.*

The responses of both primary and secondary school participants with respect to the level of support and extent of evaluation of instruction by districts could be interpreted as that the district's support and evaluation of instruction for school principals' instructional leadership support for support purposes has failed to focus mainly on observations, especially of teaching and learning in classes. In the main, the district conducted

compliance meetings at and visits to schools. However, generally, the opinions of district officials in this study differed from that of principals on support and evaluation of instruction. Officials' views were represented by those of Ms Mphe, a circuit manager, who had this to say:

> *After our on-site visits, we would meet as teams and discuss our findings that would determine the level of support our schools need. For all activities that have been planned, monthly monitoring tools are completed by schools for the purpose of support and evaluation of instruction. We also use our school readiness report to expand our support and evaluation of instruction for schools. So, in general, I would say that there is support provided to our school principals, especially on observation of instruction.*

Ms Hola, a district director, developed and led programmes to support and evaluate instruction; she pointed out specific strengths in principals' instructional practices through post-observation feedback, for example, in meetings, one-on-one sessions or written evaluations. She found the practice to be helpful for achieving goals set by the district. She had the following to say:

> *One of the reasons the district has one-on-one meeting with principals is to provide that support and evaluation of instruction to track the nature of service delivery. I am able to see whether our schools have been assisted or not. I use therefore these meetings to evaluate instruction and provide support to schools.*

From this conversation with selected school principals and district officials, specifically with respect to support and evaluation of instruction, it could be deduced that the level of support provided by the district is not experienced and understood in the same way by school principals and district office participants. The support and evaluation of instruction seemed to have been confused with monitoring and evaluation by district officials and understood as such by school principals. According to Waters and Marzano (2006), the long-standing belief that district-level leadership adds value to the effectiveness of schools and the performance of learners applies to this study, especially in relation to support and evaluation of instruction. This view was also supported by Honig (2012), that district offices were specified areas for identified support to school principals.

The findings of the study reported this section appear to contradict the questionnaire data, which reflected that most district officials (at an average mean value of 3.74) were "neutral"; while primary school principals (at 4.17), and secondary school principals (at 4.26) indicated they were in agreement with statements with respect to whether support and evaluation of instruction was provided at schools. This support could take the form of pointing out specific strengths in principals' instructional practices through post-observation feedback, for example, of meetings, one-on-one sessions or written evaluations, and conducting mentoring and coaching sessions for principals. It can, therefore, be deduced that such support for instruction by district officials was not observable by school principals as indicted by district officials.

4.3.1.4 Monitoring of instruction

Among the purposes of conducting interviews with selected participants in this study was to establish the extent to which district officials used tests and other performance measures to monitor progress towards achieving school goals, and whether discussions with respect to academic performance of schools, to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses, took place. Most district participants had similar views on this point, as represented by Ms Hola, one of the district directors. When she was asked whether the district's mechanism for monitoring instruction supported instructional leadership by school principals, she said,

> *What I can say is that the district is really engaged in the monitoring of learner progress. Firstly, we have Saturday improvement classes that are part of the School Improvement Plans programme. The district ensures that learners attend Saturday classes, especially those underperforming in more than three subjects. If learners don't perform accordingly, the district will always come in support of the principal by calling in teachers and learners to discuss challenges and assist in resolving any form of a challenge. The data-driven programme also plays a vital role in the monitoring of instruction and learner progress, because through the data-driven programme, problematic areas are easily identified and get immediate attention, especially because they involve performance.*

Ms Sheba held a different view on whether district officials' monitoring of instruction in support of instructional leadership yielded any results. When asked to share her views, she said,

> *Mmmmm… If you continue doing things the same way as before, you won't achieve results. That's why I said they merely visit schools more than monitoring instruction for support purpose. If we focus on matric only, we will not experience any change in the levels of teaching and learning. In short, I don't see the district assisting school principals as instructional leaders through the monitoring of progress for learner performance.*

Two of the three selected primary school principals, Messrs Mpone and Madi, held views that differed from that of Ms Sheba. When asked to respond to a question whether the district supported school principals as instructional leaders by, among other actions, meeting individually with principals to discuss learner academic progress, they shared their views as follows:

> *Circuit managers and district directors are mostly in interested in staff meetings whenever they came to school, without engaging directly with me as the principal on matters of performance of learners to improve learning. Only at the end of every term results will be demanded for submission and sometimes, reasons for such performance are not sought, which appears to me as a compliance issue [rather] than support.*

In his response, Mr Madi had to this to say,

> *Most of the circuit managers' meetings concerned administrative and managerial issues [rather] than academic. Most follow-ups will be around compliance, and that of administrative submission. I don't feel supported on academic matters, even subject advisors barely visit our school, I wonder where the problem might be.*

However, Ms Kgwedi, a secondary school principal, appeared to be in agreement that district officials monitored instruction for supporting principals, and reported that she had found herself working more effectively since the introduction of monitoring teams and tools by the district, especially those for secondary schools. She said,

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> *Mmmmm… What I can say is that the district is indeed involved in monitoring learner progress, through a programme called Strategy for Learner Attainment. Meetings are convened monthly between our circuit manager, myself with a selected number of learners who don't show any progress for support purpose by the district inclusive team.*

The differences in responses by all groups of participants were significant in that they reflected a number of inconsistencies when it comes to monitoring of instruction by district officials. They also indicated that there were some good practices at the level of districts to support instructional leadership by school principals, but more needs to be done in the area of monitoring of instruction.

The findings of this part of the study clarified the questionnaire data; in particular that against district officials, where mean score value of 2.53 was recorded, which means that district officials disagreed about whether they supported instructional leadership through monitoring of instruction. District leadership seemed to be more concerned with administrative and managerial, rather than instructional issues. Literature by Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) point to a need for a dedicated focus on instructional matters to support school principals' instructional leadership.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Policies and regulatory frameworks to support instructional leadership

Subtheme 2.1: Knowledge and understanding of policies for supporting instructional leadership

In this part of the study further clarity was sought from selected participants regarding the extent of their knowledge of policies that support instructional leadership by school principals. Detailed discussions of some of the key policies in education, especially those related to teaching and learning, were discussed in Chapter 2 of the study. The availability of policies was considered key for guiding instructional leadership support for school principals, and, hence, this part of the study sought to respond the following research question:

What is district the policy and regulatory framework for supporting instructional leadership by school principals?

In response to this question, participants were asked whether they had knowledge and understanding of policies in place that supported instructional leadership by school principals. Few of the district officials appeared to be clear about such policies, which was revealed in the response by Ms Mphe, a circuit manager, who had this to say:

I think it will be a variety of policies, depending on aspects that needed attention. It starts with planning at the end of the year, when you take stock in terms of policies the district has, those relevant to instruction and in support of instructional leadership. I may not be able to list them, but I know that they are there, we implement them. As the district, we then ensure that at the beginning of every term, review of implementation of such policies is done, so as to check whether they have supported principals as instructional leaders. Lately, there is a policy on Organisations, Roles and Responsibilities for districts, which guide us on what must be done to support schools.

The mention of the Organisations, Roles and Responsibilities Policy prompted me to pose a follow-up question to Ms Mphe, and I asked her to indicate sections of the said policies that linked directly to instructional leadership. This is what she said:

Though I cannot remember them now, I know there is a section that deals with how schools can be supported through district team visits, made up of subject advisors and the circuit manager concerned.

In triangulating Ms Mphe's views, school principals were asked whether they knew and understood policies that district officials implemented in support of instructional leadership by school principals. Ms Kgwedi, a secondary school principal, said,

There are quite a number of policies, language, admission, safety and security, religious and finance policies. We normally gather together as principals to check whether the implementation of such policies is done.

Given Ms Kgwedi's response, there was definitely a need for me to probe further. One of the participating principals, Mr Mpone, said, in response to the same question,

The district director and circuit managers present to us on an annual basis, a set of documents on how we must go about in doing our work as school principals. These become guiding documents to support teachers, learners and parents to improve learning.

Most of the primary school participants understood that policies that support instructional leadership were confined to policies such as CAPS and the Organisations, Roles and Responsibilities for Districts. Mr Mpone, in his response with regard to knowledge and understanding of policies aimed at guiding instructional leadership practices, had this to say,

The district convenes meetings at the beginning of each year to popularise all policy documents related to supporting instruction, and monitoring tools would also be presented to principals for implementation.

Ms Hola, a district director, showed understanding of policies/guidelines that supported instructional leadership by school principals. This is what she had to say:

We have what we call Predictability Policy Framework that outlines systems for our schools to monitor implementation of instruction-related activities, particularly in relation to principals. As a district we have written goals that we have published, through our Learner Attainment Strategy document, wherein every meeting and support visits are based on the level of support given to instruction. Through memos to schools, policy intentions on learner attainment and school principals' role, are communicated and guidelines for learner performance are provided. We have developed a district curriculum policy framework that guides all school principals on how areas, such monitoring and support of instruction, should be executed. This policy outlines also the structure of workshops and meetings in the district to support instructional leadership by school principals for improved learner performance.

A follow-up question was posed to ask whether she knew and understood how such guidelines are implemented by district officials in support of instructional leadership by school principals, and this what she said:

The evidence we have is through our meetings with principals, and we have made a rule that nothing must be tolerated that stands in the way of learners. Principals displayed their appreciation of these guidelines as they are seen to be helpful, and that forms part of evidence that they are implemented.

From the responses above, it is evident that there is divergent understanding and knowledge of policies supporting instructional leadership. The greatest challenge was that the policies seemed to be understood by some district officials, and that could explain their lack of support for instructional leadership. This lack of understanding could possibly be the reason instructional leadership practices, such as framing of school goals, communication and monitoring thereof, were reported to have lacked implementation. According to Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Lima (2010), the challenge with regard to the development of instructional leadership and implementation thereof, is the imprecision of district objectives.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Structures at the level of districts to support instructional leadership

Subtheme 3.1: Knowledge of structures at district level to support instructional leadership

The third research question sought to establish the existence of structures at the level of district offices to support instructional leadership by school principals. The questionnaire did not provide participants with an opportunity to respond to this research question, hence semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain information on this question and structures to support instructional leadership. Through the literature review, structures, such as Curriculum Management Unit, Management and Governance, and Education and Development Services, were discussed. Their existence was seen as foundational to the success of practices to support instructional leadership by school principals. Individuals participating in such structures were considered to possess the necessary knowledge and capacity to support instructional leadership by school principals.

In this part of the study further clarity was sought from selected participants regarding the existence and understanding of structures that support instructional leadership by school principals. This section attempted, therefore, to respond to the following research question:

What are the district-level structures for supporting instructional leadership by school principals?

In response to the question Ms Hola said,

As a district, we have structures in a form of teams that we refer to as panels for discussion that meet on monthly basis at the level of the district to review district activities in support of instructional leadership by school principals. We further on meet with principals for coaching purpose by circuit managers, once a term, where the main discussions are on instructional leadership by school principals. Circuit management unit, which is made up of circuit managers, would also meet with a group of their principals for coaching and mentoring purpose.

Comments such as this one reveal that coaching and mentoring teams play a vital role in providing support for instructional leadership by school principals. A further note relates to the role the management and governance unit plays in the daily operation of schools, largely because these units consist of direct supervisors of principals, whose responsibility, in the main, is to support school principals. The significance of such a structure was highly recommended by Mr Madi, one of the circuit management unit, who said,

There is a team of officials, specifically led by circuit managers, that we have put together constituted of circuit managers, curriculum, inclusive education and human resource officials, called District Support Team. This team discusses and looks at challenges school principals are faced with in as far as learner performance is concerned. Strategies are discussed for implementation to support instructional leadership by school principals. The District Management Team is also one of the structures that we have at the district level that plans and does the overseeing of all activities aimed at improving learner performance.

As a result of the two responses by district officials, further clarity was sought from one of the school principals, Ms Mphe, and this what she had to say:

> *We have a structure called Communities of Good Practice, which is made up of different sections or units at the district where issues pertaining to improving learner performance through principals as instructional leaders are thoroughly discussed.*

It was interesting to note the different names given to some of the professional and developmental structures, among which, District Support Teams and Communities of Good Practice. In my view, this could have a replicating effect for policy implementation, in that the approach to support may be applied in different ways; as a result, different messages could be received for processing. This point was argued by one of the secondary school principals, Mr Popo.

> *There are two structures that support us as principals to improve learner performance, curriculum unit made up of subject advisors and DMT [district management team]. In most instances, district management team visits our schools, especially principals, to coach and support them on areas where they need support. The curriculum unit deals mainly with the support and evaluation of instruction, as principals, we are not curriculum aspect and they have showed knowledge and competency in this field.*

Ms Jwetsa, one of the secondary school principals, echoed Mr Popo's view. She had this to say:

> *In my view, the district support team is the most powerful team in supporting us as principals of school to improve learner performance. All other teams are mainly focusing on compliance and lesser on empowerment, for example, the circuit management unit, which comprises mostly of circuit managers.*

It was, indeed, disturbing to note that most school principals understood and embraced the support by district management teams to a greater extent than that of circuit managers – their supervisors. This is demonstrated by Mr Popo, one of the participants who seemed

to have little respect for the management and governance unit. His observation was anchored by Ms Hola (district director), who elaborated further,

> *The district-based teams that provided support lacked the necessary capacity to deal with issues of instructional leadership and, hence, I started offering developmental sessions every Friday, especially for units that deal directly with school principals such circuit management unit.*

The response by Ms Hola lends credence to the research by Mapetere, Makaye and Muguti (2012), who assert that, to support educational institutions, district officials and school principals ought to meet regularly to review strategies for best practices to ensure effective collaborative work between the two entities.

From the discussion on structures at the level of districts that support instructional leadership, it is clear that district management teams are regarded as key for providing support of instructional leadership. Very little was said about other structures, such as examinations and assessment units and learner support teams, which are made up of specialists, such as social workers and psychologists. The management and governance unit, composed of circuit managers, was considered by school-based participants as lacking authority and capacity to implement instructional leadership practices to support school principals. This view was supported by a participant's statement, that the unit mainly focused on compliance, rather than direct support. Camburn *et al.* (2008) assert that the existence of structures at the level of districts, and that had been purposefully established to provide specialised support for instructional leadership practices, are of paramount importance. This assertion is in line with the claim by Waters and Marzano (2006), that effective coordination of programmes aimed at improving instructional leadership is key for the development of programmes for improving learner performance.

4.4   SUMMARY

This chapter reported on data that was collected using mixed methods and following a sequential approach. The first part of this chapter involved a detailed presentation of the empirical analysis of quantitative data from primary sources, that is, district officials, and

primary and secondary school principals. This process was followed by information gained through interviews with selected participants in the initial qualitative phase.

The purpose of these interviews was to obtain deeper understanding of the responses and findings from the quantitative phase. In this chapter, data were presented in the form of tables and figures that set out the responses of participants, followed by a detailed textual analysis of the data that had been gathered.

Data interpretation was done by transcribing and briefly analysing the interview responses in relation to the instructional leadership practices and objectives of the study. What became clear, especially during the interview process, is that understanding of these practices and application thereof differed quite extensively between participants, though, to a certain extent, there was common understanding by all participants. This finding causes concern and will be expanded upon in Chapter 5, which summarises the major findings of the study, presents the conclusions of this study, and makes recommendations for further studies.

4.5   INTEGRATION OF THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This section presents substantial findings in relation to quantitative and qualitative analysis as identified in this study. Table 4.4 summarises the findings.

Table 4.4: Integration of quantitative and qualitative results

	Integration of the quantitative and qualitative results from participants' experiences, knowledge and understanding of practices, policies and structures that support instructional leadership by school principals		
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Integrated results**
Implementation of instructional leadership practices	1.1 Knowledge and understanding of practices to support instructional leadership	Instructional leadership practices known to principals and district officials	The results from both phases (quantitative and qualitative) revealed that monitoring of learner progress and communication of goals were rarely focused upon by district officials. 3.23 shows that district officials for monitoring of instruction were neutral and the interviews furthermore revealed that the district rarely monitored, according to school principals. This was also the case with communication of goals, where data from both phases emphasised and confirmed that communication of goals was also a challenge. Mixed responses were recorded in both phases on support for instruction, protection of teaching time and maintaining high visibility.
	Leadership in instructional leadership practices at district-office level	District directors, chief education specialists, circuit managers, and curriculum management officials	Most of the participants understood circuit managers to be the only district officials responsible for supporting instructional leadership. This was revealed by interview responses, especially by school principals.
Policies and regulatory frameworks to support instructional leadership	2.1 Knowledge and understanding of policies for supporting instructional leadership	Mentioning of policies directly supporting instructional leadership	The results revealed that most participants in this study were unaware of policies developed to support instructional leadership. Though the first phase of this study revealed that participants knew, to a certain extent, about practices that support instructional leadership, the second phase confirmed that policies geared towards guiding such practices were not known to most of the participants.
		Level of support provided to school principals	Support not consistent and directly linked to supporting instructional leadership, instead, it was related more to compliance.

	2.2 Evidence of implementation of policies	Availability of policies and implementation	Unavailability of polices aimed at supporting instructional leadership. Not a great deal of support reported.
Structures at the level of districts to support instructional leadership	Activities in structures related to supporting instructional leadership	Level of monitoring, support and evaluation, professional development, effective communication, protection of teaching activities	Lack of support by district officials for instructional leadership. Roles not clearly spelled out of all those expected to support instructional leadership.
		Knowledge of how structures support instructional leadership	Poor coordination of support activities by district structures hinders understanding of the kind of support provided. Lack of knowledge by most school principals of the kind of structures at the level of district offices to support instructional leadership. See 4.3.3.
	Role of individuals in structures	Provision of instructional support to principals	Most participants, especially during interviews, revealed that most individuals serving in such structures lacked the necessary knowledge and capacity of their roles. See Section 4.3.1.
	Knowledge of structures at district level to support instructional leadership	District management team, circuit management unit, curriculum management unit	Knowledge and understanding of how district-office-based structures operate in support of instructional leadership are mostly located among district officials, more than among school-based participants (principals) see Section 4.3.3.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this study show that attempts by the South African education system to improve learner performance are not a new phenomenon. However, the extent to which schools generally continue to underperform prompted this investigation into the causes of underperformance, and whether district-level policy and practices impinge on this poor performance, especially the district's strategies to improve learner performance. The major research question I sought to explore was: What are the district-level policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa?

It was on this basis that the following sub-questions were asked to guide the study:

- What is the district policy and regulatory framework for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?
- What are the district-level structures for supporting school principals' instructional leadership?
- What kinds of practices exist at district level to promote and support school principals' instructional leadership?
- How can the policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by districts be explained?

Data were gathered through exploratory sequential mixed methods, whereby elements of the quantitative approach were applied through a questionnaire survey, while the qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Section 5.2 presents the overview of the study.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

As indicated in Section 5.1, this study set out to explore the way district-level policy and practice supports instructional leadership by school principals. Using three district offices (Johannesburg South, Lejweleputswa, and Sedibeng West), the drive was to gain

understanding of the practices, policies, and structures at the level of districts that support school principals' instructional leadership. The background in which I started this study was one where district-level practices and policies to support instructional leadership by school principals were not clear to most of the participants, and that there was limited research that sought to espouse the kind of policies and practices by districts to support instructional leadership. This is what my study sought to investigate, in order to support instructional leadership by school principals. The results of the study are reported in five chapters, as follows.

Chapter 1 provided the background and an orientation to the study by highlighting the background, problem statement, aim of the study, research questions, objectives, design and methodological aspects underpinning the study. It also included the envisaged contribution of the study to practice, theory and policy aspects, and ethical principles, in so far as these aspects help us understand the ways in which education districts support schools and principals in implementing instructional leadership in their quest to improve school performance.

Chapter 2 provided a detailed examination of the literature related to district-level policies and practice for supporting instructional leadership. The rationale and theoretical framework were examined to develop a clear understanding of trends in the field, to approach the study from an informed position. This chapter provided an extensive reflection on, among other things, the type and nature of policies and practices available to support instructional leadership. The framework that underpins this study was also highlighted. Various leadership traits were explored, with a particular focus on instructional leadership. The following pieces of legislation were also explained in this chapter, with the intention of investigating their alignment to instructional leadership: The South African Schools' Act, No. 76 of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act, No. 76 of 1998, the Education Laws Amendment Act and The Guidelines for The Standard of Principalship in South Africa. This was done with a view to investigating whether instructional leadership practices are clearly captured for implementation by districts and the specific role districts are expected to play.

The literature review is focused on countries such as the United States of America, Canada, and South Africa, and is important because it provided me with the necessary guidance during the data collection phase of this research.

Chapter 3 examined the research methodology, in order to set the pace for the data collection and analysis processes. The study adopted a mixed methods approach and sequential explanatory design due to the nature of the data I required to respond to the research questions. During the quantitative phase, data collection was done through a survey questionnaire; the qualitative phase featured semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool. Using mixed methods helped me a great deal, because issues and trends that emerged during the first phase were followed up in the second phase through semi-structured interviews. Data collected during the first and second phases were analysed separately and, later on, analysed and discussed concurrently.

Chapter 4 dealt with the presentation of research data using figures, tables and direct responses of participants, and descriptions and narrative reports. During the analysis and discussions of the data, it emerged that there were fundamental similarities and dissimilarities between what the literature suggests, and practice. Spoken words by participants, especially during interviews, were interpreted to gain a better understanding and they were compared to what the literature review suggests.

The final chapter (Chapter 5) presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. A summarised version of each chapter is presented in this chapter, before main findings from the literature and current research study are offered. This chapter summarises the entire research process and contributions to instructional leadership for improved learner performance. It is in Chapter 5 that answers are provided for the questions posed by the study. Recommendations for future studies found expression in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the research study's contribution, and own reflections or remarks.

5.2.1   Findings from the literature review

Findings of a study by Honig (2012) confirm that districts play a common, workable and critical role in supporting instructional leadership. A focus on instructional leadership practices by districts could improve the performance levels of principals and lead to improved learner performance. The literature revealed that there is currently no specific legislation, particularly in South Africa, that guides district offices of the Department of Basic Education on instructional leadership practices by district officials in support of instructional leadership by school principals. **See Sections 2.4 and 2.5.**

A literature review by Carr (2010) revealed that curriculum policies fell short of specifying the instructional role expected of district officials, in particular, direct supervisors of school principals, who are circuit managers. The literature also revealed that district officials tend to focus more on administrative functions, than supporting instructional leadership activities. Literature on models of leadership, for example, that of Hallinger and Lee (2012), reveal that setting goals, establishing standards, properly selecting, supervising and evaluating staff, creating a welcoming instructional environment, ensuring consistency in instruction and monitoring the curriculum are what makes good schools. **See Sections 2.3 and 2.4.**

The investigation into the value of professional development revealed that traditional capacity-building programmes, such as workshops with follow-ups, have had no impact on instructional leadership. The study, further, revealed that effective districts are associated with strong instructionally oriented leadership by all officials based at the district offices, and that the absence of instructional unity across schools resulted in the crumbling of districts in as far as support for instruction is concerned. The literature study also noted that academically functional districts are led by hands-on instructional leaders (district directors) who work to improve learner performance. **See Sections 2.5 and 2.5.1.**

Lastly, literature on instructional leadership in South Africa revealed that principals rarely practice instructional leadership. Instead, they focus more on the challenges experienced by the schooling system than on the means that could be employed to promote a learning culture in schools. The literature, further, revealed that the need for accountability by

districts to improve instruction has been a matter of concern in most discussions on support for instructional leadership.

5.2.2   District-level policies that support instructional leadership by school principals

The study sought to establish whether there are policies available at the level of district offices to support instructional leadership by school principals, and if district officials possess knowledge and understanding of such policies. The findings revealed that there were uncertainties with regard to the availability of instructional leadership policies at district level to support instructional leadership by school principals.

During an interview with district officials, they were requested to list policies and elaborate on each in relation to how it guided the school principals' instructional leadership. The responses confirmed that district officials possessed a flimsy knowledge and understanding of policies that guide districts to support instructional leadership. This was revealed when most district officials mainly referred to administrative and managerial guidelines as instructional leadership policies. For example, one of the participants, a circuit manager, Ms Mphe, referred to admission, language and learner attendance policies as guidelines for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. The data in this study went on to reveal that school principals, too, were not clear about the availability of such policies to support them as instructional leaders. This was located in one of the secondary school principals' responses, when she said:

> *There are quite a number of policies, language, admission, safety and security, religious and finance policies. We normally gather together as principals to check whether the implementation of such policies is done.*

These findings confirm previous studies on the same subject by the Bottoms and Fry (2010), that districts and the state have failed to create guidelines that make it possible for school principals to execute their instructional leadership roles. There was a clear indication during interviews with some of the participants that there are no clear policies in this regard, only a set of rules for execution by principals. A fundamental finding in this regard is that district officials and school principals who participated in this study have

demonstrated a need for the Department of Basic Education to develop policies that directly address instructional leadership issues to support the work of school principals. **See Section 2.5.**

5.2.3 District-level practices that promote instructional leadership processes

The results of this study established that there are practices at the level of the district that promote and support instructional leadership by school principals. Ten instructional leadership practices were drawn from the literature study and were adopted from Hallinger's (2009) instructional leadership model. These practices were utilised for the purpose of this study. Each instructional leadership practice will be discussed in response to the research questions and objectives of the study.

5.2.3.1 Framing the school goals

The principal's role in improving learner performance is dependent on that of other role players, such as district officials. This finding lends credence to the results of studies on instructional leadership done by Marsh *et al.* (2005), who contend that districts play a pivotal role in supporting improvements in teaching and learning. The findings of this study, in this instance, revealed that the majority of district officials were mostly "neutral" in relation to the level of support and evaluation of instruction to improve school principals' instructional leadership capacities. This is confirmed by a mean value of 3.78, which suggests that most of them could not agree or disagree on the practice to support school principals. **See Section 4.2.3.**

Though there was a statistically positive relationship between framed school goals and instructional leadership (4.21), the interviews conducted as a follow-up to the results of the survey data revealed that neither the district officials nor the school principals fully understood and knew about the existence of a written document on framed school goals. In confirmation of the finding, one of the participants indicated that she had no evidence to confirm that the district framed school goals in support of instructional leadership, except that district officials present departmental goals in the form of a set of rules during once-off meetings with principals. Salleh (2013) supports the framing of written goals

when he argues that written goals permit leaders to determine the areas on which the staff must focus, which must incorporate data on past and present achievements, as well as learner performance. This is in keeping with Bergeson and Heuschel (2004), who state that it is important for districts to provide direction to schools, which must have clear expectations for instruction in order to effect improved outcomes for learners.

This study, further, revealed that district leadership has minimal impact in supporting instructional leadership through framing of school goals, due to lack of coordination of district officials' interaction with school principals. This finding was demonstrated by responses from participants, who indicated that district officials present goals in an uncoordinated manner, and, hence, officials were confused by the process. According to Honig and Michael (2008), for schools to perform, district officials must possess the ability to develop and articulate the district vision through a set of practices, in order to send a message to all involved, including communities, of what is expected of a well performing school. This is the missing link I discovered in this study, through the interviews conducted, that aligns with the policies and resources – this link requires immediate attention if improving learner performance is important to districts and schools.

5.2.3.2 Communicating the school goals

Statistically, the results showed that most district officials were "neutral" (3.83), whilst primary and secondary school principals were in agreement (means of 4.07 and 4.22 respectively). However, the results of the interviews revealed that participants did not agree, despite the statistically positive mean values, that the district communicated goals clearly and consistently to support instructional leadership. In the interviews, Mr Popo said:

> *Goals are mainly communicated to us as principals during workshops where sampled milestones are indicated to achieve set goals. However, not all district officials communicate and interpret set goals the same and that brings about confusion, hence, different school principals have different targets that do not speak to the goals the district had set.*

The study, further, revealed that communication of goals differed from one district to another. There were no clearly explained channels and, hence, there was misunderstanding about how districts communicated goals to schools. The other general finding regarding communication of school goals was that there were no formally written-down school goals to support instructional leadership, hence poor communication to school principals. In most instances, information regarding rules and procedures of district programmes would be passed on during principals' meetings, instead of clearly formulated guidelines for implementation being provided. This conclusion was supported by Ms Sheba's statement, when she said:

> *The district, through circuit managers and subject advisors, very seldom meet with us to unpack annually, district's intentions especially with regard to issue of teaching and learning.*

Salley (2013) claims that clear formulation of goals and high expectations shared among school principals are two very important characteristics of effectiveness, and have the potential of increasing schools' productivity.

5.2.3.3 Supporting and evaluating instruction

The results this study were expected to provide in relation to support and evaluation of instruction were not closely associated with the results observed. It was revealed that some district officials, who were expected to support instruction, did not support instructional leadership. The general indication is that district officials do not support instructional leadership by school principals through support and evaluation of instruction, as expected by the Department of Basic Education. The study found that support and evaluation of instruction by districts was restricted to certain schools and grades. The general finding in this regard is that principals can operate effectively as instructional leaders when they are well supported and when school principals receive support from district units at different levels. This is in keeping with a finding by Honig (2012), that district officials were identified as prominent in supporting and evaluating instruction through identification and prioritisation of activities and programmes to enhance teaching and learning. Furthermore, findings emerging from this study suggest thorough

coordination of structures at the level of the district to promote instructional leadership by school principals, is necessary.

5.2.3.4 **Monitoring learner progress**

Through both the questionnaire survey administered and one-on-one interviews conducted, data in this study revealed that many participants, particularly those from district offices, did not agree (2.53) that district officials, in monitoring performance to support school principals, use tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals, and meet individually with principals to discuss learner progress. This finding is supported by what one of the district officials, Ms Hola, said about monitoring of learner progress.

> *What I can say is that the district is really engaged in the monitoring of learner progress. Firstly, we have Saturday improvement classes that are part of the School Improvement Plans programme. The district ensures that learners attend Saturday classes, especially those underperforming in more than three subjects. If learners don't perform accordingly, the district will always come in support of the principal by calling in teachers and learners to discuss challenges and assist in resolving any form of a challenge. The data-driven programme also plays a vital role in the monitoring of instruction and learner progress, because through the data driven programme, problematic areas are easily identified and get immediate attention, especially because they involve performance.*

What is demonstrated through these results is that support by district officials, in as far as monitoring is concerned, was focused on learners and teachers, and less on school principals, hence, Ms Hola's response. Studies conducted in the field of instructional leadership have demonstrated that, to improve learner progress, district offices and school principal must monitor progress regularly, discontinue practices and policies that are not supportive of learner performance, and improve those that have the necessary impact (McLaughlin & Talbert 2003). A study by Safer and Fleischman (2005) reports on the impact on learner performance when those in positions of leadership neglect monitoring student performance.

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5.2.3.5 **Promoting continuous professional development**

With regard to the promotion of professional development, the study demonstrated, through average mean values, that most participants in this study (district officials (4.08), primary school principals (4.36), and secondary school principals (4.07)) agreed that, among others, district officials do set aside time at principals' meetings to share ideas or information from in-service activities. Though the focus has not been directly on instructional leadership, factors influencing or affecting instructional leadership were outlined during development sessions. The study also revealed that, to support instructional leadership by school principals, professional development was crucial. Capacity-building programmes, especially for district officials, are of paramount importance for effective support of school principals' instructional leadership. Keefe and Jenkins (2000) state that instructional leadership success by school principals is based on support by the Department of Basic Education. Hence, the study conducted by Manaseh (2016) found that the reason for continued underperformance, as indicated by learners' results, is that school principals have not been fully facilitated or provided with the necessary skills to execute the instructional leadership role.

5.3 DISTRICT-LEVEL STRUCTURES THAT PROMOTE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Establishing well-resourced structures at the district level to guide schools through their daily operations is an important aspect of supporting instructional leadership by school principals. Investigations of district-based structures should be viewed in the light of promoting learner performance and improving teacher capacity. Scholars, such as Bottoms and Fry (2009), agree that the interconnectedness of the structures that provide strength to teaching and learning is a matter that districts should not overlook, because it enables schools and district offices to function as a unified system. The findings of this study demonstrate how highly participants valued the structures at district level that support the work of school principals, even though the current form of such structures needed to be investigated to improve support regarding instructional leadership by school principals. In an interview, one of the district directors revealed that structures, such as

panels for discussion (mainly comprising management team members) and the management and governance unit, were behind the success of the instructional leadership function of school principals – even though such panels focused mainly on learner performance at the level of Grade 12 and performance of the entire school was ignored.

With regard to districts' contexts, participants were asked to indicate areas where assistance could be provided to support instructional leadership by school principals. The responses revealed that, in almost all instructional leadership practices presented to district officials, there was a need for support to principals to improve learner performance. The responses, by both district officials and school principals, clearly suggest that programmes for much capacity building were needed if district officials are to understand their roles in support of school principals' instructional leadership. This view was supported by what one of the participants said:

> *The district-based teams that provided support lacked the necessary capacity to deal with issues of instructional leadership and, hence, I started offering developmental sessions every Friday, especially for units that deal directly with school principals such circuit management unit.*

The other important finding is that, across the three districts, the structures were assigned different tasks or responsibilities to support instructional leadership. Given such a situation, it could be suggested that alignment of goals and communication thereof would always be difficult to implement in support of school principals' instructional leadership. Perhaps, a further investigation in this regard is necessary, to investigate the impact of district-level structures in promoting the instructional leadership role of the school principal.

5.4   SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

1.   The study found that, of all practices aimed at supporting school principals' instructional leadership, framing of school goals, communication and monitoring of learner progress received little attention from district officials, to the extent that

district officials communicated various messages on instructional matters to schools.

2. Policies supporting instructional leadership, both at the level of district offices and schools, were not articulated well, and as a result, attempts to put systems in place to coordinate and regulate instructional leadership programmes have mostly suffered failure.

3. The structures for supporting instructional leadership by school principals at both district offices and schools were well established. However, there was lack of coordination of their activities to support instructional leadership by school principals, and, hence, conflicting messages were received by school principals.

4. Instructional leadership practices for supporting school principals are not well planned and coordinated by district officials to support school principals' instructional leadership, and where these practices are applicable, its only at the level of Grade 12.

5. Individuals serving in structures meant to support instructional leadership by school principals lack capacity and knowledge of the kind of practices and policies needed to support school principals.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the critical role districts play in supporting instructional leadership by school principals, as indicated in the preceding paragraphs and the findings, the following recommendations are made regarding policies and practices for supporting instructional leadership by school principals:

1. The study recommends compulsory, coordinated training for all district officials, who are seen to be key in supporting instructional leadership by school principals. It was established by this study that some district officials, even those in the highest and most influential positions, were not conversant with instructional leadership practices aimed at supporting instructional leadership by school principals.

2. In the wake of ever-changing demands on education districts for improved learner performance, there is a great need to intensify recruitment and selection programmes, especially for district-based officials, to support instructional leadership by school principals.

3. The work of district-based structures aimed at supporting instructional leadership by school principals must be revised to improve and enhance learner performance. This recommendation is informed by the finding that most district-based officials who are in key leadership positions, lack capacity and understanding of their responsibilities regarding providing support to school principals' instructional leadership.

4. The centrality of instructional leadership and coordination of instructional leadership practices must be the primary responsibility of the district management team, as the executive team in districts, which must be closely monitored by provincial offices.

5. There is a need to widen instructional leadership activities for school principals in the schooling system, to ensure that learner performance improves.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The following recommendations for further research studies are made:

1. In this research study, it was revealed that many of the participants rated the value of monitoring, supporting and evaluation of instructional leadership as critical for improved learner performance. Therefore, research is needed on the impact of the monitoring and support role played by circuit managers to improve instructional leadership by school principals.

2. The study recommends that districts intensify recruitment and selection procedures and processes, especially for district-based officials who are to support instructional leadership by school principals. Therefore, there is a need to investigate further the impact of recruitment and selection processes in support of instructional leadership by school principals.

3. The study focused on the existence of policies, practices, and structures, and the capacities of those involved at the level of districts to support instructional leadership by school principals. Therefore, there is a need to investigate, specifically, the role and impact district directors have on instructional leadership for improved learner performance by school principals.

4. The research study was confined to selected districts in two economically distinct provinces. Therefore, it is recommended that a comparative study of a similar nature be undertaken on well performing and economically viable districts. Such a study could focus particularly on circuit management and curriculum management units.

5. Leadership is at the centre of improved learner performance. Therefore, the influence and impact circuit managers have on instruction to support instructional leadership by school principals needs to be investigated.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations in this study emanated from the instruments used for data collection. The fact that only a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used, meant that it could not be concluded with certainty that there were no policies guiding instructional leadership by school principals. This shortcoming could have been addressed through document analysis. However, the literature review will account for the shortcoming in this regard.

The results of the study were informed by findings in two provinces, as I could not reach more other districts due to the vastness of districts and provinces. This study does not seek to generalise, but it provides theoretical insight in understanding district support for school principals. The study included specific district officials and school principals in the three selected districts, and, hence, the findings may not be entirely representative of all districts in those provinces. While the results of this study may be extended to other district officials, deputy principals, heads of departments, teachers and other similar studies and seek to support school principals, caution should be exercised in doing so.

Although the study findings were drawn from only participating districts, the detailed analyses of this study may make the findings implementable in other districts and schools in the country and elsewhere, particularly where the challenges facing support for instructional leadership are similar. The fact that only school principals and district officials were sampled in this study might be a limitation on its own, especially for generalisation purposes, hence, a study that includes all district management team officials and school management teams is desirable.

Collection of data using mixed methods presented a number of challenges, such as difficulty in meeting participants due to their work-related commitments, and some participants withdrew as a result. Despite all other challenges, I managed to obtain the required rich data with the assistance of the three participating district directors.

5.8   CONCLUSIONS

In responding to the research questions stipulated in Chapter 1, this study, through the findings, reached the following conclusions. The role of districts, especially in supporting instructional leadership by school principals, has come under scrutiny by policy makers and education authorities. The nature of influence by district offices can be explained and evaluated through learner and teacher performance, which suggests that the influence of such a role can only be realised through improvement of the district's approach and attitude to teaching and learning. The study concludes that the essence of district-level policies and practices in support of instructional leadership by school principals is transforming classrooms into places of teaching and learning, where learners reach their full potential and teachers excel in their work.

The communication of school goals, as a core instructional leadership practice, needs to be improved in practice. Many participants confirmed this need, especially during one-on-one interview sessions. Most participants were convinced that the failure by district-level staff members to communicate school goals effectively to school principals perpetuates misunderstandings and lack of support between schools and districts, and tends to affect learner performance. The study also concludes that there is a serious need for a paradigm shift by district officials, from an excessive focus on management and administration, to

instructional leadership, which is more curriculum-inclined. This study, further, reveals that the best way to support instructional leadership by school principals is to start with education district officials, and to focus on continued professional development programmes for them. Most district education officials are in serious need of development, which will enable them to respond to instructional leadership demands and to influence activities and practices aimed at improving learner attainment in schools.

In my interaction with school principals, I discovered how difficult it was for them to articulate some of the instructional leadership practices required for improved learner performance. The role district officials should play to support instructional leadership by school principals is, generally, not clear, given the capacity of officials at the level of districts on issues pertaining to policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals. It emerged in the study that few circuit managers and district directors were fully informed with respect to instructional leadership policies and practices that support school principals.

The current study sought to investigate how district-level policies and practices, if they exist, supported instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa. It also sought to discover if instructional leadership by school principals has any bearing on learner performance, and to identify, with the help of similar studies conducted elsewhere, applicable district-based policies and practices in the context of South Africa that can be implemented to support and influence instructional leadership by school principals.

This study discovered that strong, instructionally resolute leadership, development of district goals to improve performance, district support for instructional leadership practices by school principals, direct involvement by district-based officials in the monitoring of learner performance, and constant interactions with school principals could result in improved, even excellent, learner performance and instructional leadership by school principals.

5.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Given the nature and limitations of the study, especially in relation to the scope of the research study, it can be acknowledged that the findings may not necessarily be applicable to all districts in the country. However, I strongly believe that this study has paved the way for a greater focus on districts' role in supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa. This study will encourage and draw policy makers' attention to reforming district officials' work practices to support instructional leadership, especially on the role district officials play in supporting instructional leadership. I have mainly drawn on information on instructional leadership and districts from European and American countries; nevertheless, the findings of this study will undoubtedly raise the interest of other seasoned scholars, who will investigate further, even beyond the boundaries of South Africa, the impact policies and instructional leadership practices could have on the instructional role of school principals.

What is lacking in practice, especially on instructional leadership and districts, is alignment of the current instructional leadership responsibilities by principals, and district officials' roles and responsibilities to support instructional leadership by school principals. This lack is due to the transformative nature of the work of the principal, from purely managerial to instructional leadership, and this has necessitated a need to rethink the roles and responsibilities of district officials, so that they can support schools to improve learner performance. Unless the work of district officials is reformed to meet classroom or instructional expectations, school principals' instructional leadership needs for support by district officials will forever be compromised.

This study illuminates the need by education departments in South Africa and beyond to ensure that district officials are compliant with 21st-century demands to support school principals' instructional leadership and for improving and informing decision-making processes.

This study will initiate debate and discussions on whether the practices discussed in this research are also applicable to other districts and their support of instructional leadership by school principals, and how district support for instructional leadership by school

principals manifests itself in schools. The study reveals that school principals are vocal on the role and support districts provide, with most of the participants viewing the districts' role in supporting instructional leadership as lacking clarity. Therefore, the study will assist districts and schools to compile a meaningful agenda on issues pertaining to support for instructional leadership by districts to improve learner performance.

As Togneri and Anderson (2003) state, districts that invest in an organised and coherent set of strategies and programmes to improve learning or instruction, achieve gains in achievement. This study hopes to suggest key developmental programmes for district officials in support of the work of principals to improve learning, such as coordinated and formal training programmes on lesson observations, especially for circuit managers, who supervise school principals directly, descriptive feedback writing, data usage, and implementation of functional PLCs for both district officials and school principals.

This study will stimulate the interest of other scholars to investigate how district directors and, in particular, influence the support provided to school principals for instructional leadership. Lastly, the study has paved the way for more research studies on the work of district offices, especially in South Africa, for improving learner performance and instructional leadership by school principals.

5.10 FINAL REMARKS

This study has shown the extent to which district officials understand and embrace the importance of instructional leadership by school principals. The relationship between district-based personnel and school principals, especially regarding instructional matters, has the potential to influence classroom practices and to improve learner performance. Through this study, I learnt how important it is to focus attention on practices and policies that are directly linked to instructional leadership and the fundamental role teacher development programmes play at the level of the district.

Training that emphasises the relationship between instructional leadership and improved learner performance is fundamental and must be implemented as a matter of urgency, especially in the South African context. In the context of the South African education

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system, I learnt how districts influence learner performance when the focus is placed on instructional leadership, especially by school principals, instead of administration and management activities. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to explore in detail the capacities of circuit managers, as principals' direct supervisors, to support school principals' instructional leadership. In this study, I discovered the importance of incorporating instructional leadership practices into the strategic planning, recruitment and selection processes of districts, with the end goal of improving learner performance. I also learnt about the impact direct involvement by district directors has on instructional leadership by school principals, and learner performance, especially in relation to the communication of curriculum goals, monitoring of progress by learners and support and evaluation of instruction.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY FOR AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS AND PRINCIPALS

District level policy and practice for supporting instructional leadership by school principals in South Africa.

SECTION A: Biographic information (To be completed by all District Office participants)

1. **Your personal particulars. (Please make a cross (x) where applicable).**

Gender

Male	
Female	

Age

Under 29	
29-39	
40-49	
50-59	
60+	

Qualifications

Matric		B-Ed	
Diploma in education		M-Ed	
Degree courses		MA/MCom	
Degree		Doctorate	
Honours		Other (Specify)	

Teaching experience

Less than 5 years	
5-10	
11-20	
21-30	
31-40	

Leadership and managerial experience (including the current position

Less than 5 years	
5-10	
11-20	
21-30	
31-40	

SECTION B: District level policy and practice-Districts and principals

Please indicate your District's involvement in these facets of the instructional program by circling the number that best fits the specific job behaviour or practice as you conducted it during the past school years.

First, to the left of the item, circle the number that best reflects your view of the current situation.

Secondly, to the right of the item, circle the number that best reflects how important you think this is to improve instructional leadership.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	FRAME THE SCHOOL GOALS	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Collaboratively developing goals that are easily understood and used by principals in the school	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Frame the district's goals in terms of principals' responsibilities and targets	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Empowers and motivates both principals and officials to achieve the vision and mission	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Developed systems to secure principals' input on goal development	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Uses data on learner performance when developing the school's academic goals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	coordinates the implementation of curriculum policies such as NCS and CAPS to enhance and improve effective teaching and learning	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Runs awareness campaigns on District policy to support instructional leadership among principals	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	COMMUNICATE THE SCHOOL GOALS	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Communicates the district's mission effectively to school principals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Discusses and ensures that there is alignment of district's academic goals with departmental policies	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Refers to the district's academic goals when making curricular decisions with principals.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensure that the district's academic goals are displayed and communicated through posters or bulletin boards emphasizing academic progress	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Promotes the district's vision through an interaction with district officials and school principals	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	SUPPORT AND EVALUATE INSTRUCTION	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures that the schools' priorities for instruction are consistent with the goals and direction of the district	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Reviews principals' work products when evaluating school instruction	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Conducts informal observation in schools on a regular basis to support principals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Point out specific strengths in principals' instructional practices through post-observation feedback for example, in meetings, one on one sessions or written evaluations	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Conducts and arranges for mentoring and coaching for principals	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	PROMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures that in-service activities attended by staff and principals are consistent with the district's goals acquired during in-service training	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Supports and encourages the establishment of structures such as Professional Learning Communities(PLCs) for school principals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Obtains the participation of all principals in important in-service activities	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Leads principals' in-service activities concerned with instruction	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures that leadership development provision addresses contextual factors that influence practice	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures that Leadership development strategies focus on skills for goal setting, assessment and accountability	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Sets aside time at meetings for principals to share ideas or	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree						
					information from in-service activities					

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	**CO-ORDINATE THE CURRICULUM**	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Puts in place clear systems, role players and structures in coordination of the curriculum across grade levels.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Uses the results of district-wide testing when making curricular decisions	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Monitors the district's implementation of curriculum in order to achieve curricular objectives	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Assesses the overlap between the school's curricular objectives and the district's achievement tests	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures district officials and principals participate actively in the review of curricular materials for improved learner performance	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	**MONITOR LEARNER PROGRESS**	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Meets individually with principals to discuss learner progress	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Discusses academic performance of results with the school to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Uses tests and other performance measure to assess progress toward school goals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Inform principals of the school's performance results in written form for example, in memo or newsletter.	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	PROTECT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Limits interruptions of instructional time by public address and announcements	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensured that principals are not convened to the district office or meetings during school hours	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Ensures that all schools have instructional leadership systems for improved learner performance	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Encourages principals to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Limits the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular activities on instructional time	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	MAINTAIN HIGH VISIBILITY	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Interacts while on support visit to schools with principals and other staff members	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Visits schools and classrooms to discuss school issues with principals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Encourages policy on cover of classes for teachers until a late or substitute teacher arrives	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Assists in leading the school or provide direct instructional support to principals	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Attends/participates in extra-and co-curricular activities	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meetings, newsletters, and/or memos	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Compliment teachers/principals privately for their efforts or performance	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Acknowledge teachers'/principals privately for their personnel files	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Reward special efforts by teachers/principals with opportunities for professional recognition	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Create professional growth opportunities for teachers/principals as a reward for special contributions to the school	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING	Crucial	Important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not all important
5	4	3	2	1	Recognizes learners who do superior work with formal rewards such as an honour roll or mention in the Principal's newsletter	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Uses meetings to honour principals for academic accomplishments	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Recognizes excellent principals' achievement or improvement by inviting them to the office for motivation	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Contacts parents to communicate improved or exemplary student performance or contributions	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	Supports teachers/principals actively in their recognition and /or reward of student contributions to and accomplishment in class	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX B

FOCUS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARTICIPANTS

1. Are you familiar with the district's framed goals to support instructional leadership by school principals?
2. Please state and elaborate on each policy you know that your district has formulated to support instructional leadership by school principals.
3. Which structures at the level of the district office are particularly established to support instructional leadership by school principals?
4. What capacities do district officials have to support instructional leadership by school principals?
5. Kindly identify the kind of resources the district has and how the district went about in mobilising and utilising such resources to support instructional leadership by school principals?
6. Is there any policy regulatory framework in place in your district that you use for supporting instructional leadership by school principals? Please explain your answer fully
7. What recommendations do you wish to give as a way of encouraging the synergy of district officials and school principals in their quest to boost instructional leadership?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT LETTER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

26 Longtom street

Welgelegen

Sasolburg

1947

The Superintendent General

Free State Education Department

CR Swarts Building

Bloemfontein

9300

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta, and I am presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Doctoral programme, I am required to conduct 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 project is:

District level-policy and practice for supporting Instructional by school principals in South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to understand in what ways districts support schools and principals in particular, on instructional leadership with a view to improving the practice at

both the district and school levels. The study has the potential to benefit the Department of Education, districts, and schools on how best instructional leadership by school principals, supported by districts can improve effective teaching and learning.

The study will involve 1) survey questionnaires for selected district officials; 2) survey questionnaires for principals of selected schools; 3) interviews with selected district officials and principals and the interviews will be recorded, with permission from the participants 4) analysis of policy documents designed to provide guidance to districts and school principals on the implementation of instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning. I therefore request permission to conduct research with district officials and school principals of Lejweleputswa District. There will be no interference with officials' work plans as the research will be conducted either during lunch times or after official hours. Informed consent will be requested from district officials and school principals. No names of district officials and/or school principals interviewed or interacted with will be used in any report of the study. Attached is a letter of recommendation from my research supervisor. Upon completion, I undertake to provide the Free State Education Department with a copy of the research report(s). For further information, kindly contact me/or my supervisor at:

vusi.chuta@gmail.comjitalc@ufs.ac.za

016 973 9118/9151   051 401 7522

Thank you and hope that my application will reach your utmost reception

Yours Sincerely

Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta

CONSENT LETTER FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

26 Longtom street

Welgelegen

Sasolburg

1947

The School Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta and presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Doctoral programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to make a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research project is:

District level-policy and practice for supporting Instructional by school principals in South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to understand in what ways districts support schools and principals in particular, on instructional leadership with a view to improving the practice at both the district and school levels. The study has the potential to benefit the Department of Education, districts, and schools on how best instructional leadership by school principals, supported by districts can improve effective teaching and learning. You have been identified as one of the principals who are expected to be implementing instructional leadership practice to improve teaching and learning.

The study will involve 1) survey questionnaires (about 30-40 minutes); 2) interviews with selected district officials and principals and the interviews will be recorded, with permission from the participants (about 45-60 minutes); 3) analysis of policy documents designed to provide guidance to school principals in the implementation of instructional

leadership to improve teaching and learning. There will be no interference with your official work plans as the research will be conducted either during lunch times or after official school hours. Informed consent will be requested from you. No names will be used in any report of the study. You will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should you so wish. I have already applied for and received permission from the Free State Department of Education Superintendent General to conduct the study.

For further information, kindly contact me/or my supervisor at:

vusi.chuta@gmail.com jitalc@ufs.ac.za

016 973 9118/9151   051 401 7522

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours Sincerely

Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study
- I understand what the study is about and why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: _____ Date: _26/04/2018_____

CONSENT LETTER FOR THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICIALS

(for all district officials sampled for the study)

26 Longtom street

Welgelegen

Sasolburg

1947

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta and presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Doctoral programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to make a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research project is:

District level-policy and practice for supporting Instructional by school principals in South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to understand in what ways districts support schools and principals in particular, on instructional leadership with a view to improving the practice at both the district and school levels. The study has the potential to benefit the Department of Education, districts, and schools on how best instructional leadership by school principals, supported by districts can improve effective teaching and learning. You have been identified as one of the district officials who may be of assistance in the research study in order to improve the implementation of instructional leadership policies and practices in schools. The study will involve 1) survey questionnaires; 2) interviews with selected district officials; 3) analysis of policy documents geared at guiding school principals in the implementation of instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning.

There will be no interference with your official work plans as the research will be conducted either during lunch times or after official school hours. Informed consent will be requested from you. No names will be used in any report of the study. You will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should you so wish. I have already applied for and received permission to conduct this research study.

For further information, kindly contact me/or my supervisor at:

vusi.chuta@gmail.comjitalc@ufs.ac.za

016 973 9118/9151   051 401 7522

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours Sincerely

Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study
- I understand what the study is about and why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature: _____ Date: _26/04/2018_____

CONSENT LETTER FOR DISTRICT EDUCATION DIRECTOR

26Longtomstreet

Welgelegen

Sasolburg

1947

The District Director

Name of District

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby request permission to conduct research with principals in your District.I am Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta and presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my Doctoral programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to make a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issue under study. The title of my research project is:

District level-policy and practice for supporting Instructional by school principals in South Africa. The purpose of the study is to understand in what ways districts support schools and principals in particular, on instructional leadership with a view to improving the practice at both the district and school levels. The study has the potential to benefit the Department of Education, districts, and schools on how best instructional leadership by school principals, supported by districts can improve effective teaching and learning. The study will involve 1) survey questionnaires with school principals; 2) interviews with selected school principals; 3) analysis of policy documents geared at guiding districts and school principals in the implementation of instructional leadership to improve teaching and learning. There will be no interference with school principals' official work plans as the research will be conducted either during lunch times or after official school hours. Informed consent will be requested from them. No names will be used in any report of the

study. They will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish. I have already applied for and received permission from the Superintendent General of Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the study.

For further information, kindly contact me/or my supervisor at:

vusi.chuta@gmail.com jiitalc@ufs.ac.za

016 973 9118/9151   051 401 7522

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Yours Sincerely

Vusumzi Hertzog Chuta

_____

- I hereby give free and informed consent to participate in the abovementioned research study
- I understand what the study is about and why I am participating and what the risks and benefits are
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my participation, subject to the stipulations he has indicated in the above letter.

Signature:_____ Date:_ 26/04/2018_____

APPRNDIX G

Faculty of Education

30-Jun-2015

Dear Mr Vuzimzi Chuta

Ethics Clearance: District level-policy and practice for supporting Instructional by school principal in South Africa

Principal Investigator: Mr Vuzimzi Chuta

Department: School of Higher Education Studies (Bloemfontein Campus)

With reference to you 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-HSD2015/0283

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 Sincerely

Dr M.M. Nkoane
Chairperson: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

APPENDIX H

Enquiries: BM Kitching
Tel. no: 051404 9221
E-mail: berthakitching@gmail.com

education
Department of
Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Mr V. H. Chuta
26 Longtom Street
Vaalpark,
SASOLBURG
1947

Dear Mr Chuta

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: District level policy & practice for supporting Instructional Leadership by school principals in South Africa

    Approval is herewith granted to conduct research in the following schools: Thabong P/S, Thembekile P/S, Daluvuyo P/S, Embonesweni P/S, Lenyora P/S, Dirisanang P/S, Tswelopele P/S, Lehakwe P/S, Dr Ngoma P/S, Tsakane P/S, Lenakeng S/S, Leseding S/S, Teto S/S, Thotagauta S/S, Lebogang S/S, Lephola S/S, Lekgarietse S/S, Nanabolela S/S and Letsetse S/S.

    Target Population: 1 X District Director, 3 X CESs, 4 X DCESs10 X Circuit Managers and 12 X School Principals.

    Period of research: For three months from the date of signing of this letter. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year.

2. 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.

3. The approval is subject to the following conditions:

    3.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.

    3.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3rd Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.

    3.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.

    3.4 The attached ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.

4. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely

DR JEM SEKOLANYANE
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 04/09/2015

APPENDIX I

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2016 / 209
enquiries: Diane Buntting 011 843 6503

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	14 August 2015
Validity of Research Approval:	14 August 2015 to 2 October 2015
Name of Researcher:	Chuta V.H.
Address of Researcher:	26 Longtom Street; Welgelegeng; Vaal Park; Vereeniging; Sasolburg; 1947
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	016 973 9118; 079 503 5964
Email address:	chutavh@edu.fs.gov.za; vusi.chuta@gmail.com
Research Topic:	District level policy and practice for supporting Instructional Leadership by school principals in South Africa.
Number and type of schools:	TEN Primary and TEN Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg South; Sedibeng West ??? 10 districts ????

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However participation is VOLUNTARY.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter;

2015/08/17

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research
9⁹ Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0508
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

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TITLE FOR APPENDIX J

Table A1: Comparison of districts per domain: Agreement, district officials

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-value
Frame the school goals	4.21	0.58	2.4379	0.2955
Communicate the school goals	3.83	0.97	0.6265	0.7311
Support and evaluate instruction	3.78	0.88	1.8302	0.4005
Promote professional development	4.08	0.69	5.4232	0.0664
Coordinate the curriculum	4.00	0.81	2.2739	0.3208
Monitor student progress	3.23	1.10	3.2881	0.1932*
Protect instruction time	3.56	0.93	0.9912	0.6092**
Maintain high visibility	3.54	0.84	2.2540	0.3240
Provide incentives for teachers	4.00	0.75	1.4467	0.4851
Provide incentives for learning	4.29	0.63	0.2920	0.8642***

Table A2: Comparison of districts per domain: Importance, district officials

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-value
Frame the school goals	4.54	0.31	1.6230	0.4442
Communicate the school goals	4.39	0.35	1.4253	0.4903
Support and evaluate instruction	4.37	0.41	0.7022	0.7039
Promote professional development	4.45	0.42	1.0641	0.5874

Coordinate the curriculum	4.56	0.36	1.2100	0.5461
Monitor student progress	4.42	0.41	2.8811	0.2368*
Protect instruction time	4.53	0.39	0.0451	0.9777***
Maintain high visibility	4.48	0.56	1.3415	0.5113**
Provide incentives for teachers	4.23	0.53	0.9407	0.6248
Provide incentives for learning	4.56	0.37	2.8173	0.2445

TITLE FOR APPENDIX K

Table B1: Comparison of districts per domain: Agreement, primary school principals

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-value
Frame the school goals	4.35	0.32	1.1538	0.5616
Communicate the school goals	4.07	0.59	0.1007	0.9509***
Support and evaluate instruction	4.17	0.51	2.5109	0.2850*
Promote professional development	4.36	0.53	0.9234	0.6302**
Coordinate the curriculum	4.39	0.50	0.0000	1.0000
Monitor student progress	4.30	0.59	0.4639	0.7930
Protect instruction time	4.25	0.72	0.8292	0.6606
Maintain high visibility	3.93	0.67	0.3625	0.8342
Provide incentives for teachers	3.84	0.74	2.5447	0.2802
Provide incentives for learning	4.16	0.79	0.0496	0.9755

Table B2: Comparison of districts per domain: Importance, primary school principals

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-value
Frame the school goals	4.54	0.29	0.0454	0.9775***
Communicate the school goals	4.52	0.46	2.4296	0.2968
Support and evaluate instruction	4.42	0.39	0.1453	0.9299
Promote professional development	4.55	0.37	1.8738	0.3918
Coordinate the curriculum	4.59	0.38	2.7181	0.2569

Monitor student progress	4.63	0.40	0.9571	0.6197
Protect instruction time	4.58	0.45	0.8228	0.6627**
Maintain high visibility	4.18	0.46	3.5558	0.1690*
Provide incentives for teachers	4.02	0.61	7.1723	0.0277*
Provide incentives for learning	4.33	0.52	0.6076	0.7380

TITLE FOR APPENDIX L

Table C1: Comparison of districts per domain: Agreement, secondary school principals

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-value
Frame the school goals	4.33	0.35	0.1559	0.9250
Communicate the school goals	4.22	0.52	0.1849	0.9117
Support and evaluate instruction	4.26	0.51	0.6646	0.7173**
Promote professional development	4.07	0.48	11.8600	0.0027
Coordinate the curriculum	4.37	0.53	0.6472	0.7235
Monitor student progress	4.12	0.66	8.2873	7.7496
Protect instruction time	4.30	0.51	7.6810	7.3094
Maintain high visibility	4.06	0.67	0.6377	7.9859***
Provide incentives for teachers	4.10	0.74	7.5067	7.8802
Provide incentives for learning	4.29	0.57	0.1777	7.2733

Table C2: Comparison of districts per domain: Importance, secondary school principals

Questionnaire domains	Mean	Standard deviation	Chi Square	p-Value
Frame the school goals	4.34	0.36	5.1642	0.0756
Communicate the school goals	4.44	0.49	1.7770	0.4113
Support and evaluate instruction	4.33	0.42	0.2918	0.8643
Promote professional development	4.30	0.39	4.2193	0.1213
Coordinate the curriculum	4.46	0.36	3.2113	0.2008

Monitor learner progress	4.49	3.75	2.4215	0.2980
Protect instruction time	4.32	0.45	0.0453	0.9776
Maintain high visibility	4.39	0.56	5.2981	0.0707
Provide incentives for teachers	4.00	0.70	1.7089	0.4253
Provide incentives for learning	4.42	0.46	0.0990	0.9517

TITLE FOR APPENDIX M

Table D1: Percentage of responses to questions to the first five questionnaire domains, by districts under study

Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement					Level of importance				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sedibeng West District Officials	Frame the school goals	-	6%	16%	44%	33%	63%	37%	0%	0%	0%
	Communicate the school goals	7%	20%	11%	7%	38%	47%	53%	0%	0%	0%
	Support and evaluate instructions	5%	27%	14%	36%	18%	49%	47%	4%	0%	0%
	Promote professional development	-	18%	16%	44%	22%	60%	38%	2%	0%	0%
	Coordinate curriculum	-	20%	24%	29%	17%	47%	51%	2%	0%	0%

Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement					Level of importance				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
JHB South district officials	Frame the school goals	-	-	-	46%	54%	63%	34%	3%	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	4%	8%	24%	44%	20%	36%	52%	12%	-	-
	Support and evaluate instructions	8%	-	4%	56%	32%	44%	56%	-	-	-
	Promote professional development	-	-	-	40%	60%	40%	60%	-	-	-
	Coordinate curriculum	-	8%	-	48%	44%	68%	32%	-	-	-

Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement					Level of importance				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Lejweleputswa District Officials	Frame the school goals	-	3%	14%	43%	40%	50%	41%	9%	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	2%	4%	14%	46%	34%	46%	48%	6%	-	-

		SA	AG	N	DS	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	6%	18%	40%	36%	44%	38%	18%	-	-
	Promote professional development	-	7%	10%	43%	40%	49%	39%	11%	1%	-
	Coordinate curriculum	-	6%	10%	42%	42%	64%	32%	4%	-	-

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=Fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE LAST FIVE RESPONSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE DOMAINS BY DISTRICT UNDER STUDY

Table E1: Questionnaire data: Agreement/importance

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sedibeng West district officials	Monitor student progress	17%	19%	11%	31%	22%	58%	42%	-	-	-
	Protect instruction time	9%	24%	11%	29%	27%	62%	24%	13%	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	16%	20%	7%	31%	27%	58%	29%	13%	-	-
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	16%	18%	40%	27%	44%	49%	7%	-	-
	Provide incentives for learning	-	4%	13%	31%	51%	44%	51%	4%	-	-

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
JHB South District Officials	Monitor student progress	-	65%	20%	10%	5%	35%	50%	15%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	8%	12%	32%	36%	12%	56%	44%	-	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	-	16%	48%	32%	4%	76%	24%	-	-	-
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	-	24%	36%	40%	24%	60%	16%	-	-
	Provide incentives for learning	-	4%	24%	24%	48%	80%	16%	4%	-	-

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Lejweleputswa District Officials	Monitor student progress	-	28%	13%	35%	25%	50%	37%	12%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	6%	8%	8%	54%	24%	54%	46%	-	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	-	12%	22%	32%	34%	48%	42%	10%	-	-

			SA	AG	N	DS	SD	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	6%	10%	50%	34%	38%	42%	20%	-	-
	Provide incentives for learning	-	-	12%	40%	48%	60%	40%	-	-	-

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=Fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important

TITLE FOR APPENDIX O

Table F1: Percentage of responses to questions to the first five questionnaire domains by primary schools participants

Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement				Level of importance					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Orange Farm Primary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	-	5%	54%	42%	55%	44%	1%	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	-	-	22%	45%	33%	58%	33%	8%	-	-
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	3%	23%	38%	35%	46%	45%	8%	-	-
	Promote professional development	-	1%	10%	45%	45%	57%	40%	4%	-	-
	Coordinate curriculum	-	2%	12%	35%	50%	72%	27%	2%	-	-
Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement				Level of importance					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sebokeng Primary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	-	7%	43%	50%	57%	40%	2%	0%	0%
	Communicate the school goals	-	7%	17%	57%	20%	37%	63%	0%	0%	0%
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	3%	3%	67%	27%	50%	47%	3%	0%	0%
	Promote professional development	-	5%	-	36%	60%	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
	Coordinate curriculum	-	7%	-	37%	57%	63%	30%	0%	7%	0%
Participant	Variable (domain)	Level of agreement				Level of importance					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Welkom Primary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	-	14%	49%	37%	63%	29%	9%	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	-	-	16%	52%	32%	80%	16%	4%	-	-

	SA	AG	N	DS	SD	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Support and evaluate instructions	-	-	12%	32%	56%	60%	24%	16%	-	-
Promote professional development	-	-	9%	54%	37%	49%	46%	6%	-	-
Coordinate curriculum	-	-	8%	40%	52%	60%	24%	16%	-	-

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=Fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS IN PERCENTAGE POINTS FOR THE LAST FIVE RESPONSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE DOMAINS BY PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

Table G1: Questionnaire data: Agreement/importance:

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Orange Farm Primary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	2%	21%	33%	44%	69%	29%	2%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	2%	2%	15%	38%	43%	57%	37%	7%	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	-	5%	22%	40%	33%	47%	43%	7%	3%	-
	Provide incentives for teachers	5%	7%	12%	38%	38%	52%	35%	12%	-	2%
	Provide incentives for learning	-	3%	20%	32%	45%	53%	33%	13%	-	-

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sebokeng West Primary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	-	5%	50%	45%	50%	50%	-	-	-
	Protect instruction time	13%	3%	0%	27%	57%	62%	24%	13%	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	7%	7%	27%	20%	40%	40%	27%	23%	7%	3%
	Provide incentives for teachers	7%	20%	13%	37%	23%	27%	37%	23%	7%	7%
	Provide incentives for learning	3%	7%	3%	43%	43%	40%	50%	3%	3%	3%

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Welkom Primary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	-	5%	50%	45%	50%	50%	-	-	-
	Protect instruction time	-	-	4%	36%	60%	72%	24%	4%	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	8%	4%	12%	44%	32%	44%	36%	8%	12%	-

	SA	AG	N	DS	SD	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Provide incentives for teachers	4%	16%	8%	28%	44%	28%	36%	8%	24%	4%
Provide incentives for learning	4%	16%	4%	20%	56%	52%	40%		4%	4%

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=Fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE FIRST FIVE RESPONSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE DOMAINS BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Table H1: Questionnaire data: Agreement/importance

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT				LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sebokeng Secondary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	4%	4%	49%	43%	49%	43%	6%	2%	0%
	Communicate the school goals	-	-	26%	23%	51%	66%	26%	9%	0%	0%
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	9%	14%	37%	40%	51%	29%	20%	0%	0%
	Promote professional development	-	-	-	57%	43%	55%	43%	2%	0%	0%
	Coordinate curriculum	-	-	3%	40%	57%	66%	34%	0%	0%	0%

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT				LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Welkom Secondary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	-	5%	56%	40%	49%	51%	-	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	-	-	11%	58%	31%	51%	42%	7%	-	-
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	-	11%	47%	42%	33%	64%	2%	-	-
	Promote professional development	-	2%	16%	46%	37%	41%	48%	11%	-	-
	Coordinate curriculum	-	2%	11%	38%	49%	47%	46%	7%	-	-

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT				LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE					
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Orange Farm Secondary Schools	Frame the school goals	-	-	6%	56%	38%	24%	68%	8%	-	-
	Communicate the school goals	-	-	9%	60%	31%	40%	56%	2%	2%	-

		SA	AG	N	DS	SD	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
	Support and evaluate instructions	-	-	4%	56%	40%	38%	60%	2%	-	-
	Promote professional development	-	3%	25%	71%	-	21%	73%	5%	2%	-
	Coordinate curriculum	-	-	16%	42%	42%	38%	62%	-	-	-

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=Fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE LAST FIVE RESPONSES OF QUESTIONNAIRE DOMAINS BY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Table I1: Questionnaire data: Agreement/ importance:

Participant	Variable (domain)	LEVEL OF AGREEMENT					LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE				
		SD	DA	N	AG	SA	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
Sebokeng Secondary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	-	7%	32%	61%	61%	36%	4%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	-	6%	9%	43%	43%	51%	34%	11%	3%	-
	Maintain high visibility	-	11%	6%	40%	43%	46%	37%	9%	6%	3%
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	9%	13%	22%	56%	40%	37%	11%	6%	6%
	Provide incentives for learning	-	3%	9%	46%	43%	51%	34%	11%	3%	-
Participant	**Variable (domain)**	**SD**	**DA**	**N**	**AG**	**SA**	**CR**	**IM**	**FI**	**NVI**	**NAI**
Welkom Secondary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	31%	11%	25%	33%	61%	36%	3%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	-	2%	13%	31%	53%	33%	62%	4%	-	-
	Maintain high visibility	-	7%	16%	69%	9%	78%	18%	4%	-	-
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	9%	13%	22%	56%	22%	33%	44%	-	-
	Provide incentives for learning	-	4%	22%	40%	33%	49%	47%	4%	-	-
Participant	**Variable (domain)**	**SD**	**DA**	**N**	**AG**	**SA**	**CR**	**IM**	**FI**	**NVI**	**NAI**
Orange Farm Secondary Schools	Monitor student progress	-	-	3%	64%	33%	36%	61%	3%	-	-
	Protect instruction time	-	-	13%	44%	42%	42%	49%	9%	-	-

		SA	AG	N	DS	SD	CR	IM	FI	NVI	NAI
	Maintain high visibility	-	4%	4%	51%	40%	29%	64%	7%	-	-
	Provide incentives for teachers	-	9%	9%	47%	36%	42%	42%	11%	4%	-
	Provide incentives for learning	-	-	4%	49%	47%	49%	47%	4%	-	-

Legend:

SA=strongly agree; AG=agree; N=neutral; DS=disagree; SD=strongly disagree.

CR=crucial; IM=important; FI=fairly important; NVI=Not very important; NAI=Not at all important