Attributes and Actions of Principals as Instructional Leaders in Empowering School Management Teams (SMTs) in Schools [1]

Saltiel Khol-lolo Collen Mataboge[2], Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu[3]

Abstract

The purpose and scope of the article was to examine the attributes and actions of principals as instructional leaders in empowering School Management Teams (SMTs) in Schools. The focus is on trying to answer the main research question: What are the attributes and actions that principals as instructional leaders should have in performing their obligations? Method: Data collection was done through a questionnaire, literature review, and interviews. A pilot study was initially conducted before the commencement of the study to validate the contents of the questionnaire. To ensure validity, triangulation was undertaken (literature review, the questionnaire, and the focus-group interviews). The sample consisted of 55 principals (n=55) of schools in the Tshwane-West District of Gauteng in South Africa. Data analysis was done thematically, and the narratives of respondents were examined. Additionally, field data was verbatim transcribed from voice tapes. The transcribed information was completed as soon as the interviews were conducted to prevent incorrect interpretation of crucial information from the recordings and focus group interviews. Findings/Results: In empowering SMTs in schools' attributes like communication skills; it was found out a clear vision of the future of the school; an attitude of self-confidence; focusing on teaching and learning; tough feedback; courage to raise controversial issues. It was found that the principals lack assertiveness; are tolerant of mistakes, and are sympathetic to wrongdoers. Principals are reluctant to share power and practice distributed leadership. Implications for Research and Practice: Policymakers and schools will be able to review policies and practices to strengthen schools.

Keywords: Communication, administration, monitoring, equal opportunities, support**.**

---

[1] This article was produced from the thesis of the first author.

[2] Author, University of South Africa

[3] Corresponding Author, mahlavp@unisa.ac.za, University of South Africa

Introduction

Yurttaş and Aksu (2022) advise that school principals need to think and act on their leadership behaviors and school culture in order to ensure school dynamism. The study reports about the attributes and actions principals only. Maybe, those principal participants might not be willing to tell it all. The Department of Basic Education and school principals may use the study's findings and recommendations as a resource to help policymakers and other stakeholders understand the roles that school principals play in empowering SMTs and ensuring their accountability for matters relating to school management. The functions and duties for which the principal is answerable to the head of department (HOD) in the province in South Africa as an employee of the Department of Basic Education and in his official capacity as contemplated in Sections 23(1) and 24(1) (j) of the same Act are listed in Section 16A of SASA and underpinned the study.

This article examined the attributes and actions of principals as instructional leaders in empowering School Management Teams (SMTs) in Schools. The article's focus is to answer the following main question: What are the attributes and actions that principals as instructional leaders should have in performing their obligations in schools? The South African School Act encapsulates the principal's responsibility for exercising leadership and ensuring that learner achievement is increased (Department of Education, 1996). A public school shall be professionally managed by the principal under the direction of the Head of Department in accordance with Section 16(3) of the South African School Act. The principal's responsibility in performing this job is to make sure that the learners' education is promoted appropriately and in compliance with established policies. A yearly report on the academic performance of that school must also be prepared and submitted to the Head of Department in accordance with Section 16A(b)(i)-(iii) of the Act (Department of Education, 1996). The principal is ultimately responsible for creating a strategy outlining how academic achievement at the school will be improved. The principal's responsibilities include providing instructional leadership within the school by directing, supervising, and mentoring the school management team, ensuring fair workload distribution among staff, taking part in appraisal systems to enhance teaching and learning, and ensuring the proper and effective organization of all evaluations and assessments carried out in the school. The argument in this article is about the attributes and actions that principals as instructional leader should have in performing their obligations in schools. An increasing body of evidence supports the idea that the attributes and actions of principals are important in teaching and learning. Principals are expected to oversee and direct the activities of SMTs in enhancing teaching and learning in schools. One of the principal's core responsibilities is to manage teaching and learning by being accountable for equipping the SMTs with the requisite attributes and action in instructional leadership in schools.

This study was carried out in the District of Tshwane West area in Gauteng province of the Republic of South Africa. Generally, principals are expected to perform the following duties, namely: To set clear goals for the implementation of the curriculum; guide and assist the SMTs to ensure that teaching reflects the objectives of the curriculum; ensure that the SMTs offering the right guidance to teachers; ensure that the learners are assessed regularly; meet with the SMTs to discuss learner progress and academic achievement; manage and coordinate the curriculum in such a way that teaching time is utilized optimally; monitor the learner books to reflect the curriculum; identify the learners who need remedial and extra classes; ensuring that teaching and learning reflect the aims of the subjects; provide guidance and support to the SMTs; inspire the SMTs to take ownership of the school's vision; and to work collaboratively with staff, to set a vision that will enhance teaching and learning in schools. The sample consisted of 55 principals (n=55) of schools in Tshwane-West District of Gauteng in South Africa. Research done by Shakel, Shangolo, and Sheared (2018) found that female principals consistently obtain higher ratings on instructional leadership when compared with their male counterparts. In comparing male and female principals, these authors found that the female principals are more active in instructional leadership and demonstrated transformational leadership more than their counterpart and were having more attributes and actions. They also found that female principals as administrators were more able to conduct their school work systematically and hardworking. They were more ambitious than their male counterparts.

Literature Review

Attributes and actions of principals as instructional leaders

Merritt and Wang (2022) found that principals who act as instructional leaders must establish school goals with student learning as the primary focus. The attributes that these principals must is to ensure that SMTs use high-quality curriculum-instruction, manage assessment, and promote a positive school climate for students and staff through systems of accountability. In addition, Bhujel (2021) advise that a principal must act as the guideline, change agent, role model, director of educational institution, and manager of human resources at every school level to influence the behaviour SMTs so that the academic outcomes of students can be enhanced. Similarly, Tedla and Redda (2022) advise that SMTs need to be empowered to have attributes that relate to values, goals, morals and vision of the school. SMTs, as leaders and managers ought to be decisive decision-makers. They need to demonstrate leadership attributes that display a strong personality and be able handle issues through problem-solving skills.

In support of Merritt and Wang (2022); Bhujel (2021); and Tedla and Redda (2022), the advice of Hajarin and Yazar (2022) is that SMTs must come down to commitment and dedication to having a support system that strengthen the link between SMTs and student learning. SMTs must be in a provide schools the tools and feedback needed to improve student results and school performance. They ought to practice aspects such as discipline, obedience, control, motivation, dedication, and be consistent in discharging their work. Consequently, Malinga, Loyiso et al. (2022) suggest that SMTs attributes must involve subject proficiency, professional credibility and agency in resourcing the subject departments in schools. Again, in their leadership practices, SMTs must know how to set the vision of the school, building collegiality, developing management teams including teachers. Some of the attributes that SMTs need to possess is the promotion of student achievement through sharing of mission and vision of the school with teachers to create a conducive climate of teaching and learning (Polatcan & Cansoy, 2019). Generally, SMTS ought to be open to new teaching methodologies and serve as teacher-mentors to develop their capabilities, skills and knowledge including those of students (Muyunda, 2022).

SMTs' tacit knowledge must provide teachers with an understanding of their problem-solving capabilities to improve school performance and whole school effectiveness (Rahman & Tahir, et. al., 2022). SMTs must be able to influence school performance, as well as teacher development and learner performace in schools (Caluza, 2022). Sanchez, Paul, et al. (2020)) are of the view that Some of the attributes that SMTs need to portray include reducing/eliminate the risk of total collapse of teaching and learning that would render schools dysfunctional. Zulu et al. (2021) found that a well-grounded SMT member need to have servant leadership skills that will enhance the collaboration of all stakeholders in a school to ensure effective teaching and learning.

Hence, Alhebshi, Aishah et al (2022) advise that SMTs need to be continuously encouraged to have high expectations and be innovative to make provision of required resources within the schools' subject departments. Their priority ought to be on the outcomes of learning and curriculum coordination and implementation. They ought to ensure that the school's mission is reflected on all activities of the school management teams. In support of the previous scholars, the Western Governors University (2020), believe that SMTs in performing the role of Instructional Leadership, their actions must be to direct, guide, and influence their own work and those of teachers. In addition, SMTs are expected to use their actions to express a vision, encourage teams, and ensure that their members are as productive as possible to ensure the success of the school.

School leaders can be assigned to roles that match their skills and motivations regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other potentially marginalizing qualities thanks to instructional leadership, which emerged from a social justice perspective (DeMatthews, 2018). The ability to develop positive working relationships with the management team and the teachers, enhance teaching techniques through supervision, and develop management team competencies to lead and manage efficient teaching and learning in the school are just a few of the capabilities that make it possible to apply instructional leadership. Principals must also be dedicated to influencing and enhancing student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Shaked (2021) thinks that instructional leadership qualities are expected of school principals. In his study, Shaked (2021) discovered that some principals merely place a secondary value on instructional leadership, with only a tiny percentage of principals' time going toward these activities. Therefore, principals must put enhancing instruction and curriculum ahead of managerial responsibilities in their role as instructional leaders. Coordination of the curriculum, supervision and evaluation of instruction, and progress tracking of students should be the principals' responsibilities in terms of instructional leadership.

Principals must be led by evidence-based treatments that are informed by students' strengths-based, individualized student profiles when performing their instructional tasks (Fitzgerald & Radford, 2022).

Merritt and Wang (2022) assert that in order to guarantee that teachers employ top-notch curricula, instruction, and evaluation, principals who serve as instructional leaders must develop school goals with student learning as the main priority. This could help teachers and students feel more comfortable in the classroom. Principals must create systems of accountability that prioritize student learning in all decisions in order to fulfill their duties as instructional leadership roles.

According to Bhujel (2021), each school's principal should serve as a mentor, change agent, role model, director of the educational institution, and manager of human resources in order to empower SMTs. The student behavior and academic outcomes must be the principal's main concerns when empowering the SMTs. Yang and Liu (2019) discovered a positive relationship between servant leadership and follower psychological empowerment and employee creativity. Once more, Yang and Liu (2019) cite Bhujel (2021) as their source when they assert that empowerment occurs when servant leaders assist and enable their followers' personal growth, which must include independent decision-making, information sharing, and creative performance activities. According to them (Yang and Liu, 2019), it is critical that principals foster the growth of SMT competencies and act independently. Academic success and school effectiveness can be improved in schools where the principle has adopted a participatory leadership style and encouraged the management team to accept sharing responsibility and decision-making.

According to Lee, Lyubovnikova, et al. (2020), the principal must implement and exhibit SMT empowerment capabilities if he or she wants to inspire underperforming SMTs in schools. Once this happens, the SMTs will gradually start to emulate the principal's behavior and be eager to contribute positively to their schools.

Limon (2022) advises principals that when empowering SMTs, the following considerations must be kept in mind, specifically: To foster trust in SMTs, the principal must develop shared management structures, ensure SMT participation in problem-solving and decision-making mechanisms, enable SMT autonomy, encourage innovation, creativity, and risk-taking, offer support by delegating authority to SMTs, provide them with intellectual stimulation, affirm, and appreciate their accomplishments. The principle should serve as a positive role model by exhibiting qualities like interest, enthusiasm, optimism, honesty, and approachability.

According to Muyunda (2022), although it is well recognized that the principal's leadership style has a crucial role in fostering the teaching and learning process, it is less obvious how SMTs actually experience and put that leadership into effect in the classroom. The following qualities are necessary for principals to perform their jobs as instructional leaders: They must possess morals, values, and goals, as well as vision. Similar to this, instructional leadership, according to Lamsal (2022), is the role in any educational setting that may make use of unique abilities and knowledge to guarantee kids' academic performance while providing the essential assistance to all teachers, pupils, and school personnel. Planning, curriculum design and development, training delivery and professional development, teacher evaluation and monitoring, and student assessment are just a few of the different aspects and dimensions of instructional leadership. As a result, Tedla and Redda (2022) counsel principals that they should function as decision-makers by exhibiting leadership qualities such a strong personality, the capacity to handle problems, and decision-making/problem-solving skills. Modern school leaders oversee the intricate structures known as schools rather than just being "the principal instructor." As a result, principals are expected to develop a working relationship with other stakeholders as well as the SMTs. School principals must address the issues of effective stakeholder

participation and empowerment if they are to accomplish their schools' objectives. Zulu, who support the idea that the duty of the school administrator must entail working with other stakeholders like the SMTs and aiding them with the necessary abilities, reaffirm this viewpoint.

The Department of Basic Education (2020) in South Africa urged principals to be more helpful than directive and asked for a completely new method of conducting business. Since it is essential to all school operations, principals were asked to implement change by giving SMTs instructions on how to carry out shared educational objectives. Since then, the same appeal has been supported as a component of the 2030 school vision. The school principal is required to serve as an instructional leader by engaging in instructional projects, expressing the school's mission and vision with SMTs, and fostering an atmosphere that supports teaching and learning (Polatcan & Cansoy, 2019). In order to fulfill their responsibilities, principals must be receptive to innovative working procedures that use SMTs to enhance instructional leadership in classrooms. The principals are anticipated to act as mentors in the development of SMTs' skills.

Mayger and Provinzano (2022) belive that school principals must resituate improvement efforts through expanded and collaborative partnerships that simultaneously support SMTs development and empowerment on a continual basis. Therefore, the quality of teaching is the key factor that must be used by linking principal instructional leadership with SMTs empowerment. Moreover, principals who demonstrate this trait can transfer knowledge and mediating process very effectively, and could avoid challenges and difficulties, by finding alternative teaching methods for mediating the educational process (Siriparp, Buasuwan, et al. (2022).

Method

Research Design

This article in used a mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative methods) in collecting information. A questionnaire, focus group interviews, and literature review were used to collect the data. A pilot study was initially done and followed by the actual field work. The primary method of reliability employed in this study was the triangulation of information from many sources, including focus groups and questionnaires. The sampled consisted of fifty-five (55) principals in Tshwane-West District. Using quantitative approach, the data was described using descriptive statistics, e.g. the frequencies and mean scores, the explanatory methods and inferential statistics, the factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were done.

Research problem

The problem that was investigated emanated from the assumption that school principals as leaders were not sharing management functions and were not involving all stakeholders in managing schools. This led to the researchers to establish and to look at the attributes and actions that principals must display as instructional leaders for them to empower their school management teams (SMTs).

Aims of the research

The aim of the article was to examine the attributes and actions that principals as instructional leaders should have in performing their obligations in schools.

Theoretical foundation

This article's theoretical foundation is underpinned by the theories of empowerment and ambidexterity. The empowerment theory deals with the power relationship within an organization and involves a transfer of authority, power, and responsibility from managers to school management teams as front-line employees (Kanjanakan, Wang et al. 2023). The expectation is that principals as managers who hold power must be willing to share authority or to relinquish some responsibilities and a stronger level of autonomy to be given to other stakeholders and this is referred to as 'empowering process'. Siyal, Liu et al. (2023) regard empowerment as an attribute of inclusivity and principals as leaders ought to create a situation in the workplace where voices are respected, and the principals' words and actions must motivate others to participate and value their contributions in the organisation.

Ambidexterity is a theory derived from innovation that puts forward two elements, namely investigation and exploitation. The theory of ambidexterity emphasized that people in the organization can be more innovative and creative by exploring new ideas, processes, or even solutions that have not existed (Fortunisa, Putri et al. 2023). They can also exploit ideas, process, or methods from the existing that have never been implemented in the organization. This theory therefore explains that being a principal does not mean that s/he can create new ideas and implementing them or methods without the involvement of other stakeholders who may have creative skills. The problem of creativity and innovation, especially in schools has the potential of conflict because of the role dualism ambidexterity (innovation and exploration) of the leadership dynamics in organisations.

Research Sample (Study Group)

The attributes and actions of principals as instructional leaders in empowering School Management Teams (SMTs) in schools were examined. The sampling procedure was purposive because fifty-five principals were chosen to take part in the study. The objective was to look at the attributes and actions of principals as instructional leaders in empowering School Management Teams (SMTs). Those principal as SMTs were selected for interviews and their positions and knowledge as principals was used as the inclusion criteria. We followed the mentioned sampling procedure because Nomatshila, Apalata, et al. (2022) advised that the sampling process must be designed with the expectation in mind. That is why the participants were restricted only to the principals. The sampling process was designed with the expectation that a sampled population of principals would provide thorough and varied knowledge about their attributes and actions.

Research Instruments and Procedures

Mixed method was used in collecting information and the focus group interview session was also used which lasted for about an hour. To learn more about the principals' attributes and actions as instructional leaders in empowering School Management Teams (SMTs) in schools were explored. The talks that were held to examine the perspectives and expertise of principals about their attributes and actions. Open-ended, unstructured questions in accordance with interview protocol was followed by the researchers and medium of communication used was in English, which understood by all the participants in the study. Also, a tape recorder was used to capture the conversations while doing the interviews. Verbatim transcription of data was done throughout and then followed data analysis as advised by scholars such as Nomatshila, et al., (2022).

Validity and Reliability

The content of the questionnaire was validated through a rigorous application of the content gained from literature study. A pilot study to validate the questionnaires was used to pre-test whether the question items were understandable, relevant and cover the principal's role adequately. For the pilot study, two principals, two deputy principals and two heads of department in Tshwane West District responded to the questionnaire prior to distribution. These principals, deputy principals and Heads of Department did not form part of the selected respondents for the main research. They were chosen because they share similar attributes with the selected respondents involved in the main research. To further ensure validity, the questionnaire was also submitted to experts in the field of educational management to scrutinize and comment on it. These comments were used to improve the questionnaire. To test the extent to which groups of question items of the questionnaire reflect the same attribute, internal consistency reliability was used. Groups of question items under the same heading were subjected to the Cronbach's coefficient alpha test.

Data Analysis

In drawing conclusion in data analysis, Nomatshila, et al., (2022) advise that the evidence foundation from which conclusions must be drawn ought to be composed of the themes and sub-themes that must be identifiable. The transcribed information was completed soon after the interviews to prevent incorrect interpretation of information from the tape recordings and the interviews. Thematic analysis was followed and field data was transcribed from recorded tapes verbatim. The transcribed information was completed as soon as the interviews were conducted to prevent incorrect interpretation of information as captured in the recordings and from the interviews. To accurately

capture the information on the audio tapes, the recordings were played in spurts. The major transcripts of all the themes included all the meanings, ensuring the completeness of the data. The researchers read the transcripts several times to decipher the meaning and significance of the data. Themes were drawn and specified to symbolize the clustered categories, which were categories with comparable meanings that were put together.

Findings

The results are based on the experiences and knowledge of principals about the attributes and actions that they must carry out to empower the SMTs in instructional leadership duties. Fifty-five principals(n=55) in Tshwane West District in Gauteng Province, in the republic South Africa took part in the study. The interviews lasted for about an hour. The results are presented and discussed below.

Principal A said,…"one needs to make sure that all members of the management team are exposed to equal opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop by making sure that there is monitoring of progress, they are also motivated, there is feedback, by doing so, the team will achieve the objectives of the institution. Principal A said, "a principal … one needs to be a role model and delegate tasks with clear instructions of expectations and follow-up on tracking progress. Principal A said,…one needs to make sure that all members of the management team are exposed to equal opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop by making sure that there is monitoring of progress, they are also motivated, there is feedback, by doing so, the team will achieve the objectives of the institution"... Principal A added, "As principal...I encourage regular feedback and rigorous constructive discussion in our meetings'.

Principal B said, "I will ensure my management team attends programs that are conducted by SACE [South African Council for Educators], MGSLG [Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance] and to encourage them to register with institutions and higher learners so that they can be empowered with a variety of skills knowledge and the required application or implementation in their workplace or stations. He [the principal] must allow room for mistakes and ultimately create a conducive teaching and learning environment".

Principal C, said, "I would like to add just a few aspects such as involvement in professional learning committees (PLC) in order to exchange good practices in coaching and teaching, seminars, conferences, and symposiums so that they enrich and empower themselves with knowledge and skills. Principal C said,An instructional leader promotes an environment of peace and harmony to allow managers to feel at ease and clear or avoid unnecessary tension which do not enhance a good working and productive atmosphere.

Principal D said,"an instructional leader are to be visionary, to lead by example, manage people in this case teachers and learners, be passionate about his/her work. He needs to be a role model both at school and in the society".

Principal E said, "they [the SMT] will be tasked to draw the school assessment plan to equally distributed subject allocation and the school timetable.

Principal F said, "they must be fair and avoid biasness in dealing with their teachers to avoid conflicts.

Discussion

Most of the participants pointed out that the instructional leader should be a role model in many ways. The role model attribute summarizes all the attributes of an instructional leader, including fairness, consistency, honesty, trustworthiness, and accountability.

Principal A said,…"one needs to make sure that all members of the management team are exposed to equal opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop by making sure that there is monitoring of progress, they are also motivated, there is feedback, by doing so, the team will achieve the objectives of the institution. Principal A said, "a principal … one needs to be a role model and delegate tasks with clear instructions of expectations and follow-up on tracking progress. Principal A said,…one needs to make sure that all members of the management team are exposed to equal opportunities that will allow them to grow and develop by making sure that there is monitoring of

progress, they are also motivated, there is feedback, by doing so, the team will achieve the objectives of the institution"... Principal A added, "As principal...I encourage regular feedback and rigorous constructive discussion in our meetings'. Principal A was rather vague when he said, I will encourage my management team in the following: workshop, training, monitoring, and coaching, facilitation and also make sure that they develop themselves in ICT [Information Computer Technology] and other new approaches in teaching and learning". The findings by Principal A are supported by Bhujel (2021) who found that SMTs need advice and the principal must act as the guideline, change agent, role model, director of educational institution, and manager of human resources at every school level to influence the behaviour SMTs so that the academic outcomes of students can be enhanced. Another way of empowering the SMT, which featured strongly in discussions of the focus group, was the creation of an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This is what

In empowering the SMT, the participants alluded to regular feedback. As pointed out by Principal F who said, allow them to take ownership and to give regular feedback. Principal B said, "I will ensure my management team attends programs that are conducted by SACE [South African Council for Educators], MGSLG [Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance] and to encourage them to register with institutions and higher learners so that they can be empowered with a variety of skills knowledge and the required application or implementation in their workplace or stations. He [the principal] must allow room for mistakes and ultimately create a conducive teaching and learning environment". The ideas of principal B are supported by Limon (2022) who advised that principals when empowering SMTs, they must foster trust in SMTs, develop shared management structures, ensure SMT participation in problem-solving and decision-making mechanisms, enable SMT autonomy, encourage innovation, creativity, and risk-taking, offer support by delegating authority to SMTs.

Principal C, said, "I would like to add just a few aspects such as involvement in professional learning committees (PLC) in order to exchange good practices in coaching and teaching, seminars, conferences, and symposiums so that they enrich and empower themselves with knowledge and skills. Principal C said, An instructional leader promotes an environment of peace and harmony to allow managers to feel at ease and clear or avoid unnecessary tension which do not enhance a good working and productive atmosphere. Principal C said, "A successful principal as an instructional leader must motivate, coach and mentor the management team at all the time". Another participant, Principal E added by saying the following, "they [the SMT] should know …. how to become mentors and coaches… Principal C added, …an instructional leader must be fair, be consistent and decisive". On this score, To this Principal C said, A successful principal as an instructional leader must motivate, coach and mentor the management team at all the time. In addition, Principal C added, …"an instructional leader must be fair, be consistent and decisive". Also, Principal D said,…"an instructional leader are to be visionary, to lead by example, manage people in this case teachers and learners, be passionate about his/her work. He needs to be a role model both at school and in the society". The above attribute was confirmed by Lamsal (2022) who think principals must possess morals, values, and goals, as well as vision. It seemed that the participants viewed mentoring and coaching from two angles: the principal as mentor and coach of the SMT and the SMT as mentors and coaches. Both these angles lead to empowerment of the SMT.

The data revealed that the principals empowered the SMT by delegation. This way of empowering the SMT included how to develop subject policies, how to conduct meetings, how to do administrative activities such as drafting, developing a school timetable and how to distribute the workload equally among the teachers. To this end, Principal C said, "I think what I should do is to try and build capacity amongst my fellow SMT members. I would ensure that I delegate effectively with good articulated instructions. I would also give support, give direction, encourage lifelong learning, and also encourage participation". Principal A spoke about delegating administrative duties to the SMT when he said, "I also empower the management team with administrative activities such as drafting and designing the comprehensive school timetabling where policy on time allocation is correctly implemented. The management team is also empowered to do different subject teacher allocations with an equal distribution of workload". Principal D said,…"an instructional leader are to be visionary, to lead by example, manage people in this case teachers and learners, be passionate about his/her work. He needs

to be a role model both at school and in the society".The above attribute was confirmed by Muyunda (2022), who recognized that the principal's leadership style has a crucial role in fostering the teaching and learning process. Motivation, monitoring, mentoring and participation in the activities of the school, delegation and meetings are mentioned as ways of empowering the SMT.

Principal E said, "they [the SMT] will be tasked to draw the school assessment plan to equally distributed subject allocation and the school timetable. Principal E put it this way. Attributes which an instructional leader should have in order to perform his duties effectively are among others, to be honest, trustful and be a true leader with good leadership skills". Principal E put it this way. "Attributes which an instructional leader should have in order to perform his duties effectively are among others, to be honest, trustful and be a true leader with good leadership skills". Another participant, Principal E added by saying the following, "they[the SMT] should know …. how to become mentors and coaches". It seemed that the participants viewed mentoring and coaching from two angles: the principal as mentor and coach of the SMT and the SMT as mentors and coaches. Both these angles lead to empowerment of the SMT. Principal E had this to say,…I will make sure that my management team is exposed to seminars, symposiums and developmental workshops and team building societies and postgraduate programmes for qualification and empowerment. Principal D simply said, …"exposure to workshops and collaborative skills shared from others".This was affirmed by the Department of Basic Education (2020) in South Africa by urging principals to be more helpful than directive and by using new methods of mentoring and coaching.

Principal F spoke of meetings and subject policies when he said, "allow them [the SMT] to develop policies like subject policies. The management team must be allowed to chair meetings. Allow them to take charge of the subject in their different departments. Give them an opportunity to run meetings as I have indicated". Principal F said, "they must be fair and avoid biasness in dealing with their teachers to avoid conflicts. They must encourage good working relationships with trust and honesty". Principal D commented, … "enhance team spirit, conducive working environment, support teachers and learners, and provide feedback as well". Asked about provincial department activities the principals exposed their management teams as part of empowering the SMT. The participants referred to workshops, seminars, symposiums training sessions, conferences, and professional learning committees.

Tedla and Redda (2022) counsel principals that they should function as decision-makers by exhibiting leadership qualities such a strong personality, the capacity to handle problems, and decision-making/problem-solving skills. Modern school leaders ought to oversee the intricate structures known as schools rather than just being "the principal instructor." concurs with the ways of empowering the SMT through coaching, mentoring, workshops, seminars, conferences, symposiums, and professional learning committees (PLCs). It may be said that the principals employ acceptable ways of empowering the SMT and this will augur well for the success of instructional leadership in schools and the coveted distributive leadership.

Summary about Attributes and Empowering Strategies that Emerged from the participants

Principal participants suggested the following strategies in empowering the SMTs.

Principal A:[equal opportunities; monitoring; role model and delegate tasks; clear instructions; feedback; workshop, training, coaching, facilitation; and develop themselves in ICT]. According to Trenerry, Dunn et al. (2023), many organisations have committed to workplace diversity; however, work-related racism remains the most common forms of discrimination. Efforts to increase workplace diversity will fail in the absence of measures to address discriminatory attitudes, behaviours, practices, and cultures. Also, the lack of strategic development, including knowledge of how to implement workplace diversity and anti-racism strategies at cannot support SMTs empowerment.

Principal B: [team attends programs; room for mistakes; create a conducive teaching and learning environment]. Principals are required to have the right leadership and strategy to increase the professionalism of teaching staff in their schools, so they are able to create a conducive school climate, provide advice to school members, provide encouragement to all teaching staff and implement an interesting learning model (Safrida,Tannady et al.,2023).

Principal C: [build capacity; delegate; good articulated instructions; give support, give direction, encourage lifelong learning, participation; subject teacher allocations; equal distribution of workload]. Cox and Mullen (2023) found that principals are charged with delivering high-quality, equitable educational opportunities and ensuring that students achieve academically, and to graduate on time.

Principal D: [visionary, to lead by example, manage people; role model; Motivation, monitoring, mentoring and participation; delegation and meetings]. The role of employees is very important in the success or failure of a company. Because of the importance of this, the principals must monitor the performance of each employee and monitor whether they have fulfilled their duties and responsibilities as expected (Susanto, Syailendra et al., 2023).

Principal E: [school assessment plan to equally distributed subject allocation; school timetable; honest, trustful; good leadership skills; be a true leader; mentoring; and coaching]. Albert, Scott et al. (2023) found that teacher mentoring in schools often involves pairing experienced teachers with beginning teachers (BTs) to offer support. However, not all schools have experienced SMT members to serve as mentors to teachers.

Principal F: [develop policies; chair meetings- opportunity to run meetings; take charge of the subject; avoid biasness; avoid conflicts; encourage good work relationships; trustworthy and honesty. Mendez and Quark (2023) found that school board members abandoned high school rezoning in the face of fierce opposition from white, affluent residents who saw school reassignments as a threat to their entitlements to a highly rated school and to their property values.

Conclusion

Some participants were not willing to say the truth in fear of being victimized. SMTs are responsible for executing the obligations of instructional leadership and management of schools. However, when things go wrong, it is the SMTs that must be accountable for school effectiveness, irrespective of the underperformance. SMTs must be held liable in terms of which they are accountable to the Department of Education only in so far as their mandated instructional leadership duties are concerned. SMTs need to mitigate the risks of communication collapse and breakdown in schools. To remedy the challenges that SMTs might experience in instructional leadership, they need to be empowered with the requisite knowledge, attributes and skills of the school trade. The lack of strategic development, including knowledge of how to implement workplace diversity and anti-racism strategies at cannot support SMTs empowerment.

Suggestions

The focus was on the attributes and actions of school principals only. The findings and recommendations from this study may be used by the Department of Basic Education and school principals as a source of information for policymakers and stakeholders to understand the attributes and actions of school principals in empowering SMTs to ensure that schools are managed accountably and effectively. Based on article, policymakers and schools will then be able to revisit their policies and practices for the purpose of strengthening them. The study provides a theoretical and empirical contribution to the existing literature on the attributes and actions that principals ought to use in the empowerment of SMTs. The knowledge provided can add to the existing literature about attributes and actions of school leadership in schools. Principals will tap into the new knowledge and they will be in a position to create a sense of trust in SMTs. Also, they will be able to develop shared management structures and ensure that SMTs participate in problem-solving, decision-making, as well as encouraging innovation, and creativity.

Acknowledgment

References

Albert, M., Scott, C. E., & Rincon, M. (2023). Can even one adult please just listen to me? Rethinking the mentoring of beginning teachers by positioning secondary students as guides. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 128, 104111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104111

Alhebshi, S.H., Aishah, N., & Al-Maswary, N.A.A (2022).Leadership as a Factor of School Quality in International Schools. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies*, 5: 1084-1091, DOI: 10.47191/jefms/v5-i4-17.

Bhujel, C. B. (2021). The role of principal in improvement of school performance: A qualitative study in community school of Nepal. *Artech Journal of Art Social Sciences*., 3, 11-22.

Caluza, P. N. (2022). *From a sinking school to a moving school: a case study of a school-teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement* (Doctoral dissertation). Submitted in fulfilment of the Master of Education degree in the discipline Educational Leadership, Management and Policy, School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Republic of South Africa.

Cox, J. S., & Mullen, C. A. (2023). Impacting student achievement: Principals' instructional leadership practice in two Title I rural schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 33(1), 3-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268462211339

DeMatthews, D.E. (2018), *Community engaged leadership for school justice: A critical approach in urban schools.* New York: Routledge.

Malinga, C.B., Loyiso, C Jita, L.C., and Bada, A.A. 2022 .Comparing the organizational infrastructure for instructional leadership in natural sciences teaching among formerly segregated schools in Gauteng. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, 6. 1-29, DOI: 10.32851/ijebp.v6n1.p1-29

Department of Basic Education. (2020). Schooling 2025. Accessed 02 August 2022. education.gov.za/Curriculum/Schooling2025.aspx. Accessed 02 August 2022. education.gov.za/Curriculum/Schooling2025.aspx.

Department of Education. (1996). South African Schools Act. (Act No. 84 of 1996.) Government Gazette, 377. Nov. 15. (Regulation Gazette. No 1323.) Pretoria: Government Printers.

Fortunisa, A., Putri, D. M., Elsyah, R. D. (2023). The Influence of Empowering Leadership Towards Employee Ambidexterity: Study Literature Review. *Journal of Community Development in Asia*, 6(1), 21-33. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32535/jcda.v6i1.1985

Kanjanakan, P., Wang, P. Q., & Kim, P. B. (2023). The empowering, the empowered, and the empowerment disparity: A multilevel analysis of the integrated model of employee empowerment. *Tourism Management*, 94, 104633. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104635

Lamsal, B. (2022). Instructional Leadership Behavior among Principals of Two Schools in Lalitpur, Nepal. *Journal of Technical and Vocational Education and Training*, 1(16).

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., &Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership and Management*, 40(1), 5-22.

Limon, E. (2022). The Relationship between Empowering Leadership and Teachers' Job Performance: Organizational Commitment as a Mediator. *Journal of Theoretical Educational Science*, 15(1), 16-4.

Mendez, J. B., & A. Quark, A. (2023). Debating Equity through Integration: School Officials' Decision-Making and Community Advocacy During a School Rezoning in Williamsburg, Virginia. Critical Sociology, 49(4-5), 749-766. https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205221118000

Merritt, A. B., & Wang, Y. (2022). Destructive Leaders in Schools: Can They Be Instructional Leaders. NASSP Bulletin, Vol. 106(2), 109–132.

Muyunda, G. (2022). Perceptions and Implications of Principals' Instructional Leadership Practices. *Asian Journal of Management, Entrepreneurship and Social Science*, 2(03), 157-170.

Nomatshila, S.C., Apalata, T.R., & Mabunda, S.A., (2022). 'Perceptions and knowledge of school management teams about non-communicable diseases and strategies to prevent them', Health SA Gesondheid 27(0), a1781. https://doi.org/10.4102/ hsag.v27i0.1781

Polatcan, M., & Cansoy, R. (2019). Examining studies on the factors predicting teachers' job satisfaction: A systematic review. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 6(1), 1154-1172.

Provinzano, K., & Mayger, L.K. (2022). Betwixt and Between Justice and Inaction: Full-Service Community School Principals and Community Equity Literacy. *Urban Education* 6, pages 004208592110738.

Rahman, R.A., Tahir, L. M., & Ali, M.F. (2022). Tacit knowledge in instructional leadership: Evidence from Malaysian secondary principal. Malaysian *Online Journal of Educational Management*, 10(2), 50-72.

Safrida, S., Tannady, H., Solissa, E. M., Sapulete, H., & Al Haddar, G. (2023). Strategic Leadership Analysis of School Principal to Improve Learning Quality. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kewirausahaan*, *11*(2), 391-399. https://doi.org/10.47668/pkwu.v11i2.741

Sanchez, J.E., Paul, J.M., & Thornton, B.W. (2020). Relationships among teachers' perceptions of principal leadership and teachers' perceptions of school climate in the high school setting. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, Doi:10.1080/13603124.2019.1708471.

Shaked, H. (2021). Between center and periphery: instructional leadership in Israeli rural schools. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 35 (7), 1361-1374.

Shakel, R.D., Shangolo, H.P & Sheared, A.G. (2018). Participatory management: an opportunity for human resource s in education. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 1(1):1939-1943.

Siriparp, T., Buasuwan, P., & Nanthachai, S. (2022). The effects of principal instructional leadership, collective teacher efficacy and teacher role on teacher self-efficacy: A moderated mediation examination. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 43(2), 353-360.

Siyal, S., Liu, J., Ma, L., Kumari, K., Saeed, M., Xin, C., & Hussain, S. N. (2023). Does inclusive leadership influence task performance of hospitality industry employees? Role of psychological empowerment and trust in leader. *Heliyon*, *9*(5), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15507

Susanto, P. C., Syailendra, S., & Suryawan, R. F. (2023). Determination of Motivation and Performance: Analysis of Job Satisfaction, Employee Engagement and Leadership. International *Journal of Business and Applied Economics*, 2(2), 59-68. https://doi.org/10.55927/ijbae.v2i2.2135

Tedla, B.A., & Redda, E.H. (2022). Teacher professionalism as an impetus for teacher leadership to lead schools: A retrospective study. Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences, 10(1), 1-15.

Trenerry, B., Dunn, K., & Paradies, Y. (2023). Productive disruptions: Supporting diversity and anti-racism in the workplace through multi-level organisational strategies. *Australian Journal of Management*, 03128962231175182.

Yang, J., Gu, J., & Liu, H. (2019). Servant leadership and employee creativity: The roles of psychological empowerment and work–family conflict. Current Psychology: *A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*, 38(6), 1417–1427. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-0161-3

Yurttaş, A. ve Aksu, A. (2022). Liderlik stilleri, okul kültürü ve okul dinamizmi ilişkisi. *e- Kafkas Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, *9*, 581-602. doi:10.30900/kafkasegt.1028940

Zulu, J.K., Bhengu, T.T., & Mkhize, B.N. (2021). Leadership challenges and responses to complex township school life: perspectives from four secondary schools in South Africa. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 24(2)