

A participatory approach to improving the instructional leadership of heads of department in underperforming schools

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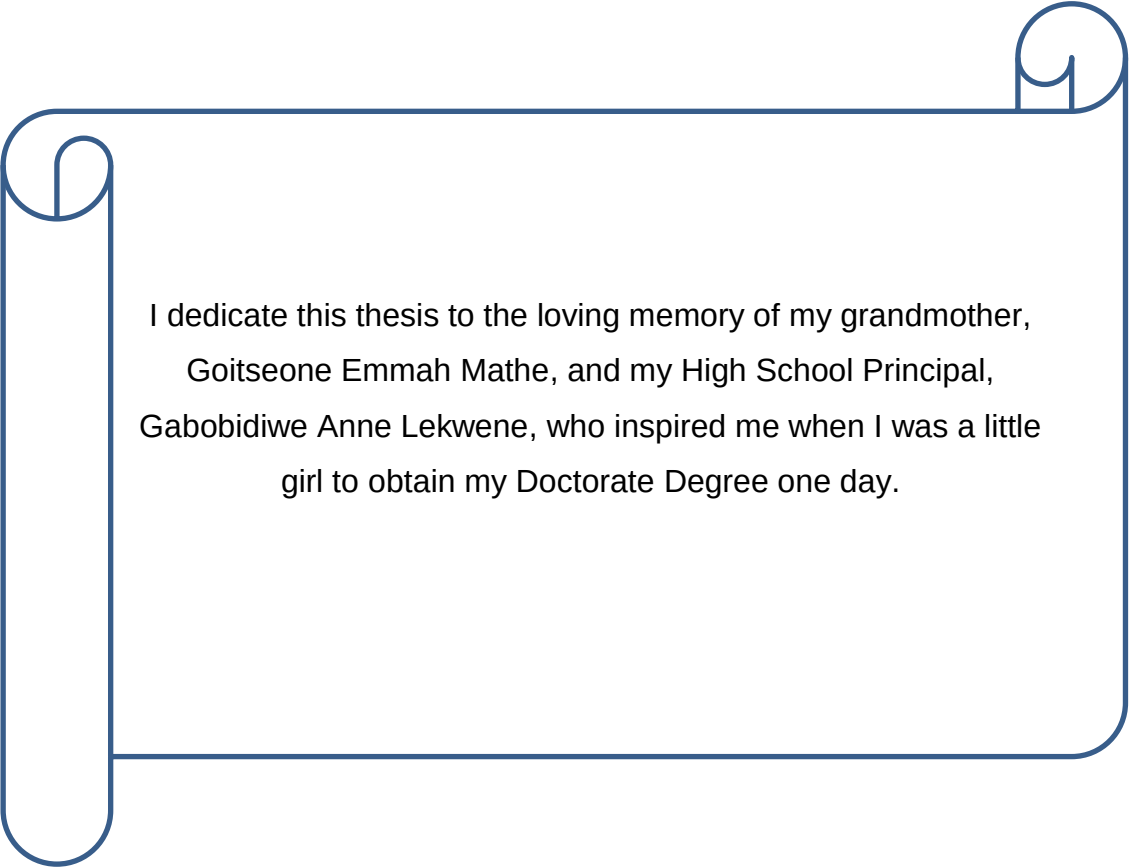
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I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my grandmother,
Goitseone Emmah Mathe, and my High School Principal,
Gabobidiwe Anne Lekwene, who inspired me when I was a little
girl to obtain my Doctorate Degree one day.

I Boitshepo Audrey Seobi, 17061040 hereby declare that the thesis for *Doctor Philosophiae*, in Educational Management is my own work and it has not previously been submitted for the assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another university or for another qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Boitshepo', written on a light-colored background.

Boitshepo Audrey Seobi

Official use:

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ABSTRACT

Based on existing literature, teachers in underperforming schools would benefit from receiving instructional leadership to improve their quality of teaching. However, teachers seldom receive such support on an ongoing basis. I have argued that Heads of Department (HODs) are best placed to provide such support, but little has been written on how this could be done in a way that develops the capacity of HODs to provide instructional leadership support to teachers working in under-resourced contexts. This study addressed this gap in knowledge by engaging with HODs in a participatory manner to find ways that they could better provide instructional support to teachers. My main aim in this study was to work in a collaborative manner with HODs to: investigate their instructional support roles to teachers; explore how they could improve their instructional leadership practice to support teachers to improve quality teaching and learning; and construct theoretical guidelines or a model of instructional support that could help heads of department to improve their instructional leadership practice in order to improve teachers' quality of teaching.

A participatory action research design was followed to enable HODs to identify their own problems, plan the way they would instructionally support teachers, implement their plans, observe and reflect on their actions as a way of evaluating change and restart the cycle again until they were satisfied that sufficient improvement has taken place. The participants in this study not only implemented improvements during the study, but they also learnt a strategy which encourages lifelong learning. Data generation and analysis followed a qualitative approach. Two iterative cycles of participatory action research are discussed in this thesis.

The findings indicate the value of a participatory approach to develop HOD capacity for providing instructional leadership in under-resourced and under-performing schools. An action learning model to improve instructional support, designed by the participants and based on the findings, is presented. This study aimed to strengthen the instructional leadership role of HODs at schools. Through this study, HODs were empowered to provide better instructional support to teachers, in order to improve the

quality of teaching, especially in low-performing schools. Therefore, scientifically, this study expanded instructional leadership theory by explaining how HODs' instructional support to teachers in schools can be strengthened in a sustainable and contextualised way. The guidelines are more meaningful, relevant, and effective for HODs, as they are theories that emerge from meaning-making dialogues between them, using concepts, terminologies, and formulations that make sense to them. Therefore, through this study HODs did not only acquire *knowledge* about supporting teachers instructionally, but they also improved their *practice* and learnt how to sustain improvement through an action research approach. A participatory approach to improving instructional leadership has not, to my knowledge, been documented in the literature in South Africa and therefore this study produced new theoretical and methodological insights in this field.

Keywords: Action Learning, Participatory Action Research, Instructional Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Teacher Professional Development, School Improvement.

ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
FAL	First Additional Language
HODs	Heads of Departments
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NWU	North West University
OBE	Outcomes – Based Education
P1, P2, P3, etc.	Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, etc.
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PMS	Performance Management System
T1, T2, T3, etc.	Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, etc.
TAs	Teaching Assistants
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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CHAPTER 1:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines my inquiry into how a participatory approach can be applied to strengthen the instructional leadership provided by heads of department (HODs) in underperforming schools in the North West Province in South Africa. I introduce the context of and rationale for the study, before describing the research aims and methodology. A brief description of the ethical measures taken precedes an overview of the chapters of the proposed study.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The South African government has been involved in education reform since 1994 when the transition to democracy demanded equal education for all (Harris, Day, Hardfield, Hopkins, Hargreaves & Chapman, 2003; Sayed & Jansen, 2001). In South Africa, high-performing schools are regarded as schools that obtain between 70% and 100% pass rates at the exit level of the matriculation examination, and where over 50% of learners qualify for admission to the universities – anything lower than that is deemed to be labelled as underperformance (North-West Department of Education, 2011). When the study was conducted, there were 116 such underperforming schools in the North West Province (North West Department of Education, 2011), all of them from the previously disadvantaged sector of society. This raises questions about the quality of teaching and learning that is provided in formerly disadvantaged schools.

Persistent poor performance of South African learners in both national tests and international tests, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), is a matter of growing concern (Sayed & Jansen, 2001; South Africa International Study Centre, 2011; Van Wyk, 2007). South Africa uses TIMSS and PIRLS to explore

educational issues, including: the monitoring of system-level achievement trends in a global context, establishing achievement goals and standards for educational improvement, stimulating curriculum reform, improving teaching and learning through research and analysis of data, conducting related studies (for example, monitoring equity or assessing learner in additional grades), and training researchers and teachers in assessment and evaluation (Van Wyk, 2007). TIMSS and PIRLS are trend studies that monitor changes in achievement on a regular basis. They are effective means for seeing whether an increase or a decrease in achievement has occurred after education policies have been modified (South Africa International Study Centre, 2011). According to results from TIMSS, in two successive studies South Africa came last out of all the African countries that participated in the TIMSS tests (Scott, 2010). Scott (2010) indicates that South Africa was even behind African countries such as Ghana and other developing nations that had spent far less of their budgets on education than South Africa had. PIRLS results for South African schools were also poor, with South African Grade 4 and 5 learners coming last out of 40 countries in a study conducted in 2006 (Van Wyk, 2007).

A total of 116 South African secondary schools under-performed in Grade 12 National Tests (matriculation). The South African Department of Basic Education is currently attempting to improve learner performance through the Annual National Assessment (ANA). According to the Department of Basic Education, (2011), the purpose of ANA is to continuously track learners' performance each year in Literacy and Numeracy to improve their performance, monitor progress, guide planning and distribute the required resources in order to improve learners' performance in Literacy and Numeracy in grades 3, 6 and 9. However, the key overall finding is that in 2011, learner performance continued to be well below what it should be, especially for the children of the poorest and most disadvantaged South Africans (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Continual curriculum reform in South Africa has resulted in policy problems within the system (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2010). According to Cross et al. (2010), teachers are struggling to translate curriculum into reality. Teachers are working in resource-poor environments (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008), with over-crowded

classrooms and learners who experience many barriers to learning. These conditions have an adverse impact on the capacity of teachers to deliver quality teaching (Robinson, 2002). Added to these problems, many teachers have not received high quality training due to the legacies of the past (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Furthermore, curriculum reform in South Africa has also resulted in a lack of people who can inspire teachers and model the kind of teaching and management required, as well as lack of resources (Sayed & Jansen, 2001). These issues impact negatively on the quality of teaching, ultimately resulting in poor academic performance of learners.

Given the socially and economically deprived environments in which disadvantaged schools are situated (De Clercq, 2008), teachers at these schools are in need of effective and on-going instructional support, to maintain an acceptable quality of teaching and learning and manage change that was brought by curriculum reform (Cross et al., 2010).

Curriculum reform needs to be followed by structured support to teachers (Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000). When curriculum change takes place, teachers need to be supported instructionally to ensure that they are equipped to implement the new curriculum. Since the curriculum in South Africa has changed frequently, continuing instructional support for teachers has to receive high priority to help teachers to handle change and provide quality teaching (Shalem & Hoadley, 2009).

Although there are many social and structural factors that impinge on the quality of teaching, I have come to believe that one reason for teachers' poor quality of teaching and poor academic performance of learners, is lack of *instructional support* for teachers (Shalem & Hoadley, 2009). Instructional support for teachers means support for teachers in their teaching practice to improve their quality of teaching in order to improve learners' academic performance (Davies, 2005). Teachers instruct (teach) learners.

Traditionally, the term *instructional leadership* is used to describe the principals' leadership role as the top pedagogical decision maker in a school (Ylimaki, 2012)

who is responsible for improving the quality of teaching. Curriculum leadership is also often used in literature as a preferred term over instructional leadership (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008; Ylimaki, 2012). The concept “curriculum” in curriculum leadership extends beyond teaching practice to educational aspects of content decision, e.g. what should be taught. Curriculum consists of both content (what should be taught) and instruction (how should that be taught), and both of these concepts are interdependent (Ylimaki, 2012). How one teaches something is consistent with what is taught (Ylimaki, 2012). Instructional leaders can help teachers improve learners’ achievement by implementing best instructional practices for teaching high content standards. This implies that instructional leaders must pay attention to both the curriculum content (what) and the instruction (how) (Mooney & Mausbach, 2008).

In paying attention to both curriculum content and pedagogical processes, instructional leaders should (i) assist teachers in setting and reaching personal and professional goals related to the improvement of school instruction and monitor the successful completion of these goals (ii) do regular formal and informal classroom observations in all classrooms, (iii) be engaged in preplanning of classroom observations (iv) be engaged in post observation conferences that focus on the improvement of instruction (v) provide thorough, defensible, and insightful evaluations, making recommendations for personal and professional growth goals according to individual needs and (vi) be engaged in direct teaching in the classroom of his or her school (McEwan, 2003). These six elements of instructional support by McEwan (2003), can be linked to the core purpose of instructional leadership, which is to provide instructional support and management to secure high quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and achievement for all learners (Tranter, 2006). This requires instructional leaders to work in a collaborative manner with teachers (Tranter, 2006).

Kruger (2003) also emphasized the collaborative aspect of instructional leadership, as it promotes idea sharing, shared decision- making and assistance in professional growth, which in the end, benefits the learners. Collegiality and collaboration among teachers require instructional leaders to encourage teachers to share their classroom experiences with other teachers (McEwan, 2003). This involves encouraging

teachers to talk to their colleagues about their teaching successes and concerns, and that helps to ensure that meetings of teachers counts on their learning and development (Davies, 2005 & McEwan, 2003). According to the latter authors, instructional leaders who provide this instructional support demonstrate that they remain strongly connected to classrooms and they share power with other stakeholders. This aspect of instructional leadership appealed to me because it is aligned with my philosophical paradigm and preferred methodologies (see paragraph 2 of 1. 5.1.1).

Since instructional leadership stresses collaboration and power sharing (Kruger, 2003), it should not only be the principal who is assigned instructional leadership roles of improving quality of teaching. Other stakeholders, such as heads of department (HODs) must be involved. This notion of power sharing links well with my theoretical framework distributed leadership theory and the methodological paradigm of this study (participatory action research) (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Davies, 2005; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003; Riordan 2003 and Ylimaki, 2012) (see paragraph 1 & 2 of 1.5.1.2 ; paragraph 1 of 1.5.1.3 and paragraph 1 & 2 of 1.5.1.4). I am arguing for a shift from a traditional instructional leadership approach to a distributed perspective of practice in the school leadership approach (Spillane, 2012). A traditional instructional leadership approach holds principals responsible for improving academic performance (Ylimaki, 2012) whilst the distributed school leadership approach embraces the notion of distributing leadership within the school to empower both teachers and administrators to be part of a major change in form, nature, and function of teaching and learning in the school (Riordan, 2003).

However, in the schools that I have had contact with in my capacity as a teacher (over a period of 12 years) and a research officer (2 years) when I conducted visits on an on-going basis with the purpose of offering teachers instructional support, instructional support for teachers does not appear to be something that happens regularly and in a coherent and strategically planned manner. The only form of professional development I experienced was Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) which is a component of Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). IQMS is the policy that has been introduced in South Africa to develop teachers and enhance

quality education delivery. According to the Government Gazette (Department of Education, 2009), IQMS is an integration of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS), Whole – School Evaluation (WSE) and Performance Management System (PMS). DAS and PMS are the two IQMS components used for teacher evaluation and appraisal. This teacher evaluation system consists of twelve performance standards that are divided between DAS and PMS. According to the Department of Education (2009), DAS is the policy that is used to enhance quality education delivery from the teachers in the classroom situation, using the following four performance standards:

- (i) The creation of positive learning environments,
- (ii) Knowledge of Curriculum and Learning Programmes,
- (iii) Lesson Planning and
- (iv) Learner Assessment.

The DAS is thus closely related to instructional issues and it is these four aspects in which I believe instructional leadership support is needed to enhance quality teaching. According to the Government Gazette (Department of Education, 2009), the aim of the DAS, finalised in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) *Resolution 4 of 1998*, was to facilitate personal and professional development of an individual teacher, and to improve the quality of teaching practice and education management through the principle of lifelong learning and development. Teacher development and evaluation, according to the DAS policy, takes place through lesson observation and the evaluation is based on the first four performance standards mentioned above. Teachers are required to do on-going self-evaluations as part of DAS (Department of Education, 2009). However, according to what I have seen in the schools that I had contact with, this self-evaluation was not done on an on-going basis, but only once per year when required for DAS purposes. The manner in which it was done was not developmental. Teachers lack insight on how to effectively do self-evaluations for their improvement and even the departmental

officials who train teachers lack knowledge of how self-evaluation should be done (Gallie, 2006). The self-evaluations are verified by a development support group (DSG), consisting of an HOD and a selected staff member (De Clercq, 2008). The DSG goes to the class and observes the teacher's lesson. They record the teacher's strengths and areas which are in need of development. This DSG evaluation serves as a baseline to inform the teachers about their development (De Clercq, 2008). In theory, if weaknesses have been identified in the teacher's performance, the teacher should be provided with some form of support, but in practice this evaluation tends only to be a formality to satisfy administrative requirements. I have, in all my years of teaching, never seen a developmental programme drawn up as a result of the DAS evaluation.

I therefore argue that it is not sufficient to rely on DAS for the improvement of teachers' quality of teaching. In reality, challenges that teachers experience cannot be resolved through one lesson observation / once off feedback as it happens through DAS (Department of Education, 2009) or by a few once-off workshops that are the normal continual professional development approach of the Department of Basic Education. Professional development of teachers should be extended beyond the one-shot workshop by promoting on-going learning opportunities for teachers to learn or be taught in the same ways they are expected to teach the learners (Grigsby, Schumacher, Decman, & Simieou, 2010). That led me to ask how this situation could be improved.

Substantial research on instructional support to teachers has been conducted (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Hoy & Hoy, 2009; McEwan, 2009; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004; Owens & Valesky, 2011; Sergiovanni, 2000), but it mostly involved instructional support for teachers by *principals*. However principals' knowledge of how to manage curriculum issues in South Africa is limited (Sayed & Jansen, 2001). Even though there are detailed normative frameworks (often from other countries and contexts) of what principals should do, there is little consideration of the reality of the work of principals in particular contexts, and what they actually do. Principals have many responsibilities, of which instructional support is but one (Kruger, 2003). They also do not tend to teach, and they may therefore not keep abreast with the latest

knowledge in teaching and learning. Thus, it is unlikely that they will have the time, or the up-to-date knowledge needed to provide instructional support to teachers. Furthermore Sayed and Jansen (2001) state that most of the research into leadership is not conceptually rich. This implies that it is not even clear in the literature as to how and when should principals be involved in the instructional support roles of developing teachers. Therefore, there is a need for instructional leadership support theory relevant to the South African context (Sayed & Jansen, 2001) and in my opinion that theory should clarify and expand on the roles that HODs can play in this regard.

According to Departmental Policy HODs are responsible for providing instructional support to teachers at schools (Department of Education, 2000). HODs are supposed to provide and coordinate guidance on the latest ideas on approaches to the subject, methods, techniques, evaluation and aids in their fields and effectively convey such latest ideas to staff members concerned. HODs are also required by policy (Department of Education, 2000) to provide and coordinate guidance on syllabuses, schemes of work, homework, practical work, and mentor inexperienced staff members. However in reality, I have not experienced HODs doing this sort of work, but rather merely acting as 'final checkers' of work done by teachers. This is the reason why I am interested in investigating how HODs could be assisted to develop instructional leadership support to teachers. Through this research, I intended to strengthen and improve the instructional leadership roles of HODs and help them to improve their instructional support for teachers.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Based on the above argument, it is evident that teachers in underperforming schools would benefit from receiving instructional support to improve their quality of teaching. However, according to literature reviewed and my personal experience, teachers do not receive such support on an ongoing basis. I have argued that HODs are best placed to provide such support, but little has been written on how this could be done in a way that will develop the ability of HODs to provide instructional support to teachers working in under-resourced contexts. This study addresses this gap in

knowledge by engaging with HODs in a participatory manner to find ways in which they could better provide instructional support to teachers.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM

Based on the above problem statement, the principal research question has been formulated as follows:

- How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practice?

1.4.1 Secondary questions

The secondary questions related to the above research question are the following:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?
- What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers?

1.4.2 Aim and objectives

My main aim in this study is to work in a collaborative manner with heads of department to:

- investigate their instructional support roles,
- explore how they can improve their instructional support to teachers to lead quality teaching and learning, and

- construct theoretical guidelines/model of instructional support that will help heads of department to improve their instructional leadership practice in order to improve teachers' quality of teaching.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a plan that accounts for the epistemological and theoretical framework on the one hand, and methodological paradigms and methods on the other hand, to be used in a research study (Birks & Mills, 2011). I will explain my paradigmatic and methodological choices in the following sections.

1.5.1 Paradigms informing my study

A paradigm, according to de Vos (2006), is the fundamental model or frame of reference that is used to organise our observations and reasoning. This study was underpinned by critical theory as an epistemological paradigm and distributed leadership theory as theoretical paradigms, instructional leadership as a conceptual framework and participatory action research as a methodological paradigm.

1.5.1.1 Epistemological paradigm

Epistemology is the study of what constitutes knowledge (Barbour, 2009), and it attempts to find answers to questions such as the following:

- What is knowledge?
- How is knowledge acquired?
- To what extent is it possible for a given subject or entity to be known?

The epistemological paradigm for this research was critical theory. Critical theory is a transformative type of theory, as its purpose is to liberate people from oppression stemming from historical, mental, emotional and social structures (Healy & Perry, 2000). For this study, I used critical theory based on Horkheimer's definition of critical

theory (Bohman, 2012). Horkheimer's definition of critical theory is that it is adequate only if it is simultaneously explanatory, practical, and normative. This implies that critical theory must explain what is wrong with current social reality, it must identify actors or people to change it, and it must provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Bohman, 2012). Regarding this study, critical theory was used as a guide (i) to explore with HODs the current problems they experience in providing instructional support, in order to raise awareness around how it could be improved, (ii) to engage with HODs to change their instructional support for teachers, and (iii) to provide clear norms on which to base the reason for change and achievable practical guidelines for instructional support for teachers by HODs. To accomplish these three tasks, the research process must be practical, and this emphasizes the relevance of critical theory for this study, because it permits practical action to be taken in a distinctively moral sense (Bohman, 2012), allowing for real epistemological emancipation emphasized by ontology of critical theory, rather than just changing for instrumental purposes.

The ontology of critical theory, states that virtual reality is shaped by social, political, cultural and economic values that are formed over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In brief this ontology implies that reality is more meaningful if it is shaped *by* participants in their own social, political, cultural, and economic values. In applying this ontology to my study, it means that the form and the nature of the HODs' *instructional* support to teachers will be developed and be shaped by HODs themselves under the social, political, cultural and economic values that are favourable to their social setting. In shaping their reality, the application of dialogical, dialectic and hermeneutic approaches were relevant for this study because the transactional nature of inquiry in critical theory requires dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of inquiry and that dialogue must be dialectical (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The application of these approaches in this study implied a democratic, empowering, and humanizing approach (Stringer, 2007). This epistemological stance linked well with the theoretical paradigm of this research.

1.5.1.2 *Theoretical paradigm*

I drew from distributed leadership theory as a lens to understand leadership practice and a conceptual and analytic framework useful to study leadership interaction (Harris, 2009). This leadership theory focuses on the nature of and form of leadership practice and the particular pattern of interactions between leaders, followers and the situation (Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership theory assumes that leadership is practised both formally and informally in schools in a variety of ways at different levels, and it portrays the leadership functions carried out in schools that focus on the improvement of teaching and learning (Riordan, 2003). This theory also helped to argue the distribution of leadership roles (Timperley, 2005). This means that the theory helped me to put instructional leadership where it best sits – with HODs – not principals.

1.5.1.3 *Conceptual framework*

The conceptual framework for this study is instructional leadership. This is predicated on the assumption that teachers and leaders need to work together as colleagues to improve teaching and learning at schools (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Collaboration, teamwork, dialogue and collegiality of teachers with HODs and other teachers can help to develop their quality of teaching in order to improve learners' academic performance. Dialogue with participants results in the improvement of their quality of teaching and learning because it is about creating opportunities for them to talk with their colleagues and leaders about teaching and learning. Dialogue also includes encouragement, feedback and questioning about teaching (Davies, 2005). Instructional leadership links well with the epistemological and the methodological paradigms of this study as it emphasizes collaboration, teamwork, and collegiality between the instructional leaders and the teachers.

Using this instructional leadership concept and being guided by distributed leadership theory, I demonstrated how HODs can work together to improve their instructional support for teachers. Since different theorists view distributed leadership differently, (Hallinger 2003; Kruger 2003 & Riordan 2003) for this study I chose to be guided by

a distributed perspective framework (Spillane, 2012; Gronn, 2002) because it includes two aspects, the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. A leader-plus distributed leadership perspective follows a numerical action pattern, which acknowledges that the work of leading schools involves multiple individuals and is not constrained to those at the top of the organisational hierarchy or those assigned formal leadership duties (Spillane, 2012). However, this leadership perspective is not sufficient to capture the complexities of leadership practice since it is just a combination of individuals' actions (Gronn, 2002). The practice aspect advocates using the collective knowledge of all stakeholders to improve leadership. . It views leadership practice as the outcome of the interaction of school leaders, followers, and their situations (Harris, 2009). A distributed leadership practice perspective is thus about the interactions of people working together (Gronn, 2002). This leadership perspective moves the leader-plus focus of combining the actions of individual leaders to the interactions among leaders, followers and their situation (Spillane, 2012). This perspective of distributed leadership practice recognises that schools have multiple leaders with collaborating team members that need to work interdependently (Gronn, 2002). I found this framework suited to this study because it helped me to argue for the distribution of leadership roles, not only from the Principal to the HODs, but also from HODs to other teachers and teaching assistants. To attain this purpose, my study required a methodological paradigm that allows for collaboration.

1.5.1.4 Methodological paradigm and methodology

In order for the participants to bring change and improvement to their social situations, they will need to discuss issues using dialogical, dialectical and hermeneutic approaches, which are features of critical theory. Participants' different perspectives consequently become subjects of interaction and negotiation as people creatively explore ways of conceiving the situation so that that they assist them in resolving their problems (Stringer, 2007). The consideration of dialogical, dialectic and hermeneutic approaches in this study suggests a strong link with participatory methodological paradigms. Such a paradigm values the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders and encourages ways of discovering and incorporating all the

perspectives of different stakeholders into mutually acceptable techniques of understanding to enable them to work towards a solution of the problem investigated (Stringer, 2007). My adherence to a participatory paradigm led me to conclude that participatory action research (PAR) would be a suitable methodology for my study.

Participatory action research (PAR) appeared to be a relevant methodology for this study, because it allows for democratic interaction, participation, and collaboration between the researcher and the participants. I understand PAR as a form of research which is premised in many ways on interactions and qualitative accounts and looking at situations through the eyes of participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). With this study, I intended to facilitate the improvement of the instructional support of HODs by working with them to identify issues that detract from their instructional support, and to discover and implement practical actions to improve and change their instructional support in a contextually relevant way.

PAR enabled the HODs to identify their own problems, plan the way they would instructionally support teachers, implement their plans, observe and reflect on their actions as a way of evaluating change and restart the cycle again until they were satisfied that sufficient improvement has taken place. The participants in this study did not only implement improvements during the study, but they learnt a strategy which encouraged lifelong learning.

(i) Research methods

Methods are practical procedures that are used to generate and analyse data (Birks & Mills, 2011). The methods used in this study to generate data have been selected because they are suitable for a qualitative, participatory methodology.

(ii) Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants to be included on the basis of my judgement of their typicality or possession of particular characteristics being sought (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The total population for this study comprises all underperforming schools in the country, and from this population I purposively

selected two underperforming schools, one high school in the North-West Province and one primary school in the Eastern Cape Province. Those two underperforming schools were purposively chosen because the high school's matriculation pass rate was significantly below South Africa's Grade 12 benchmark of 70% and the primary school's pass rate results were low based on ANA benchmarks. Then I worked with the HODs (six HODs from the first site, and 4 HODs from the second site) who volunteered to participate in this study (availability sampling) (Cohen *et al.*, 2007) as a group, rather than as individuals, because empowerment has to be at a collective rather than individual level, as individuals do not operate in isolation from each other, but they are shaped by organisational and structural forces (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). From site one where the research cycle was disrupted, I worked with those 6 HODs from March 2013 to April 2013, and from site two, where the research was completed, I worked with those 4 HODs from May 2014 to October 2014. I visited HODs from site one six times but we only had two sessions. In other occasions they did not show up. When I arrive at school, I will find one or two participants, which made it difficult for us to work. I worked with the HODs from site two 8 times. The informal time or the relationship building period with the HODs, for both was the snack time. It was during snack time that we usually sit together before the meeting and have an informal chat.

The application of purposive sampling in this study meant that I purposely worked only with HODs because I believed they are the ideal people to support teachers instructionally. However, other stakeholders (for example, teachers and principals) were approached to clarify issues or to confirm data generated, as determined by the emerging research process.

(iii) Data generation and analysis

I used aspects of a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) on an ongoing basis for a simultaneous data generation and analysis. Constant concurrent data generation and analysis provided focus for the study, fosters the researcher's control over data and allows for an early analysis of data that subsequently led the researcher more to data generation around emerging themes and questions

(Charmaz, 2006). I will now explain how I generated data, according to the cyclical stages of the action research process.

In both schools I formed an action learning set with HODs and met regularly with them to help them proceed through action research cycles to improve their instructional leadership practice. To gather baseline data, HODs constructed individual written narratives, which were discussed in the larger group to allow for dialectic reflection on their instructional leadership.

After capturing all the HODs' individual and group viewpoints, I analysed data using initial coding and then used the emerging themes as basis to guide a further focus group session with participants to validate and further explore the themes using visual techniques (Cohen et al., 2007). The reflections by action learning set members and the visual images were analysed and compared to the data, as per grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). After validating the themes through further discussion with the group of participants, I negotiated with the HODs to prioritise an issue to begin working on. I facilitated the meetings in deciding how to improve this particular issue, and in gathering data to evaluate the effectiveness of their change in practice. The data were analysed initially by me, and my findings were taken to the group sessions to be further discussed and analysed by the participants. At that stage, reflection on the learning that had taken place occurred, and that gave an allowance to identify further issues to be address.

During the action stages, narratives and visual methods, such as photo voice, drawing or collage (Wang, 2008; Hergenrather, Rhodes, Cowan, Bardhoshi, & Pula, 2009) were also used to elicit data in a participatory way, but that was only decided when the research study was underway.

Throughout this process, I made observations and wrote them up as *field notes* in my research journal and reflected on them. According to Birks and Mills (2011), field notes refer to records made during fieldwork to record events, activities and the researcher's responses to them during the period of study. Field notes were used both in data generation and in data analysis. For *data generation*, I observed the

school environment to gain a better picture of its climate -- the physical and social environment of the school and how it impacts on teaching and learning. I did this to get a sense of the conditions and climate in which the HODs work. The observation was useful during data interpretation. It helped me to make meaning from the analysed data. I encouraged HODs to have their own *reflective diaries*, and use them on a daily basis. This implied that they were encouraged to reflect upon the actions they have taken, and on the learning that occurred as a result of their participation in this study. This involved (i) what changes they achieved, (ii) how they achieved those changes, (iii) what impact did those changes bring to their social situation and (iv) what is the next step that can be followed for more improvement? In my knowledge, these reflections had led to continuous improvement in HOD's instructional support for teachers.

As part of the data generation, field notes were taken in the form of memos. Memos are written records of a researcher's thinking during the process of undertaking a grounded theory study (Birks & Mills, 2011). I also used analytical memos to aid me in my data analysis and theoretical memos to aid me in making sense of the large amount of data generated (Charmaz, 2006).

1.5.2 Measures for ensuring trustworthiness

Rigour in action research is based on procedures that ensure that the outcomes of research are trustworthy (Stringer, 2007). The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through procedures that assess attributes such as credibility (triangulation of sources, independent re-coder, member checking), transferability (rich description of the research process), dependability (data was open to scrutiny, process was well described) and confirmability (audit trail), refer to discussion in chapter 3.

1.5.3 Ethical measures

Ethical principles including, but not limited to, informed consent, transparency, confidentiality, no harm and privacy (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997) were applied in this study. Schools where research was conducted were also contacted upfront to

obtain permission for the research to be undertaken. No participant was forced to take part and it was made clear in writing and orally that they were allowed to withdraw at any stage and their information will be treated confidentially (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

1.5.4 Possible limitations of the study

It was a challenge to obtain full participation from the participants and to sustain it throughout the study. In chapter 4, I discussed how I used this situation as a learning experience by forming a strong relationship with the participants before the study commences and that helped to improve the next cycle of inquiry.

Regarding limitations, as with all qualitative studies, the findings are limited to the school in which the study was conducted. However, the process was well described and the grounded theory/model that emerged could act as a guideline for improving instructional leadership in schools in similar contexts.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Firstly, this study aims to strengthen the instructional leadership role of HODs at schools. Through this study, HODs were empowered to provide better instructional support to teachers, in order to improve the quality of teaching, especially in low-performing schools. Therefore, scientifically this study's contribution to the scholarly body of knowledge is the expansion of the instructional leadership theory by strengthening HODs' instructional support to teachers in schools.

Secondly, the literature is not clear on how principals should provide instructional support to teachers. With this study, HODs developed their own instructional support guidelines that are appropriate to their particular social setting. Such guidelines are more meaningful, relevant, and effective to HODs, as they are theories that emerge from HODs' dialectic meaning-making dialogues between themselves, using concepts, terminologies, and formulations that make sense to them (Stringer, 2007). Hence, through this study, HODs did not only acquire *knowledge* about supporting

teachers instructionally, but they improved their *practice* and learnt how to sustain improvement through an action research approach.

HODs' provision of instructional support to teachers by means of instructional leadership guidelines that they themselves have developed and that are appropriate to their particular social setting constitute the practical part of the instructional leadership theory. A participatory approach to improving instructional leadership has not, to my knowledge, been documented in the literature of South Africa and therefore this study has produced new theoretical and methodological insights in this field.

1.7 PROPOSED OUTLINE OF THESIS

The research report was structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Chapter 1 of the research comprises an introduction and a discussion of the background of the research, the research questions, the aims and objectives of the research, the research methodology with outlined paradigms, measures to increase trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and an outline of the chapters.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2 comprises the first phase of the problem-identification process, in which data gathering was conducted by reviewing scholarly literature concerning instructional leadership theory and by reviewing literature from Department of Education documents and policies pertaining to instructional leadership.

Chapter 3: This chapter provides a theoretical justification and explanation of the research design.

Chapter 4: This chapter describes the processes and findings of the empirical stage of problem identification, as step one of the action research process.

- Chapter 5:** This chapter introduces, describes, and explains the first cycle of action research, where the HODs worked collaboratively to improve their instructional support and reflected on the significance of their learning. This chapter also explains the second cycle of action research, as explained in the above paragraph.
- Chapter 6:** This chapter describes a grounded theory approach to forming guidelines/model for improving the instructional leadership of HODs in under-performing schools.
- Chapter 7:** This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations for further research and practice.

1.8 SUMMARY

In chapter 1 the background and the rationale for the study was introduced. In this chapter I argued for the need to investigate:

“How can Heads of Department in under-performing schools improve their instructional leadership practice”?

To answer the above question, I intended to work in a collaborative manner with Heads of Department to:

- investigate their instructional support roles to teachers,
- explore how they can improve their instructional support to teachers to lead quality teaching and learning, and
- construct theoretical guidelines/model of instructional support to help heads of department to improve their instructional leadership practice in order to improve teachers' quality of teaching.

The following secondary question was formulated to guide the study further:-

- How do Heads of Department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?
- What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers?

Critical theory was adopted as an epistemological paradigm and PAR was as a methodological paradigm of this study. Qualitative research approach and research methods (sampling, data gathering and data analysis) were implemented and reasons for adoption of all those methodologies for this study were explained.

Measures of trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations for the study were explained. The chapter ended with the research plan, indicating seven chapters which were planned to contribute to the intended outcome of this research: to develop a model to assist HODs in underperforming schools to provide instructional support to teachers. The following chapter will take on the form of literature study relating to issues of leadership theories and instructional support.

CHAPTER 2:
**A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE
ON INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE
TRANSFORMATIONAL TYPES OF LEADERSHIP IT
REQUIRES**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the introduction and background to the research were presented, followed by the rationale for the study. The research question that guided this study was also introduced, namely “How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practices?” The primary aim of the research was stated. The philosophical framework, research methodology, measures of trustworthiness to be employed, and ethical considerations to be observed were explained. The chapter concluded with an outline of the thesis.

My aim in this chapter is to provide a theoretical overview of existing literature on instructional leadership and the transformational types of leadership it requires. Thereafter I argue my case for heads of department (HODs) to fill the instructional leadership role in schools and, drawing on the literature, I suggest that there is a need for HODs to be empowered in this regard, so that they can provide better instructional support to teachers. This implies that this chapter has been written with two objectives in mind. The first objective was to critically discuss literature on instructional leadership in schools. I also reviewed conceptual models of leadership, because instructional leadership constructs are located within leadership theories. The second objective was to critically engage with literature on who should assume such leadership, and how this leadership can be optimally developed to ensure sustainability of learning. My critical engagement with the literature was guided by distributed leadership theory, as it coincides with the emancipatory and transformative paradigms that I have adopted in this research (Ylimaki, 2012).

It is important to mention that criticism in a literature review serves to illuminate the issue under investigation, to discuss both the strengths and the limitations of existing knowledge about the problem (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Ridley, 2011). A literature survey may be organised according to (i) dates of publication of the literature, that is, logically, (ii) topics or ideas, (iii) the research design and methodology used in important studies, to enable the reader to draw his or her own conclusions, (iv) a structure where the most general literature (least related) is covered first, ending with the most closely related literature, or (v) according to a combination of all of these methods (Hart, 2003; Ridley, 2011). For this study, the review of literature on instructional leadership and leadership theories was structured by beginning with the most general literature (the least related), and ending with the most closely related literature (Ridley, 2011). I will begin my engagement with the literature by explaining what I mean by the main concept of this study, namely “instructional leadership”.

2.2 DEFINITION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

It is important to explain what I mean by the concept of instructional leadership, before I locate the concept in specific leadership theories. I understand instructional leadership to be the effort to improve teaching and learning by leading instruction, or teaching, effectively, addressing the challenges that hinder teaching and learning, guiding teacher learning, and thus ultimately fostering organisational learning (Brazier & Bauer, 2013). I will explain instructional leadership by defining instruction and leadership separately, and thereafter combining the explanations of the two concepts.

Instruction means teaching and comprises of four main elements: (i) the creation of positive learning environments, (ii) knowledge of a curriculum and learning programmes, (iii) lesson planning, and (iv) learner assessment (Department of Education, 2009; Robinson, 2000; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003). In my understanding, leadership comprises the tasks of giving direction, and developing and exerting social influence by one person or a group over other people (Bush, 2006; Captain, 2013; Hallinger, 2007). A combination of the two concepts, instruction and leadership,

provides a comprehensive definition of instructional leadership, which I will use in this study, namely:

Instructional leadership is the process of managing, governing, influencing, guiding, and giving direction on how teaching can be done, with consideration to the learning environments, teaching and learning strategies, and the selection and use of learning and teaching materials, lesson planning, and assessment.

When school leadership is focused on teaching and learning, the link between leadership and instruction is strengthened, meaning that the same tasks that school leaders undertake to run the school can be used to improve the quality of instruction (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). This necessitates the instructional leader to possess both instructional and leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will move schools to a route of continuous improvement with respect to teaching and learning (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). For this reason, the instructional leader requires expertise in multiple areas (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Ghamrawi, 2013). Instructional leaders should support teachers by acting as resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, school team leaders, and data coaches (Ghamrawi, 2013). Instructional leaders should support teachers to ensure that a positive environment is created for teaching and learning to take place, that the teaching and learning strategies that are applied in classrooms promote learning, that the learning and teaching materials which are selected for use are up to standard, that the way such materials are used encourages learning, and that the assessment given to learners is in line with the curriculum. This should be done in a way that will encourage teachers to ensure that learners do more than just pass tests and achieve minimum standards (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). In other words, teachers should mentor learners to subscribe to a philosophy of lifelong learning that values excellence and continual striving towards the achievement of personal potential (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). In this way, learning becomes sustainable, as the school climate and culture are influenced in a positive way.

The development of such a philosophy means that teachers should be assisted to set and achieve personal and professional goals related to improvement of the

instruction, and that they should be helped to critically reflect on their progress towards achieving these goals. Instructional leadership should not be seen primarily as a form of checking whether a teacher has done what they are supposed to have done, but should be regarded as a source of help and inspiration through constructive and critical dialogue, which results in learning that assists teachers to reach their personal and professional growth goals, according to individual teachers' needs (McEwan, 2003). This implies that instructional leaders should be lifelong learners, and this will only happen if they are exposed to lifelong learning and development activities. Lifelong learning and development includes guidelines, processes, and exercises that necessitate action and reflection by individuals, as well as sharing and learning in small groups (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). To ensure lifelong learning and development, I worked with instructional leaders in an action learning process, where they met in a group, discussed matters that hinder their instructional support to teachers, and suggested ways to improve their support. Through this process of interaction, instructional leaders learnt from one another and they were required to take action, which means putting into practice the knowledge they have acquired and reflecting on their actions (Kendon, Pain & Kesby, 2010; Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013).

2.3 INSTRUCTIONAL CHALLENGES FACING TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Instructional leaders should know what challenges teachers are facing, so that they can focus their instructional support to teachers because they are entrusted with instructional roles (Department of Education, 2009). Only when they are aware of these challenges will instructional leaders be able to understand the lived reality of the teacher, working in a resource-scarce environment, and only then will they be able to influence and direct their teaching practice towards successful teaching and learning (Msila, 2013). In my experience, teachers are challenged in the four performance standards that make up the components of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) (Department of Education, 2009) (see section 1.13). DAS is based on the fundamental principle of lifelong learning and development (Zuber-

Skerritt & Teare, 2013). Although lifelong learning and development are mentioned in DAS, I have never seen this kind of lifelong learning and development happening during my interaction with schools, and even during my time as a teacher. It is for this reason that I decided to work with HODs to help them to move from a traditional paradigm to a new paradigm of learning and development, which is self-directed, empowering, and sustainable, and which is needed in the context of the current worrying issues pertaining to education (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). This DAS policy is used to evaluate quality education delivery from teachers in the classroom situation, using the four performance standards outlined below (Department of Education, 2009). The first performance standard is the creation of positive learning environments.

2.3.1 The creation of positive learning environments

Classroom environment is an important factor in teaching and learning, because learners spend much of their time in the classroom, and an attractive environment makes it more inviting and comfortable for them to learn (Clouse, 2005; Killen, 2000). In my experience, creating an attractive classroom environment appears to be something that teachers, particularly in underperforming schools, need help with. In schools that I visited from 1996 to 2010 as a teacher and a school support visit facilitator, I observed that classrooms did not reflect the kind of environment that promotes teaching and learning. The walls of the classrooms were bare and learners were sitting in rows, even in classrooms that were not overcrowded. In classes where teachers did try to rearrange learners' seating to make it suitable for group work, the arrangement was not conducive to learning, in that some learners were not facing the chalkboard.

Another challenge facing teachers is the lack of respect among learners, which precludes the creation of a positive teaching and learning environment, in which learners become a community of learners (Sawyer, 2006). In teaching and learning environments, learners should become accustomed to classroom rules and norms that oblige them to adjust to new relationships with their teacher, who then becomes a facilitator, rather than the primary source of knowledge. In Motloun's (2008) and

Sawyer's (2006) terms, learners should be committed to collaborating, which means that they should participate actively during small-group collaboration and whole-class discussion. Teaching and learning environments such as these can serve as safe spaces for learners and can sufficiently motivate and cognitively engage learners to collaborate in meaningful ways to solve problems (Buys, 2010; Sawyer, 2006).

In addition, these small-group collaboration and whole-class discussion also promote active engagement by learners in their learning, making the learning self-regulated, which means that learners assume responsibility for constructing their own understandings of the content taught (Buys, 2010; Sawyer, 2006). However, there is much evidence that such a high degree of engagement is difficult to achieve (Motloun, 2008; Sawyer, 2006; Tranter, 2006). It is for this reason I decided to use distributed leadership theory, because it links with the emancipatory and transformative paradigms (Ylimaki, 2012) I adopted for this study, to collaborate with HODs and help them to provide teachers with collaborative instructional support, so that HODs too can encourage teachers to promote collaboration in their teaching practice between themselves and learners and among learners.

2.3.2 Knowledge of the curriculum and learning programmes

Teaching and learning strategies and the selection and use of teaching and learning materials are two areas that teachers struggle with (Robinson, 2000).

2.3.2.1 *Teaching and learning strategies*

The approach of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), adopted by the Department of Education in 2005, puts greater emphasis on learner-centred teaching methods (Department of Education, 2005). According to the OBE approach, which has now been replaced by the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education, 2012), learners should be able to (i) communicate effectively using visual, mathematical or language skills in the modes of oral and written presentation, (ii) collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information, (iii) organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively, and

(iv) work effectively with others in teams, groups, organisations, or in the community (Department of Education, 2000; Department of Basic Education, 2012).

The above-mentioned learning outcomes require learners to be independent learners, assisted by learner-centred teaching methods. For instance, group work and pair work are examples of learner-centred teaching methods that teachers are expected to master (Tranter, 2006). These teaching and learning strategies demand effective control, meaning that learners should not be left to their own devices to learn (Motloun, 2008; Pinto & Dison, 1999). The teacher must structure the learning environment so that learners can interact productively under the teacher's indirect guidance as they work towards a particular learning outcome (Killen, 2000). This means that teachers should set clear guidelines for learning, they should move around and monitor to ensure that all learners in the groups are participating, manage time, allow learners to report and give logical conclusion (Gardener, 2002; Killen, 2000; Sawyer, 2006; Tranter, 2006).

However, in many (Fort Beaufort, King Williamstown, Matatiele, Mount Frere, Bedford) schools that I visited as a school support facilitator in the Eastern Cape, I observed that many teachers were struggling to make group work or pair work effective learning strategies for learners, and were also struggling to keep learners disciplined while they worked in groups. Some teachers were not comfortable with passing control over to their learners, others were unable to maintain a learning environment where learners interacted productively under the teacher's indirect guidance, working towards a particular learning outcome, and some teachers found it difficult to manage the lesson time when implementing group work, that is, it took them a long time to get learners settled before the lesson could commence, and then it took them more time to get learners focused on the task (Killen, 2000; Motloun, 2008; Robinson, 2004). Because of these challenges, teachers reverted to lecturing. Telling/narration as a teaching method is good, but too much use of this method causes learners to become passive recipients of information, and this impacts badly on the development of their critical thinking and their learning (Erasmus et al., 2010; Killen, 2000; Price & Nelson, 2007). Teaching methods should positively influence

learners' critical thinking and their learning development (Gardener, 2002; Sawyer, 2006; Tranter, 2006).

There is no single teaching and learning strategy that is better than any other in all situations. For this reason, the teacher has to use a variety of teaching strategies that will benefit learners' learning by encouraging them to find information for themselves, to learn together, to allow learners to debate issues among themselves, and to make presentations of their own findings to others in their group (Killen, 2000; Motloun, 2008). This calls for teachers to make rational decisions about which strategy is likely to be most effective in a particular situation for learners' learning (Killen, 2000). Whichever particular teaching and learning strategy the teacher selects to use should help learners to think about, understand, and recall the information that is directly linked to the outcomes of the lesson (Department of Education, 2005; Hoer, 2003; Killen, 2000). For this reason, the emphasis is placed on teaching and learning strategies that are learner-centred, and learning activities that stimulate learner curiosity – encouraging learners to ask themselves questions, such as “why”, “how”, and “what if” (Killen, 2000; Robinson, 2002).

2.3.2.2 *The selection and use of teaching and learning materials/ resources*

Initially, during the implementation of the CAPS curriculum, there was no alignment between curriculum development, teacher development, and selection and supply of teaching materials (Cross et al., 2010). This problem can be linked to some of the challenges that teachers were faced with. For instance, I have noticed that teachers have struggled with the selection and use of teaching and learning materials. Based on my experience, sometimes the resources that are used as teaching and learning materials by teachers are not up to standard. The teaching and learning materials that are used by some teachers are below the level of difficulty required for the grade in question. This implies that in some cases the teaching and learning materials that are selected for use do not promote learning or develop learners' critical thinking (Killen, 2000). This becomes a drawback for learners when they are exposed to national examinations, as is the case here in South Africa at Grade 12 level or the ANA examinations at primary level, because it is argued that materials should be

used to improve teaching and learning (Erasmus, Leodolff, Mda & Nel, 2011). In the end, learners are faced with an assessment which is based on resources that are up to standard; meanwhile, learners have been taught with substandard resources, and this leads to failure (Prat, 2002).

Regarding the use of teaching and learning resources, I have observed that sometimes teachers neglect to use a simple resource that is found in all schools, regardless of how wealthy the school is, namely the chalkboard. They tend to do too much lecturing during the lesson, without writing key points on the board for learners, or without combining listening on the part of learners with talking, viewing, or writing, thus resulting in over-reliance on lecturing. Too much reliance on the teaching method of lecturing usually leads to boredom, lack of involvement, or limited learning on the part of learners (Erasmus et al., 2011). From what I have seen, teachers who sometimes write key points on the board for learners tend to forget to encourage learners to take notes from the board. Note-taking is one way of transferring responsibility for learning to the learner (Sawyer, 2006). When learners are not encouraged to take notes, writing on the board by teachers becomes a futile exercise (Erasmus et al., 2011; Motloun, 2008), since learners cannot retain all of that information accurately until their final examination. Note-taking is important for learners, especially that it can serve as a tool for revision (Gardener, 2002).

Teaching and learning does not only require listening; it requires listening, viewing, and writing, and these skills help to engage learners in their learning (Gardener, 2002; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Successful learning for learners requires learner engagement (Clouse, 2005; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). However, teachers find it difficult to engage learners in their learning. The implementation of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in South Africa has placed enormous demands on teachers, requiring them to apply various teaching and learning strategies, such as individualised instruction or cooperative learning, as ways to engage learners (Botha, 2002). If teachers are not developed and are not provided with sufficient instructional support to implement the curriculum which has been adopted in South Africa, the standard of education will remain low, meaning that underperforming schools will maintain their same level of

low performance (Botha, 2002). It is a sad fact that many teachers find it difficult to plan their lessons, and some do not even do any lesson planning.

2.3.3 Lesson planning

Lesson planning contributes to a highly structured teaching experience, where the objectives of the lesson are set out, clear and structured explanations are given, and the key points of the lesson are stressed (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs & Robinson, 2004). The current curriculum followed in South Africa's education system (Department of Education, 2005) also emphasises planning on the part of teachers. Planning influences what learners will learn, and it transforms the available time and curriculum materials into activities, assignments, and tasks for learners (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). This suggests that teachers need to be supported to acknowledge that planning is a tool that can assist teachers (Henderson, 2007). From many of the teacher portfolios that I viewed during school support visits, I have evidence to suggest that many teachers teach without lesson plans or weekly, term or year plans. This way of teaching impacts badly on the quality of teaching. Lack of planning can negatively affect curriculum coverage. Due to lack of planning, some teachers fail to achieve balance in their coverage of the curriculum, meaning that they may devote too much attention to some parts of the curriculum and fail to cover other parts of the curriculum that need to be covered. The other problem related to lack of planning is that teachers tend to emphasise tasks that require only memorisation and comprehension, or understanding, of knowledge (Black et al., 2003; Krathwohl, 2010), and they neglect other cognitive skills, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. All of these skills are ordered from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract, and they should be planned and integrated in the tasks given to learners through teaching and learning, as well as in learners' assessments (Krathwohl, 2010).

2.3.4 Assessment of learners' work

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in South Africa also introduced teachers to new ways of assessing learners (Robinson, 2002). CAPS

stipulates that assessments should be valid and reliable, they should link with the objectives of the curriculum, marking should be done according to rubrics, or marking guidelines, and learners should be given feedback in the form of marks and constructive comments (Black et al., 2003). It is important to explain what assessment is, and the related concepts that contribute to the effectiveness thereof. Assessment refers to any of the situations in which some aspects of a learner's education are in some sense measured by either a teacher, an examiner, a peer, or the learner himself or herself (Campbell et al., 2004; Pratt, 2002). In teaching and learning situations, the purpose of assessment is to demonstrate the outcomes of learning, to encourage, guide, and improve learning, to measure learners' performance, and, in the final instance, to award or withhold qualifications/credits (Black et al., 2003; Vandeyar & Killen, 2003). For this reason, assessments should be valid. A valid assessment is a test that measures what it purports to measure; this means that the test must have content relevance and content representativeness. Lesson objectives refer to the aims of the lesson (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003), which are derived from the content. In Vandeyar and Killen's (2003) terms, a reliable assessment is one where the items or tasks in the assessment are substantially free from errors of measurement. In other words, the test must produce consistent results, regardless of changes in the assessment situation, for instance where the learner's performance is assessed by different markers (Vandeyar & Killen, 2003). In order for the assessment items or tasks to be substantially free from errors of measurement, instructional leaders should encourage teachers to develop and use rubrics, or marking guidelines, for marking learners' work (Black et al., 2003). Rubrics, or marking guidelines, should be designed in order to create consistency in the marking of learners' work (Black et al., 2003).

Considering my exposition above concerning assessment, it is clear that teaching, assessment, and marking should be linked, meaning that the assessment should cover the lesson objectives, and marking should be based on a rubric. However, during the school support visits that I conducted, I had the opportunity to view both teachers' and learners' portfolios, and I noticed that the integration of lesson

objectives in learner assessments and the setting of valid and reliable assessments is a challenge for teachers.

The problems that I have seen with assessment is that teachers give assessments that do not link with the lesson objectives, they mark without using rubrics, making meaningless ticks on a learner's work, ticks that one cannot account for in relation to a learner's total mark. They only provide feedback in the form of marks, and they neglect to provide feedback in the form of both marks and comments. Providing learners with feedback in the form of both marks and comments is constructive and is a valuable way of promoting learning (Black et al., 2003; Pratt, 2002), but the majority of teachers do not do this.

Traditional ways of teaching and marking are difficult to eradicate (Steyn, 2003). New ways of teaching and assessing learners demand teaching that takes into consideration assessment standards and criteria for assessing, namely rubrics. Trying to accomplish this creates trouble, confusion, and uncertainty in the teaching practice of some teachers (Tapscott, 2009). The majority of teachers greeted the introduction of the new curriculum with hostility, because the change was so rapid and they were not ready (Sayed & Jansen, 2001). Furthermore, teachers did not receive adequate training to implement the very modern CAPS curriculum (Hoadley et al., 2009).

The above exposition of challenges that teachers face can provide the instructional leader with information on how to better support teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Knowledge of these problems by instructional leaders will be useful for them to develop strategies to improve their instructional support to teachers. Secondly, when thinking of the opposite of the above challenges, namely the appropriate application of the above performance standards in teaching and learning, it becomes clear that the person aspiring to take the lead in performing instructional duties needs to be proficient in areas of instruction, and he or she should possess good leadership skills (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). This means that instructional leaders should have both knowledge of the subject that they are

providing instructional leadership in, as well as good skills in leading, supporting, helping and building people to work in teams.

I have only mentioned some of the challenges that I have identified during my interaction with teachers; and literature too, demonstrates that teachers are in dire need of instructional support (De Clercq, 2008; Hoer, 2005). Research shows that teachers in low-performing schools can overcome their teaching and learning challenges and increase learner achievement when they are organised as a professional community characterised by continual learning (Morrissey, 2000). Continuous professional learning and development can occur through collaboration, namely working together in teams, being engaged in dialogue, mentoring, and reflecting as an individual or in groups (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, 2012). For this to happen, there has to be distributed leadership in the school, where the instructional leaders manage the instructional teaching and learning programme in a way that teachers are encouraged to work together and keep the channels of communication among them open (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Furthermore, the leaders should also collaborate with teachers in determining the purpose of education and the collaboratively decided-upon monitoring actions that instructional leaders will take to see to it that the purposes agreed upon are adhered to by teachers in the delivery of teaching and learning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

The encouragement of collaboration among teachers and instructional leaders is endorsed by the assumptions of all paradigms in this study, namely the distributed leadership theory, which is the theoretical paradigm, critical theory, which is the epistemological paradigm, and participatory action research (PAR), which is the methodological paradigm. These paradigms endorse the common goal or objective of developing people who are capable of leading, problem-solving, working effectively in teams, and thinking critically in building long-term strategic capacities among themselves (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Stringer, 2007). For this to happen, people who are in charge in various organisations should be transformative leaders, which means that they should encourage collaboration, or team work, among people. Just like individuals, team members can have different goals, but at some point in

their development, they can have common objectives and some agreement on how to reach their objectives (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Stringer, 2007).

This brings us to the question of who should take the lead in performing the instructional duties in schools, and how should they do this. However, before this question can be addressed, it should be understood that leadership is located within specific conceptions of leadership.

2.4 CONCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Conceptions of leadership address the questions of who should lead, what they should do to lead, and how they should lead (Borole, 2010; Nordengren, 2012). There are numerous models of leadership (Buys, 2010; Bush, 2011; Harris, 2004; Jackson, Street, Temperley, McGrane, Fielding & Bragg, 2005) for example, situational leadership, servant leadership, emotional leadership, the diamond model of leadership, authentic leadership, the GROW model (<http://coaching-journey.com/2012/03/the-grow-model-4/>), etc., which have been developed over the past 40 years (Nordengren, 2012). These models are categorised into two major schools, namely (i) trait definitions of leadership, and (ii) the process definition of leadership. Instructional leadership can be defined differently, depending on the conceptual lens through which it is viewed (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). For this reason, it is important to understand the different approaches to leadership.

2.4.1 Trait leadership theories

Trait leadership theories are traditional models that fall under a transactional leadership approach. The transactional leadership approach refers to an authoritarian or top-down form of leadership (Hallinger, 2010). Authoritarian leadership models state that important leadership qualities are inherent in the leader, that is, the leader is in control of everything and makes all the decisions (Nordengren, 2012). When viewed through this lens, instructional leadership can be defined as the process where the leader controls, coordinates, and supervises all teaching and learning activities (Borole, 2008; Hallinger, 2010; McEwan, 2003; Nordengren, 2012),

such as defining the purpose of schooling, setting school-wide goals, providing the resources needed for learning to occur, supervising and evaluating teachers, coordinating staff development, and creating collegial relationships with and among teachers (Chell & Tracey, 2005; Harris, 2004). In this case, instructional leadership is characterised as being directive and top-down (Hallinger, 2010), and the responsibility for it is located in one person – the school principal. Thus, instructional leadership is the practice of leadership where the principal's influence in curricular and instructional development displays a strong and directive behaviour (Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Harris et al., 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005).

The above trait definitions of leadership imply that the leader's influence on development is focused on learners' achievements through the mediation of teachers (Bush, 2011). This means that the practice of instructional leadership requires the instructional leader to emphasise results, rather than the process that will influence those results (Bush, 2011; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Msila, 2013). For example, the instructional leader would be more concerned with learners' marks than with what the teacher did to achieve those marks. These trait leadership conceptions are in opposition to the epistemological and the methodological paradigms of this study, because these two paradigms advocate that participants should be actively involved in together examining the problem in order to resolve it, and that this should take place in a non-coercive way (Bartol & Locke, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Msila, 2013). Paradigms of this investigation emphasize the involvement of people in their social knowledge construction (Bohman, 2012). The isolation of teachers by traditional models is commonly critiqued as a major stumbling block to school improvement (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Nordengren, 2012). As a result of such criticism, there has been a broadening of the definition of leadership since the 1980s (Nordengren, 2012). Since then, the process definition of leadership has emerged.

2.4.2 Leadership theories

There is no consensus on the meaning of leadership because there is no theory or model that has provided a full and satisfactory explanation of leadership (Gill, 2011).

Theories of leadership reflect particular theoretical frameworks and as a result of this, leadership theories developed from different studies only explain some aspects of leadership dependent on the context where the study took place (Gill, 2011). A theoretical framework adopted for this study is the distributed leadership practice perspective (Spillane, 2012; Gronn, 2002). The distributed leadership practice perspective leadership theories focus on leadership as an interaction between leaders and followers (Bush, 2008; Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Nordengren, 2012). Distributed leadership, which is also known as a shared or collaborative leadership approach (Marishane & Botha, 2011), is an example of a process model of leadership. Instructional leadership practised under the process definition of leadership means that the instructional leader collaborates with the people he or she is leading. The process definition of leadership is thus a social influence process model, because intentional influence is exerted by one person or people over other people to collaboratively structure leadership activities and relationships in an organisation (Nordengren, 2012).

Several studies (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Harris, 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mokhele & Jita, 2010) offer good examples of a process model of instructional leadership. By this model of leadership, leadership is defined as a shared activity where teachers develop expertise by working together in teams, being involved in dialogue about their teaching practice, being given the opportunity to perform leadership tasks, and performing similar or different tasks to accomplish a common goal, namely the improvement of instruction in the school (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012). Again taking supervision as an example, according to the notion of social influence processes, instructional supervision is the act of working professionally with teachers to determine what works best in the classroom, and what needs to be improved (Ünal, Sürücü & Yavuz, 2012). This implies that, when practising instructional leadership, according to the notion of social influence processes, leadership roles are not performed by only one person, but are shared or distributed among staff members (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Marishane & Botha, 2011). This is the preferred concept for this study, because it links with my preferred paradigms, which emphasise collaboration and

value democratic practices. It is for this reason that I chose a distributed leadership theory as a theoretical framework for my study.

2.5 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Studies examining the distribution of instructional leadership roles have yielded varying, and even contradictory, opinions on who should take the lead in performing instructional leadership duties in schools (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003; Department of Education, 2000, 2007; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Kruger, 2003; Riordan, 2003). The studies cited above differ in that the Department of Education (2000, 2007) requires HODs to take the lead in performing instructional leadership roles, while Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003), Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2012), Hallinger and Murphy (2012), Kruger (2003), and Riordan (2003) are of the opinion that principals and teachers should mostly share instructional leadership roles.

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2012) operationalise the distribution of the instructional leadership roles by means of the learning-oriented model of school leadership, which consists of four pillar practices. I agree with Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano's (2012) learning-oriented model, which operationalises leadership distribution, because this leadership model encourages collaboration, dialogue, reflection, and learning among adults for their growth by means of four pillar practices, namely teaming, mentoring, collegial inquiry, and providing leadership roles (see Figure 2.1 below).



Figure 2.1: Four pillars: The learning-oriented model of school leadership (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012)

The above-mentioned four pillar practices are intentionally structured to serve as environments that support growth and learning of teachers in different ways.

The learning-oriented model of school leadership draws from Kegan and Lahey's (2001) constructive-developmental theory, which acknowledges that people have different developmental capacities and needs for growth, which implies that they need to be supported differently (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012). This theory emphasises transformational learning, rather than informational learning. Informative or informational learning seeks to bring valuable new content into our existing ways of thinking (Illeris, 2009). Learning under transformational theory increases knowledge and repertoire of skills, and it also extends our already-established cognitive structures, by deepening the resources within our existing frames of reference (Illeris, 2009). Transformational learning, which is supported by

Kegan and Lahey's (2001) theory, is aimed at changing our frames of reference and our ways of thinking and increasing our capacity to see things from different perspectives (Illeris, 2009). Transformational learning aims to change not only what we know, but how we come to know it (Illeris, 2009). This learning changes knowledge, it increases our confidence to learn and self-perceptions of our ability to learn. It also increases our self-esteem and all other positive factors which help to sustain our ability to be lifelong learners (Illeris, 2009).

Kegan and Lahey's (2001) constructive-developmental theory caters for different developmental capacities. In addition to cognitive development, the theory includes other different types of development, such as emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal development, which enable an individual to interact with other people (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012). The above-mentioned types of development are embraced in the four pillar practices, and this understanding of different development makes the learning-oriented model of school leadership a promising tool that I can draw from to support participant learning in this study. For example, some teachers are confident to engage in collegial discussions to present their opinions or inputs, while others feel insecure and uncomfortable to engage in discussion with their colleagues. An understanding of such different behaviours helps to create developmental environments that are conducive for teachers' growth. I adopted Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano's (2012) learning-oriented model of distributed leadership because it caters for various different behaviours by creating a safe space for teachers of varied dispositions to take action and be fully involved in their development. The use of this model in this study will also result in a situation where there is collaboration between myself as researcher and the research participants. This implies that participants will not be controlled. For instance, during the discussions they will take full responsibility of discussing their issues and developing plans suitable for the improvement of their situation (Barbour, 2009).

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano's (2012) learning-oriented model of distributed leadership is suited to this study, because it uses group discussion as a strategy, encouraging dialectic interaction. In shaping the instructional leaders' reality, I will

adopt dialogical, dialectic and hermeneutic approaches, as required by my critical epistemological paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Dialogical, dialectic and hermeneutic approaches that are used during group discussions are more democratic, empowering, and humanising (Stringer, 2007). Group discussion will serve as a means of creating opportunities for participants to consult with and work alongside others in teams (Billet, 2010). For this study, the implication is that participants will meet and collectively be allowed to dialogue around the issues that hinder their instructional leadership support to teachers. An understanding of various different behaviours, as highlighted in Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano's (2012) four pillar practices, will be useful in ensuring free participation during group discussions, where participants will be freely identifying their problems and developing strategies to implement to remedy their situation. I will now discuss the four pillar practices in relation to the collaborative, participatory paradigms guiding this study.

(i) Pillar 1: Teaming

I understand teaming to be a set of behaviours that a group of individuals perform while pursuing a common goal to coordinate knowledge regarding needs or activities (Satterfield, Heeten & Houston, 2005). Teaming supports adult learning, because it creates opportunities for dialogue and reflection. Effective teamwork requires collegial relationships, engagement in dialogue, and learning from the collective interaction (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Western, 2012). In a school situation, teaming can involve teachers talking about their teaching practice, which can include the curriculum, learners' work, planning, and assessment, and it can also involve teachers sharing knowledge about what is working and what is not working in their teaching practice. It is also through teaming that teachers can observe one another's teaching through class visits and can provide feedback and be able to help one another. This will benefit teachers who are struggling, since they will learn from the experienced teachers. It is important to mention that the type of teaming discussed here is an action learning one. As distinct from other teams, action learning teams are focused on two objectives, namely learning and problem solving (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010). While it is expected that a solution to the problem can be developed

and acted upon, the larger yield is the learning itself (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010). The real problem becomes the fulcrum on which critically reflective learning processes occur (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010). Teaming also allows teachers to simultaneously collaborate and be involved in dialogue with others. This habit of working together decreases individualism and promotes collaboration. The application of teaming with the aim of developing people, as proposed by Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2012), does not only promote the sharing of ideas by group members, but also provides a challenging opportunity through or from which participants can learn to question their understandings about specific issues and to consider other people's viewpoints, test them, and finally review their own understandings.

(ii) Pillar 2: Collegial inquiry

Collegial inquiry in this study refers to a collaborative investigation by HODs to find solutions to problems that hinder their instructional support to teachers, aiming to improve their individual instructional support to teachers for the benefit of the entire school community (Fox, 2011; Jackson, Street, Temperley, McGrane, Fielding & Bragg, 2005). The co-constructed knowledge will be based on HODs' shared experiences (Fox, 2011). Their shared experiences will be planned and put into action in order to construct collective knowledge that will improve their practices as instructional leaders. Knowledge constructed from research of this nature is different from knowledge obtained through traditional research, where all the steps in the research are planned and decided on by the researcher, the researcher approaches the participants with questions to answer, and methods of obtaining answers to the questions are devised by the researcher (Collins, 1999). Knowledge obtained through collegial inquiry can count as research that is based on people's actual activities, where people are active partners in the research process, benefiting from it, and being empowered by it (Collins, 1999). I adopted the approach of collegial inquiry for this study, because its above-mentioned features can help to bridge the gap between research and application (Mertler, 2009). In collegial inquiry, the participants are not only required to put into action their shared experiences; they are also expected to observe changes, if any, and to evaluate the situation, and this demands reflective practice (Bolton, 2007; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010; Msila, 2013).

The concept of reflective practice includes examination, exploration, introspection, and analysis of all achievable thoughts that will define and clarify the problem under investigation (Tugui, 2011). Reflective practice needs to be a deeply questioning inquiry into professionals' actions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and identity in professional cultural and political contexts (Bolton, 2007; Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Mertler, 2009). The concept of reflective practice that I will adopt for this study is the one interpreted by Bolton (2007), who describes reflective practice as a process that requires HODs as instructional leaders to deeply question their professional actions, thoughts, feelings, and principles regarding the kind of instructional support that they offer teachers to improve the quality of teaching in schools. Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2012) view collegial collaborative inquiry as an example of a larger idea of reflective practice, because it drives reflection on one's understandings, principles, beliefs, and commitments compared to those of others, so that the person can learn from other people's understandings, principles, beliefs, and commitments. This indicates that through reflective practice, instructional leaders will constantly ask themselves questions, such as what kind of change agents they are, how they are accountable for their actions and how they support teachers instructionally, what is happening, what ought to be happening, and how can they make it happen (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Kondon, Pain & Kesby, 2010) (see Figure 2.2 below). Reflective practice fits in well with this study, because it also links with the assumptions and process of PAR, namely to promote collaborative inquiry to improve individuals' social context and to encourage critical reflection on individual leadership and participation (Jackson et al., 2005). In brief, just like teaming, collegial inquiry requires interaction among people (Billet, 2010), and through it, leadership roles can be developed among colleagues.

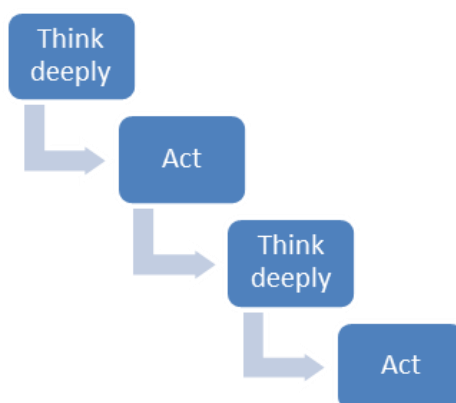


Figure 2.2: A diagram illustrating deep reflection (Mertler, 2009)

(iii) Pillar 3: Providing leadership roles

The pillar of providing leadership roles differs from other approaches of distributed leadership roles in the sense that it stresses “hands-on” development, meaning that people take action and learn while performing their normal duties. For example, teachers’ leadership roles can be developed through involvement in leadership activities, such as chairing departmental meetings, coaching other teachers, or becoming mentors to new teachers. Adoption of this pillar encourages and ensures collective action in leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2004), rather than positioning one person as the sole leader. Collective action in leadership responsibilities links with the epistemological and methodological paradigms of this study, because it embraces collaborative learning. Collaborative learning must lead to action. Action learning is based on the premise that there is no learning without action, and there is no action without learning (Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010). As a result of this, collaborative action learning involves individuals as group members, but also involves activities such as negotiation and the sharing of ideas, which involves the construction and maintenance of shared conceptions of tasks, which are accomplished interactively in group discussions (Sawyer, 2006). This signifies that learning as a whole has shifted from a narrow focus of individual learning to an incorporation of both individual and group learning (Haneberg, 2006; Sawyer, 2006; Western, 2012).

(iv) Pillar 4: Mentoring

Mentoring is a specialised form of coaching (Biech, 2008). It is an effective way of retaining and supporting new teachers in the field (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012). The process of mentoring is valuable for people who are less experienced, in that a knowledgeable person or a mentor can help the less experienced people in a safe space (Buys, 2010; North West Department of Education, 2006). Mentoring requires a good relationship between a more senior or experienced manager and a new or less experienced employee. A mentor shares his or her experience with less knowledgeable people in a relationship of mutual trust, collaboration, and respect for each other's abilities, and this makes mentoring different from supervision (Biech, 2008; Haneberg, 2006). A mentor is different from a supervisor in the sense that a mentor provides the employee with a coach other than his or her supervisor (Biech, 2008). A mentor can therefore be regarded as a trusted friend assigned to assist an employee with the education of his or her charge (Biech, 2008). This kind of relationship differs from the relationship that one has with a supervisor, who has a direct responsibility for the performance and learning of an employee (Biech, 2008). As opposed to supervision and monitoring, a mentor helps the less experienced people in a safe space, and, again, mentoring can occur without any official recognition of it (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2012; North-West Department of Education, 2006). For this study, HODs will be encouraged to develop teachers through mentoring. This means that the HODs will be encouraged to use experienced teachers to develop the new or the less experienced teachers. In their group discussions, too, HODs will share ideas. This will contribute to the less experienced HODs learning from the experienced ones, and this HOD mentoring will occur without any official verbalisation (Buys, 2010; North West Department of Education, 2006).

To sum up, Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano's (2012) study has provided useful guidelines for how leadership roles can be distributed using four pillar practices, but it did not provide a definite answer to the question of who should take the lead in performing the instructional leadership roles of supporting teachers.

2.6 WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN PERFORMING THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLES OF SUPPORTING TEACHERS?

There is a consistent agreement in the literature on the need for the principal to be involved in the areas of the curriculum and instruction, but there is considerable disagreement on who should take the lead in performing the instructional leadership roles of supporting teachers (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). I argue that one person cannot be solely responsible for this task, and that it should be distributed among the school management team as a whole.

School principals, particularly in less successful schools, complain that managerial activities and dealing with the daily operations of the school, particularly writing memoranda, attending meetings (scheduled and unscheduled), and speaking on the telephone, take up most of their time and leave them with no time to perform instructional activities (Hoadly et al., 2012; Msila, 2013; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004), which require a substantial amount of time if they are to be done properly (Datnow & Castellano, 2001). Principals do not have sufficient time to direct the curriculum and instructional activities (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004), along with all their other responsibilities. They spend a considerable amount of time promoting the school's image and working closely with parents, school boards, and other external agents (Datnow & Castellano, 2001).

Furthermore, supporting teachers instructionally will require effort from the principal to align the curriculum (content) and instruction (teaching methods) with national standards (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Yet principals cannot be experts in all learning areas (Datnow & Castellano, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004), and they possess at best a broad knowledge of the education process and learning theories (McEwan, 2003). Therefore, they are not capable of giving all teachers in all learning areas the effective instructional support that they need. The literature also shows that teachers do not trust principals to be able to provide instructional support to them; instead, they consider peer coaching and collegial staff

development to be more appropriate in curriculum and instructional matters (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Hoadly et al., 2012; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

Past studies (Department of Education, 2007; Kruger, 2003; Riordan, 2003) seem to suggest the idea of the distribution of instructional leadership roles, that is, collaboration and power sharing between the principal and the teachers. However, further study into this area is needed to provide a stronger sense of who should take the lead in performing the instructional leadership roles of supporting teachers, and to explore how this can be done in a way that promotes sustainable change.

In this study I embrace Kruger (2003) and Riordan's (2003) notion of distributed instructional leadership, which ties in with the suggestion of the Department of Education (2000, 2007) of putting HODs in charge of supporting teachers instructionally. Kruger (2003) and Riordan (2003) argue for distributed leadership, although they do not clarify who should do what. According to the Department of Education documents cited above, HODs are supposed to provide and coordinate guidance on the latest ideas on approaches to the subject matter and that includes teaching methods, techniques and evaluation of teachers' work in their field, and they are expected to effectively convey such latest ideas to staff members concerned. This means that HODs are responsible for the management, running, directing, and giving of support in teaching and learning. However, based on my personal experience, HODs act as "final checkers" of the work done by teachers. They are only checking mark schedules, asking for learners' books from the teacher, 3.3.1 and signing their signature and doing the same on examination papers or formal tests set by the teachers. This led me to want to investigate how I can help HODs to improve their practice to provide clear and effective instructional support to teachers. In advancing Kruger (2003) and Riordan's (2003) notion, this study will provide knowledge that clarifies what HODs should practically do to improve their instructional support to teachers in a participatory way.

2.7 WHAT SHOULD HODS DO TO IMPROVE THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS?

Viewed from a collaborative process model of leadership (Msila, 2013), instructional leaders and all staff members need to create a sense of coherence and consistency in their work. Davies (2005) states clearly that instructional leaders should develop systems to support planning and assessment. Instructional support will also require coaching. Coaching systems include classroom observations, the collection and analysis of data from learners' tests and examination results, and supporting and guiding teachers to implement teaching policies by discussing policy documents with them (Davies, 2005; Pratt, 2002). The above-mentioned factors contribute largely to the productivity of the school. However, the success of HODs in performing these duties depends on the type of relationship they develop with the teachers. It is sometimes difficult for HODs to relate well to teachers because of a weak organisational culture (Borole, 2010). A weak organisational culture refers to a lack of agreement on key values, or a situation where people work as individuals, and teamwork is neglected (Borole, 2010). In schools where teachers do not value teamwork, it becomes difficult for the goals of the organisation to be achieved.

A positive learning environment, or an environment that is conducive to learning, is a physical and emotional environment that encourages teaching and learning (Clouse, 2005; Killen, 2000). This suggests that the learning environment does not only refer to the classroom. It involves the school grounds, the library, computer rooms, and laboratories, which means that all these environments should be supportive of teaching and learning. Considering the above explanation, HODs in underperforming schools find it difficult to support teachers to create positive teaching and learning environments for learners in schools. What I saw during the time that I visited schools as a school support facilitator was that there was no order in schools, learners did not respect instruction time, and they spent most of their time roaming around. The classrooms were unattractive and dirty. Not much research has been done into school environments as a developmental pathway to learners' disorderly behaviours and physical milieux that inhibit teaching and learning (Reinke & Herman, 2002). It is for this reason that I intend to work collaboratively with HODs to help them to support

teachers, to ensure that schools and classrooms are seen as physical and social milieux that promote teaching and learning. In addition, it is also important for HODs to support teachers in the use of teaching and learning strategies and the selection and use of such materials.

2.8 SUMMARY

In conclusion, this literature review informed me about the idea of the distribution of instructional leadership roles, which means collaboration and power sharing between the principal and the teachers, but there is no clarity on who should do what and how they should do it. For this reason, I argue for clarification of the instructional leadership roles of HODs and how they should perform such duties to support teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. I intend to do this in a participatory way, to encourage sustainable learning and change. Working with HODs in a participatory way requires the use of participatory research methodology and strategies. These will be discussed next.

CHAPTER 3:
**A THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH AS METHODOLOGY**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I provided the theoretical framework for the study, based on a review of instructional leadership literature. Through this study, I intend to offer insights into the process and outcome of conducting participatory action research (PAR), to improve the instructional leadership of HODs in schools to support teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This study is carried out within the context of underperforming schools.

In this chapter, I describe and explain the research methodology and strategies used in this study. I theoretically justify my choice of critical theory as epistemological paradigm and PAR as methodological paradigm, as well as the methods of data generation and analysis that I have chosen. I also discuss the ethical considerations observed in this study and the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Table 3.1 outlines the methodological choices in this study.

Table 3.1: Outline of methodological choices taken in this study

Paradigmatic assumptions					
Epistemological paradigm			Critical theory		
Methodological paradigm/research design			Participatory action research		
Selection procedures					
Selection of site			Purposive sampling: Two underperforming schools – one high school in a peri-urban area, and one primary school in a peri-urban area.		
Selection of participants			Purposive sampling: Six HODs from one under-performing high school in a peri – urban area, and four HODs from a primary school in a peri-urban area.		
Data-generation techniques			Data-documentation techniques		
Participant narratives. (cycle 1) Qualitative questionnaires (cycle 1 and 2) Drawings with narratives. (cycle 1) Transcripts of recorded action learning set meetings. (cycle 1 and 2) Analysis of group exercises Observations (cycle 2) Photovoice (cycle 2) Reflective journals (cycle 1 and 2) Field notes/memos (cycle 1)			Verbatim transcripts of audio recordings Visual recordings		
Data analysis and interpretation					
Thematic analysis and interpretation (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008).					
Quality criteria of the study					
Credibility Triangulation of data- generation methods; independent recoding; member checking.	Transferability/ process validity Rich description of research process.	Depend-ability Inquiry audit trail	Confirm-ability Audit trail	Catalytic validity Evidence of how the study stimulated enthusiasm for change in the participants and others.	Rhetorical validity Critical feedback from the validation group on the research report.
Ethical considerations					
Informed consent, transparency, safety, confidentiality, trust, privacy.					

3.2 PARADIGMATIC APPROACH

Paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2010). They act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the study and commit the researcher to particular methods of data generation and interpretation (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). The paradigmatic beliefs of the researcher influence the purposes of the research, how they conduct it, how they will assess the role of values and ethics in their work, how they will form relationships with the research participants, and how their work will be presented (Bailey, 2007; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). This requires that the researcher ensure coherence in the study design, because the design impacts on the nature of the research question and the manner in which the research will be conducted. Coherence can be maintained by ensuring that the research question and the research methods fit logically with the paradigms used (Terre Blanche et al., 2010). For the purposes of this study, I chose the paradigmatic standpoint of critical theory as metatheoretical paradigm, and I adopted the PAR design as methodological paradigm.

3.2.1 Metatheoretical paradigm: Critical theory

Critical theory, usually associated with the Frankfurt School, originated from the writings of Karl Marx (Shook & Margolis, 2006). According to Shook and Margolis (2006), Marx's principles are concerned with social equity, equality, and justice. Marx's socialist theory was an attempt to reconstruct society in a more just way (Gibson, 2008; Kettley, 2012; Shook & Margolis, 2006). I chose to use critical theory to work with HODs in underperforming schools to empower them to improve their instructional support to teachers, because this theory aims to bring change, empowering the disempowered (Bohman, 2012; Shook & Margolis, 2006).

The term 'epistemology' means the nature of knowledge, while the term 'ontology' refers to how we perceive and act on this knowledge (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). The epistemology of critical theory is that people's experiences and perceptions of reality

are the object of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore this epistemology suggests that the researcher needs to interact with people, engage them in the investigation, observe events, and read documents to discover people's lived reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The ontology of critical theory is that knowledge is socially constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The epistemology and the ontology of critical theory create a perfect link to participatory action research (PAR), the methodological paradigm adopted in this study, because they allow participants to be engaged in the research process, to plan, and to take action to improve their circumstances through a systematic process of critical reflection on the current situation, what it might be like if changes are made and how they can effect the changes to bring about improvement (Billet, 2010).

3.2.2 Participatory action research as paradigm and methodology

A research design is a formal plan for conducting a study, and it specifies exactly how the study will be carried out (Mertler, 2009). It is crucial to conceptualise the design of a study prior to its commencement, carefully considering all aspects of the study and how they fit with the paradigm of the researcher, as well as the nature of the research question. The research design aspects include not only how data will be generated and analysed, but also primarily how the study will be planned (Mertler, 2009). The research design that I have chosen will be discussed below.

I chose PAR as a methodological paradigm for this study because it is more than a methodology; it is a paradigm, based on values that promote the social good (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). In the course of an investigation, PAR allows participants to experience insightful, emotional moments and personal growth akin to the transformational moments that occur in action learning (O'Neil, Watkins & Marsick, 2010). PAR emphasises cognitive and operational changes in participants, which results in a better understanding of social reality, rather than the researcher making assumptions about how things are, and how action and attitudes may be adjusted (O'Neil, Watkins & Marsick, 2010). Furthermore, this paradigm involves participants in action learning (Revans, 1991). Action learning is, by its nature, non-directive and non-interventionist, trusting that people as social beings are generally motivated to

self-organise and to work collaboratively, contributing all they can in unpretentious ways to the common good (O'Neil, Watkins & Marsick, 2010).

Another reason why I chose PAR is because it links with critical theory. PAR places a high value on the democracy of the research process, allowing for free and full participation of the participants (Stringer, 2007). It becomes relevant for me to use PAR for this study because it allowed me to work collaboratively with the participants, regarding them as co-researchers, raising their awareness of the need for change, and helping them to visualise and actualise change. The epistemology and the ontology of critical theory resonate with the participative and democratic assumptions of PAR (Collins, 1999; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010). Collins (1999) and Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2010) view PAR as a research methodology which combines research, education, and action. PAR is a form of participative, person-centred inquiry which allows the researcher to conduct research with people, as opposed to on them or about them (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007), helping the people to change and grow through the process. Thus, PAR is viewed as an emancipatory approach to knowledge production and utilisation, aiming to actively involve oppressed people in the collective investigation of reality, in order to transform their knowledge (Collins, 1999; Creswell, 2008; Kindon et al., 2010). Since PAR empowers people by involving them through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge to solve their own problems, the knowledge discovered, or the benefits of the research, accrue more directly to the people involved (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). This happens because PAR attempts to represent participants as researchers in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggles (Shook & Margolis, 2006), assisted by the facilitation of the academic researcher (Stringer, 2007).

As indicated in Chapter 1, I intend to facilitate an improvement in the instructional support that HODs provide to teachers, by working with them to help them to identify problems that hinder their provision of instructional support to teachers, and to investigate and implement practical actions to improve and change their instructional support. In order for this to happen, I had to adopt dialogical, dialectical and hermeneutic approaches in my interaction with participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Bartol & Locke, 2006). The dialogical and hermeneutic approaches in research mean

a more democratic empowerment approach, which seeks participants' full participation, and it also engages them as equals (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stringer, 2007). These approaches require participants to think critically. Action research provides a simple but powerful framework which engages people in critical thinking (Kindon et al., 2010; Mertler, 2009). Figure 3.1 below indicates the process followed in this study.

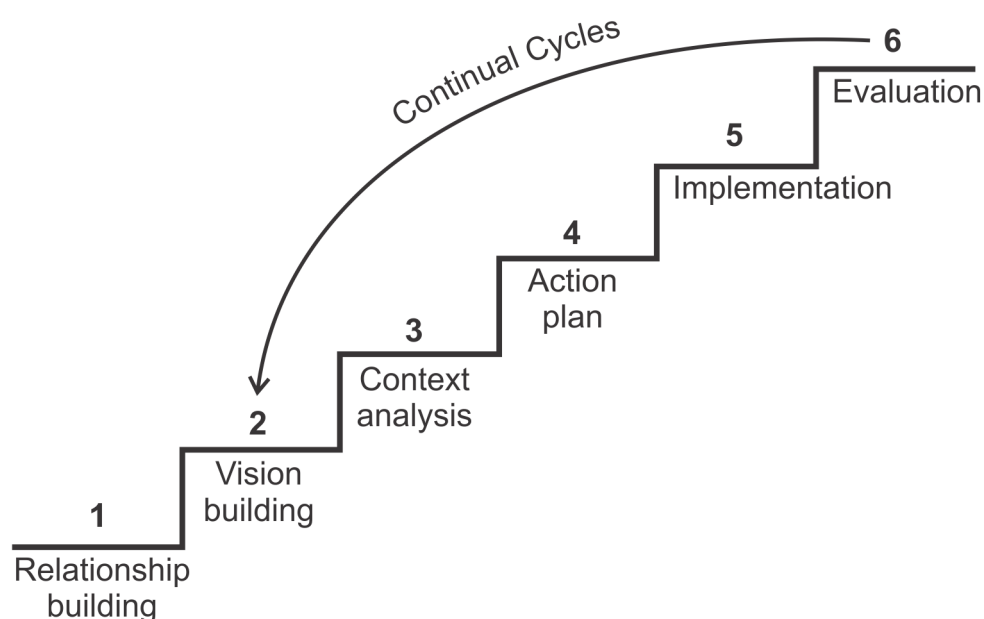


Figure 3.1: The action research process followed in this study for interaction between the facilitator/researcher and the participants (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011)

Steps 1, 2 and 6 above are not covered by the usual action research cycles, as depicted by many authors in their spiral of cycles (see Dilworth & Boshyk, 2010; Spaulding & Falco, 2013; Tomal, 2010), but they are important in the action research process. Step 1 involves creating a good relationship between the researcher and the participants and among the participants themselves. Step 2 requires that the team develops a common vision, which will carry them through to step 6, which involves the evaluation of the achievements of the research. The action research

process constitutes a spiral of cycles, each cycle consisting of four phases (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010; Koshy, 2010; Tomal, 2010), indicated by steps 3, 4, 5 and 6 above. Step 3, Planning and context analysis, involves the identification of the problem; step 4 involves the development of a strategic plan to improve the situation; step 5 involves the implementation of the plan; and step 6 involves the evaluation of the action plan as well as critical reflection of its impact and significance for further change. At the completion of each cycle (steps 3-6), participants relook the situation for a review, reflect for reanalysis, and re-act to transform their actions (Stringer, 2007; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). The participants continue to relook, reflect on, and re-act their situation, proceeding from one cycle to the next, until both the facilitator and the participants are satisfied that the desired change has been achieved (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010) (see Figure 3.2). When proceeding from one cycle to the next, the central question which guided the investigation was “How can HODs improve their instructional support to teachers?”

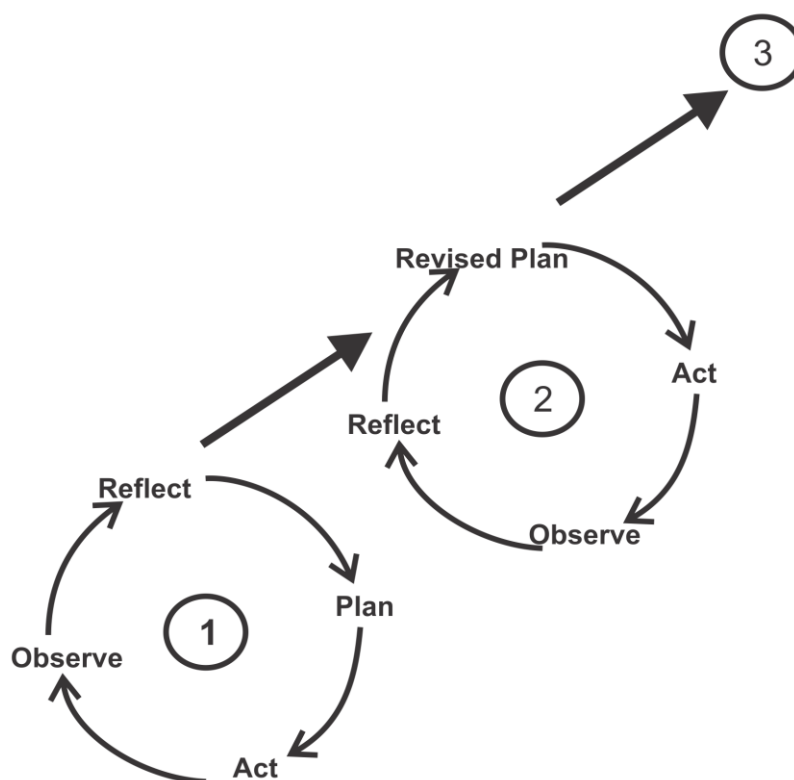


Figure 3.2: The spiral nature of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011:34)

The entire research process necessitates that participants reflect on and experientially learn from their actions (Turesky & Gallagher, 2011), drawing from their own experiences. In order for this to happen, participants should be engaged in reflective and dialogical conversations (McIntosh, 2010). The HODs in this study engaged in collaborative dialogues, through which they gained access to each other's visions and insights, opening up thinking to scrutiny, through which wider opportunities for understanding could unfold (McIntosh, 2010). The HODs were required to collaboratively work on issues that hinder their instructional support to teachers, using the phases of the action research cycles. This required that HODs define issues, ideas, and government policies about their job descriptions more closely, so that they could develop a deeper understanding of how they should provide instructional support to teachers (Cohen et al., 2007). The HODs collaboratively identified the problems that hindered their instructional support to teachers, they developed strategic plans to improve the situation, they implemented the plans, and they observed and reflected on the changed situation. This framework, where participants are required to look or observe, think, and act in working out their situation demands full commitment by the participants from the beginning of the project to the end (Kindon et al., 2010).

In traditional research, learning is assumed as an outcome which in reality is seldom reflected upon by participants (Kindon et al., 2010; Mertler, 2012), and opportunities to learn are restricted to the findings of the data analysis. In PAR, contrast, participants learn throughout the research process (Cohen et al., 2007; Kindon et al., 2010). This framework promotes the values of democracy, equality, and liberty, which are the social values of action research. This value-based design implies that participants' views are respected, they are equals, and they participate freely and fully in the investigation, looking into the situation that needs to be changed, thinking of solutions, and acting together to implement solutions to bring about change.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are sets of specific techniques for selecting cases, measuring and observing social aspects of life, gathering and refining data, analysing data, and

reporting on the results (Neuman, 2006). The qualitative researcher is likely to generate, analyse, and interpret data simultaneously, going back and forth between research steps, because research is an interactive process, in which steps blend into each other (Neuman, 2006). The research methods employed in this study will be discussed below, starting with the sampling methods.

3.3.1 Research site and participant sampling

Due to time and resource constraints, it is impossible to include all people who might potentially inform the research process; therefore I purposively selected a smaller group of HODs in underperforming schools to provide information, on which the study is grounded (Creswell, 2008; Stringer, 2004). My initial aim was to work with a group of HODs from an underperforming school. However, due to the withdrawal of those HODs, from the research, I had to choose another site to complete the study. My promoter was involved in a project at another school in Eastern Cape and we decided to request the principal and the HODs of that school to participate in my study. Although this school was a primary school, it was situated in a similar socio-economic context and faced similar challenges to the initial school. I now give a brief description of the two sites.

My research sites were two underperforming schools, in peri-urban areas. School 1, was a high school with infrastructure such as a science laboratory and a computer room, but with poor teaching and learning resources. Learners came from the surrounding community that faces many social challenges. School 2, was situated in a similar peri-urban area. I used purposive sampling to select participants for this study.

Purposive sampling seeks to ensure that the diverse perspectives of people who are likely to affect the problem under investigation are included in the study (Neuman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling seeks to select participants for a variety of purposes, namely maximum variation sampling (which seeks to include people who represent diverse perspectives in any social context), extreme case sampling (which strives to include particularly troublesome or enlightening cases), typical sampling

(which endeavours to include participants who are typical of people in the setting), or theory or concept sampling (which tries to include participants who have particular knowledge related to the issue studied) (Stringer, 2004). For this study, I used typical sampling to select the underperforming schools, believing that both the participants and the setting are most typical of this study's population (Creswell, 2008; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). I intentionally chose to work in underperforming schools, because the persistent poor performance of South African learners in both national and international assessments of certain areas of knowledge, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), is increasing cause for concern (Sayed & Jansen, 2001; South Africa International Study Centre, 2011; Van Wyk, 2007).

I intended to work with HODs from one underperforming school to help them to develop ways of improving their instructional support to teachers. However, I ultimately had to involve another school in the study. Due to the emerging and dynamic nature of action research, I decided to conduct research at a second school, after the HODs withdrew from the study. Participants cannot be forced to take part in a study if they are not willing to participate (Cohen et al., 2007). As a result, I withdrew from the first school but reflected on the learning to improve my own practice as a researcher before entering a second site (see Chapter 4). In school 1, six HODs volunteered to participate, and in school 2, four participants offered to contribute to the study, namely three HODs and one HOD who was also a Deputy Principal. Table 3.2 below provides biographical information about the participants.

Table 3.2: Biographical information about the participants from school 1 and school 2

SCHOOL 1				
Participants	Age category	Gender	Race	Number of years as HODs
HOD for natural sciences	50 - 55	Male	Black	Between 15 and 20
HOD for Human and social sciences	40 - 45	Female	Black	Between 5 and 10
HOD for commerce subjects	40 - 45	Male	Black	Between 5 and 10
HOD for languages	35 - 40	Male	Black	Fewer than 5
Deputy principal	50 - 55	Male	Black	Between 15 and 20

SCHOOL 2				
Participant	Age category	Gender	Race	Number of years as HOD
Deputy Principal and HOD for Senior phase	40 - 45	Female	Coloured	Between 5 and 10
HOD for HOD for Senior phase	40 - 45	Male	Coloured	Between 5 and 10
HOD for Foundation phase	45- 50	Female	Indian	Between 5 and 10
HOD for Foundation phase	45 - 50	Female	Coloured	Between 15 and 30

3.3.2 Methods of data generation

Data generation and analysis in action research is much more effective when it is accomplished as an interactive process between stakeholders (Creswell, 2008; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010). Most of the data for this study was therefore generated from the interaction between the participants and the researcher, and from their interaction with one another. Data generation refers to the various ways in which data will be obtained for a study (Neuman, 2011; Thomas, 2003). In qualitative research, there is a wide range of methods of data generation, namely personal experience, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, reflections, interactions, and visual texts, which describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people's lives (Bailey, 2007; Neuman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2003).

3.3.2.1 Narratives (during in Cycle 1)

In this study I generated data using the method of narratives. Narratives are spoken or written accounts of an event or an action, or a series of events in chronological order (Mertler & Charles, 2011). The purpose of narratives is to convey experiences as they are expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals (Mertler & Charles, 2011). I requested the HODs to write narratives, (participants' narratives) with the purpose of investigating their individual perspectives on their instructional leadership and to explore the individual issues that they face that hinder their ability to offer instructional support to teachers. HODs were required to write a narrative about what is good and what is challenging in being an instructional leader, following the guidelines given in Appendix C1. Allowing the participants to write narratives about their instructional leadership experience helped me to obtain insight into their understanding of instructional leadership and to establish a starting point for working with them. Apart from participant narratives I engage the participants in the drawing narratives. This exercise was meant to stimulate the participants' thinking by allowing them to visualise the ideal teachers they wanted to work with and to think of how they can plan to achieve their desire. I also generated data by administering qualitative questionnaires.

3.3.2.2 Qualitative questionnaires (Used during cycle 1 and 2)

I generated data by capturing the HODs' experiences and perspectives with regard to instructional leadership by means of qualitative questionnaires. The concern of many participants, (or the readers) of research involving only in-depth interviews and case studies, is that of representativeness (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) argue that one way of alleviating such fears has been to make use of a survey, most commonly involving the use of a questionnaire. Although results from a questionnaire can be used to test a hypothesis or to add value to a theory, it is often forgotten that some of the data generated from questionnaires can be as qualitative in nature as interviews or observational data, for example in providing people's views or perceptions of an issue, or contributing to the development of theory (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). It is for this reason that I decided to use qualitative questionnaires, drawing on Wellington and Szczerbinski's (2007) views as my guide, to gather baseline data. I purposively provided the participants with structured qualitative questionnaires, with the aim of providing them with every opportunity to describe and explain what is most salient to them (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007) (see Appendix C2). Furthermore, questionnaires helped me to gain insight into the problems that the HODs experience in supporting teachers instructionally, that is, the context in which those problems are situated. Apart from the structured qualitative questionnaire, I adopted photovoice for the study.

3.3.2.3. Photovoice (used during cycle 2)

The HODs generated data with other teachers and teaching assistants by means of photovoice. I advised HODs to engage teachers and volunteers in the photovoice exercise in order to share their views with about quality education. I thought that involving the stakeholders in this exercise will be beneficial for HODs to get rich data from the stakeholder because unlike a qualitative questionnaires, a photovoice exercise can encourage the participants to think more deeply about the context when deciding on the kind of quality they want (Baker & Wang, 2006). The prompt given was that stakeholders were asked to take photographs of things that depict quality

teaching and learning at their school. Apart from the photovoice exercise, the HODs were engaged in action learning sets.

3.3.2.4. *Recording of action learning sets (Used during cycle 1 and 2)*

An action learning sets is a small group of three or four members working together in a specified area of discussion facilitated by a researcher (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011; Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). The HODs were engaged in action learning sets that were underpinned by the action learning principles of lifelong learning, capacity building and continual improvement of professional practice, mutual respect, and commitment to establishing and pursuing goals and working together to achieve them (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). In this kind of arrangement, the HODs were assisted to improve their performance and achieve their goals (Buys, 2010). I, in my role as facilitator, acted as a coach to facilitate the improvement of their instructional leadership (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013). In this regard, coaching was focused on helping team members to improve their problems and to develop and support them in their overall development for their current positions and for future functioning (Buys, 2010). This was a non-directive form of coaching, which was focused on helping team members to close the gap between where they needed to be and where they were (Buys, 2010). The participants were required to discuss their current situation, set their own achievable goals that would effect change and improvement, explore new possibilities that would lead to their desired change, support one another in their plan of action, and assess their performance (Buys, 2010). The members of an action learning set help one another to improve their professional practice and leadership, and this thus constitutes an ongoing and sustainable professional development activity. Figure 3.3 below illustrates the process I undertook as a coach also the participants as learners in their action learning sets.

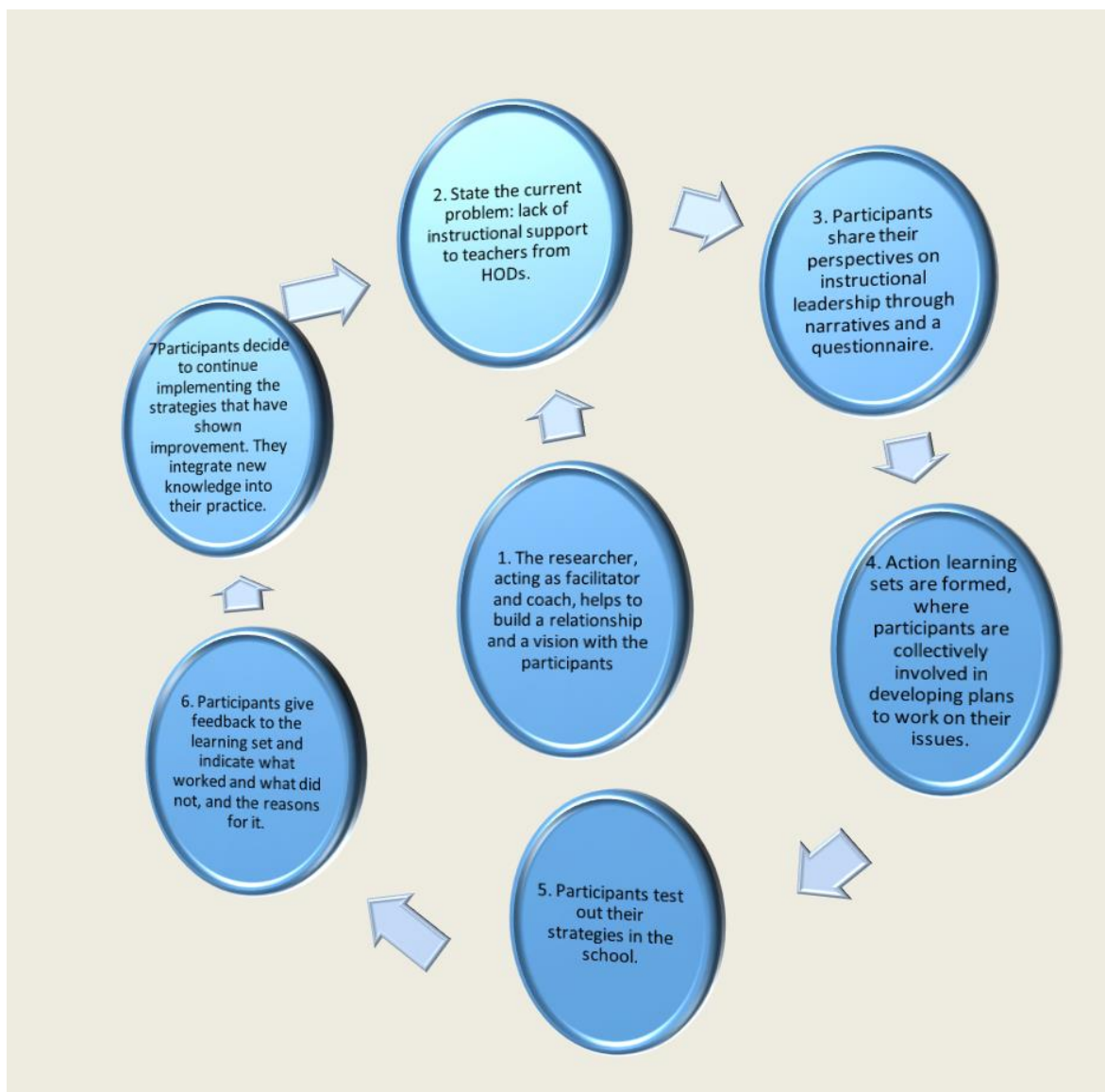


Figure 3.3: The action learning process within the action learning sets

To ensure continuous and long-lasting professional development in their practice and their leadership, the HODs met regularly as a group to critically reflect on the research process. Their meeting involved identifying and discussing issues that hinder their provision of instructional support to teachers, developing strategies to help improve such issues, discussing the implementation of such strategies, reflecting upon the effectiveness of the strategies and the significance of their learning and changed practice for informing their instructional support to teachers (Biech, 2008; Chevalier, 2007; Kearney, Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). In order for this to happen, I established a good relationship with the HODs and I ensure that the HODs, too, had a good relationship with one another. Establishing a good working

relationship required that the HODs openly stated what they expected from their participation in this study, how they visualised working together, when and how often we met, and what was expected of them (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013) (see Appendix A1). Furthermore, I ensured that our encounters were a safe and supportive milieu for learning. I helped the HODs to understand that being older and more experienced does not guarantee expertise in any particular area, that continuous learning and development is inevitable, and how working together in small learning sets to empower one another to be effective instructional leaders can help them to achieve lifelong learning (Zuber-Skerritt & Teare, 2013).

In their action learning groups, the HODs discussed issues together in a dialogical and productive relationship that created a sense of community through the sharing of perspectives, the negotiation of meaning, and the development of collaboratively produced instructional leadership strategies that they could use to better support teachers (Stringer, 2007). To ensure the effectiveness of the action learning sets, general principles of conducting a group discussion were followed. Participants were encouraged to respect one another, to respect other people's opinions, to take turns in speaking, to listen to one another, no one was allowed to dominate the discussion, and participants were treated as equals, to make their dialogue a success (Birks & Mills, 2011; Collins, 1999; Kindon et al., 2010). This is a way for accomplishing both a sense of community and a living democracy that PAR provides, via dialogical conversations (Stringer, 2004). The dialogue is considered a multi-voice powerful representation, where the voices and responses of others can occur in a non-threatening setting (McIntosh, 2010). This contributed to participants' professional development. I generated data by taping the entire conversation during the meeting, and I then transcribed and analysed the conversation. During the action learning sets meeting, the participants also drew pictures of the teachers that they would like to work with. Apart from taping participants' conversations, I also encouraged participants to reflect in writing throughout the research process.

3.3.2.4 Reflective journals (used during cycle 1 and 2)

The keeping of a journal served as a means of making the HODs aware of some deeper processes through which they could make meaning in their practice (Msila, 2013; Patton, 2002). Reflective journal writing helped the HODs to have an ongoing professional introspection, constant dialogue with themselves, critical awareness of their practice, and to continually search for the best instructional support practices (Msila, 2013; Patton, 2002). Reflective writing also served as a tool for the HODs to monitor their instructional support practices to teachers (Birks & Mills, 2011), by writing about and analysing the strategies that they were implementing. I also kept my own reflective journal and wrote accounts in it after each meeting with the HODs. Keeping a research journal is an essential part of any action research methodology, and it is believed that it provides evidence of research decisions and a record of one's thoughts, feelings, and impressions. A journal is regarded as a document reflecting the increased understanding that comes with the action research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Keeping a research journal also helped me to keep track of ethics-related decisions that I made throughout the research process, and at the end of the study this made me aware of choices that I had made and their consequences, for myself and the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2005). I also interviewed the HODs during the research process.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Terre Blanche et al. (2010) view data analysis as the transformation of data into an answer to the original research question. Data interpretation means to assign significance or coherent meaning (Neuman, 2011). For this study, data analysis and interpretation was done in accordance with the principles of the grounded theory approach. In grounded theory methods, there is no preconceived theory or coding scheme, but, instead, an attempt is made to let the data speak for itself, by using the strategies of reviewing, discussing, coding, and perhaps model/theory building (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Grounded theory methods provide a systematic procedure for shaping and handling rich qualitative material (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory methods were relevant for this study and

have been used because of the quality that they bring to the research. Grounded theory methods enabled me to simultaneously be involved in data generation and to analyse the phases of the research, and this is important in the cyclical approach of PAR (Mertler & Charles, 2011; Thomas, 2009). I continually interpreted the data and let it guide my actions, creating analytical codes and categories from the data (Charmaz, 2006). The suggestions that emerged for improving support to teachers were based on the HODs real experiences and thus were contextually relevant. Grounded theory methods were also helpful in developing middle-range theories to explain the behaviour and processes that are needed to improve HODs' instructional support to teachers, which will lead to the enhancement of instructional leadership theory. According to Charmaz (2006), sampling for theory construction involves analysing, checking, and refining the emerging conceptual categories, and this required me to continually interact with the HODs to generate specific data that expanded the categories and refined them.

Data analysis also involved data reading and organisation through the use of analytical memo writing, coding and categorising, and enhancing analysis by taking categorised themes (Stringer, 2004) to the HODs for validation and for further development of strategies that would solve problems that hinder their ability to provide instructional support to teachers. See Figure 3.4 below.

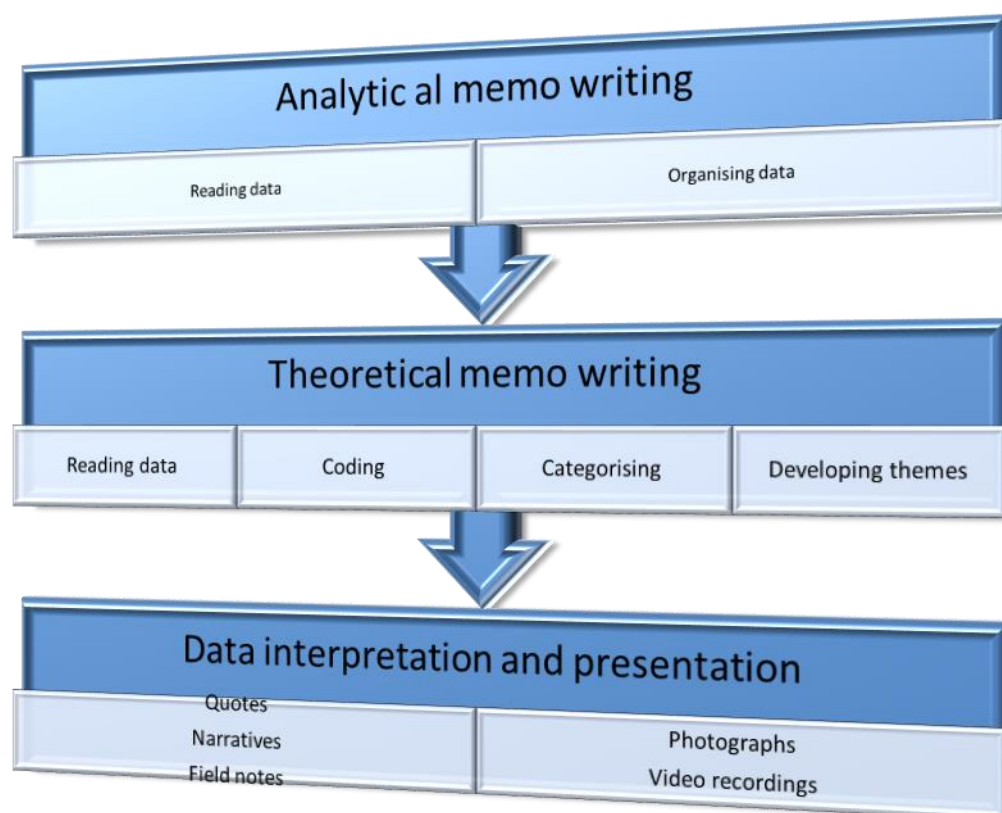


Figure 3.4: Data analysis, interpretation and presentation techniques

Regarding data analysis, I looked for key aspects that hinder the provision of instructional support by HODs to teachers (Creswell, 2012; Stringer, 2004). I gathered and analysed data on a continuous basis (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006). Simultaneous data generation and analysis means that my emerging analysis shaped my data-generation procedures (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). This meant that after every meeting with the HODs, I went through the information captured and analysed it. This involved categorising issues into themes and taking those themes to the HODs for validation and for further development of strategies that would solve problems that hinder their instructional support to teachers (Buys, 2010; Hanesburg, 2006; Oliver, 2010). Research tends to involve both the researcher and the participants in the research process (Oliver, 2010). Oliver (2010) views research as a collaborative effort, where everyone is involved in the resolution of a collective difficulty. During data analysis, too, it is necessary to relate any knowledge

that has been generated to the general social and historical situation, and to try to appreciate how the participants have affected and influenced change.

Before analysing the data, I first organised it. Organisation of data is important in qualitative research because of the large amount of information that is gathered during the study (Creswell, 2012). Organisation of data in qualitative research means keeping data in the chronological order of the events, having a detailed discussion of several themes with sub-themes, having specific illustrations, and having multiple perspectives from individuals, as well as quotations (Creswell, 2009; Neuman, 2011). Due to the large amount of information that was gathered during the study, I was obliged to use a computer to store the data. This meant storing the typed interview transcripts and the typed field notes and saving all the accumulated data in computer files and folders (as electronic copies for back-up) according to the source. Arranging data according to the source necessitated that data obtained from the interviews, the observations, the reflections, and the field notes or memos be stored in different folders, and this required the application of analytical memo writing. With analytical memo writing I was obliged to read data continuously to organise it. Memo writing is essential to grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008), and I chose to use it since I am using parts of grounded theory for this study.

A memo is a unique research tool which helps the researcher to explore what is going on in the research site (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008). Memo writing is useful for the researcher to analytically interpret data, that is, sort, analyse, and code raw data, and this leads to the development of themes (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008). Memos also conceptualise the data in narrative form. Remaining firmly in the data, researchers use memos to create social reality by discursively organising and interpreting the social worlds of the participants (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008). During my visits to the research site, I wrote memos about the state of discipline and order during instruction time, and I compared this information with the information I obtained from the participants' reflections. The information in my memos was helpful for me during data analysis. Continuous reading of all the data helps to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell, 2009). Reading all the data to obtain its general sense means reading the transcripts several times, with the

aim of immersing myself in the details, in order to get a sense of the data as a whole, before breaking it into parts (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2011). Breaking down the data into categories involved the application of theoretical memo writing, and it required the use of the qualitative data analysis.

As far as theoretical memo writing is concerned, I wrote little notes to myself as I coded the data, with the aim of dividing the data into categories. Coding refers to the process of dividing data into parts by means of a classification system (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997). All the data gathered, together with the photographs taken, were organised into categories. This involves segmenting data in the form of sentences and paragraphs into categories, and labelling these categories with a term based on the actual language that has been used by the participants. I manually coded data, to interpret, and compare segments of information. This program was also useful for me to understand data, and go through all data segments and notes relevant to an idea (Creswell, 2012). Coding and organising data into segments helped to build unique networks that connected visually selected passage memos and codes in a concept map. After segmenting the data, I started to compare and contrast each topic and category, to determine the distinctive characteristics of each (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997). This process of segmenting or categorising the data meant that I started with individual cases, incidents, or experiences and developed progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesise, explain, and understand the data, and also to identify patterned relationships within it (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, the use of coding data enabled me to organise text, graphics, and audio and visual files, along with coding memos and findings, into themes.

Data analysis involves keeping data in the chronological order of the events, and providing a detailed discussion of several themes with sub-themes, specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from individuals, and quotations (Creswell, 2009). To analyse the data in accordance with the above stipulations required that I use a computer (Creswell, 2009). The use of a computer was helpful for storing data in an organised way, and it also enabled me to work easily with categorised data. I also observed the school environment, and I wrote field notes. This helped me to obtain a

sense of the conditions and climate in which the HODs work, and it also helped me to interpret the data to make meaning from the HODs' interpretations.

I presented an analysis of the data generated in the form of lengthy narratives in chapters 4 and 5. This was done in sufficient detail to allow the reader to judge the accuracy of the analysis (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997). I used raw data to illustrate and substantiate my interpretations. I illustrated and substantiated my interpretations by quoting participants and providing photographs and video clips (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997; Stringer, 2004). According to Creswell (2009), interpretation of knowledge in qualitative research is understood through making links, interpreting contexts, and perceiving meanings attached to the data. Understanding of knowledge is determined from the findings produced by the research, which could be interpreted differently at different times and in different places by different people (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). This calls for the use of a number of strategies to ensure the validity of the research design, because the validity of a qualitative research design involves issues of ethics (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Macmillan & Schumacher, 1997; Patton, 2002).

3.5 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Rigour in action research is based on strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of actions that occurred, to ensure that the results of the research are reliable (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Stringer, 2004). In an interpretive paradigm, the concept of trustworthiness is an overarching evaluative standard for field research (Bailey, 2007). However, trustworthiness does not mean that the reader has to agree with the researcher; rather, it means that the reader is able to see how the researcher arrived at the conclusion that he or she has made (Bailey, 2007). Trustworthiness of this study is ensured through procedures that assess attributes such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and rhetorical, catalytic and process validity (Bailey, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Patton, 2002; Stringer, 2007; Wellington & Szczerbinki, 2007).

3.5.1 Credibility and process validity

Credibility means the plausibility and integrity of a research study (Stringer, 2007). Regarding the credibility of this research, I made it possible for the participants to consciously observe and record events, activities, and contexts over a long period of time. According to Bailey (2007) and Terre Blanche et al. (2010), conscious observation of events and activities means that one has to take notes about what is actually happening at the time, rather than describing what has happened from memory or from an interpretation of what one thinks happened. The notes that I took are written in chronological order, with the date, the time, and the place where the action occurred (Neuman, 2011; Patton, 2002).

To enhance the credibility of this study, I used member checking. Participants were given the opportunity to view raw data, analyses, and research reports. This enabled the participants to verify that the research adequately represents their perspectives and experiences (Stringer, 2007). According to Stringer (2007), exposing participants to raw data and research reports provides the participants with an opportunity to clarify and add information related to their experience. This helps to prove the authenticity of the research process.

Process validity is a measure which examines the extent to which problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning of the people involved in the research (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Outcome validity is dependent on process validity in the sense that if the process is superficial or flawed, the outcomes will reflect this fact. Process validity must also deal with the much debated problem of what counts as evidence to sustain assertions, as well as the quality of the relationship that the researcher develops with the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2005). This process involves triangulation. Triangulation, or the inclusion of multiple perspectives, guards against viewing events in a simplistic or self-serving way (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Triangulation can also refer to a variety of methods, for example observation and interviews, so that one is not limited to only one kind of data source (Herr & Anderson, 2005). As linked to process validation, triangulation guards against deception. It is important to note that one cannot only

fake data and write fiction, but one can also use the data to tell a deception, as easily as a truth (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2010; Herr & Anderson, 2005). To ensure process validity in this study, the participants were engaged in dialectical discussions in several meetings. This required of them to apply the strategies that they had agreed upon and to reflect on the situation, and this enabled ongoing learning on the part of the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Neuman, 2011; May & Perry, 2011).

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the possibility of applying the outcomes of a study to other contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Stringer, 2007). Lodico et al. (2010) regard transferability as the degree of similarity between the research site and other sites, as judged by the reader. These authors further indicate that transferability is assessed by looking at the richness of the descriptions included in the study, as well as the amount of detail provided about the context in which the study occurred. With regard to transferability, the research results from this study will only be applicable to the people and places that were part of the study. This therefore means that the outcomes of this research will be applicable only to the HODs, the teachers, and the principal who were involved in the study. In addition, the research results will also be relevant only to the school where the research was conducted. In this study, transferability was enhanced through a rich description of the process, so that other researchers can replicate the research. This helps to explain that transferability is not whether the study includes a representative sample, but it is how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will work in their own communities, by understanding in depth how the processes occur in the research site (Lodico et al., 2010), which involves dependability.

3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which people can trust that all the measures of the research process have been followed (Stringer, 2007). However, in qualitative research, dependability involves accommodating changes in the environment studied

and the research design itself (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). This clarifies the fact that a qualitative researcher purposively does not control the conditions of the research in order to advance the replicability of the research (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). Instead, as the understanding of the researcher becomes more refined over the course of data generation and analysis, the researcher concentrates on recording the complexity of the situational contexts and interrelations as they occur naturally (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). Discovering this complexity by altering research strategies within a flexible research design cannot be replicated by future researchers (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). Thus, for qualitative researchers there is not an unchanging universe where pure replication is possible and desirable (Conrad & Serlin, 2011).

Nonetheless, the research procedures should be clearly defined and open to scrutiny, which means that the researcher must report results, preferably doing so with reference to possible changes over time (Bailey, 2007; Conrad & Serlin, 2011). Furthermore, the findings must go beyond a snapshot, because if the study is to be conducted again with the same participants in the same context, there should be similar results (Bailey, 2007; Conrad & Serlin, 2011). This demands a researcher to do a careful recording of what was changed in research design and why that was changed (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). That will not only allow future researchers to inspect the procedures, protocols and decisions, but it also enables the qualitative researchers to reanalyse data (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). In brief, this explains dependability as whether the process of the study is consistent and reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods, so that others will be able to track the procedures and processes that was used to generate and interpret the data (Lodico et al., 2010).

There are several elements that contribute to dependability in research, such as whether the study design is congruent with the research questions, whether there is an explicit explanation of the status and the role of the researcher, and whether the findings show meaningful parallelism across the data sources (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). The researcher is also required to demonstrate basic theoretical constructs and analytical frameworks and to ensure peer or colleague review (Conrad & Serlin, 2011; Lodico et al., 2010). For this study, I provided a detailed description of the

procedures that I followed in providing a basis for judging the extent to which the outcomes of the research are dependable (Stringer, 2007). I ensured this by providing a rich description of the research process, indicating how the data was generated and analysed (Stringer, 2007; Lodico et al., 2010). Recording devices such as audiotapes were used extensively in this research to support dependability and confirmability (Lodico et al., 2010).

3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to evidence that all the procedures described in the study actually took place (Stringer, 2007). The generated data, instruments such as field notes, tapes, software, and all materials used for data collection and analysis are kept safe for some time after the study as evidence. Such materials can be used for auditing the research results of this study, and this will count as rhetorical validity for this research. It is actually difficult to deal with the issues of confirmability and dependability separately. For this reason, it is important to note that the principle means of establishing confirmability in a study, as with dependability, is through providing an audit trail. To ensure confirmability and dependability, Conrad and Serlin (2011) recommend providing an audit trail, one that allows an external auditor to examine both the processes and the products of the study. I provided full and explicit audit trails of the processes of data generation, analysis and interpretation (Arthur, Waring, Coe & Hedges, 2012). In this study, an audit trail includes raw data, including tapes of action learning set conversations, interview notes, qualitative questionnaires, narratives, field notes/memos, reflections, and the products of data reduction and analysis (Conrad & Serlin, 2011). These materials can be used not only for auditing the research results of this study, but will count as rhetorical validity for this research. Rhetorical validity refers to how genuine and believable the research report is.

3.5.5 Catalytic validity

Catalytic validity is the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energises participants towards knowing reality in order to change it (Herr &

Anderson, 2005; Lodico et al., 2010). It is important to note that in action research, it is not only the participants who undergo epistemological and ontological transformation; the researchers, too, should be open to reorienting their view of reality, as well as their view of their role (Bailey, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005). This contributes to a deeper understanding of social reality in both the researcher and the participants. The most powerful action research studies are those in which the researcher recounts a spiralling change in their own and their participants' understanding, and this reinforces the importance of keeping a reflective journal during the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). Keeping a reflective journal helped the participants and me to monitor our own change process, and it provided evidence of changed perceptions, attitudes, practices, and reactions (Birks & Mills, 2011; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Msila, 2013). I used reflections not only for analysing the results of the research, but also to show evidence of what participants and I had said, how we affected the research process itself, and sometimes how the research process affected us (Bailey, 2007). This involved a description of how the participants collaborated with me in determining what changes needed to occur and the planning of actions, which contributed to increased self-understanding in the participants (Lodico et al., 2010). During the entire process, I adhered to ethical measures.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics define what is or what is not legitimate to do, and they also outline moral research procedures (Neuman, 2006; Thomas, 2009). Ethical considerations are particularly important if the research involves people, because the researcher needs to gain the voluntary informed consent of all participants involved in the research (Arthur et al., 2012). This requires that the researcher provide the participants with adequate information about the nature of the research, how it will be used and reported, potential benefits, and any potential harm that could arise, to enable participants to decide whether to agree to take part in the study or not (Arthur et al., 2012). The higher learning institutions strongly emphasise the significance of building ethical considerations into the early stages of planning by completing a formal ethical review process before commencing research (Arthur et al., 2012). However, in many

instances, particularly in action research, ethical principles may cause conflict in practice, because the researcher is not allowed to contact the participants before the research process begins, yet she is expected to build ethical considerations into the early stages of her planning (Arthur et al., 2012; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Neuman, 2011).

Another problem related to ethics is that many ethical issues involve a balance between the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the rights of participants (Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Professional social research requires both knowledge of proper research techniques and sensitivity to ethical concerns, and this is not easy for the researcher (Bailey, 2007; Neuman, 2006). This requires a balance between potential benefits and potential costs. Potential benefits, such as advancing the understanding of social life, improving decision making, or helping research participants, must be weighed against potential costs, such as a loss of dignity, self-esteem, privacy, or democratic freedom for participants (Neuman, 2006). It is difficult to appreciate the ethical dilemmas that researchers face until one is doing research oneself (Neuman, 2006). The researcher has a moral obligation to be ethical, even when the participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Neuman, 2006). This results in ethical issues, concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts arising over the proper way to conduct research (Neuman, 2006). To deal with ethical issues, researchers need to prepare themselves and consider ethical concerns as they design a study, so that sound ethical practice is built into the study design (Bailey, 2007; Neuman, 2006). However, as indicated earlier, our organisational ethical principles do not allow a researcher to have any contact with participants before the approval of the proposal, thus it becomes difficult to ensure that sound ethical practice is built into the study design. With regard to ethical considerations, participants signed the voluntary informed consent forms.

Informed consent is a standard requirement by universities and other regulatory bodies when human subjects are involved in research, whether by their direct participation or through demands being made of them (Bailey, 2007; Gillham, 2008). For this study, participants were given voluntary consent forms, which solicited their participation in the study (see Appendix A2). The form clearly indicated that their

participation would be voluntary, that the information they shared would be kept confidential, and that use of the information would be subject to their permission. To obtain informed consent from potential participants in this study, I made them aware of the purpose of the research, the procedures that would be followed during the research (see Appendix A1), the potential benefits of the research, the right of participants to withdraw from the research at any time, what was required of them if they consented to participate, and the fact that their refusal to participate or their decision to withdraw from the study at any time would not have any negative consequences (Bailey, 2007). I also explained the steps that I had taken to uphold the rights and the privacy of research participants. This included a course of actions that guard against uncalled-for intrusion into participants' lives, maintaining privacy, and establishing appropriate ownership and use of the products of the investigation (Patton, 2002; Stringer, 2007). In addition to this, I ensured that there was evidence that the research had been carried out rigorously.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter explained the research methodology that I adopted for this study. It explained the participatory techniques in which the HODs were engaged to provide their own perspectives about their instructional support to teachers. The following chapter will provide a detailed explanation of my interaction with school 1, as well as a critical reflection on the knowledge that I obtained, which then guided my interaction with school 2.

CHAPTER 4:

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS OF CYCLE 1

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I described and explained the research methodology and strategies employed in this study. I also theoretically justified my choice of critical theory as epistemological paradigm, participatory action research (PAR) as methodological paradigm, and the methods of data generation and analysis used.

The purpose of this chapter is to report on the first cycle of investigation into my research question, namely “How can heads of department (HODs) in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practices?” In this chapter I discuss the findings that emerged from the data generated by the HODs, to answer the following secondary questions:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?

Table 4.1 below illustrates the ways in which the data was generated by the HODs.

Table 4.1: Ways in which the data were generated for cycle 1

Ways in which the analysed data were generated for cycle 1		
Data generation technique	Purpose	Documentation
Written narratives	To allow HODs to individually voice the problems they experienced in their practice.	Bonded Booklets
Drawings with narratives	I wanted HODs to visualise the qualities they want teachers to model	Drawings and narratives
Action learning set meetings	To create a platform for participants to discuss their issues and find ways of improvement	Discussion recorded and transcribed verbatim
Critical reflections by the researcher	To keep track of the research process, progress and, my learning	My reflective journal and field notes

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

To analyse these data for this study, I followed an inductive qualitative analysis process (Arthur et al., 2012). During the process of analysis I viewed HODs' instructional leadership support to teachers from a holistic perspective, factoring in not only the data, but also the setting, the participants, and anything that contributed to the uniqueness of the specific context under investigation (Mertler & Charles, 2011). The analysis process evoked insights, ideas, 'aha' experiences, and questions, which not only made me change or add new data-generation methods (Arthur et al., 2012), but ultimately led me to take the decision to change the research site.

As mentioned in section 3.4, I used aspects of grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2014) to analyse the data in this study. This required me to read,

read, and reread data (Mertler & Charles, 2011). I began coding the first data that were generated, in accordance with the process of generating grounded theory (Arthur et al., 2012). As Arthur et al. (2012) point out, coding is all about creating codes and categories grounded in the data, which requires the researcher to scrutinise and interact with the data and ask analytical questions, which ultimately leads to themes emerging from the data.

4.3 THEMES DERIVED FROM THE DATA

The following themes emerged from the data (see figure 4.1 below).

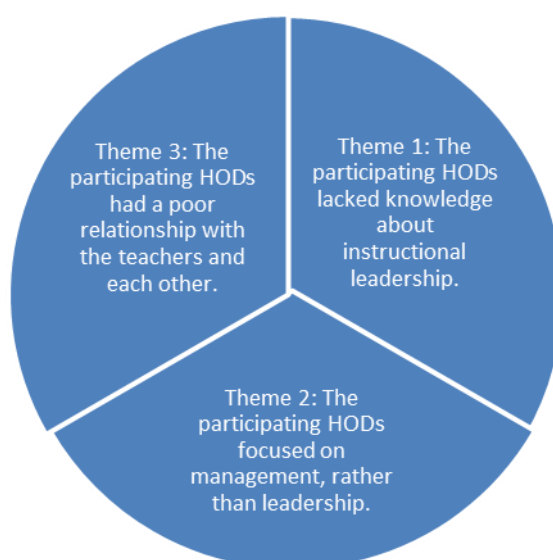


Figure 4.1: Themes derived from the data

The themes depicted in figure 4.1 emerged from an analysis of the raw data. I discuss the above themes one by one, starting with theme 1. The discussion and the interpretation of the themes are supported with *verbatim* extracts from participants' written and oral responses and participants' drawings. I also compare the findings to relevant literature, to explore answers to the following secondary research questions:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?

The final step that I took was to interpret the simplified and organised data. During this step, I examined the events, behaviours, or other observations, as represented in the coded categories, for relationships, similarities, and contradictions (Mertler & Charles, 2011). The themes discussed below are discussed separately for ease of understanding, but, in fact, they overlap and influence each other.

4.3.1 Theme 1: The participating HODs lacked knowledge about instructional leadership

My first aim was to find out what participants understood about their roles as HODs and to give them a basis of what to begin to think about their leadership. I therefore requested them to write what they understood by the concept of instructional leadership. The data revealed that participants did not have a good understanding of the concept of instructional leadership, as is shown by their narratives. For instance, in school 1, where I did cycle 1 of this study, participant 1 wrote that it is “[s]olving teacher’s [sic] problems”. Solving teachers’ problems is part of instructional leadership; participant 1 is on the right track, but the participant misses the point that HODs must work together with teachers. Participant 2 stated that instructional leadership is to “perform a set of instructions in order to make an institution to work normal [sic] to create a conducive working relationship”; participant 5 said that it is to be able to “reprimand tactfully”. These interpretations, as shown in their written narratives (Appendix C1A) suggest that the participants had narrow and superficial understandings of the concept, with a focus on controlling and directing, rather than on collaboration and working as a team with the teachers for whom they were responsible. This is emphasised by participant 4: “Goals must be created and we [the HODs] must ensure order.” They saw themselves as being responsible for setting goals, rather than doing this in collaboration with teachers. Participants thus practised a transactional style of management (Brundrett et al., 2002). Transactional

leaders typically clarify tasks for followers, and explain what is required of them (Jameson, 2006). This is more akin to management than leadership, and it provides little space for learning and development, or for taking leadership beyond the leaders' own limited conceptions of what is needed (Jameson, 2006). In contrast to the transactional style, transformational leadership is beneficial to both the leader and the followers, creating a strongly productive organisational culture (Jameson, 2006), where people work together in pursuit of a common organisational vision. However, this was not a style of leadership that the participants were practising, and thus their understanding of the concept of instructional leadership was not in line with the paradigm of transformational leadership.

Since participants did not seem to have a transformational understanding of the concept of instructional leadership, I decided at the following session to provide an explanation of instructional leadership from the literature, as a way of scaffolding their learning (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev & Miller, 2003). I used scaffolding to help the participants to understand the concept of instructional leadership beyond their level of understanding, through interactional talk among themselves, while I assumed the role of a knowledgeable advisor (Burns & De Silva, 2005). I used the explanation of the concept of instructional leadership as a learning activity or a prompt to promote high-level thinking processes, requiring the participants to scrutinise or synthesise the concept from multiple perspectives (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995). My purpose for doing this was to help the participants to integrate new knowledge with their old knowledge, in order to create rich and complex knowledge about the concept of instructional leadership (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1995; Merrill, 2002). I encouraged participants to interact, based on a belief in Vygotsky's idea that development and learning are influenced by a relaxed positive social environment, where people learn from their interactions with peers or colleagues, and those who have more knowledge than themselves (Merrill, 2002). I therefore gave the participants the following explanation, as a way of pushing their understanding of instructional leadership beyond their boundaries:

Instructional leadership is the effort to improve teaching and learning by leading instruction effectively, addressing the challenges that hinder teaching and

learning, guiding teacher learning, and fostering organizational learning. (Brazer & Bauer, 2013)

During the action learning set meeting, which was held on 11 April 2013, I requested the participating HODs to communicate their own understanding of the given explanation of the concept of instructional leadership. Only one HOD offered any form of response: “[I]t is to equip the HODs with tactics to help their subordinates” (participant 2). The discourse suggests a hierarchical form of relationship between teacher and HOD, with suggestions of autocracy. The other participants were silent, which led me to try another approach. I deliberately scaffolded the learning to assist the participants to push the boundaries of their understanding (Burns & De Silva, 2005). Consequently, I broke down the concept of instructional leadership into two separate concepts, namely instruction and leadership. I then posed this question to the participants: “What is your understanding of the concept of instruction?” Their responses were as follows: “to give orders” (participant 5), “task to be carried out” (participant 3).

Their understanding of the concept of instruction did not include any references to teaching or learning (Midlock, 2011). Instructional leadership is regarded as an important responsibility of educational leadership (Midlock, 2011), but the participants seemed to focus on the idea of them giving instructions to the teachers. I then introduced the idea of 'instruction' being another word for 'teaching'. I then asked the participants what they thought the word “leadership” meant. A brainstorming exercise conducted with the participants yielded the following ideas: “giving direction, to support” (participant 3), “motivate, encourage” (participant 4), “to lead or to govern” (participant 1). This demonstrated that the participants understood what the concept entails. I then led a discussion to try to help the participating HODs to understand the concept of instructional leadership from a transformational perspective. My aim was to help the participants understand that both the HODs and the teachers should be involved and should play their roles in instructional leadership. I explained to the participants that instructional leadership involves teaching, teaching components, leadership, or leadership duties; for this reason, it cannot be done by only one person. I also requested the participants to describe the role of teachers, as this is

important, since teachers are the ones who are responsible for the implementation of the components of teaching and learning (Department of Education, 2009). However, when I requested the participants to explain the components of teaching, they struggled to mention them. I ended up outlining the following components for the participants, as stipulated by the Department of Education (2009):

- Creation of a conducive teaching and learning environment;
- Knowledge of curriculum content and pedagogical strategies;
- Assessment; and
- Planning.

Having done this, I made it clear to the participants that, since instructional leadership involves more than one person, and various tasks, it operates well when all people involved are performing their roles. Leadership involves leading, guiding, giving direction, and supporting. An HOD is an educational leader who promotes the success of all learners by advocating, nurturing, and supporting a school culture of teaching and learning that is conducive to pupils' learning and teachers' improvement of their everyday practice (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). Instruction is teaching, and it is done by teachers; for this reason, teachers need to ensure the implementation of the above four components of teaching and learning, as stipulated by the Department of Education (2009). This clarifies that even though HODs may lead the instruction, in the end teachers are the ones who determine the success of instruction, through the implementation of the components of teaching (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). This led me to recombine the two concepts, namely instruction and leadership, and I suggested to the participants the following definition of the concept of instructional leadership:

Instructional leadership involves managing, governing, influencing, guiding, and giving direction on how teaching could be done, with consideration to the learning environments, teaching and learning strategies, and the selection and use of teaching and learning materials, lesson planning, and assessment.

With this definition, I made it clear that instructional leadership cannot be a success when it involves only one person (the HOD, or the teacher) or one component of teaching. Instructional leadership includes leadership roles that should be performed by HODs, the teaching duties of teachers, and the components of teaching that should be implemented by the teachers, with support from the HODs (Department of Education, 2009; Ghamrawi, 2013; Hoy & Hoy, 2009). I informed the participants that in order for them as instructional leaders to be successful in their jobs, they need to collaborate with teachers. In the light of this, HODs are required to spend time in classrooms as colleagues, and engage teachers in conversations about teaching and learning (Hoy & Hoy, 2009). I further told the participants that teachers, too, need to ensure that teaching is done properly, and this can only be achieved if teachers have autonomy and power to make their own professional decisions (Fullan, 2000; Jansen, 2004). This requires that both HODs and teachers be reflective practitioners, where both collaborate in reflecting on and making decisions about how to improve teaching and learning. However, because they were not clear about the concept of instructional leadership, and did not really understand that this was part of their job, the participants tended to focus more on their administrative roles.

4.3.2 Theme 2: The participating HODs focused on management, rather than leadership

Narrative data from the participants illustrated that they were not clear about their instructional leadership roles. Some of the duties that they thought fell under this category included “keeping contact with SGB, keeping quarterly reports”, and “withdrawing a learner from school” (participant 1). These duties are not related to instructional roles; on the contrary, they are school administrative and clerical tasks. Administrative work that participants mentioned involved daily office routine, bookkeeping, and clerical work, all of which are administrative tasks (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993; Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Managers are principally administrators – they focus on planning, budgeting, and evaluating (Maccoby, 2000). Transformational leaders, on the other hand, continually try to get organisations and people to change and improve (Maccoby, 2000). Managers focus on managing the organisation, while transformational leaders emphasise intrinsic motivation and

positive development of followers, through building relationships, motivating, coaching, and building trust between themselves and their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2008; Maccoby, 2000). The HODs in this study seemed to see their role as managerial, more than as leaders of learning. Learning-centred schools are schools where HODs enhance the professional development of teachers through promoting collaboration among teachers, and between teachers and HODs (Erickson, Brandes, Mitchell & Mitchell, 2005). Such HODs use collaborative models, which emphasise the importance of nurturing learning communities, within which teachers try new ideas, reflect on outcomes, and collaboratively construct knowledge about teaching and learning in the context of genuine activity (Butler, Lauscher, Jarvis-Selinger & Beckingham, 2004). In these partnerships, teachers and HODs focus on teaching and learning practices in the classroom (see figure 4.2 below), and this gives HODs the opportunity to perform the instructional leadership roles of supporting teaching and learning. Leadership of the learning-centred school emphasises a strategic capacity based on a holistic conceptualisation of organisational change and innovation towards a vision of the learning-centred school, it stresses goal orientation with regard to student learning outcomes, it focuses on teaching and learning, and it ensures a supportive organisational structure that promotes effective teaching and learning and decision making (Brundrett et al., 2002). In the light of this, HODs can be seen as instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, and mentors, as mandated by the Department of Education (Department of Basic Education, 2009; Ghamrawi, 2013; Hoy & Hoy, 2003). However, the participants in this study focused more on managerial tasks than on leadership duties.

Management discourse includes traditional bureaucratic customs (Maccoby, 2000), and it is defined as the process of planning, organising, actuating, and controlling an organisation's operations, in order to achieve coordination of human and material resources, which is essential for the effective and efficient attainment of the objectives of the organisation (Van der Westhuizen, 2009). HODs who act like managers are narrowly engaged in maintaining their superiority, rather than acting like leaders who have self-confidence, which has grown out of an awareness of who they are, what their roles are, and what vision is driving them to achieve the goals of

the organisation (Fink, 2005; Kowalski & Reitug, 1993). As participant 2 noted, “If the HOD is not there, management is dead, nothing will take place”.

The response above also implies that the participating HODs had no faith in the teachers; they felt that they needed to drive them. The tendency to control the processes of success is the most common element that leads to a failure in management and the academic improvement of learners, because when teachers are controlled, they are unable to reflect on the process of teaching and learn for their own improvement, as well as to align their teaching with the vision of the school (Haneberg, 2010; Johnson, 2005).

With reference to Van der Westhuizen’s (2009:58) levels of education hierarchy, as depicted in figure 4.2 below, it is important to note that critical self-reflection on practice should begin at classroom level and proceed to school level (Johnson, 2005). This implies that what teachers and HODs do in the classroom should be aligned with the goals of the school, which, in turn, should be linked to the goals of the education system, as outlined in policy. Instructional leadership is most successful if it involves both HODs and teachers, and is owned by all and measured by all; in this way there will be no domination or control by HODs (Haneberg, 2010). HODs should draw on notions of distributed leadership, underpinned by the rationale that high performance in an organisation can only be achieved if all of the personnel are committed and work together to eradicate underperformance (Brundrett, Burton & Smith, 2002). It has been contended that leadership as a distributed rather than a monopolistic concept is more likely to achieve this (Brundrett et al., 2002). As a coach, the work of an HOD is that of a puzzle master, where his job is to make observations and ask questions that help performers to piece together their visions, goals, and ways forward (Haneberg, 2010), rather than telling them what to do. However, the participating HODs in this study did not realise that focusing only on school management issues and system issues impacts badly on their instructional leadership.

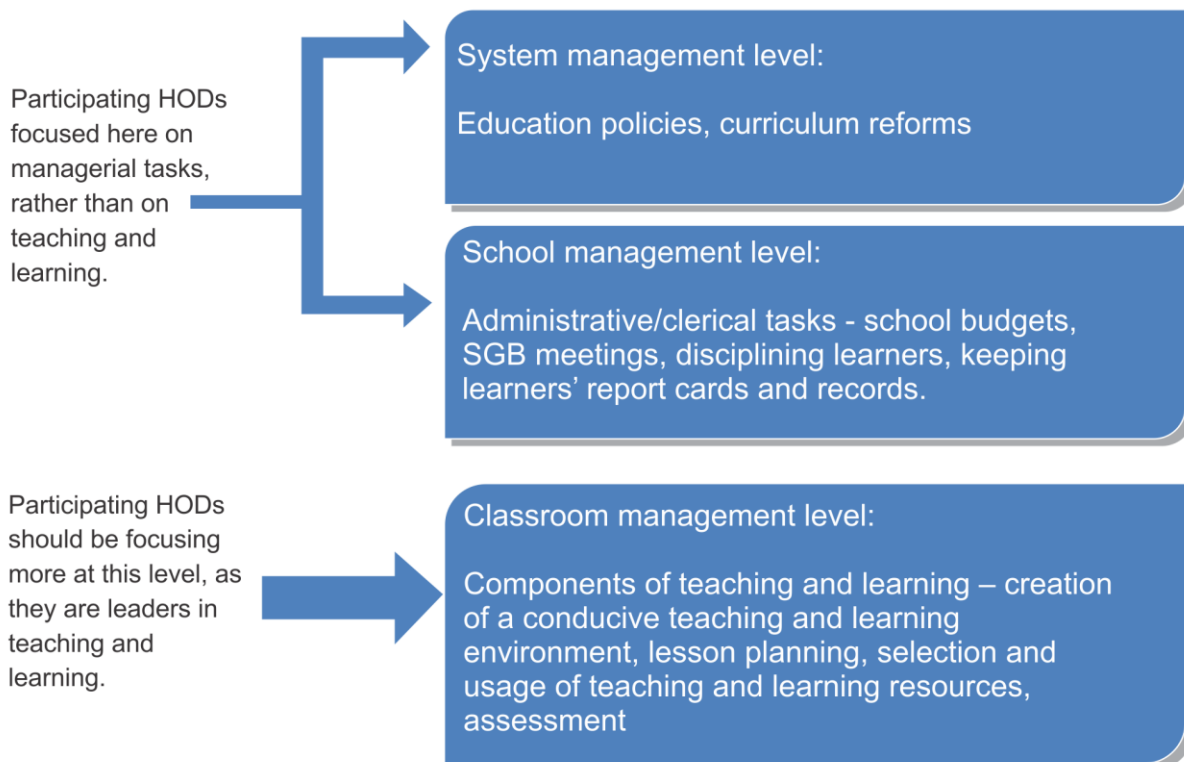


Figure 4.2: Levels of education hierarchy (Van der Westhuizen, 2009:58)

During the action learning set meeting of 7 March 2013, I requested participants to sit in two groups, and state their expectations with regard to their participation in the project. This was one way of ensuring that participants are involved in making their own decisions about how their participation will benefit them in their everyday work. Again, the bulk of the common expectations that they articulated in their narratives consisted of school management tasks, rather than instructional matters relating to teaching and learning in the classroom. Common expectations centred around issues such as those expressed by group 1, namely “improvement in the management of the school with new skills and approaches”, and “gain new approaches for learner discipline and learning methods, to settle disputes in our workplace”, and those expressed by group 2, namely “gain experience and managerial skills”, and “Teamwork – respect for one another”.

Only group 1 mentioned any expectation with regard to learning in the classroom, and that was to “gain new approaches for learning methods”. As they are instructional leaders, I had expected that the participants would be concerned about the four components of teaching and learning, mentioned above in theme 1. This led me to believe that the participants did not have a deep understanding of what instructional leadership entails. Even though they form part of the school management team, HODs are instructional leaders, and they should perform their instructional roles of supporting teachers (Department of Education, 2009). HODs should focus on both management and instructional leadership in a balanced way (Fink, 2005; Johnson, 2005; Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993). (See figure 4.3.) In this study, I would place the participating HODs on the second rung of the continuum (see figure 4.3).

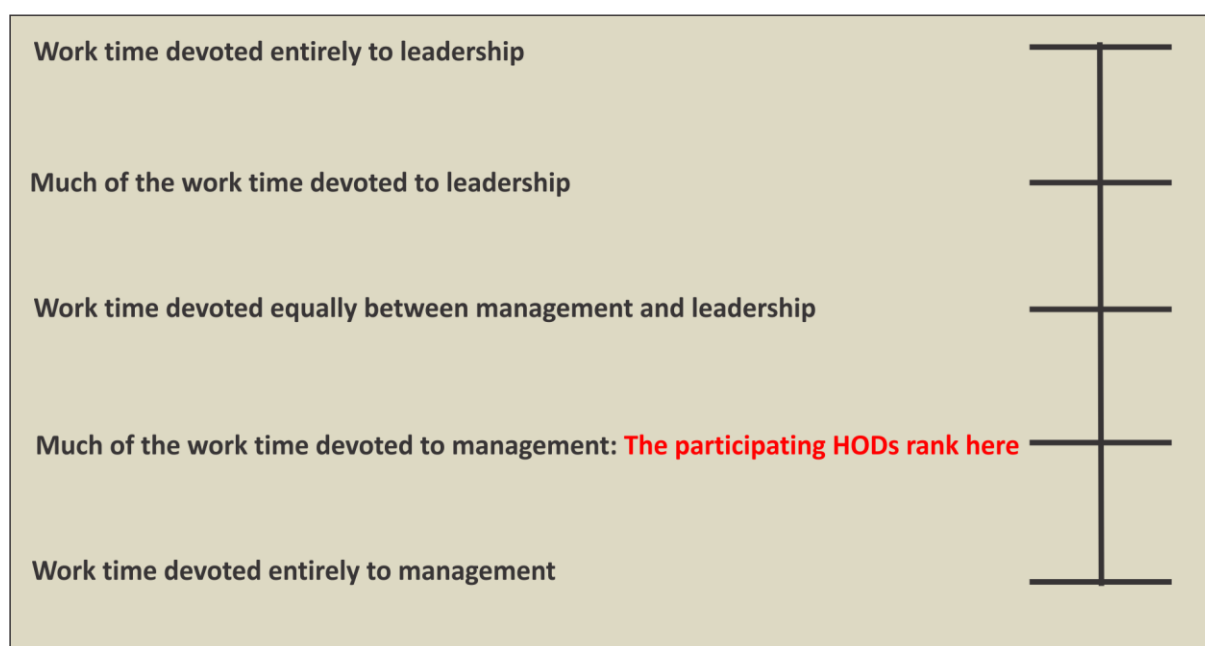


Figure 4.3: Leaders and managers: A continuum of administrative behaviour (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993:29)

The participating HODs focused more on managerial tasks, rather than combining them with instructional leadership roles, and this created an imbalance (Harber & Davies, 2002; Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993), in the sense that participants failed to conceptualise and practise management as an interwoven entity. Management as an

interwoven activity embraces all the functioning of the school (Brundrett et al., 2002; Johnson, 2005; Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Quality in public schools runs deeper than management and administration of the school; it should extend to leadership discourse, which involves thinking about what students need to know and be able to do as a result of their school experience (Johnson, 2005). However, the dominating discourses emerging from the data indicate that the participants' leadership style was autocratic. When acting as managers, participants limit their capacity to be aware of teachers' needs, and to support teachers to improve the larger social situation for which they have the responsibility, and over which they have the power (Fullan, 2000). If they act like this, the participants are instructional dictators, rather than instructional leaders (Fullan, 2000).

Apart from being too autocratic, the data also indicated that the participants showed more concern for education system management matters than classroom and curriculum matters. The education system management matters that participants were concerned about included "failure by government to provide the school with resources" (participant 1) and "many changes in the education system, e.g. OBE, NCS, CAPS" (participant 4). The participants did not mention anything that indicated that they offered support to teachers in relation to the provision of guidance with syllabi, schemes of work, homework, practical work, and mentoring inexperienced staff members, as required by policy (Department of Education, 2000). The participants failed to understand that in the context of school improvement and student learning, it is important to understand the links between all elements that comprise the school and schooling, including leadership, and to do so in a backward-mapping way (Brundrett, Burton & Smith, 2002). Backward mapping requires that people make many shared decisions, from classroom level to school level (Johnson, 2005). According to Johnson (2005), this entails identifying, and relating student learning outcomes derived from the curriculum, learning processes, teaching methods, use of computer technology leadership and management, and culture building. In Johnson's (2005) terms, if instructional leaders are to close the gap between where they are, where they want to be, what they want to achieve, what they can do (practice), and how can they do it to attain their purpose, they should work within backward-mapping parameters. This frame of thinking links with both the

classroom and school-related factors that the participating HODs could show concern for. However, the participating HODs were overwhelmed as much as the teachers by the systemic issues mentioned by participant 1 at the beginning of this paragraph, and they therefore could not provide adequate instructional leadership, particularly at classroom level.

I engaged participants in an activity which required them to draw a picture of the ideal teacher that they would like to work with, and to label him or her with all the characteristics that they deem to be desirable in a teacher. I engaged participants in this task because I wanted them to realise that they needed to model these qualities to teachers and collaborate with teachers in developing these qualities, rather than instructing or giving teachers orders, as was suggested by their narratives. I encouraged the participants to include the thinking, feelings, and actions (what he or she would do) of their ideal teacher, and what he or she would likely say. I chose to engage the participants in this activity because it links with the methodological paradigm of this study, PAR. Through this activity, I wanted HODs to take action of thinking, planning and drawing of their ideal teacher who can bring change. Through this activity I wanted to engage them in discussion and drawing which was meant to commit them to the development of change in their context. This viewpoint links with PAR requirements that endorse people to plan, and to take action to improve their circumstances through a systematic process of critical reflection on the current situation, what it might be like if changes are made and how they can effect the changes to bring about improvement (Billet, 2010).

The photographs in figure 4.4 show the HODs working together in two groups drawing their ideal teacher.



Figure 4.4: (Left) Group 1 drawing their ideal teacher; (Right) Group 2 drawing their ideal teacher

Figure 4.5 depicts a representation of the ideal teacher, drawn by the HODs in group 1.

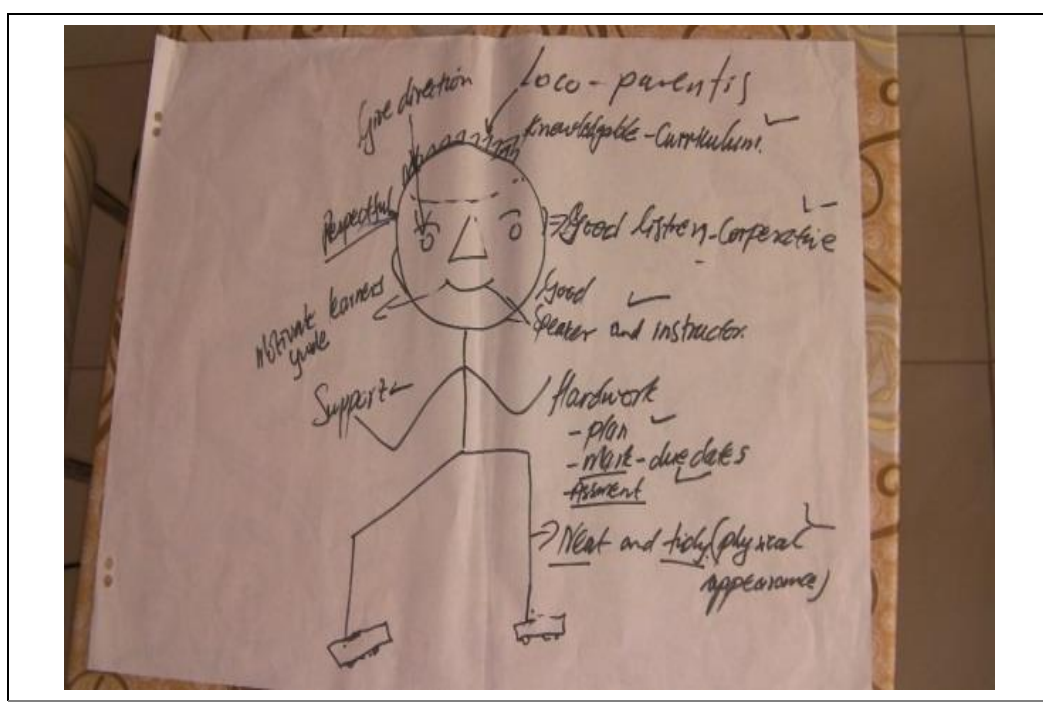


Figure 4.5: A representation of the ideal teacher, drawn by group 1

Figure 4.6 depicts a representation of the ideal teacher, drawn by the HODs in group 2.

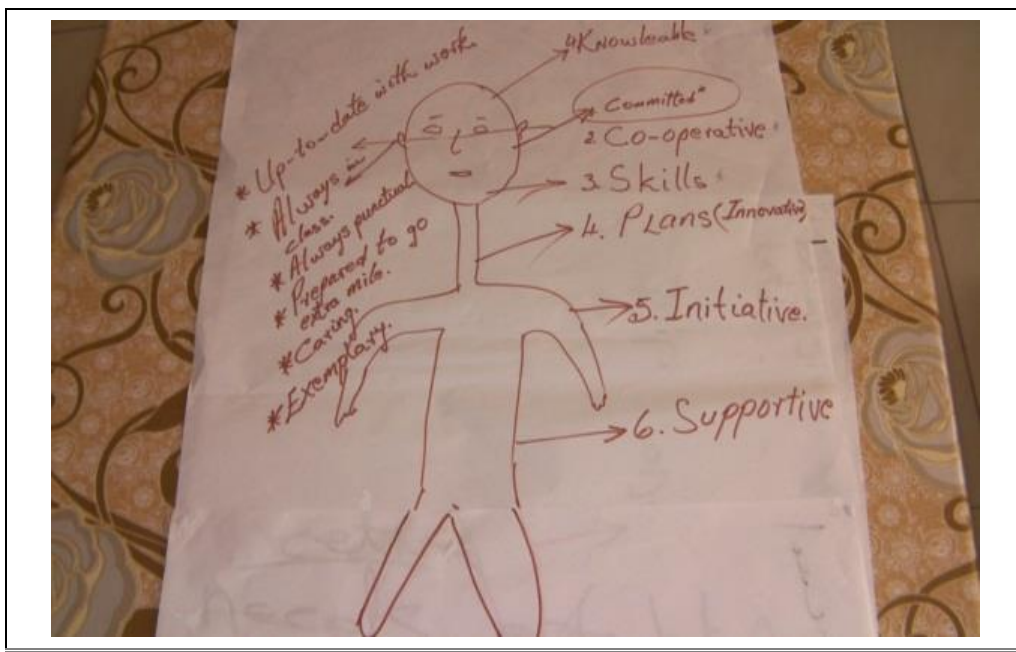


Figure 4.6: A representation of the ideal teacher, drawn by group 2

The two figures above show that participants aspire to work with teachers who motivate learners, give direction, are good listeners, and are supportive, caring, exemplary, and cooperative. However, the participating HODs did not display characteristics related to the ones that they expect teachers to display. As indicated earlier, the participants acted like managers that controlled and dominated the teachers, which is not consistent with the practices of leadership (McCombs & Miller, 2009). McCombs and Miller (2009) believe that the crucial role of leaders in transforming schools is to change minds, not just practices, and this can only occur through dialogue, debate, and reflection. Furthermore, in contrast to what the participants in this study did, transformational leaders expose teachers to new ideas, and encourage them to try them out (McCombs & Miller, 2009). However, such approaches require good relationships between leaders and those they support, something that appeared to be problematic for the participants in the study.

4.3.3 Theme 3: The participating HODs had a poor relationship with the teachers and each other

Narrative data from the participating HODs showed a poor relationship between the HODs and the teachers, and also mistrust among the HODs themselves. Participant

4 mentioned that “not all teachers respect HODs, some teachers are against HODs, some teachers are fault finders; teachers do not want to work together as a team”. This suggests that the HODs place all the responsibility for developing good relationships on the shoulders of the teachers. The HODs failed to understand that they and their followers should share a particular set of characteristics, motivations, and values (Fullan, 2000). Therefore, they cannot expect teachers to demonstrate characteristics such as those portrayed in the representations of the ideal teacher, namely “good listener”, “cooperative”, “caring”, and “giving direction” (quotations extracted from figures 4.4 and 4.5), if they are not willing to accept responsibility for embodying these characteristics in their everyday interactions.

The narrative data of the HODs further show that the HODs experienced many disputes in their workplace. They had conflicts with teachers, and there were also conflicts among the teachers. In this regard, this is the response of one of the HODs: “Conflicts between learner-to-learner, learner-to-educator and educator-to-educator, teachers do not meet the deadlines, and HODs also experience resistance from teachers.” This response suggests that there was little sense of collegiality at this particular school. HODs will not be able to support teachers instructionally if they do not have a good relationship with them, and they will not be able to improve their instructional leadership if they cannot practise it by collaborating with teachers (McCombs & Miller, 2009). Evidence from the research suggests that if HODs and teachers were to collaborate even only on the development of a shared vision, and goals and assessment criteria, this, in itself, would positively influence learner performance (Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Sagor, 2010). Clarity on where teachers and HODs are going, and what they want to achieve, is important, because this allows them to keep their eye on their destination, and focus their time and energy, which are finite (Sagor, 2010). For learners, having a clearly stated shared vision takes the mystery out of the instructional process, it enables them to track their own improvement, and it provides them with opportunities to feel genuinely good about themselves as they progress along the developmental continuum (McCombs & Miller, 2009; Sagor, 2010). This kind of collaboration requires a good relationship between the HODs and the teachers, but this was not likely to happen at the participants’ schools, because there was little cooperation between the HODs and the teachers. Apart from this, the

data illustrated that participating HODs themselves were not united, because they did not trust one another.

Participants mentioned that there was a lack of confidentiality within their own management team. Participant 3 stated that “confidentiality in some SMT members is not there”. This is a serious problem, because as instructional leaders, HODs need to work as a team. Schools are human organisations working on human beings through human interactions (Cheng, 2001). If the staff in schools do not trust each other, it will be difficult for them to share issues that hinder their own improvement. For instance, it will be hard for them to share their weaknesses or challenges with each other, and this is where collaboration, good relationships, and trust are critical, to develop each other to support teachers in pursuing the vision of the school as a united team. Vision is about trust. Anybody can have a vision for a school, but it is only those leaders that have trust among themselves and in the teachers that are able to achieve the vision of the organisation (Cheng, 2001). Relationships of mistrust between leadership teams are troubling indicators that suggest that the sustainability of the leadership team may be in jeopardy (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006).

The work attitude of the participating HODs did not portray their school as a safe place where they can grow together as a team. Important elements in creating a safe place are trust for one another, openness in attitude and information sharing, understanding and acceptance of others, confidentiality with regard to what is learned about others, and honesty in sharing thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Bentley, 2000). However, these elements did not exist among the HODs, and this prevented collaboration among them, and they ultimately withdrew from the study.

To sum up, I intended to work with HODs to answer the following questions:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?

The data shows that the participants lacked knowledge about instructional leadership. They did not really understand the meaning of the term “instructional leadership”, and how they should practise instructional leadership. They failed to focus their time, energy, and priorities on classroom matters, but instead devoted their attention to administrative tasks. They complained about systemic issues, which they could not really change, rather than seeing their main role as being supporters and leaders in helping teachers to improve their teaching and learning.

- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?

The HODs felt that the teachers did not cooperate with them, and do not respect them. There was a poor relationship between the HODs and the teachers, and the HODs blamed the teachers for that. The HODs did not function as a team, and did not appear to trust each other. These factors meant that in the school the HODs were not having much positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. As this started to become apparent in the course of our discussions, I noticed that the HODs started to withdraw from the project. Despite the fact that the data showed that the HODs had a poor relationship with the teachers, and that they were not sure about their own roles as instructional leaders, I asked them to meet with the teachers before our subsequent meeting, to gather data on what problems the teachers were facing, and what support they needed. I realise now that I, in effect, pushed the HODs to action before I had really helped them to understand their roles as instructional leaders, and to set realistic goals. The outcome was that they did not attend any more sessions. I had difficulty in obtaining a reason for this from them, but eventually they indicated that they had “too many other commitments”. I then had to reflect on why this had happened, in order to be able to understand in what way I needed to change the approach that I use when I conduct a subsequent study with a new set of participants at another site.

4.4 REFLECTION ON MY LEARNING DURING CYCLE 1 OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

My experience in working with the participants was painful, because the participants withdrew from the project before its completion, but this was an important learning experience for me. The most important lesson that I learned was that honest reflections are useful tools for learning. During the first cycle of the research process, I was writing my reflections with the main aim of updating my study leader on “what happened” in the field, but I overlooked the bigger picture of “why did that happen”. This “why” part that was missing in my reflections emerged during the data analysis, but it was too late then, as the participants had already withdrawn from the project. When I reported what I had done, and what had happened in the field, I failed to reflect more deeply on my actions, which means that I did not consider how my actions could have been the cause of the participants’ withdrawal from the study. I only thought of some minor issues that cast me in a positive light. I was so confident that I treated the participants well; I respected them, negotiated dates and times of meetings with them, and was friendly towards them, but I did not reflect sufficiently on what they might have felt and thought in response to my questions and my actions.

After the withdrawal of the participants, reading and analysing the reflections that I had written during the research process helped me to critically evaluate what really had happened, when it had happened, how it had happened, why it had happened, and how it contributed to the withdrawal of the participants (see appendix C1B). I had many discussion meetings with my promoter, who acted as a critical friend, and also helped me to investigate what the cause was of the “failure”. Those were the most painful moments of my professional life, as a teacher, a school support visit facilitator, and now as a researcher. It was only at this stage that I realised the effects of this “why” part, which was missing during my interaction with the participants, as is explained in the following sections. This was not easy for me, since I initially believed that I had done everything right, and that the fault lay with the participants. However, I eventually realised and admitted all the mistakes that I had made, without being forced to do so, but as an outcome of the evidence from the data that “I” had

generated (with the participants), and that “I” had analysed myself, and the reflections that I had written with my own hand. I slowly came to realise that my behaviour had played a role in the withdrawal of the participants from the study. In the end, I viewed the whole situation from a different perspective. Instead of seeing myself as a failure, as I had done, I was proud of the rich knowledge that I had acquired.

I learned that instead of facilitating the action learning set meetings with the participants, I had directed them. In one of our discussions with my study leader, we talked about the issue of me dominating the action learning sessions, instead of facilitating them. This was the part where I thought that I did not deserve to be answerable for the failure of the participants to sustain their participation in the study. I strongly believed that I had interacted well with the participants. However, through our discussion and the analysed data of the transcripts, I learned that even though I was giving the participants opportunity to talk, it was not sufficient. I dominated the entire discussion.

The data analysis clearly shows participants’ lack of understanding of their roles, their tendency to focus on administration rather than on leadership, and the weak collegial climate in their schools. Instead of helping the participants to understand their roles, I directed them too much, and told participants what instructional leadership is, and what they should be doing. This could have negatively affected their self-esteem as HODs, and made them lose interest in the study. I also realised that I had pushed participants to start working with teachers, while they were not yet ready to do that, due to the weak interpersonal relationships that prevailed. Nevertheless, from all this I acquired much learning, which I will now discuss in relation to the three themes of this study, starting with theme1.

4.4.1 Knowledge and power relations

Regarding theme 1, I realised that my education, my occupation, and my past experience had a negative impact on my study. I have 12 years of teaching experience, and, in addition to this, I have worked as a school support facilitator for

two years. The large amount of knowledge that I accumulated during these years, particularly the two years that I worked as a school support facilitator, made me realise that in general, teachers lack instructional support. The cohort of Advanced Certificate in Education students that I have worked with include teachers, principals, HODs, and even subject advisors. Having worked with all these stakeholders convinced me that teachers lack instructional support from the HODs, and HODs, too, need to be developed, so that they can support teachers instructionally. I think this knowledge influenced me to dominate the interaction, instead of allowing the participants to develop by themselves. Knowledge is not detached from power (Hindess, 2006; Townely, 1990). This means that I approached the participants with my thinking influenced by my prior knowledge, namely that HODs need to be developed, and this is actually in conflict with PAR practice. Even worse, when I requested the participants to explain what instructional leadership is, they were unable to explain the term. I think it was at this point that I allowed my prior knowledge to influence my behaviour when dealing with the participants, in that I dominated the discussion and explained the term to them, rather than getting them to develop their own understanding of the term. I did this out of fear that the study was progressing too slowly, and that I would not meet my research deadlines. I learned that I did not work with participants in a participatory way. I directed the process too much, by telling them what instructional leadership is, and what they should be doing. This might have led them to feel inferior, and inclined to withdraw from the study. My prior knowledge caused me to exercise my powers over the participants, which meant that I contributed more than the participants did during the knowledge-production process in the action learning set meetings. Foucault, as cited in Townely (1990), clarified the relationship between power and knowledge, stating that knowledge may lead to power, or that power may be enhanced by the possession of knowledge (Hindess, 2006; Townely, 1990). In simple terms, it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, and it is also not possible for knowledge not to establish power (Hindess, 2006; Townely, 1990).

In effect, the issues I discussed above relates to what happened during my interaction with the participants; in exercising my knowledge and power over the participants, I not only spoke more than the participants did, but I also did not listen to

the participants. The exercise of power always creates knowledge, and, conversely, knowledge always produces effects of power (Hindess, 2006; Townely, 1990). These are small matters that can easily be missed by novice researchers, without their even noticing them, and they can easily inhibit cooperation from the participants, and ultimately spoil the research. I had to come to the conclusion that I was mirroring what the data told me about the HODs' style of leadership – I, myself, was being controlling and autocratic in the research process.

4.4.2 Contradiction of the values of PAR

My critical reflection on my learning helped me to realise that the way I was dealing with the participants was not consistent with the values of PAR. Regarding theme 2, the focus of the participating HODs on administration indicated that there was a need for them to learn about transformational leadership. During the action learning set meeting which was held on 11 April 2013, I requested the HODs to call departmental meetings, where they were supposed to find out what kind of instructional support teachers need in order to improve teaching and learning. With this task, my purpose was to encourage the participants to start collaborating with the teachers, even though they themselves were not clear on what they should be doing. This task proved to be too much of a challenge for the participants, given the bad relationships that they had with the teachers, and they ultimately decided to withdraw from the study. On reflection, I realised that it might have been a problem for the participants to be expected to collaborate with the teachers, without being provided with more time to understand how this might be accomplished using a transformational leadership style. They really did not understand the concept of instructional leadership, or their roles as instructional leaders (see the discussion of theme 1 in section 4.3.1), and yet I asked them to deal with teachers, where there was the possibility that the teachers could ask them questions that they did not know how to answer. In the light of this, I also learnt that rather than spending more time on helping the participants to understand their roles in an experiential or interactive way, I pushed them into doing something that they could not do, namely working with teachers (Harland, 2003; Kozulin, Gindis, Agseyev & Miller, 2003).

4.4.3 A misleading concept: Instructional leadership

I began to think that the concept of instructional leadership could be misleading. During the action learning set meeting of 11 April 2013, I struggled to explain the concept of instructional leadership to the participants in a way that they could relate to. I simply cited the literature and told them what is meant by the term. When I asked the participating HODs to define the word “instruction”, they related it to giving orders, but from a transformational perspective, this is not what instructional leadership involves. I realised that I was perhaps confusing them by asking them to define the concept like this. Their understanding of the word “instruction” was actually contrary to a collaborative and transformational understanding of their roles as instructional leaders. For this reason, I decided that from then on I would use the term “teaching and learning leadership”, rather than “instructional leadership”, as the main concept. The adoption of this concept, namely “teaching and learning leadership”, would remove the idea of “instruction” as a didactic process, and would replace it with a more appropriate description of what the HODs should focus on. The HODs could see themselves as leaders of teaching and learning. This could help them to understand and perform their roles better, and could help to create time in their schedules to deal with or be involved in instructional matters at classroom level (Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, LaFors, Young & Christopher, 2006).

4.4.4 Establishing a rapport

Analysis of the data for theme 3 taught me that a good relationship with study participants is essential for the success of any research. However, establishing a good relationship with people takes time. A good relationship is something that you as the researcher cannot control, although you can influence it. For instance, you cannot force people to trust you and have a positive relationship with you, but your actions and how you deal with people can influence your relationship with them, and this requires considerable time. During my first encounter with the participants, I experienced that people open up to you in their own time, and once they trust you. I experienced this after I had had an informal chat with two of the participants, and they offered me some tips on how we could have all the HODs, in order to set up the

meeting. They even organised the meeting, and all the HODs came to that meeting, because they advised me to come set up the meeting during break, when all the teachers are there. It is only when participants trust you that they collaborate with you, and your research makes progress. This was a challenge for me, because I had time frames to meet, while there were no time frames for participants to open up. For instance, it was only after the participants had withdrawn from the study that I learned that I had rushed the participants to sign the voluntary consent forms, without having given them time to think about the contents of the form that they were signing (Bailey, 2007). In my first meeting with the participants, I explained everything that was expected of them before they could sign the consent letters. However, I remember one participant asking whether they could be given some time before signing, and I politely requested the participants to sign there and then, as the forms were due for submission. They did not appear to have a problem with that; they signed the forms, and we set a date for the next meeting, but they did not turn up for that meeting. After making more effort to meet with some of them, I discovered that it was a problem for them to meet every week, even though they fully understood and accepted the explanation that I had given them. I explained to them that I had planned to have meetings with them every week, so as to avoid having meetings in June, because I did not want hinder with the preparations of the June examinations or disturb them during the examination period. It became clear to me after their withdrawal from the study that my explanation, and their understanding of my explanation, had not changed their feelings about meeting every week. I was driven by ethical principles, not realising that I was behaving selfishly and pushing my own agenda of meeting the deadlines. This made me realise that before the participants can open up, it is a challenge to get them involved in the research, as PAR requires.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter I discussed my work with the participating HODs, with the purpose of investigating how they conceptualise their role in providing instructional leadership support to teachers, and what problems they experience in their provision of instructional support to teachers. The participants ultimately withdrew from the study, and that happened as a result of my behaviour. What I learned from this cycle helped

me to change my approach when I facilitated the second cycle, with new participants. I ensured that I modelled a more collaborative process. The following chapter will explain this second cycle.

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION OF CYCLE 2: A COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY INTO HOW TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I gave an account of the first cycle of investigation, to explore answers to my secondary research questions, namely “How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?”, and “What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?” In this chapter, I report on the second cycle of investigation, to explore the question “What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers”? The findings from the first cycle informed my actions in this cycle. Table 5.1 below outlines the data-generation techniques employed in this cycle.

Table 5.1: Ways in which data were generated for Cycle 2

Data-generation technique	Purpose	Data documentation
Action learning set meetings	To allow HOD participants to identify their problems, plan strategies to overcome these problems, observe and reflect on the situation, and be able to learn from each other at the group sessions.	Conversations in meetings recorded and transcribed
Qualitative questionnaire	To provide the other stakeholders with an opportunity to present their views.	Written questionnaires
Photovoice	To generate data on what stakeholders view as quality education.	Photographs and written narratives

5.2 ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE PARTICIPATING HODS TO DEVELOP THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The following figure details the actions taken by the participating HODs. In reality, the actions overlapped, and were not linear, as some of the actions occurred simultaneously.

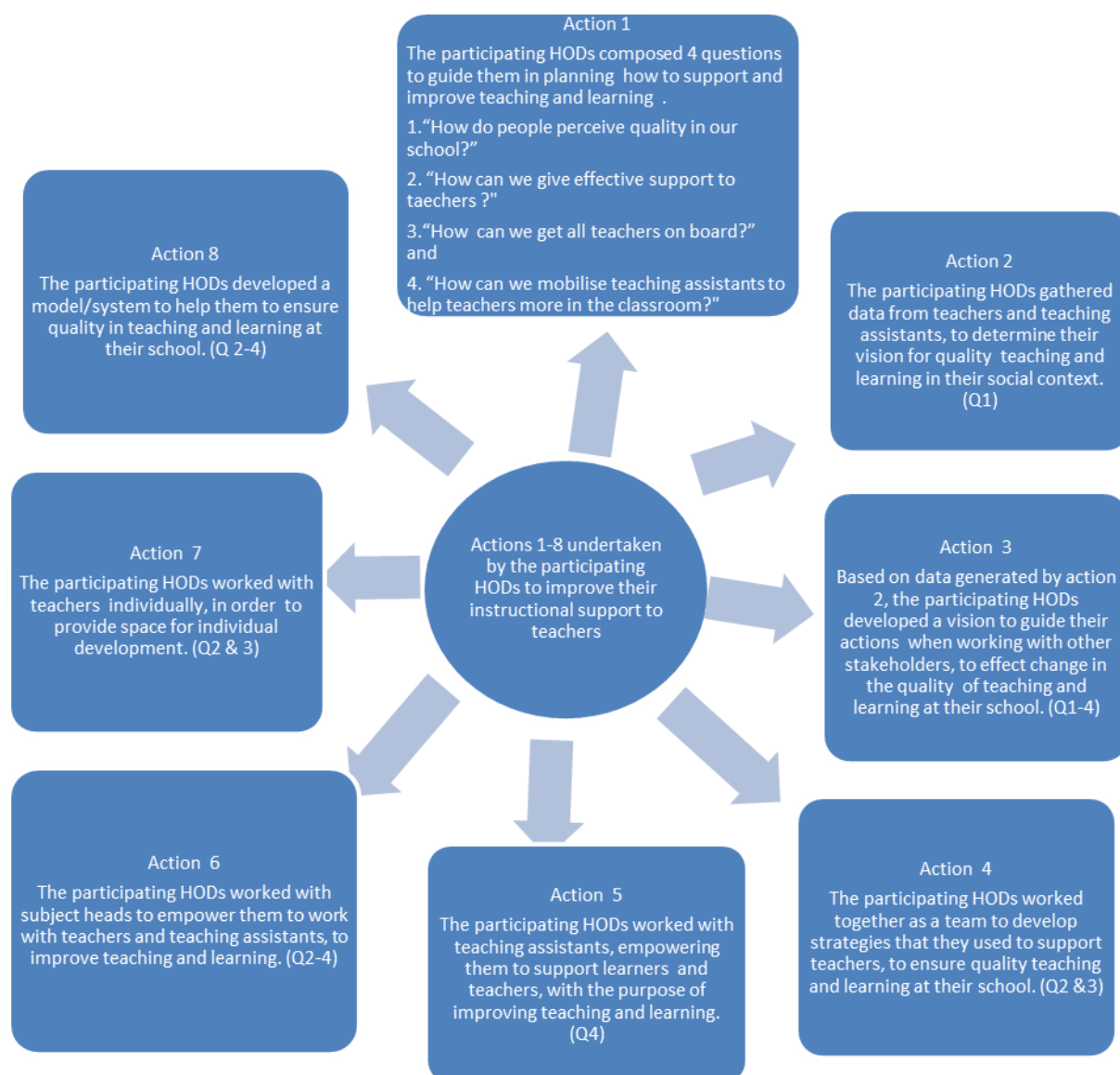


Figure 5.1: Iterative cycles of action taken by HODs to improve their instructional leadership in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning

I facilitated the HODs to form an action learning set and hold regular meetings. The meetings gave the participants the opportunity to meet to develop plans, agree on strategies to be implemented, and reflect on the situation after the implementation of strategies. This collaborative learning is similar to the process recommended by McCombs and Miller (2009) in their six steps of continuous improvement of quality teaching:

1. Identifying and clarifying core beliefs about the school culture,
2. Creating a shared vision of what these beliefs look like in practice,
3. Collecting accurate and detailed information about the gaps between the vision and current reality,
4. Identifying what innovations will help to close the gaps,
5. Developing and implementing an action plan that supports teachers through the change process, and
6. Embracing collective autonomy and collective accountability for closing the gaps.

Critical reflection on the process was necessary to guide the participants on whether they should improve their plans and strategies or maintain the strategies to sustain improvement. Either way, this process required continuous observation and reflection in participants' action learning set, until they were all satisfied that they had accomplished their goals.

5.2.1 Action learning set meetings

I facilitated several sessions with the participants,¹ who also met informally on their own to carry on with the action research. During each session, the participants discussed issues related to the goals that they wanted to achieve, and planned what actions they would take to reach their desired outcomes (see Table 5.2).

¹ In this chapter, the following codes are used: P = participating HODs; T = teacher; TA = teaching assistant.

Table 5.2: An overview of the sessions held with the participants

Session	Purpose	Actions taken	Goals to be accomplished
1 (23.05.2014)	Relationship building, and identification of problems impacting on quality education.	Relationship building exercise was given to participants. A qualitative questionnaire was designed for some stakeholders. A photovoice exercise was also planned and later administered with some stakeholders.	To establish a good relationship with participants. To obtain the views of all the stakeholders regarding quality education.
2 (20.06.2014)	To determine a collective vision of quality education.	Analysed questionnaire data and visual data.	To start to create a vision for the project.
3 (09.07.2014)	Vision building.	Crafted visions.	To determine subsequent actions to be taken.
4 (21.08.2014)	To involve other stakeholders in improving the quality of teaching and learning.	Planned meetings with subject heads, teachers, and teaching assistants to discuss issues related to the enhancement of quality in teaching and learning, based on the data analysed.	All stakeholders to participate in actions to ensure quality education.
5 (25.09.2014)	To determine how to provide instructional support to teachers.	Decided on a system to give guidance and direction, and monitored whether the support given was applied and was effective, and whether other strategies are needed, and moderated teachers' work. Support strategies agreed on: Dialogue, discussion, and mentoring.	To develop a system to provide regular, consistent instructional support to teachers, to enhance the quality of education.
		Monitoring strategies: Discussions/conversations with teachers, discussions/conversations with subject heads, hold phase meetings, subject meetings, and grade meetings. Moderation, or establishing the degree of equilibrium between the set vision and the outcomes. Strategies applied: Viewed teachers' and learners' work, and teachers' administrative files.	
6 (23.10.2014)	To evaluate what improvement was effected by the support strategies.	The HODs agreed that there is a need for them to construct a model that they can use at school to improve the quality of teaching and learning through instructional support.	Construction of a model to guide HODs to provide instructional support to teachers.

5.3 ACTION 1: IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AT THE SCHOOL IN TERMS OF THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

During the first action learning set session, I started off with a relationship-building exercise (see Appendix B1), designed to help the participating HODs see each other as individuals, and not just as fellow teachers. I then chatted over a snack with them about issues that related to their practice. Examples of the questions that I asked them were “What is your understanding of teaching and learning leadership?”, “What are your roles?”, and “How do you enact your roles?” Their answers to these questions indicated to me that they, as with the participants in Cycle 1, tended to see their roles as more task-oriented and managerial, rather than as related to leadership. This informal time spent with the participants helped me to begin to form a relationship of trust with them. They talked easily about the problems they face as HODs, which, once again, were similar to the problems I had identified in the first cycle. I facilitated a brainstorming session with them, and they concluded that they wanted to improve the quality of teaching and learning in a way that could be applied to their particular school context. They identified four questions that they needed to explore:

- (1) “How do people perceive quality education at this school?” The participating HODs thought that it was important for them to have a common understanding of the type of quality education all teachers and teaching assistants want for their school, before they can start influencing that quality.
- (2) “How can we offer effective support to teachers?” The participating HODs did not have time to meet with each individual teacher and give them feedback on a regular basis. Furthermore, the participating HODs were worried that they did not know whether what the teachers claimed to be doing was actually what was taking place in the classroom. They were merely moderating teachers’ work on an individual basis, and giving written feedback on their portfolios, rather than interacting with these teachers. Their concern was that if teachers are not maintaining quality teaching and learning, moderation of their portfolios will not help improve the quality of teaching and

learning. Moderation has little impact on the quality of teaching and learning, because it cannot address the complexity of a whole teaching programme (Horsburgh, 2010). For moderation to have an impact on student learning, the emphasis should be wide, and should focus on all aspects, such as the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment (Horsburgh, 2010), and should be conducted with the teacher, not just a moderation of the work presented in the portfolio. The participants were concerned that they did not have a system that they could use as a guide to support teachers in their daily practice – they merely moderated the quality of the teachers’ work, without any developmental input.

- (3) “How can we get all teachers on board?” This question was identified, as some teachers were resistant to using the resources provided, such as teaching assistants.
- (4) “How can we mobilise teaching assistants to help teachers more in the classroom?” The participating HODs were concerned that some teachers do not use TAs effectively in the classroom, delegating to them menial jobs, such as cleaning, rather than using them to support teaching and learning.

I facilitated this problem-identification session by writing all the issues mentioned by the participating HODs on the board, and after a discussion about which issue would be tackled first, the participating HODs agreed to start working on the first question, which was to define what they, and others, meant by quality education in their school. Our discussion brought the participants to an understanding of quality as a multifaceted concept (Runciman, Merry & Walton, 2007), and the possibility that quality may be viewed differently by different stakeholders. As one participant said,

“I was wondering whether, if we want to know what quality education is, shouldn’t we know what teachers think about it?” (P1).

It was apparent that the participating HODs realised how important it was to consult with other stakeholders, to obtain their views on “looking at what is quality education,

its appearance, and also the theories on management” (P2). They also realised that, for any change to be effective, they would have to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are included in defining what was meant by quality education. This would help other stakeholders to take collective responsibility for any actions towards change in educational practices in the school (Leach, Pelkey & Sabatier, 2002). After agreeing on the need to involve other stakeholders, we discussed how the HODs could obtain the views of those groups. One suggestion was to do a survey, or to raise the issue in phase meetings:

“Teachers in the same phase might have a common understanding of quality they want, or they might have different understandings.” (P4)

The participants decided to use a qualitative questionnaire, as well as the visual method of photovoice (Wang, 1999). (See Chapter 3 for an overview of the data-generation strategies.) They thought that using a variety of options to record views was important, since some of the stakeholders might not be comfortable with having to record their views in writing.

5.4 ACTION 2: THE PARTICIPATING HODS GATHERED DATA FROM TEACHERS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

The participating HODs gathered data from the other stakeholders (the teachers and the teaching assistants), to determine a vision for quality teaching and learning. This action was to answer the first question posed in Figure 5.1, namely “What is quality?” The HODs developed a questionnaire (see Appendix D1) to give to the different stakeholders. This questionnaire enabled the participating HODs to investigate the views of the teaching assistants and the teachers regarding what quality means for them. I advised the participating HODs to conduct a photovoice exercise, as I thought that, unlike the questionnaire, which can just be completed in a hurry, a photovoice exercise can encourage the participants to think more deeply about the context when deciding on the kind of quality they want (Baker & Wang, 2006). The participants, with my help, analysed the data, with the purpose of crafting a vision. Four main themes emerged (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Themes relating to quality education

THEMES
Theme 1 Quality education must be holistic.
Theme 2 Quality education must be supported by a favourable school and classroom environment.
Theme 3 Quality education must demonstrate a link between the school and the community.
Theme 4 The development of quality education is an ongoing process, which requires continuous development of all stakeholders.

5.4.1 Theme 1: Quality education must be holistic

The Department of Basic Education explains that quality education is holistic, but their evaluation of a school's success is based mainly on academic performance (Department of Basic Education, 2009). The participating HODs in the study discovered that the stakeholders at the school also viewed quality education from a more holistic perspective, and evaluated success through a less narrow lens than a broader lens. The stakeholders were of the opinion that a holistic education would, anyway, result in better academic performance, and they did not want quality that is based only on obtaining high marks or good results, and which ignored the development of the whole person. The stakeholders believed that quality education should develop children in totality, preparing them holistically for the future: "Quality education to me means a better future for all learners" (T6). They also believed that quality education should create more opportunities for learners: "Quality education means a lot, because when you are educated, you have a lot of opportunities" (T13).



Figure 5.2: Quality education must develop and prepare learners for the future

Many descriptions of quality in education exist, and they attest to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept (UNICEF, 2000). For this reason, considerable consensus exists around the basic measurements of quality education today. The kind of quality education that the stakeholders want for their school can be linked to the following, which are consistent with the basic dimensions of quality education (Epstein, 2010):

- Quality education embraces outcomes that incorporate knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society, thus leading to holistic development.
- Quality education enables people to develop their potential and latent talents as human beings and members of society. This implies that education is a tool to develop people as individuals and as a community. Its mission is to enable all people, without exception to develop their talents to the fullest, and to make them realise their creative potential, guiding them to take responsibility for their own lives and the achievement of their personal aims.

As the participants discussed the photographic data, they came to the conclusion that “results are necessary to compile an academic report” (P3) for learners, but that these are not the only variables that should be focused on when looking at an improvement in education. The participants agreed with the stakeholders’ views that holistic quality education should develop learners’ potential in all areas. Quality education should develop and prepare learners to get jobs and live a happy life after finishing their schooling, as the following excerpts from the photovoice narratives show:

“Quality education to me means a better future for all.” (T6)

“[Quality education] means happy family and easy life for you in every world you go.” (T9)

Education should create reasonable hope “for a better life, a bright future” (T6) and better living conditions. For this to occur, stakeholders wanted to “strive to promote healthy physical, intellectual and social development for all, as well as a healthy learning environment” (T4). Learners should be provided with opportunities to associate with members of the community and learn skills that can broaden their horizons (see the last two photographs in Figure 5.2). Education should “empower learners” (TA4) and highlight the need for cultural and sport activities, as well as academic input.

An analysis of the data revealed that the teachers and the teaching assistants were aware that education should prepare learners for life after school. Education should offer the possibility for inclusion into the larger social fabric, often associated with training for jobs, and capacity building, in order to break the cycle of poverty (Ngomedje, 2006). The curriculum and pedagogical practices should prepare learners to thrive in their own social contexts. This thinking is in line with current literature, which decries the narrow emphasis on pass marks as being indicative of a quality education (Penney & Chandler, 2010; Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spauull & Armstrong, 2011). The pressure to achieve high marks at all costs ignores the fact that the education of citizens must have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places that people actually inhabit (Gruenewald, 2003). This “teach to the test” (Gruenewald, 2003:3) conceptualisation increases the likelihood that teachers will place more emphasis on teaching aspects of the syllabus that are likely to be tested, rather than adopting a place-based education that is culturally and contextually relevant.

As emphasised by Bueschel (2003), a place-based education requires educational institutions to develop learners to be valuable resources for their communities. Failure to consider how education will impact on the future of learners seems to be one of the issues that has been overlooked and/or marginalised in many contemporary discussions, during curriculum reforms, in particular (Penney & Chandler, 2010). This raises concern about the adequacy and appropriateness of the ways in which education is currently developed, structured, and taught in schools. The stakeholders in this school want “education that will make the learners to be free from the bondage of mental inferiority” (see Figure 5.3), as stated in the school motto. They want education that will raise the consciousness of learners to realise that they can deal with the challenges in life, to make the most of their potential. Learners should not see themselves as inferior because of social circumstances. They should be educated to believe in themselves, to feel proud of their background. To encourage learners to be free from mental inferiority, one teaching assistant stated that education should provide learners with “equal opportunities, devoid of major disparities” (TA3) (see Figure 5.3).

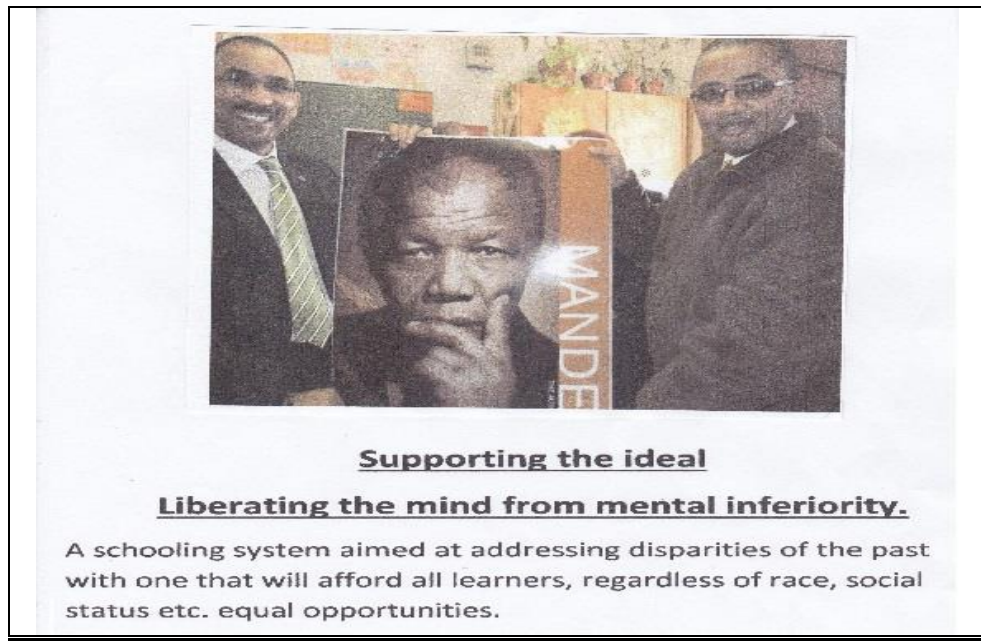


Figure 5.3: Quality education should liberate learners from mental inferiority

The participating HODs agreed with the views of the stakeholders about the need for a holistic education, and added that to reach their potential, learners needed to become self-directed learners (Brookfield, 2009):

“If learners are given tasks, they should be able to do them by themselves.” (P1)

5.4.2 Theme 2: Quality education must be supported by a favourable school and classroom environment

The stakeholders thought that quality education could only be attained when the environment was favourable, meaning that “conditions between learners and teachers must be favourable in such a way that students enjoy themselves at school and teachers must give their best to educate learners” (T10). Furthermore, stakeholders wanted teachers to “be more involved in the children they teach at school” (T4), and to be “able to motivate learners and ensure excellence in the classroom by requiring learners to work hard” (T7).

The view of the stakeholders was that quality education is determined by quality teaching (see Figure 5.4).

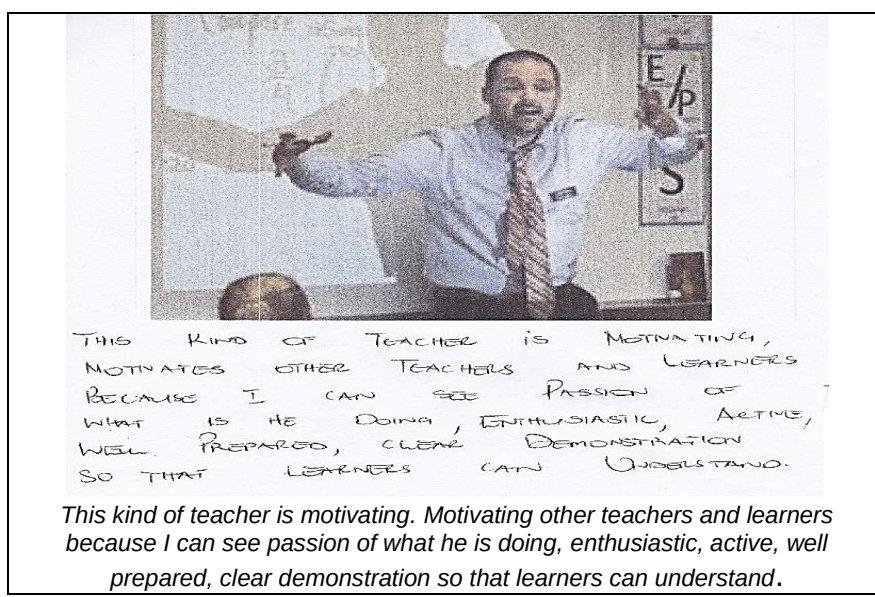


Figure 5.4: A photograph depicting that quality education depends on quality teaching

The stakeholders' definitions of quality education are in line with the idea of quality education being a process through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools, and skilful assessment, to facilitate teaching and learning and reduce inequalities (UNICEF, 2000).

Since the stakeholders believed that quality education depends on quality teaching, it is important to demonstrate the parameters of quality teaching that the stakeholders expected from the teachers. The stakeholders wanted instructional time to be used fruitfully: "Teachers should be on time for their classes" (T8); and "They must ensure that the syllabus is completed within specified time frame" (T2). They wanted teachers who are passionate and have a love for learners and the community they are working in. The stakeholders wanted "teachers who are committed, productive, present all the time, clued up on all aspects of education (curricular and co-curricular)" (T12). Being 'clued up' with curricular activities included knowledge of technology, or computer skills. To be at that level, teachers need continuous development, "to develop learners' knowledge, skills" (T10). Furthermore,

stakeholders required teachers to “use teaching and learning strategies that cater for a variety of learners” (T2), and with those strategies, “learners must be interactive at all times” (T5) in their learning processes.

To summarise the views of the stakeholders, a quality education depends to a large degree on good teaching. If the teacher is committed, relates well with the learners, and gives them the opportunity to attempt tasks by themselves and in groups, this helps the learners to develop a love for the subject, and so be more likely to engage in the learning process. The participants also emphasised the importance of developing a good relationship between teacher and learner, for quality learning to take place. It is interesting to note that the teachers and the teaching assistants set these criteria themselves, rather than having them imposed by ‘school leadership’ in an authoritarian way. I think that this exercise, in itself, might have helped to move them towards holding themselves accountable to such standards. This is the value of an action research approach, where the research is driven by the participants themselves.

The stakeholders also recognised the need to have adequate resources in the school, but they felt that they could still do much to encourage learners, through recognition of their efforts.

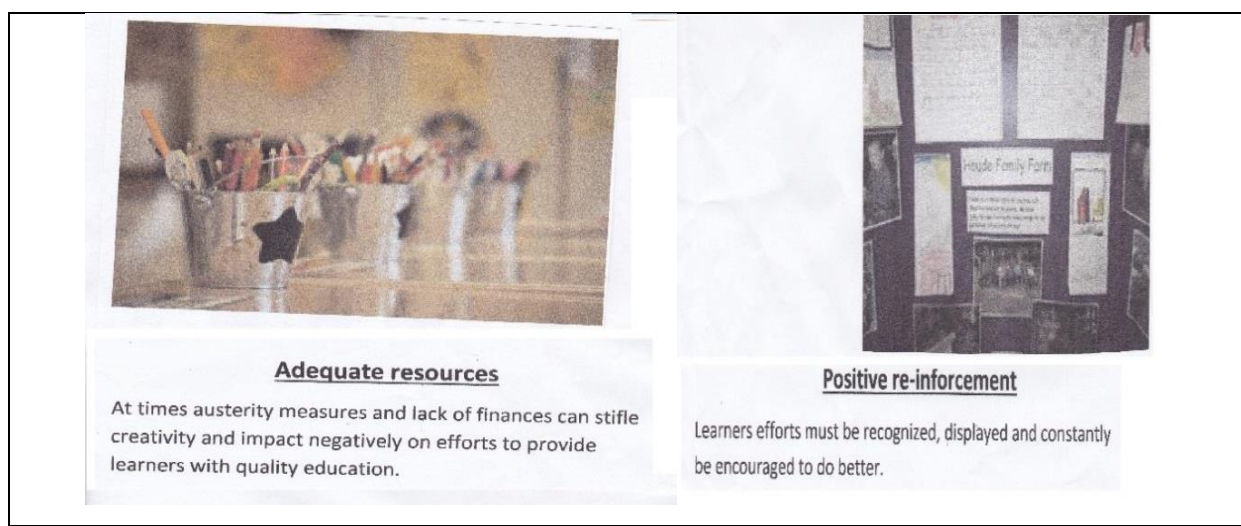


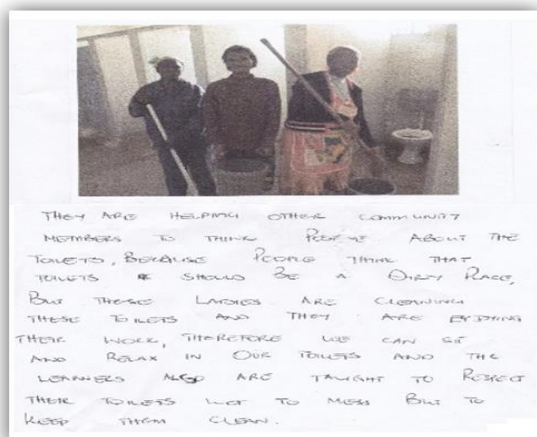
Figure 5.5 A photograph depicting that in a resource scarce environment, recognition of learners' efforts is very important.

The second photograph in Figure 5.5 shows print-rich walls, filled with learners' work, so as to enhance the quality of teaching and learning at the school. The participants thought it was important for teachers to display learners' work on the classroom walls, to show "recognition of learners' efforts", and that this "constantly encourages learners to perform better" (T7). The affective outcomes of education are at least as important as cognitive results, and the acknowledgement of learner efforts is reflected in learners' increasing motivation to learn (Heui-Baik et al., 2010). Displaying learners' work or books in the classroom can improve the surroundings, the classroom becomes attractive and interesting, it usually stimulates learners to read, and it makes learners feel good, all of which can ultimately promote learning (Clouse, 2005).

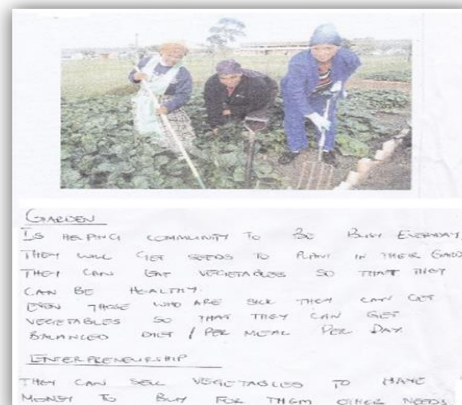
5.4.3 Theme 3: Quality education must demonstrate a link between the school and the community

The stakeholders thought that the education that children receive at school should be contextually relevant, enabling children to be productive citizens who can contribute meaningfully to their community (see Figure 5.6): "Quality education has to be responsive to the ethnic group it serves" (T4).

School as a favourable teaching and learning environment, with parents being involved in school activities



They are helping other community members to think positive about their teachers because people think that toilets should be a dirty place. But these learners are cleaning and they are enjoying their work. There after we can sit and relax in our toilets. And the learners also are taught to respect their toilet not to mess but to keep them clean.



It is helping community to be an exemplary they will get crops to plant in their gardens. They can get vegetables so that they can be healthy. Even those who are sick they can get vegetables so that they can get balanced diet per meal per day.



Figure 5.6: A photograph showing that parents and members of the community should be involved in school activities

The stakeholders suggested that one way of creating a link between the school and the community was to involve parents in providing services to the school, e.g. cleaning the school premises, tending the garden, ensuring safety at the school by guarding the school, and serving in the school's feeding scheme. The stakeholders wanted this school to function as a community school. Community schools collaborate with many partners, to offer a range of support and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2002). The school and the community work together to prepare children for school, and to attend school consistently. Families are increasingly involved with the education of their children, and schools are seen as enabling spaces which promote health on all levels – physically, socially, and emotionally (Epstein et al., 2002).

A school-community partnership refers to a school which invites participation from learners, teachers, parents, and other members of the community (Sandy & Holland, 2006). School-community partnerships should hold common values, to move all stakeholders as a community towards achieving their goals in the context of what they care about (Sandy & Holland, 2006). When the school collaborates with the community in a way that community members feel that the school will satisfy their needs and care for and support them, they develop a sense of belonging at the school (Epstein, 2010; Osterman, 2000). When schools work with communities within these parameters, they will be demonstrating that education is a “social rather than an isolation process” (Osterman, 2000:324). In this way, the school will consider children's interpersonal needs, and the importance of collaborative activities for experiential learning, thus promoting the idea that learners should function as a social group (Osterman, 2000). For this to happen, the teachers and the school should develop and encourage the community's sense of belonging at school, by designing communal activities at school that appeal to participation by members of the community (Epstein, 2010; Osterman, 2000). For instance, if teachers see learners as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in the learners' education and development (Epstein, 2001). Partners recognise their shared interests and responsibilities for the children, and

they collaborate to create better programmes and opportunities for the learners (Epstein, 2001).

5.4.4 Theme 4: The development of quality education is an ongoing process, which requires continuous development of all stakeholders

The final theme that emerged indicated that the stakeholders were aware that quality education depends on continuous development of all stakeholders. There was recognition that the teaching assistants could do so much more if they were trained and mentored. In addition to doing administrative duties, TAs could be trained to be more effective in supporting the teachers instructionally and administratively. In their photovoice exercise, teachers indicated that “TAs can help with auxiliary duties of photocopying, and data capturing, which involves capturing learners’ marks, recording them and compiling class list” (see Figure 5.7 below).

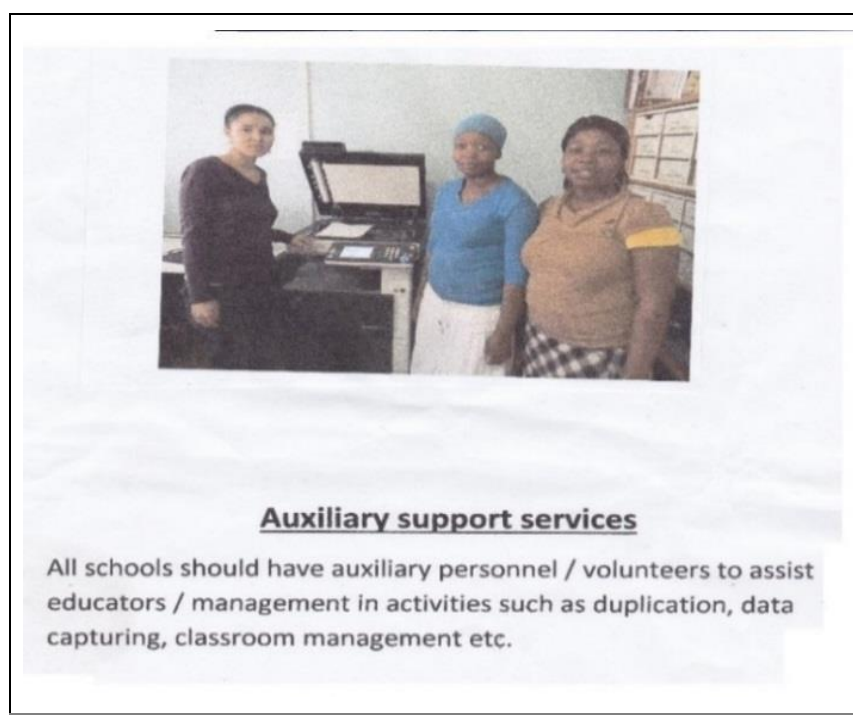


Figure 5.7: A photograph illustrating that TAs should be empowered to do auxiliary duties

There was a suggestion that TAs should help support teachers instructionally by “identifying learners’ needs” (T10), and helping slow learners. Reflecting on this data, the participating HODs realised that it would be important to create “opportunities for TAs to be empowered in understanding the curriculum” (P1), so that they could help teachers more in the classroom, and assist learners with their homework. Until then, TAs had mostly done menial work, such as cleaning classrooms. The role of the TA in schools has transformed, and TAs are no longer seen as “an extra pair of hands” for the teacher in the classroom (Groom & Rose, 2005:20). Worldwide, TAs are currently perceived to have a more professional role, recognised through the provision of a variety of new accredited training initiatives and qualifications, such as the Professional Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (Groom & Rose, 2005). Training puts TAs in a position to work specifically with learners with social, emotional and behavioural problems, and they can also play a major role in supporting the teacher in the management of behaviour in the classroom (Austin, 2002). In terms of providing administrative assistance, the stakeholders mentioned that “TAs can help with auxiliary duties of photocopying of question papers and administrative documents for teachers, and they do data capturing – design mark sheets, record learners’ marks and compile class lists” (T2).

The stakeholders, particularly the teachers, also felt that parents/caregivers should be more involved in the education process.

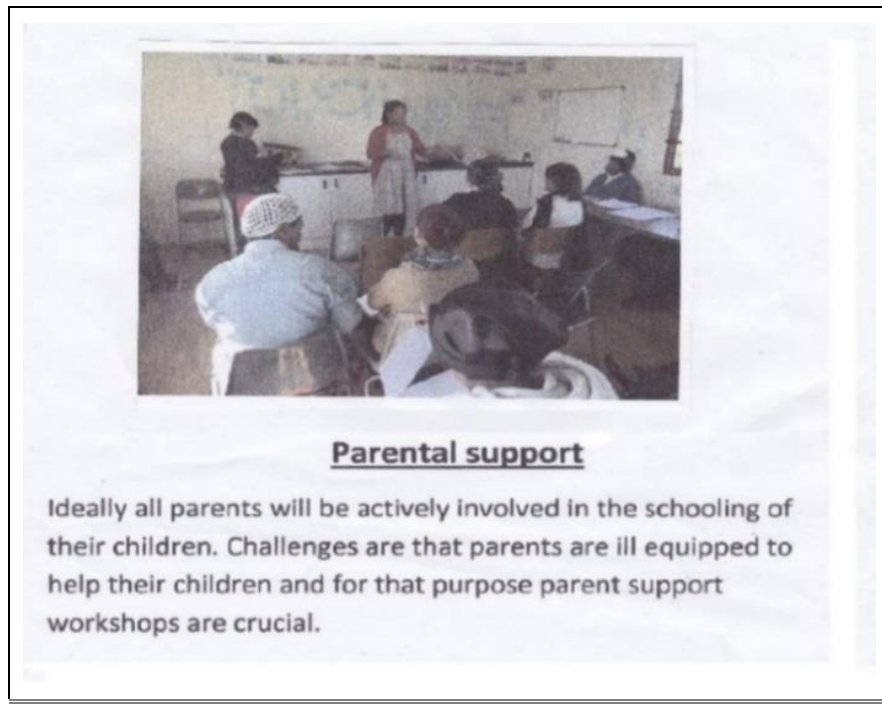


Figure 5.8: A photograph illustrating the need for parents to be developed to become more involved in the education of their children

The stakeholders felt that “parents must check and sign learners’ books on a regular basis” (T5). As depicted in Figure 5.8, the teachers wanted the parents to be developed to become able to play a significant role in their children’s education. This relates to Fan and Chen’s (2001) assertion that parents must be involved in the learning activities of learners at home, supporting learners to do their homework. This helps to extend the learning developed by the teachers at school to home-based learning by parents (Hattie, 2013). However, South African parents from disadvantaged groups are not always able to be involved in their children’s education. Disadvantaged parents may feel threatened by the authority of teachers, perceived socio-economic differences, and their own limited education; all of these serve as barriers to participation in school activities (Pena, 2010). Parents may experience problems regarding the differences in values and patterns of living between middle-class teachers and their own low socio-economic status. In some cases, parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds want to be supportive in the education of their children, but they feel intimidated by teachers and principals,

because of their tendency to use English when communicating with parents, which makes it difficult for them to form relationships (Pena, 2010).

Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds also find it hard to be involved in school activities due to non-flexible work schedules, a lack of resources, transport problems, and stress caused by living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This implies that parents work long hours, and when they arrive home, they have no transport to take them to their child's school to attend meetings with the teachers, because of the disadvantaged areas they are living in. Some parents are illiterate; consequently, it is difficult for them to be involved in their children's education or school activities (Pena, 2010). Other parents simply feel awkward about approaching school personnel, particularly if they have had previous negative experiences with the school (Pena, 2010). One of the suggestions offered to address the lack of parental involvement in their children's education is that the school should improve training, to involve parents as volunteers at the school, so that parents can collaborate with teachers in supporting learners in their education.

To summarise, the stakeholders' views emphasised that quality education must contribute to all-round development for the learners. This is only possible within a favourable school and classroom environment. It should be based on a sound relationship between the school and the community, and should be responsive to local needs. Teaching assistants and parents need to be involved in ongoing development in this regard. Stakeholders should work together, and should share duties, to ensure that their goal of achieving holistic education is reached (Spillane, 2005).

Having developed a clear picture of what quality education should look like, the participants decided to use their analysis to craft a vision, as a guide to start making the envisaged quality education a reality in their school.

5.5 ACTION 3: THE PARTICIPATING HODS CRAFTED A VISION FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

After we had discussed the emergent themes on how the stakeholders defined quality education, the next step for them was to create a vision to guide their work of providing instructional leadership, through supporting teachers and teaching assistants. Based on the themes, I designed the plan in Figure 5.9, to guide the discussion around the respective roles of the stakeholders, and how they could make a difference.

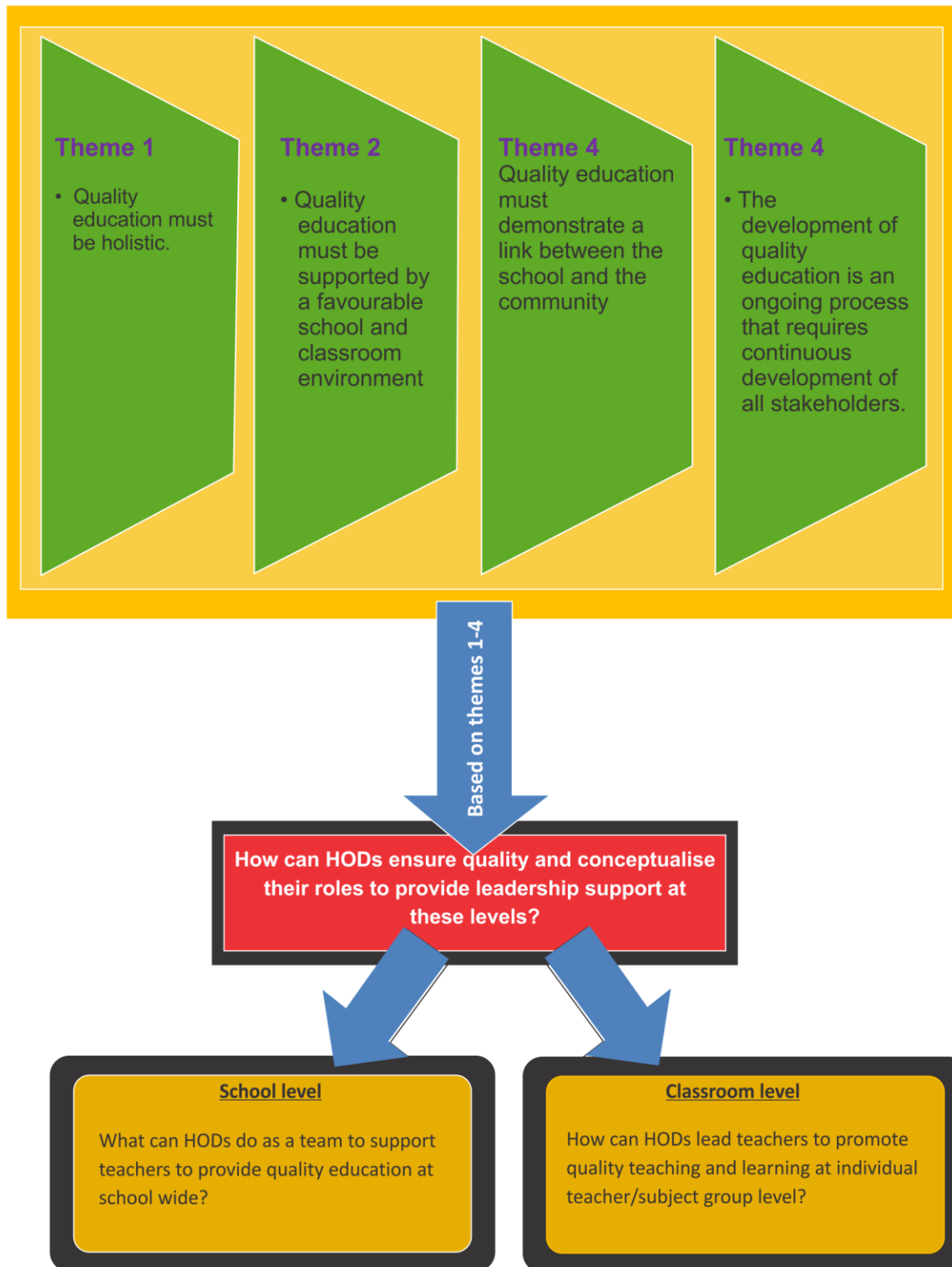


Figure 5.9: Conceptualising HOD's roles at school and classroom level, based on the research findings

Although the participants agreed that they could have an impact on all the themes, they decided to start with the issues raised in Theme 2, which focused more on teaching in the classroom. However, the themes do overlap, and improvement in one area will also have an impact on other areas. The focus of this study is instructional leadership at classroom level. It was important for the participating HODs to think of their roles in this regard in relation to the findings, and how they could respond and provide leadership to support quality teaching and learning. During the meeting, the participating HODs said they wanted to design a model to guide the instructional support that they offered to teachers. They began to see the need for coordinated change. It was the participants' vision to "have a co-created system" (P3), which would help them to accomplish their vision of having holistic education at their school.

Having established what the views of the other stakeholders were, and having realised the roles they should play, the participating HODs and I revisited the data, as a way to help the HODs craft a vision which would guide and align their actions towards their specific envisaged goals. Figure 5.10 below shows the participating HODs working as a team, discussing and reflecting on the drawing and the narrative that they produced from the analysed data, with the intention of crafting a vision that they would use as a guide to design strategies to achieve the goal of quality education.



Figure 5.10: Participating HODs discussing and reflecting on the analysed data, in order to craft a vision

A vision is what one aspires to (Cheng, 2001), and, in this case, it is the HODs' conceptions of how quality education can be achieved at this school.

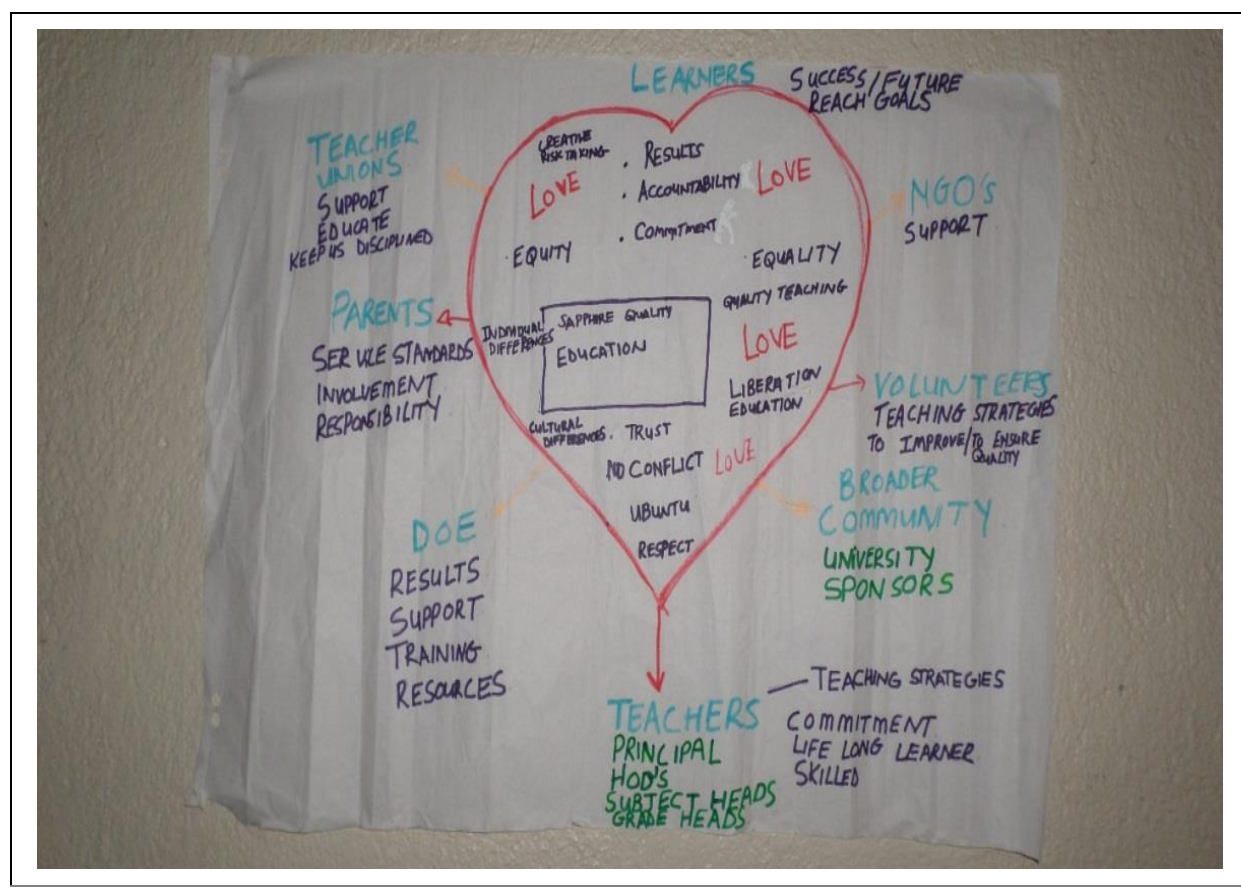


Figure 5.11: A vision towards quality teaching and learning

As the participants worked to create this vision (see Figure 5.11), we discussed its meaning. Below I summarise in narrative form the gist of the discussion, and I indicate how it was derived from the data analysis that the HODs conducted.

As depicted in Figure 5.11, love was the central theme of the vision. The HODs stressed the point that all the stakeholders, particularly the teachers, must treat learners with love: “When you have love of your job and you have love for people whom you are working with, no matter where they are from or what challenges they come with, love will help you to overcome all the challenges” (P1). They believed that if the teachers teach the learners with love in their hearts, their teaching will be more effective, and they will go the extra mile in doing their duties, as everything that they do will be coming from the bottom of their heart. Everything that you do with love, or everything that you do for a person that you love, you do to the best of your ability, and your actions have a considerable positive impact. For this reason, the participants wanted passionate teachers, with an ability to confront the realities of schools in disadvantaged contexts. If learners receive this kind of service from teachers, they can stand a chance to prosper in their academic work, and be developed to face their future life and become productive members of their communities. When teachers care, their energy will begin to flow towards the needs and desires of the cared-for, namely the learners. Values such as respect, love, equity, peace, commitment, and trust are highlighted as essential to be able to provide an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning (Theme 2).

The text outside the heart in the figure 5.11 shows that the HODs would support the teachers to work together with the wider community (Theme 3). One example of this was the training of volunteers to support teachers in the classroom with instructional tasks, such as homework, and to liaise with parents to do this. The vision also represents all stakeholders, such as teachers, the principal, subject heads, grade heads, and volunteers, as lifelong learners, engaged in continuous development (Theme 4). The ultimate aim of this vision is for learners to be successful and reach their potential; hence, education must be holistic (Theme 1). As participant 3 said, “education is a weapon that will brighten or bring success in the future of the

learners”. For this to take place, participants stressed that it is important for quality education that takes place at school to be linked to the broader community that the school serves (Theme 3). A school serving a socio-economically challenged population, such as this one, must be a community school, which offers opportunities for skills development to both learners and community members, as well as academic development. Community members’ involvement in school activities makes the school a “democratic and responsive place to cultural, ethnic and immigrant groups within multicultural education” (T2).

The process of analysis helped the participants to realise that they would need to work as a team to develop a system that would allow them to continuously monitor and improve the quality of education at the school, in a way that involved all stakeholders collaborating to take responsibility for their specific contribution (Theme 4). The task of crafting this vision allowed them to articulate that all stakeholders at the school needed to be developed continuously to increase their commitment, and to focus their participation on teaching and learning tasks, so as to positively impact on their goal of holistic quality education.

The next step was for them to develop strategies that would enable them to take action to accomplish their vision. They decided to begin by focusing on one area which directly related to their role as instructional leaders, because they thought that this was where they could have the most influence on the quality education envisaged by the stakeholders.

5.6 ACTION 4: THE PARTICIPATING HODS WORKED TOGETHER AS A TEAM TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES THAT THEY COULD USE TO SUPPORT TEACHERS TO ENSURE QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THEIR SCHOOL

The participants realised that they had to work together as a team to support teachers instructionally. In their own terms, they said “it came up that we need to sit together as a school, from Foundation phase and Senior phase” (P3). Previously, they had functioned as two teams of HODs in two phases: “It was more of the HODs

in the Foundation phase that worked together and the HODs in the Senior phase that worked together” (P4).

During an action learning set session that I facilitated with the participants, they brainstormed some strategies that they could develop to support teachers instructionally, in order to act on their vision. After realising that working together as a team was useful, the participants decided to get other stakeholders at the school to work in teams as well. The implication was that the HODs would work with the subject heads, the subject heads would work with the teachers, and the teachers would work with the TAs in subject groups. The participants said that “working in groups like this is a relief” (P3). It helped them to feel supported and able to share the burden of work. The strategy that they decided on was for them to share instructional leadership tasks with subject heads, and for the teachers to share classroom management tasks and administrative duties, such as photocopying and record keeping, with the TAs.

5.7 ACTION 5: THE PARTICIPATING HODS WORKED WITH THE TAs, EQUIPPING THEM IN CURRICULUM MATTERS, IN ORDER FOR THEM TO SUPPORT THE LEARNERS

The participants prioritised working with the TAs, because they realised that the teachers did not involve the TAs effectively in classroom matters. The participants developed ideas to empower the TAs, so that they could assist with instructional tasks. One of the participant HODs opted to work with the TAs as a group, and to mentor them on an ongoing basis, until the subject heads could include the TAs in the subject meetings. The HODs said they were aware that some of the teachers were still resistant to having the TAs attend their meetings, as they were not regarded as ‘professionals’. The HODs thought that if they developed the TAs to be able to provide instructional help, the teachers would change their attitude.

This HOD set up meetings with the TAs, with the purpose of empowering them to support teachers instructionally. In this interaction, the TAs said that they would like to learn how to support learners with homework, particularly those whose parents

were not able to help them. The HODs then encouraged teachers to send individual TAs to the homes of learners, as a form of parent group support (Groom, 2006). The HODs took note of this, and requested teachers to train TAs to do basic homework support in each class. Out of this request, a larger project was born (see Figure 6.4), which attests to the potential of creating a space for all stakeholders to share their needs and aspirations.

The TAs also requested training to support the teachers in the classroom. For instance, the TAs could “replace teachers, in classes where there were no teachers because of absenteeism” (P1), and so avoid having to put learners in other classes, which resulted in overcrowded classrooms, which are not learning-friendly environments. The HODs also encouraged the teachers to involve the TAs to maintain order in the classroom when the teacher or the HOD is involved in other school tasks: “For myself as Deputy Principal, when the principal is not here, I have to come to the office for administrative issues, or attend to parents, I leave my class a lot, and I use the TAs to attend to my class whilst I am out” (P1). Current literature attests to the fact that the effect of teaching assistant support in the classroom is currently gaining recognition across a growing body of research (Bentham, 2006).

In addition to empowering and involving TAs to support teachers more in classroom instructional tasks, the participating HODs also organised training for them in administrative work. Figure 5.12 below shows TAs engaged in the administrative duties of photocopying and filing documents.

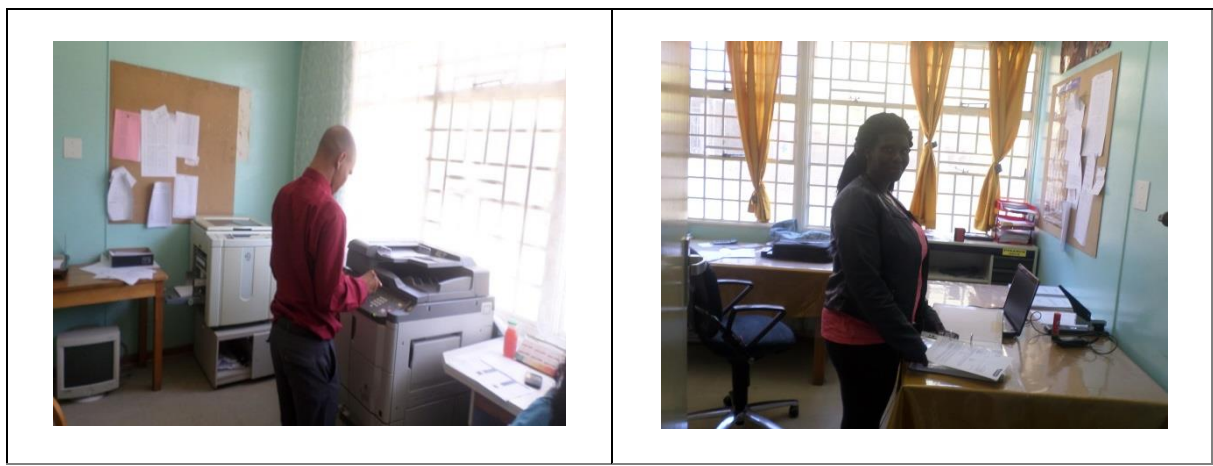


Figure 5.12: TAs doing administrative duties

Participants related one scenario where they were operating under time constraints. They had to issue learner reports, and on that day they found out that “the new teacher did not have the reports handouts, because there was no provision for another subject in the report card” (P2). The HODs had to simultaneously provide support to the teacher who did not have the report cards, and empower two TAs to help the teacher to make the issuing of the report cards a success. Participant 2 mentioned that she “trained those two TAs and showed them how to punch the marks onto the computer, and for that we used my TA, Ms F’s TA and the teacher responsible for that class”. The participants worked with the TAs, “gave them training, showing them what to do and how to do that, developing them to do that kind of a task” (P3). The HODs held focused training sessions, which were based on practice and allowed time for group discussion and reflection about the issues. They also provided the participants with a format to build team collaboration. This allowed both the participating HODs and the TAs to share good practices and to develop skills in working effectively (Groom, 2006). As mentioned, one HOD decided to continue to mentor the TAs as a group, since she found this as a very satisfying task.

5.8 ACTION 6: THE PARTICIPATING HODS WORKED WITH THE SUBJECT HEADS TO EMPOWER THEM TO WORK WITH THE TEACHERS AND THE TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The participating HODs decided to work with the subject heads, so that they could provide support to the teachers. Before, the HODs had been doing the work of a subject head, rather than delegating. As one participant remarked, “[i]t was only when I attended a DBE [Department of Basic Education] training last month, that I realised I did not even know what a subject head was supposed to do” (P4). The HODs decided to delegate more to the subject heads. Each participating HOD communicated with the individual subject heads they were responsible for, to help them to support teachers to develop their instructional plans.

Figure 5.13 below shows a participating HOD reviewing the English First Additional Language (FAL) week plan, and thereafter discussing the plan with the subject head to modify it (see Appendix D2).



Figure 5.13a: A participating HOD reviewing the English First Additional Language (FAL) week plan

Figure 5.13b: The participating HOD involving the subject head to review and modify the FAL week plan to suit their learners

Both the participating HOD and the subject head modified the term plan, by separating reading from phonics (see Appendix D2). The HODs also collaborated

with their respective subject heads to improve the time allocation given for learners in Grades R, 1 and 2. The term plans indicated seven hours, but the HODs felt that the time allocation given on the term plan did not suit the needs of their learners. Consequently, they discussed the matter with the subject heads, and they decided to change the allocated time from seven hours to six hours (see Appendix D3).

The participating HODs learnt to discuss issues with the subject heads before making final decisions, whereas in the past they used to just make decisions unilaterally, and then inform the subject heads of the decisions they had made. This showed that the participating HODs were beginning to dialogue with the teachers, creating a platform for mutual learning and action learning. For instance, Figure 5.14 portrays two HODs and a subject head working together.



Figure 5.14: The participating HODs and the subject head modifying the term plan to suit their context

The HODs recorded the conversation as evidence to show how they were working together to help subject heads to make changes: e.g. “Yes, the children are familiar with shapes” (P2), “OK, shapes are easy, because they see them every day” (P3). In concluding their discussion, P1 mentioned that “I am going to move Counting to week 4”, rather than scheduling it for the final weeks, as this did not benefit the learners.

By empowering the subject heads and sharing duties with them, the participating HODs were practising distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), which helps to empower all teachers to take responsibility for leadership (see section 2.5, paragraph 8, pillar 3).

5.8.1 The participating HODs empowered the subject heads to moderate teachers' work, to establish how well their practice reflected the instructional plan

The participating HODs improved moderation by working together with the subject heads in a developmental team. When they started to collaborate effectively with the subject heads, the participating HODs began to use the subject heads to view teachers' work, as they claimed that 'viewing teachers' work was the baseline to see if the teachers are on par' (P1). They did this moderation, or viewing of teachers' work, to establish the degree of equilibrium between the set vision and the expected outcomes. This decision was taken because the HODs felt that "the support that teachers needed had a lot to do with moderation" (P1). The HODs consequently decided to involve the subject heads in moderation, so that they could work together to ensure effective moderation, and also provide the subject heads with the experience of working in an action learning group, as they would later be expected to work with their teachers in the same way.

The HODs each took on a team of subject heads, appropriate to their phase and subjects. The subject heads were requested to collect the formal assessment tasks from the teachers they were working with. Afterwards, the subject heads "were expected to moderate those tasks, and then gave them to us" (P1). This showed collaboration between the subject heads and the participating HODs, in terms of sharing the workload. The subject heads could do the initial moderation, but by sharing this responsibility with the HODs, the latter were able to gain a better understanding of the developmental needs of the teachers. The initial moderation done by subject heads and the final one done by HODs demonstrates HODs did not leave all their duties to subject heads, they still collaborated with them ensuring that they are doing well, in line with the principles of distributed leadership. This implies

that though HODs were sharing the instructional leadership tasks with subject heads, they were still coordinating the process by ensuring that subject heads are on the right track. What was happening between these two cohorts of leaders was the demonstration of both distributed leadership and PAR values --- co-performance, interdependence and full commitment from both parties (Spillane, 2012). They were all fully involved in ensuring that they play their parts. HODs dependent on subject heads to do duties so that they could have relief to be able to have time for individual contact with teachers and subject relied on HODs for instructional leadership growth.

HODs recognised that the teachers were struggling to “adapt to what is expected of them in terms of moderation and having to do things in a different way” (P2). As participant 2 shared, “previously teachers just drew up their tasks, made the copies, and gave them to the learners”. Nobody checked the assessment tasks: “looking at its format, or checking whether what teachers were assessing in the task was actually what they were asked to assess” (P1). Through what they had learnt by working with the subject heads, the HODs were able to provide targeted support to individual teachers who were struggling to meet the teaching and learning curriculum requirements.

5.9 ACTION 7: THE PARTICIPATING HODS WORKED WITH THE TEACHERS, SUPPORTING THEM IN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALLY

I requested the HODs to document their actions when they worked with the teachers, and to reflect on their learning. In our discussions, the HODs came to realise the importance of establishing good relationships with individual teachers. A good relationship will help teachers to be open to input from the HODs, giving both the teachers and the HODs space to collaboratively discuss issues, develop plans to be implemented, and agree on ways to implement the plans, so as to achieve quality education. Mentoring was one of the ways in which the HODs engaged with the teachers.

The HODs were now free to do mentoring, rather than task work, which they delegated to the subject heads. They mentored the teachers, particularly the ones

who were new to the profession. For example, P1 “worked with one teacher, drawing a lesson plan together and discussing it together”. The participating HOD sat with the teacher after school, and they worked together to develop five lesson plans. The HOD said that the discussion with the teacher took place “until after 5 o’ clock, and we did not realise that it was so late” (P1). In teaching, planning contributes to highly structured teaching, where the objectives of the lesson are set out and clarified, and the key points of the lesson are stressed (Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs & Robinson, 2004).

Apart from mentoring teachers in actual teaching and learning matters, the participants also mentored teachers in classroom administrative tasks, e.g. writing comments on the report cards: “I personally sat with the Grade R teachers to talk about the comments that they are going to write in learners’ report cards”(P3). This participating HOD gave that support, as she said that they had “two new teachers in their group”; therefore she deemed it necessary to support them. They were teaching Grade R, and one teacher was teaching Grade 3. The participating HOD said that she “called the teachers to explain how they write comments on the report cards” (P3). However, even after mentoring the teachers, when the report cards had to be issued, participant 3 mentioned that she “found out that those two teachers made major mistakes, especially on language and spelling”. Participant 3 had to “sit with those teachers and work with them to correct the mistakes, and thereafter teachers had to go and do final reports without mistakes” (P3). Teachers had to correct the report cards by rewriting them, because participant 3 said that “we do not issue report cards with mistakes or with Tippex”, or correction fluid, on them. New teachers enter their careers with varying degrees of skills in terms of instructional planning and delivery. Thus HODs should be willing to act as mentors, coaching beginning teachers to improve their performance wherever their skill is lacking (Podsen & Denmark, 2000). In terms of this study, the collaboration between the HOD and the two teachers shows that now the participants had the time to interact with the teachers, using various instructional support strategies, which included observing teachers’ lessons, as the subject heads were doing the moderation.

The participating HODs extended the support they gave to teachers by involving a subject specialist from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), who collaborated with them in observing teachers' lessons, and thereafter giving them critical feedback: "feedback that showed the teachers' strengths and weaknesses; and some areas that needed improvement" (P1). According to the participating HODs, the subject specialist "observes the lesson, she looks through the lesson plans, and she then sits with the HOD and the teacher to give her feedback, indicating areas on what the teacher is doing well, and the areas wherein the teacher needs support or to improve" (P1). Thus, class observation served as one way of helping the participating HODs to know what is happening in the class, because, according to the literature, effective instructional leaders have a strong sense of what is happening in each class (McEwan, 2009). Lesson observations helped the participants to monitor teachers' progress, to see whether their vision would be reached.

The participants began to identify teachers who needed help, even if they did not ask for it. Participant 1 indicated that she and participant 4 had had "a discussion with teachers", which they led. According to participant 1, "Mr B and I and the other HODs had to sit and discuss this matter and go to the teachers and ask them if they will be able to finish the assessment tasks and submit the marks before the end of the term". In their discussion, participant 1 reported that "teachers could not finish the tasks before the school closes". Consequently, the teachers and the participating HODs "had to decide on other dates for the tasks to be done, which was the first week when the schools reopen" (P1). When the teachers submitted the assessment tasks on their USB drives, "Mr B and I and the two ladies here, being in different phases, we had to check whose marks were in and who were still struggling, and to check how far are they, when will the marks be in, because the due date was the 15th of October 2014" (P1). The participant reported that "Mr B and I had to go after those teachers and ask why they did not submit, and we found out that some of them did not have computer skills" (P1). Participant 1 solved the problem by asking the teachers if she could work with them, and she then showed them how to load the marks onto the computer. The participants mentioned that "it was easier for them to work with the marks on the computer, since they were using the programme to

combine and analyse the marks” (P2). The conversation between the participating HODs and the teachers about the time frames for submitting the assessment tasks and the loading of the marks onto the computer helped the teachers to have a say in their in their practice (Orland-Barak, 2007), and to accept responsibility for the task. Orland-Barak (2007) conceives of professional conversations as social contexts for constructing and negotiating meanings, for creating spaces for participants to put their practice under scrutiny.

What these participating HODs are doing is that they have adopted the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), the policy that has been introduced in South Africa to develop teachers and enhance delivery of quality education, and they have adapted its use for their benefit. For instance, the participating HODs said they have adopted the “IQMS process to monitor teachers’ progress” (P2) throughout the year at their school, instead of using IQMS once a year, as required by the DBE (Department of Basic Education, 2009). The IQMS is based on self-reflection and dialogue, to improve teachers’ performance. The participants explained that “in the IQMS process, there is collaboration between the teacher, the peer of the teacher, chosen by the teacher, and the HOD as a supervisor, so the three of us work together as a developmental team” (P2), but in the case of the participants, they intended to continue working in teams throughout the year, not only during the IQMS period (Department of Basic Education, 2009), because “one-time observations have been shown to have virtually no impact on teaching” and learning (Gormally, Evans & Brickman, 2014:1888). Where monitoring is effective, the quality of teaching is noticeably higher than in schools where monitoring is poor or infrequent (Davies, 2005).

5.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter I described how the participants engaged the stakeholders of this study in defining what determines quality education. Based on the findings, the stakeholders’ perception was that quality education must be holistic, it must be supported by school and classroom environments that are conducive to teaching and learning, and it must demonstrate a link between the school and the community. The

stakeholders further indicated that quality education is an ongoing process that requires continuous development of all stakeholders (parents, TAs, and teachers) involved in the education of the children. The participants undertook seven actions to ensure that the envisaged quality education by the stakeholders was implemented, and they realised the need to develop a system that they could follow to sustain the improvements that they achieved during the research process. The development of the system will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6:

DEVELOPING A MODEL TO IMPROVE HODS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I gave an account of the second cycle of investigation, to explore answers to the question “How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practices?” In this chapter, I present the model constructed by the participants, which is a visual representation of how to improve instructional support to teachers. The model is also offered as a potential guide for instructional leaders in underperforming schools in similar contexts. The process of building a model was based on the two themes identified below, which emerged from participants’ reflections on the data generated in Cycle 2, as well as from reflections on their own experiences of the project:

- The importance of teamwork and participation of all stakeholders to improve instructional support to teachers; and
- The importance of forming good relationships, so as to enhance collaboration between all the stakeholders.

6.2 THEME 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK AND PARTICIPATION OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS, TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS

For the purposes of constructing the model, participants met as an action learning set, facilitated by my promoter, rather than by me, so that they could feel free to reflect honestly on what they had learnt, and how they could use this knowledge to develop a framework to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning could be improved in a sustainable way.

Before their involvement in this study, the participants found it difficult to support teachers, as each HOD had tended to work in isolation, and had been doing the work of the subject head, e.g. moderating portfolios, rather than working in a developmental manner with the teachers. During their engagement in this study, the participants realised that it was imperative to involve other stakeholders – subject heads, teachers, and teaching assistants – in constructing and implementing a vision to improve the quality of teaching and learning at their school. They ensured the participation of all stakeholders, by forming teams, or action learning sets, based on what they had learnt from being part of the leadership action learning set in this research project:

“As HODs, we are now structuring teams of HODs and volunteers, HODs and the executives of volunteers, and HODs and subject heads.” (P3)

They also promoted the importance of reflection within these groups, as they had discovered the importance of reflection for themselves:

“[W]e were sitting and thinking, throwing reflections, and we found that we need to do this, and we need to do that [...] but when we go out and do it, and then we need to sit back and think, ‘Maybe this approach was not the right one, or maybe this approach worked with this one, and not with this one.’” (P1)

“Yes, we are definitely reflecting more now on our practice.” (P3)

The process that the HODs had experienced in this project was action learning, which is a practical and ethical philosophy based on a deeply humanistic potential that commits people via experiential learning to address the persistent problems of organisations and societies (Peddler, 2011). In action learning, what is seen as being important in guiding the process is an exploration of questions, rather than a rushing to finding solutions, and experiential learning is promoted (Peddler, 2011). For example, in this study, the participating HODs discovered that they had acquired a better and fuller understanding of the different needs and requirements of

stakeholders in terms of quality education, so they could use this knowledge to inform how they structured their instructional support.

During action learning sessions, the participants ask fresh questions, and this assists them to learn how to think in a systematic way, and how to handle complex and seemingly unconnected aspects of organisational challenges (Marquardt, 2000). The core questions asked in action learning should help participants to look at underlying causes and long-term consequences, rather than focusing on ad hoc responses to current problems. Such questions should also foreground the importance of relationships and accepting responsibility for being part of the problem, but also being able to be part of the solution (Marquardt, 2000). The participants thus play a major role in constructing knowledge that is relevant to their needs (Wood, 2013).

Action learning also allowed the participants to work in a democratic way:

“It was for the first time that we got the TAs’ and the volunteers’ voices, of what do they want, what they expect from the school.” (P2)

“Education must not only be one-sided, meaning that it must not only be academic.” (P4)

“All the stakeholders should be involved, the learners, the parents, the community, the politicians, the volunteers, which play a big role, especially in the classes as TAs, the clinic, the administrators.” (P3)

The participants’ democratic relations with all the stakeholders helped everyone to better understand their practice, and this resulted in a notable change in confidence, motivation, and commitment (see 6.3). Thus, they were motivated to encourage teachers to develop through action learning, in the hope that they would begin to enjoy their teaching, as they themselves had begun to enjoy providing instructional leadership:

“For me it helped. I was a new HOD, although I have been doing some of the things. I did the course the previous year, but being involved in the study helped me to put some of the things into practice.” (P1)

The HODs wanted other stakeholders to experience an improvement in their practice the same way they did – through teamwork. Due to their learning on this project, the HODs had changed the way they offered instructional support (see section 5.8).

Before their engagement in the project, the HODs mentioned that “as HODs we don’t have time” (P1), “none of us have time” (P2), and “time is one of the challenges that we are sitting with” (P1). The HODs had struggled to meet as a team: “we had two meetings this year, although we said that we will have one meeting every month, but it has been five months, and yet we have met only twice” (P1). Now they met regularly, which allowed them to identify what the instructional issues were, and to collectively decide how to address them. By sharing and dividing the work, they found that they had more time to work developmentally with individual teachers (see section 5.8.1). They were also able to delegate responsibility for the moderation of portfolios to the subject heads (see section 5.8.1).

After going through this research process, the participants learnt that teamwork is important, as it enables staff members to collaborate in a democratic way, where everyone is involved in decision making and is informed about what is happening in their workplace. Teamwork helped the HODs as an instructional leadership team to have one voice:

“Having one voice was something that was lacking before at our school.” (P5)

“What we did before in the Foundation Phase we used to have a meeting, class teachers having the meeting with parents, but we took that to the phase. Now we took it to the both phases [...] we set up the agenda, and before the meeting we agreed, ‘This is what we are going to talk about, and these are the things we need to tell the parents.’ We worked with teachers first to establish a common voice, before

we could all meet with the parents as a team of teachers and HODs, working collaboratively.” (P1)

“What we do in Foundation Phase we can bring it to the Senior Phase, and we work as a unit, and to the volunteers as well, as they can have meetings with parents.” (P3)

The participants learnt that it was advantageous to function in united teams, to provide teachers and teaching assistants with a place where they can feel they belong, and can discuss professional matters. As pointed out by the principal of the school on 6 February 2015, “this project has created an intellectual space for the HODs, something that was lacking before. Now they can talk about teaching and assessment. That place did not exist before”.

The HODs, on their part, learnt to share leadership roles. They mentioned that they now have knowledge of what was expected of the subject heads, that they did not have before, “because the subject head is a new thing, and we did not know what was expected of us in relation to them” (P1). The HODs learnt to practise distributed leadership. For instance, the subject heads were empowered to share leadership roles with the HODs, which allowed the former to develop their leadership capacity. Since distributed leadership is a democratic leadership style, which is linked to social cohesion, equality, trust, and good relationships (Harris, 2004), it is assumed that if HODs continue to lead in a democratic way, the working relationships in the school will improve over time.

6.3 THEME 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONSHIPS FOR PROMOTING COLLABORATION WITH AND AMONG TEACHERS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Having succeeded in forming teams and encouraging teamwork, the participants also strived to establish a good relationship among all the stakeholders, and between the stakeholders and themselves. Such a relationship was embedded in the values of trust, respect, support, commitment, confidence, and independence, which are some

of the values that were embraced in the participants' vision (see Figure 5.11), and which are also the basis for action learning.

The HODs attributed the improved channels of communication and greater levels of trust and respect that they were experiencing to the fact that team meetings allowed open and democratic communication. By modelling the values of trust and respect, the HODs established a good relationship with the teachers, and this enabled them to engage in discussions with the teachers, and to work together as a way of supporting them to develop ways of improving the quality of education at their school:

“Regarding the support that we gave the Foundation Phase, I personally sat with the Grade R teachers to talk about the comments that they are going to write in learners' report cards.” (P4).

Sitting together and discussing instructional matters helped to improve the attitude of the teachers, according to the HODs. By delegating some of their work to the subject heads, the HODs now had time to mentor teachers in instructional matters. The teachers responded to this increased attention in a positive way:

“[T]eachers are more cooperative, they give the work on time, we do not have to run after them, and when there is a problem, they are open, they come and ask for help.” (P3)

The teachers had started to become more proactive, and approached the HODs for help, which they had not done in the past. For instance, “they asked about the files, the things they should prepare for moderation, and they enquired about what the subject head will be looking at during moderation” (P3). Enquiries such as these “showed how communication between us has improved” (P3). The process of communication improved, as the teachers were given a chance to be listened to, or to air their views, and to listen to other stakeholders reviewing and refining their own practice, something that is a common outcome in action research (McAteer, 2013).

The HODs noted that the teachers had also begun to hold themselves accountable to similar values. They felt that the teachers also became more confident, autonomous, committed, and keen to work. They became proactive, not waiting to be told to do things, and they developed trust in their HODs:

“[S]ome of the teachers have already started to do their assessment on the computer, making new assessment forms, because they feel more comfortable and more confident, because they have a better knowledge – they know what they are doing, or what to do.” (P2)

The participants also stated that even the “subject heads know what they are supposed to have as subject heads, they know what all teachers need in their learning areas [...] so if the teachers do not have, for instance, the overviews, or whatever the subject heads have in the file, subject heads can give such materials to the teachers” (P2).

Good relationships and open communication between the teachers and the HODs did not only lead to a high level of commitment to their work among the teachers; it also seemed to make them more enthusiastic:

“In Foundation Phase, this term the teachers were very eager to start, whilst some of them in the past would wait for us to give them the materials [...] this term some of them took the last year’s materials, and started looking at those materials.” (P1)

The participants also managed to earn the teachers’ trust, which was an accomplishment that was brought about by their involvement in this project:

“[O]ne other thing that I want to add is that at this point the teachers trust us more. They feel that we now we have an idea, we know what we are doing, what we are saying when we ask them to do things.” (P2)

Furthermore, the teachers seemed to have developed confidence, due to the fact that the HODs showed that they had confidence in them. As reported by one HOD, “we had a young teacher here, she started last year in the learning area in my team [...] I can see the growth in her. Actually they have been working with policies [...] so we can see that we will have a future HOD who will be equipped” (P3).

Now that they had developed the strategies to support teachers instructionally, the participants realised that they needed to develop a model to guide instructional support in the future. The learning that the participants acquired during the process enabled them to develop their own strategies, which led to improvement in their own situation, and they wanted to sustain these strategies by integrating them into a model. The participants collaborated to design a model to illustrate how they would like to structure support in future, keeping in mind what they had learnt about the value of teamwork and relationships. Figure 6.1 below illustrates the result of this collaborative task.

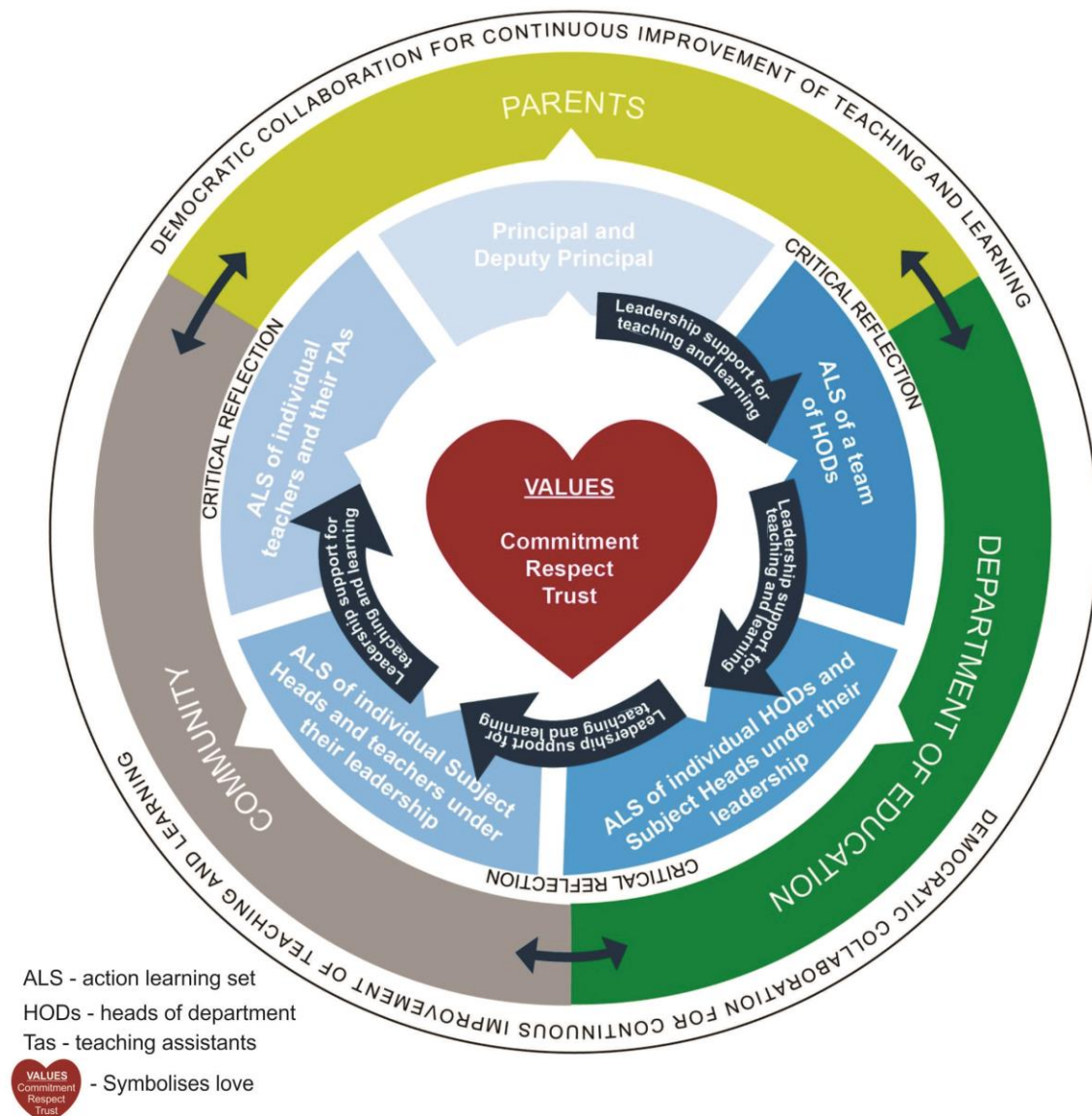


Figure 6.1: A model developed by the action learning set of HODs, to improve their instructional support to teachers

In the next section I will explain the various components of the model and the implication

6.4 A STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL TO ASSIST HODS IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TO TEACHERS FOR QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

The participants realised the importance of involving other stakeholders in the visualisation and realisation of quality education in their context. They believed that improving children's education is not solely the responsibility of the teacher in the classroom, but that the responsibility should be shared among all the stakeholders (see section 5.4.1.3). The purpose of the model, as pointed out in Table 5.2, is to provide guidelines on how the HODs in the school can collaborate with other stakeholders to improve instructional support in order to promote quality education (i) that is holistic, (ii) supported by a favourable school and classroom environment (iii) that links the school and the community, and (iv) that is an ongoing process which requires continuous development of all stakeholders (see section 5.4). To ensure that this vision of quality education was attained, the participants created a democratic, participatory, and collaborative milieu in their social context, which allowed them to better understand and implement the instructional support needs of the teachers. The instructional leadership model designed by the participants to support the teachers instructionally was underpinned by particular values that the participants thought would build them as a group. The stakeholders consisted of members of the school and members of the community, working in various action learning sets, but having a common vision and common values, and sharing responsibilities.

6.4.1 Values that underpinned the instructional leadership process

At the core of the model is a red heart, which signifies love. Love was identified as the central value which motivates all stakeholders. The participants believed that love is a prerequisite to other treasured things that we can share. Some of the most valuable things we can share are our time, our talents, and our energies in serving others, and these things are exactly what the participants wanted all stakeholders to share when teaching learners or serving the community. The participants believed that all educators should operate from the base of love:

“[W]hat we say is that when you love, love of your job, and you have love for people whom you are working with, no matter what and where they from, or what challenges they come with, love will help to overcome all the challenges.” (P1)

The participants emphasised love in their social context, because they know that love is closely linked with trust, respect, good relationships, and total commitment.

The other values that should guide all interactions in meetings, dialogues, and discussions are trust, respect, and commitment (see section 5.3).

6.4.1.1 Trust

Trust is a belief that someone is reliable, good, and honest (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 2010), and it is the most important element for a harmonious, collaborative, efficient, and effective work environment. The participants in this study established and maintained their integrity, and this earned them the trust of the stakeholders, and it benefited them in their learning and development. When the HODs conveyed to the teachers that they trusted them, it increased the stakeholders' self-esteem and their level of initiative (see section 6.2.2). Trust is only established when all people, even the lowest-paid employee or volunteer, feel important and respected as part of the team.

6.4.1.2 Respect

Respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone, prompted by their abilities, qualities, or achievements (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 2010). The participants of this study respected other stakeholders, by making sure that they considered and valued the stakeholders' opinions before making a decision. The participants valued respect, and this helped them to improve team communication, increase the self-confidence of the stakeholders, increase productivity, and create a stronger communal culture, which means that the participants managed to make their school a favourable teaching and learning environment (see section 5.4.1.2) for learners, and an environment that does not exist in isolation, but is linked to society.

6.4.1.3 Commitment

Committed employees make decisions that benefit their colleagues, team, and organisation (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Operating in teams helps them to achieve, because they are organised, they all know what they want to achieve, they share the same vision, and there is a collective feeling of trust within and between groups. Committed teams are more likely to pick up the slack for a missing worker. Their collaboration on tasks usually leads to better ideas and more effective performance, and that is how the participants in this study and the stakeholders operated to improve their instructional support to teachers, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning at their school.

In addition to the above values that the participants embraced, the participants also made sure that school staff members were serving the learners and the members of the community with love.

6.5 LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

As the black arrows around the action learning sets show, the participants managed to improve their instructional support to teachers through distributed leadership. At each level, the learning acquired from working in a team was able to be filtered down to the team at the next level. For example, what the HODs learnt in their team they could take to their respective subject heads, what the subject heads learnt they could filter down to their subject teachers, and so on. They developed the strategy of empowering and sharing their instructional roles with the subject heads, who in most cases worked directly with the teachers (see section 5.8). The outcome of this distributed leadership helped to relieve the HODs' workload, and enabled them to have more time for contact with the teachers, to discuss instructional matters. The teachers also had their workload reduced, since administrative duties, such as photocopying, and classroom management were done by the TAs (see Figure 5.7). This helped them to focus more on teaching and engagement in instructional sessions – dialogues or discussions with their HODs (see section 5.9). The involvement of the TAs in teaching and learning clearly showed that instructional

support to teachers was not limited to HODs and teachers, or subject heads and teachers. There were various teams working together to support the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

6.6 TEAMWORK AT ALL LEVELS OF THE ACTION LEARNING SETS, WITH MEMBERS BEING ENGAGED IN CRITICAL REFLECTION

Because the participants had benefited so much from their regular action learning meetings, they encouraged other teams to do the same. The different action learning sets indicated on the need to meet regularly to critically reflect on what they need to do to improve teaching and learning within their specific sphere of influence. These Action Learning sets are safe spaces for discussion and critical reflection on feedback brought by all members, to improve or sustain the planned strategies agreed upon to improve the situation, or to maintain the achieved improvements. Critical reflection (see the outer white circle around the ALS teams in Figure 6.1) on actions contributed to a positive change in teaching and learning. This process enabled both the HODs and the teachers to customise their own professional development (Metler, 2012) as they learnt from their own experiences. This type of reflection leads to the identification of individual or collective professional development needs.

Critical reflection provides a stronger foundation of knowledge for the next cycle of research, or for deeper investigation of issues. In this way, all the stakeholders act as researchers, committed to continuous professional development, which was one of the factors that was identified as necessary for the provision of quality education (see section 5.4.1.4).

Since the principal is ultimately held responsible for instructional leadership by the Department of Education, there is provision in the model for discussing issues with him (see the light blue arc at the top of Figure 6.1). However, according to this model, the deputy principal, who is also an HOD, is also responsible for instructional matters. This means that the principal of the school can concentrate on administrative matters and other issues. The participants considered that “in the township schools, the

deputy should be accountable for the instructional matters, because it becomes difficult for the principal to handle everything” (P5). Thus it is important for the deputy principal to liaise with the principal and take responsibility for academic improvement, because the HOD/deputy principal is better placed to be in touch with the instructional needs of the teachers and the HODs.

6.6.1 Collaboration between the HODs in the school, to improve their instructional leadership

In the model (see Figure 6.1), the action learning team shown in dark blue is that of the HODs, who work as a team to decide on how best to support instruction in the school. The arc is dark blue, which signifies that HODs are the main people responsible for the instructional leadership support to teachers. As we go around the circle, the shades of blue become lighter, which signifies distributed leadership, and progressively less ultimate responsibility for instructional leadership. By sharing issues from each department, the HODs are able to set collective goals that will best support teaching and learning. They are also able to identify their own learning needs, through critical reflection, and to take steps to meet these needs.

6.6.2 Cooperation between the individual HODs and the subject heads under their leadership

The next arc in the model, which is shown in a lighter shade of blue, represents the action learning set of the individual HODs and the subject heads under their leadership. The blue of this arc is not as dark as that of the arc discussed in section 6.8.1, and this indicates that although the subject heads play a crucial role in instructional support to teachers, their roles carry less responsibility than those of the HODs. By delegating much of the classroom leadership to the subject heads, the HODs are freer to provide support to them, since the subject heads can then identify their support needs through critical reflection and dialogue within the action learning set. The subject heads accept more responsibility to work directly with the teachers. They help the HODs by supporting the teachers in curriculum tasks, e.g. moderation,

thus creating space for the HODs to focus on strategic leadership issues, rather than day-to-day tasks.

6.6.3 Collaboration between individual subject heads and teachers under their leadership

The next action learning set consists of the subject heads and the teams of teachers. Subject heads have the most intimate knowledge of the subject area, and are best placed to provide support to teachers, through monitoring and moderation.

6.6.4 Collaboration between individual teachers and TAs

The next arc in the model represents an action learning set consisting of teachers in a specific department and their TAs. In this action learning set, the teachers and the TAs work together to find ways on how the TAs can become involved in instructional matters, to provide support to the teachers.

Apart from the co-accountability between the participants and the stakeholders in the school, the participants also encouraged the extension of collaboration beyond the school, and this requires staff members to collaborate with members of the community.

6.7 CO-ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

The school is community property; therefore, it should operate in partnership with the community. The model shows a joint effort – equal contribution and equal commitment – between the school and the community when dealing with school activities and school improvement plans. The model portrays that the school is not an isolated entity from the parents, the community, or the Department of Education. This is indicated by the sections surrounding the action learning sets, which represent the parents, the community and the Department of Education. This model stresses that the school should be seen as a social organisation that brings the community together to support the school's reforms and activities. Schools are governed by rules

and regulations, but the parents and the members of the community still deserve to have a say in the school, as they have a right to manage and be responsible for the education of their children (see section 5.4.1). This links with the theoretical framework of this study, which highlights that distributed leadership practice should not only be delegated to people in formal positions, but also to others such as teachers and parents who are urged to take on leadership responsibility in school out of their own initiative (Harris, 2014). Furthermore, children should be granted the opportunity to learn from members of the community, which implies that children need more than just academic development. They also need to learn some other skills from members of the community, which is why it is important for the school to have open links with parents and the community (see section 5.4.1.3). The bond between the school and the community can be advantageous. For instance, in this study members of the community were involved in the cleaning of the school, acting as security guards for the school, doing gardening at the school, and helping in the school's feeding scheme (see Figure 5.6). Engagement of members of the community in school activities occurred because the participants learnt to collaborate democratically with all the stakeholders, e.g. members of the community.

6.8 THE LEARNING ACQUIRED BY THE PARTICIPANTS SPILLANE

As indicated in the outer white circle in the model, democratic collaboration was also seen as a vital factor during the process of improving the quality of education. The participants had learnt the value of democratic collaboration towards shared goals. Thus the participants encouraged the teachers to treat learners and members of the community in a democratic way. The purpose was to ensure collaboration of all, to achieve the quality education that they wanted for their school, as this required continual involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders, which is vital for learning from one another. The actions that the participants undertook during this research helped to focus and energise them towards identifying areas of possible improvement in the functioning of their school, in order to change it. The actions that the participants took – forming collaborative teams, and involving team members in instructional matters, and the sharing of duties – created time for the HODs to interact with the teachers and support them effectively. The actions taken by the

HODs also helped them to develop skills to support the teachers effectively. Their learning allowed them to develop their own model, which was a great achievement for the participants, as the model became the tool that will sustain their improved situation in a way that is suited to their context.

The participants learnt the importance of listening to all views, and encouraging distributed leadership, rather than adopting a hierarchical and autocratic form of leadership. Working in these conditions, the focus was on shared goals, rather than personal goals. They learnt that management is not supposed to be distant from the people it is working with, but that it should rather collaborate with the people in a democratic way. Leaders should seek followers' opinions and ideas, create a conducive work atmosphere, by associating with the stakeholders and their families, and treat all with genuine respect (see section 5.6). In this way, the leaders feel that everyone is pulling together to accomplish a shared vision, rather than a series of personal agendas. This is the essence of teamwork. When a team really works, the players trust one another. Working as teams has become more common in business organisational structures. By putting employees into groups for shared work processes or activities, your organisation benefits from more ideas, better ideas, and increased collaboration (see section 5.4.1.3). Several positive effects result when employees commit to their work teams and the organisation in general. The increased level of collaboration among the stakeholders also leads to a high level of continuous learning from one another among all the stakeholders.

Continuous learning means the ability to continually develop and improve one's skills and knowledge, in order to perform effectively and adapt to changes in the workplace (Morrissey, 2000). With a common shared vision towards effective performance in the workplace, the ability to continually develop and improve one's skills involves taking responsibility for identifying and pursuing areas for development and training that will enhance job performance, being able to conceptualise the learning process, and being involved in reflecting on and learning from one's practice and experiences. In situations like this, all members are learning from their own experiences, and this is likely to result in an equal contribution of all members to the development of the institution (see section 5.4.1.4).

The principle of equality was promoted by participants treating all stakeholders and learners fairly, thereby creating an inclusive social culture for all staff, learners, and members of the community (see section 5.4.1.3). Stakeholders were considered equal partners. Equality became evident only after the HODs began working hand in hand with the stakeholders, (namely the teachers and members of the community) and even treating them as equals, by listening to them and allowing them to be engaged in discussion of issues. In their vision, as explained in section 5.5, they had strived to ensure equal access to opportunities, to enable learners to fully participate in the academic and the cultural learning process. This was reflected in the adoption of action research processes which led to emancipation through collaborative, critical, and self-critical inquiry by practitioners (teachers, principals, or leaders) into a problem or an issue in their own practice.

After they had developed reflective skills, the participants found it easy to communicate and involve the stakeholders in instructional matters in the school. For the participants to develop direction for their envisaged quality education, they developed a vision, which drove their quest. Thus, it was important for the vision to be communicated among all the stakeholders, and to be involved in the actions that helped to make a vision become a reality. Participation and communication are inseparable. For people to be able to work together, communication is imperative. Communication is essential, since it creates a channel for information to flow in the organisation. By communicating the organisation's vision, management defined where it intended to take the school. By communicating the school's values, the participants managed to establish and clarify methods to take the school to the desired destiny. The participants succeeded in all this because of the collaboration that they initiated, and encouraged between themselves and the stakeholders, and among the stakeholders. Such collaboration resulted in the stakeholders becoming active participants, and proactive in the realisation of their quality education, which involved classroom instructional matters (see section 6.2.2), as everyone developed a sense of belonging and equality in the participants' social context. All these positive feelings made collaboration of all the stakeholders in their action learning sets easier and productive.

6.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the model developed by the participating HODs in the study, based on the findings in the literature, as well as the findings of the fieldwork conducted by the researcher. A structural description of the model was presented, followed by a discussion of the participants' learning, and what implications it has for their instructional support to improve the quality of teaching and learning at their school. The following chapter will present a summary of the findings of the study, answers to the research questions, and recommendations emanating from the conclusions drawn from the study.

CHAPTER 7:

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I dealt with one of the aims of this study, namely the development of a model to help heads of department (HODs) in underperforming schools to improve their instructional support to teachers, based on the literature and the findings of fieldwork conducted. The structure of the model and guidelines on how to operationalise it were described and discussed. In this chapter, I present a summary of the study, findings pertaining to the research questions, and recommendations emanating from the conclusions. I will also discuss the contribution of this study to the scholarly body of knowledge.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FOCUS OF EACH CHAPTER

The main aim of this study was to work with HODs to collaboratively develop and explain a model to assist HODs as instructional leaders to improve their instructional support to teachers. The following is a summary of the six chapters that make up the research report, and they outline how the participants and I addressed the research questions.

7.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 presented the rationale for the study and argued for the need to answer the primary research question, namely “How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practice?”

My main aim with this study was to work in a collaborative manner with heads of department to:

- investigate their instructional support roles,
- explore how they can improve their instructional support to teachers, to lead quality teaching and learning, and
- construct theoretical guidelines/a model of instructional support to help heads of department to improve their instructional leadership practice, in order to improve teachers' quality of teaching.

To guide the study further, the following secondary questions were formulated:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?
- What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers?

I also positioned these questions within my paradigmatic choices, and justified my choice of participatory action research (PAR) as the research design for the study.

7.2.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 presented a literature review of the concepts that make up the theoretical foundation of the study. In this chapter, I linked Kruger's (2003) and Riordan's (2003) notion of distributed instructional leadership with my study, and explained how it resonates with the suggestion of the Department of Education (2000, 2007) of putting HODs in charge of supporting teachers instructionally. However, Kruger's (2003) and Riordan's (2003) notion of distributed instructional leadership did not clarify who does what, or how roles should be shared. The Department of Education (2000, 2007) documents require HODs to provide and coordinate guidance on the latest ideas on the subject matter and teaching methods, techniques, evaluation, and aids in their field, and to effectively convey such latest ideas to staff members concerned.

However, the literature indicates that HODs do not provide effective instructional support to teachers, and they are not even clear about their roles. I thus argued for the distribution of leadership roles among all the staff members, with the emphasis on transformational learning. Transformational learning is supported by Kegan's (1982) theory. It aims to change our frame of reference and our way of thinking, and it increases our capacity to see things from different perspectives (Illeris, 2009). Thus, adoption of transformational type of leadership was helpful to change not only what the participants knew, but also how they had come to know it (Illeris, 2009). This learning changes knowledge, increases confidence to learn and self-perceptions of the ability to learn, and increases self-esteem as a learner, which are all factors which help to sustain the ability to be lifelong learners (Illeris, 2009). The adoption of transformational leadership type was planned to enhance HODs' understanding of not only their roles, but also how to embody these roles to support teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

7.2.3 Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 I explained and justified the research methodology and research methods I chose for this study. I used critical theory as the epistemological paradigm, and participatory action research as the methodological paradigm. I purposely chose to work with HODs in underperforming schools from primary to secondary level. The research methods consisted of qualitative questionnaires, participant narratives, drawings with narratives, transcripts of recorded action learning set meetings, analysis of group exercises, and observations. The data were thematically analysed. I chose this methodology to allow participants to become fully involved in the improvement of their own practice. This chapter also outlined methods used to ensure trustworthiness, and it addressed ethical concerns.

7.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 addressed two of the three secondary research questions of the study, namely:

- How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers? and
- What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?

Based on the findings of fieldwork that I conducted, three themes emerged, namely (1) the HODs lacked knowledge about instructional leadership, (2) they focused on management, rather than on leadership, and (3) the HODs had a poor relationship with the teachers and with each other. Regarding the findings from the empirical data, it became clear that the HODs did not support the teachers instructionally, as the HODs lacked knowledge about instructional leadership. They did not know what to do and how to do it. Instead of leading the teaching and learning, they focused on administration and management of the school, which included admission of learners, maintaining discipline at the school, and fundraising, rather than leadership of actual teaching and learning, or supporting teachers in the classroom. Furthermore, these HODs also had poor relationships with the teachers and with each other. They were not working together as a team, and they were not used to collaborating with teachers. These problems hindered them in supporting teachers instructionally. It also became apparent that the HODs in this particular school were not comfortable with investigating their practice, and they felt threatened by this exposure of their lack of knowledge and competence, so that they ultimately decided to withdraw from the study. However, we had enough interaction to generate data to answer the above research questions.

In addition to generating these themes, this cycle of action and enquiry (Cycle 1) was an important learning experience for me. The critical reflection on my learning in this cycle helped me to realise that my own practice as a researcher was not consistent with the values of PAR. For instance, I realised that instead of facilitating the action learning set meetings with the participants, I directed them, dominating and contributing more than the participants during the discussions. However, the learning I acquired during the first cycle informed the steps and approaches that I used in the second cycle. I learnt to work more collaboratively with the participants. This chapter

emphasised the importance of critical reflection on the part of the researcher, and the need to turn negative experiences into opportunities to learn, which is consistent with the principles of action research.

7.2.5 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 addressed the third sub-question of this study, namely:

- What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers?

The democratic collaboration between the HODs and the other stakeholders was enhanced through collaborative cycles of enquiry and action, as detailed in Figure 5.1. Before the participants could embark on improving their situation, their first action was to identify and prioritise the issues.

7.2.5.1 *Cycles of action and enquiry*

Action 1: The participants worked as a team, and they identified the following problems, which were phrased in the form of questions:

- (1) “How do people perceive quality education at this school?” The participating HODs thought that it was important for them to have a common understanding of the type of quality education all teachers and teaching assistants want for their school, before they can start to influence that quality.
- (2) “How can we offer effective support to teachers?” The participating HODs did not have time to meet with each individual teacher and give them feedback on a regular basis. Their concern was that they did not know whether what the teachers claimed to be doing was what was actually taking place in the classroom, since they were merely moderating teachers’ work on an individual basis, and due to lack of time spent with the teachers, as they were just giving the teachers written feedback on their portfolios, rather than interacting with them.

- (3) “How can we get all teachers on board?” This question was identified, as some teachers were resistant to using the resources provided, such as teaching assistants (TAs).
- (4) “How can we mobilise teaching assistants to help teachers more in the classroom?” The participating HODs were concerned that some teachers do not use TAs effectively in the classroom, delegating to them menial jobs, such as cleaning, rather than using them to support teaching and learning.

After identifying their problems, the participants decided to start working on the first problem. For this matter, they realised that it is important for them to first understand how the stakeholders in the school conceptualised the term “quality” with regard to education in their specific school context. This led to Action 2.

Action 2: The HODs gathered data from the teachers, the parents, and the TAs to determine their vision for quality teaching and learning in their social context, and they then embarked on a series of actions, Actions 3 to 7, to operationalise their vision through the instructional support that they offered to teachers and teaching assistants (see Figure 5.1).

Action 3: Based on data generated by Action 2, the HODs developed a vision to guide their actions when working with other stakeholders, to effect change in the quality of teaching and learning at their school. The vision of quality education that was crafted from the input of all the stakeholders was that (i) quality education must be holistic, (ii) it must be supported by a favourable school and classroom environment, (iii) the community must be involved in instructional matters, and (iv) it is an ongoing process that requires continuous development of all the stakeholders involved in the education of the children, that is, TAs, teachers, subject heads, and HODs.

Action 4: The HODs worked together as a team to develop strategies that they used to support the teachers to ensure quality teaching and learning at their school. They realised that teamwork would be of benefit at all levels, since it would enable

distributed leadership, freeing them to concentrate on supporting and mentoring, rather than just controlling and monitoring.

Action 5: One HOD set up meetings with the TAs, with the purpose of empowering them to support teachers instructionally. The aim was to empower TAs in curriculum matters to support teachers more in the classroom, rather than doing menial work. For instance, the TAs were trained to do classroom management and administrative work of photocopying documents, such as question papers and work schedules, recording learners' marks, and designing mark sheets. They were also empowered to do filing (see Figure 5.12).

Action 6: The HODs worked with the subject heads to empower them to work with the teachers and the teaching assistants to improve teaching and learning. For instance, the HODs decided to share duties such as moderation with the subject heads.

Action 7: The HODs worked with the teachers individually, in order to provide space for individual development. This included mentoring the teachers and engaging in dialogue and discussion with them.

7.2.6 Chapter 6

In this chapter I presented the model constructed by the participants, which is based on the findings of the Cycle 2 fieldwork and the literature. The model which the participants designed served as a tool to sustain the improvements that they had attained during the process of the study. It explains the improvement in the HODs' instructional support to teachers as a result of democratic collaboration between the various stakeholders, based on the principles and values of action learning and action research. Instructional leadership was distributed throughout the various levels of management, namely:

- a team of HODs,
- individual HODs, and subject heads under their leadership,

- individual subject heads, and teachers under their leadership, and
- individual teachers, and their TAs.

The HODs as agents of change filtered down their learning to all stakeholders in this way, and the principal was kept informed and consulted by the deputy principal.

7.3 PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

This research provided me with valuable learning to enhance my own practices as a researcher and a lecturer of educational leadership. I learnt that good relationships between instructional leaders and the teachers under their leadership are essential for any improvement in the quality of education. Instructional leadership needs to be carried out within an enabling relationship which involves collaboration, coaching, a safe space to discuss problems, and the ability to empower everyone in the organisation to act as a mentor to others under their leadership. This notion of distributed instructional leadership is something that is not currently practised in many schools, which still have a hierarchical approach to leadership.

This study taught me that when a leader allows those under their leadership to learn from their own experiences, learning comes from inside, which allows them to develop ownership of such knowledge. This implies that leaders have the power to make the improvement of quality education a success, depending on how the instructional leaders are 'steering the wheel', and from which position they are operating, that is, facilitating and collaborating with the teachers, or dominating and controlling them. This kind of learning is sustainable, because it is experiential learning, which is built from an individual's practice. This helped me to realise that allowing people to do things by themselves accelerates learning, it makes learning enjoyable and sustainable and such learning is acquired in a favourable atmosphere, which is peaceful and a relaxed milieu, where the input of all is respected. This was one of the themes of the vision for quality education (see section 5.4.1.2). During the process I realised that the HODs began to enjoy their work. This was shown by comments made by the HODs about the teachers (see section 6.3), which were

different from how the HODs felt about the teachers at the beginning of the research project (see section 5.5, paragraph 6). The regular reflection on the process and their own learning allowed the participating HODs to develop as leaders, and all stakeholders to improve their own practices. They not only learnt how to be better teachers; they also learnt how to interact with and collaborate with others to this end. The learning was thus holistic, and not limited to the content matter of the subject that the teacher was teaching. The teachers learnt to involve the community (TAs) as partners in improving instructional leadership. In other words, the process was experiential learning, as teachers were embodying the themes generated in their research.

In my practice as a researcher, I learnt that it is important to be patient with people, considering the fact that what you know as a facilitator is not known by the participants, and they need to develop at their own pace. Therefore, as a facilitator in the field of education leadership and management, I learnt that when working with instructional leaders such as subject heads, HODs, and principals, it is important to let them take the lead in developing their social context, by allowing them to improve their practice through learning from their experiences at their own pace, and also allowing them to reflect on their own practice. However, all these happen, when the practice of PAR is right, if not the situation takes an adverse direction.

Limitations of PAR

The study conducted through PAR can yield desirable results, but such findings would only be suited to that context or to the context with similar situation, therefore generalization of the findings is not the answer in the practice of this paradigm. The practice of this methodology requires skill. If the facilitator is not skilful, the research would end up revealing undesirable outcomes, for instance the withdrawal of participants due to lack of commitment, and power struggle by facilitator as it happened in chapter four.

7.4 SYNTHESIS OF RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I conclude this study by answering the research questions of this study, taking one research question at a time, and explaining how it was answered. The three research sub - questions, (i) “How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers”?, (ii) “What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers” and (iii) “What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers”, will be answered first, and then the main question of the study “How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practice’ will be answered last.

7.4.1 Synthesis of research

The first sub question of this study is ‘How do heads of department conceptualise their role in providing instructional support to teachers?’ Research findings of the first cycle of the research process revealed that HODs of this study focussed more on managerial and administrative tasks, which involved school budgets, SGB meetings, disciplining learners and keeping learners’ report cards rather than doing their instructional tasks of supporting teachers in classrooms, (see figure 4.2). As shown by empirical data, these HODs focussed more on managerial or administrative duties rather than supporting teachers instructionally because they lacked knowledge about instructional leadership. They did not know what to do or how to do it: they struggled to know what they should do to improve instruction.

The second sub – question of this study was ‘What problems do heads of department experience in their instructional support to teachers?’ The answer to this question is also based on the findings of the first cycle of the research process. The participating HODs had bad relationships with teachers, and with each other, they were not used to working in teams, this made it difficult for them to function well as instructional leaders. The findings of the second cycle also revealed that HODs were not functioning as a unit. HODs worked as two teams in one school. HODs of the foundation phase were working alone as a separate team from the HODs of the

senior phase. Furthermore, these two teams had a problem that they did not have a system in place that could help them to support teachers instructionally – they only moderated the quality of the teachers’ work, without any developmental input.

The third sub – question which was ‘What can heads of department do to improve their instructional support to teachers’, was answered by the research findings of the second cycle of the research. Based on the findings the answer to the latter question was that HODs started functioning as a team, and they democratically collaborated with other stakeholders like subject heads, sharing duties with them and these HODs also encouraged other stakeholders (subject heads, teachers, TAs) to work in teams as well. This resulted in HODs working with the subject heads, the subject heads working with the teachers, and the teachers working with the TAs in subject groups. In addition, HODs consulted and involved other stakeholders in planning and the decision making related to the improvement of the quality they desired for their social context, see (figure 5.1 Action 2) and (figure 5.3b).

The main question of this study, ‘How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practice’ was also based on the second cycle of research. Based on the findings, HODs decided to develop a model based on all the strategies that they used to improve their situation, see figure 6.1. The purpose of developing the model was to sustain the improvement they have accomplished in their social context. The model was based on the own values that they embrace at their school and also inclined to action research. Their model shows the distribution of instructional leadership roles in all levels --- a team of HODs, individual HODs and the subject heads under their leadership, individual subject heads and teachers under their leadership and individual teachers and their TAs. In conclusion, the participating HODs as agents of change in this study cascaded their learning to all stakeholders in this manner and the principal was kept informed and consulted about the instructional matters by the deputy principal since she was the leader of the HODs team. The powerful learning acquired by the HODs of this study was on their honest reflections during their actions.

As a point of departure, based on my own learning, and on the findings of this study, I present the following as recommendations for policy makers, teacher education, and further research.

7.4.2 Recommendations for policy makers

The findings of this study lead me to **conclude** that reflections are powerful tools for learning, which benefit both the HODs and the teachers. When involved in reflective practice, HODs and teachers develop ownership of their learning, rather than being provided with policy guidelines that they may not understand, but are obliged to implement, or 'tick lists' and forms that they need to complete, without their engaging in a developmental process. They need to learn how to be lifelong learners, as they are expected to develop this skill in learners. It is important to note that sustainable learning or improvements in learning cannot be forced. Sustainable learning comes from the inside in a favourable environment (good relationships, discussion, trust, respect, commitment, and democratic collaboration) among the people involved. It is thus **recommended** that policy concerning instructional support be reviewed to include more reflective collaborative processes.

7.4.3 Recommendations for teacher education

Based on the findings of this study, I **conclude** that teachers' training at both pre-service and in-service levels should incorporate more action research/action learning in their developmental programmes, for them to learn to practise the skill of learning and developing themselves, or putting theory into practice in their teaching. Incorporation of action research into teachers' training will stimulate self-reflection and group reflection, which will result in sustainable professional development. Self-reflection and group reflection will be powerful and helpful in instilling a spirit of collaboration among teachers. I therefore **recommend** that:

- Pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes should incorporate action learning/action research as a core feature, with increased emphasis on developing teachers as reflective practitioners, and

- Facilitators responsible for training teachers should model democratic interaction with teachers, listening to teachers, not instructing them, but working together as learning partners.

7.4.4 Recommendations for future research

This study has answered the question “How can heads of department in underperforming schools improve their instructional leadership practices?” However, there are several other questions which arose during the process, and they need to be investigated further. For example:

- How can community members be engaged in a similar process of improving support to teachers?
- How can teaching assistants be developed as instructional support teachers?
- How can learners be developed to improve their engagement in their learning process?
- How useful would this instructional support approach be in a well-resourced school?
- How could this instructional support model be used to develop school leadership in general?
- How could this instructional support model be adapted to include parents to support instructional leadership?
- How does this model of instructional support impact on teacher motivation and well-being?
- How does this model of instructional support impact on school climate?

It is also suggested that a longitudinal study be conducted to determine the impact of this model of instructional support on learner academic performance.

7.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge concerning education leadership, and specifically to instructional leadership. It has shown that distributed leadership can be attained through adoption of an action research and action learning approach to instructional support. This is an alternative approach to instructional leadership, which tends to be regarded as the responsibility of the principal, rather than being seen as being distributed among all the stakeholders. This is particularly the case in under-resourced schools in South Africa. The study has shown that even in very under-resourced schools, improvement in the quality of teaching and learning can be attained through collaboration, and the adoption of life-enhancing values, such as love, trust, respect, and commitment. This study has also provided a practical case study of instructional support improvement. Furthermore, the model developed in this study has provided theoretical guidelines for improvement of instructional leadership and can serve as a useful heuristic for other school leaders working in similar contexts internationally. It has provided an example of how a participatory, action learning approach to improving instruction develops the capacity of all teaching staff to generate knowledge to change their practice. This knowledge is useful, not only in disadvantaged contexts, but also in well-resourced schools as it also provides for ongoing professional development in the field of instructional leadership. The model has demonstrated a changed perspective of instructional leadership. It acknowledges both formal and informal leadership practice perspective through distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2012). This leadership perspective is further linked to PAR, influenced by notions of Zuber-Skerritt (2011), and Hallinger, (2003). In thinking about instructional leadership, is associated with Zuber-Skerritt's notion of action leadership (2011), as well as transformational leadership as expounded by Hallinger, (2003). Zuber-Skerritt, (2011) explains action leadership as an inventive, pioneering, collaborative and self-developed way to lead people. This leadership style is not hierarchic, but based on the democratic values of autonomy, equal opportunity, belonging and self-realization

(Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). This is a great contribution to the education management and leadership field.

In terms of teaching practice, the contribution of this study is that it has shown that an action learning and action research approach to improving instructional leadership can improve motivation, enjoyment of the job, and thus the general well-being of teachers. Since teachers are the heart of the school, teachers who are motivated enjoy their job and they contribute to an improved school climate for teaching and learning. This study will enlighten instructional leaders to treat teachers as learning partners, and to operate as teams in their social contexts, teams that are driven by a clear, common vision, which is developed, communicated, and agreed upon by all stakeholders. Working together with followers under this leadership practice can lead to a high degree of co-performance, which is the focus of a distributed leadership practice perspective, a theoretical framework of this study (Spillane, 2012). Any kind of improvement planned under conditions such as those in this study becomes easier to implement, because the stakeholders have a feeling of ownership of such improvement.

In contradiction to the literature, another contribution shown by this study is that HODs are best-placed to support teachers instructionally, due to their expertise in the subjects that they are leading, as a result of their specialisation in these subjects. The literature suggests that principals should be instructional leaders, but, in practice, they do not have time. They are overloaded with managerial and administrative work, which is also necessary for the functioning of the school. As has been clearly demonstrated by this study, HODs are best-placed to be effective school-based instructional leaders and this demonstrates the importance of multiple leaders for the development of instructional leadership, a finding which is supported by existing literature on the theory (Spillane, 2012).

In terms of methodology, the contribution of this study is that it has demonstrated that action research and action learning can enhance instructional leadership at all levels. This study has managed to link the instructional leadership theory with action research. It has shown that it is not sufficient for leaders to distribute duties, as is

signified by distributed leadership theories. However, it is important for leaders to take action to liaise with other stakeholders, to investigate what is holding back development in their contexts, and to negotiate democratically on how instructional leadership can be improved within their specific social contexts.

7.6 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study are limited to the sample of 10 HODs from two underperforming schools, which makes it a typical qualitative research study. Inclusion of more HODs and more schools in the sample could have produced different research results. The fieldwork was conducted in peri-urban areas, so the model could perhaps not be suitable for schools in rural areas.

7.7 CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to work collaboratively with HODs in underperforming schools to develop a model that will assist HODs as instructional leaders to improve their instructional support to teachers. The reason for conducting this study was to fill the gap that was evident from the literature. The literature has suggested that principals are in a position to lead instructional tasks. However, they have administration tasks that make it difficult for them to provide adequate instructional support to teachers. This study argued that HODs should take an active role as instructional leaders. Thus, being guided by the primary research question, I used democratic methodological paradigms and data gathering strategies to conduct this study, to allow HODs to be actively involved in working out the improvement of their social context, without any undue external influence. The findings from Cycle 1 demonstrate that the HODs lacked knowledge about instructional leadership, they focused on management, rather than leadership, and they also had poor relationships with the teachers and with each other. They felt threatened by this exposure of their lack of knowledge and competence, and they therefore withdrew from participating. However, the learning that I gained from this cycle enabled me to improve my practice as a researcher, and also to gain insight into the types of

difficulties that HODs face in attempting to provide instructional leadership in under-resourced and underperforming schools.

The findings from Cycle 2 demonstrate that improvement of quality education is an ongoing process which requires continuous development of all organisational stakeholders involved in the education of the children. The findings from this cycle also reveal the importance of collaboration, action learning, and reflection. Action learning allows people to do things by themselves, at their own pace in a favourable atmosphere – a peaceful and relaxed milieu. Learning acquired under these conditions does not only contribute to accelerated learning, but also to an enjoyable and sustainable learning experience. Lastly, the findings of this study demonstrate the need for not only the learners to be lifelong learners, but for all stakeholders who are involved in the education of learners to be given the opportunity to become lifelong learners as well.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

ETHICS APPROVAL FROM NWU



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900
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Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel +27 18 299 4849
Email Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: ACTION RESEARCH FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: BEYOND SERVICE LEARNING																														
Project Leader:	Prof L Wood																													
Student/Research Team:	Prof P du Toit; Me A Seobi; R Setlhare-Meltor; R Waddington; C Langenhoeven; L Mphahlele																													
Ethics number:	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>0</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="6">Project Number</td><td colspan="2">Year</td><td colspan="3">Status</td></tr></table> Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation	N	W	U	-	0	0	0	4	0	-	1	4	-	A	2	Institution			Project Number						Year		Status		
N	W	U	-	0	0	0	4	0	-	1	4	-	A	2																
Institution			Project Number						Year		Status																			
Approval date: 2013-03-07	Expiry date: 2018-03-06																													
Category	N/A																													

Special conditions of the approval (if any): None

General conditions: While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following: - The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC: - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project. - The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-IRERC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited. - The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC and new approval received before or on the expiry date. - In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC retains the right to: - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project; - withdraw or postpone approval if: - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected, - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-IRERC or that information has been false or misrepresented, - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately, - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

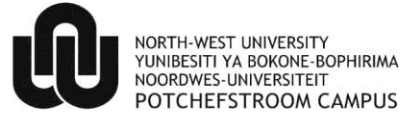
Yours sincerely

Linda du Plessis
Digitally signed by Linda du Plessis
DN: cn=Linda du Plessis, o=NWU,
ou=Vaal Triangle Campus,
email=Linda.duplessis@nwu.ac.za,
c=ZA
Date: 2015.07.15 16:04:23 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



Dear Sir/ Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at one secondary school in the North-West Province

I hereby request permission to do empirical research at two schools in the North-West Province. I am a doctoral student in Education Leadership and Management at North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. My aim with this project is to improve the instructional support of Heads of Department through a Participatory Action Research **(PAR)** approach. PAR requires **democratic interaction, participation, and collaboration between the researcher and the participants**.

This research aims at strengthening the instructional leadership role of HODs at schools by helping them to develop practical and contextually relevant guidelines for enhancing their instructional support to teachers. I have already made contact with two principals who gave me permission to conduct research at their schools. I will meet regularly with HODs at each school but these meetings will occur outside the normal instructional hours of the school. I envisage working with the participants from February until November 2013.

All information obtained will be handled confidentially, adhering to the ethical rules of research determined by the North-West University. As part of ethical measures, aspects like informed consent, voluntary participation and anonymity will be respected and adhered to. Lastly, the thesis and findings will be made available to the Department of Education.

I include the promoter's contact details for use, if a need arise.

Contact Information for the promoter

Professor Lesley Wood

Tel +27-18-299 4770

Mobile: +27 082 296 9202

Fax+27-18-299 4788

I hope you will consider this request and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Boitshepo Audrey Seobi

APPROVAL FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



education and training

Lefapha la Thuto le Katiso
Departement van Onderwys en Opleiding
Department of Education and Training
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

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DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT

TLOKWE AREA OFFICE

OFFICE OF THE AREA MANAGER

TO: BOITSHEPO AUDREY SEOBI
NWU POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

FROM: MS S.S. YSSEL
AREA MANAGER
TLOKWE AREA OFFICE

DATE: 18 FEBRUARY 2013

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS
TO IMPROVE THE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT OF HOD'S

The above matter refers.

Permission is herewith granted to you to visit two Secondary Schools in Potchefstroom under the following provisions:

- the activities you undertake at schools should not tamper with the normal process of learning and teaching.
- you inform the principal of your identified school of your impending visit and activity;
- you provide my office with a report in respect of your visit;
- you will obtain prior permission from this office before availing your findings for public or media consumption.

Wishing you well, in your endeavour.


MS S.S. YSSEL
AREA MANAGER
TLOKWE

AO131297/dp

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOL ONE AND SCHOOL TWO



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Letter to the Principal

25 / January / 2013

Dear Sir/ Madam

Request for permission to conduct research at your school

I hereby request permission to do empirical research at your school. I am a doctoral student in Education Leadership and Management at North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. My aim with this project is to improve the instructional support of Heads of Department through Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. PAR requires democratic interaction, participation, and collaboration between the researcher and the participants. Therefore participants (HODs) from your school will be expected to attend collaborative sessions once per week, after school hours for 1-2 hours. I hope to commence the study in February 2013, and end in November 2013.

This research aims at strengthening the instructional leadership role of HODs by helping them to develop practical guidelines suited to their specific context and use those guidelines to enhance their instructional support to teachers. In order for this to happen, HODs from your school will be expected to meet once a week to share issues that hinder their instructional support to teachers and thereafter develop strategies that will help them to improve their instructional support to teachers.

All the information gathered during the meetings through interviews and discussions will be videotaped, and photographs will be taken. However, all the information will be handled confidentially, adhering to the ethical rules of research determined by the North-West University. As part of ethical measures, aspects like informed consent, voluntary participation and anonymity will be respected and adhered to. Lastly, the findings will be made available to the Department of Education and to yourself.

I hereby give permission for the research to be conducted in this school.

Principal's signature

Date

This study has been explained to the Principal and this form is signed voluntarily.

(Researcher's signature)

Date

Contact Information for the promoter

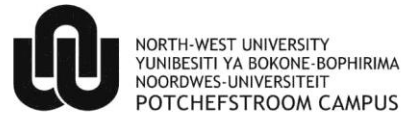
Professor Lesley Wood

Tel +27-18-299 4770

Mobile: +27 082 296 9202

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APPENDIX A1 CONSENT LETTER: TO PARTICIPANTS



Participant Informed Consent Letter

25 / January / 2013

Dear Sir/ Madam

Request for permission to conduct research in collaboration with you

I hereby request your consent to participate in my research study. I am a doctoral student in Education Leadership and Management at North-West University, Potchefstroom campus. My aim with this project is to improve the instructional support of Heads of Department through a Participatory Action Research **(PAR)** approach. PAR requires **democratic interaction, participation, and collaboration between the researcher and the participants**. Therefore, you will be expected to meet once a week with other participants and the researcher for interaction. The meetings will not hinder the instructional time, they will take place after school hours. The research will commence in February until November 2013.

What is expected of you: As mentioned above, you will meet with other HODs. During the weekly meetings, you will be expected to:-

- **Identify problems** that hamper with your instructional support to teachers that you are leading in the learning area /s that you are heading. After sharing such issues, you will be expected to collaborate with group members (other HODs) to,
- **plan strategies** that can be applied to deal with the raised challenges that hinder with instructional support to teachers. Thereafter you will be expected to,
- **implement** the planned strategies with the teachers that you are leading and
- **observe** and record the changes if there are any and,
- write your **reflections** based on the situation and thereafter you will be expected to

- **report** the developments to the collaborating group of HODs at the following meeting.
The collaborating group of HODs will analyse the feedback shared by each and every individual member and come up with improved strategies that will be
- **planned** for implementation to improve the instructional support given to teachers by HODs to bring teacher development and the improved quality of teaching and learning.

Following the above until the researcher and the participants are satisfied that effective change has been implemented, will help the researcher and the participants to develop the practical guidelines or model that will strengthen the HODs instructional support to teachers, which is the aim of this study.

All the data pertaining to this study will be obtained through interviews, discussions and other participatory methods. All discussions will be recorded. However all the information pertaining to this study will be handled confidentially, adhering to the ethical rules of research determined by the North-West University. As part of ethical measures, aspects like informed consent, voluntary participation and anonymity will be respected and adhered to. Lastly, you will be informed of the findings and be given a copy, if you wish to have it.

I also include the promoter's contact details for use, if a need arise.

Contact Information for the promoter

Professor Lesley Wood

Tel +27-18-299 4770

Mobile: +27 082 296 9202

Fax+27-18-299 4788

Thank you

Kind regards

Boitshepo Audrey Seobi

APPENDIX A2 VOLUNTARY LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

Voluntary Consent Form

A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO IMPROVING THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF HEADS OF
DEPARTMENT IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS

If you agree, please place an "X" in the yes boxes to show that you understand and agree with each statement.

1.	I understand the information about the study in the Information Letter. Any questions I had were answered.	Yes I understand -----
2.	I realize that participation is completely voluntary and that I can stop participating in the study at any time. If I am uncomfortable answering any question, I may choose not to answer.	Yes I understand -----
3.	I understand that my full name will not be used, nor will specific details of where I live be shared, when information from the interviews is used by researchers.	Yes I understand -----
4.	I understand that what I say may be quoted at great length in publications, presentations and the final report. If I become concerned with anything I said, I can ask for parts or all of what I said not to be quoted. I may also have any parts of the interview deleted if I want.	Yes I understand -----
5.	I understand that it is my decision to take part in this study. If I do not wish to participate, or want to withdraw from the study at any time, my wishes will be respected without penalty.	Yes I understand -----
6.	I understand that photographs and video clips I appear on might be used in this study. These photos will be used in the dissertation and research articles/ chapters / conference papers that may be used world-wide. I give permission for my photos to be used.	Yes I understand -----

I agree to participate in this study.

Research Participant's signature

Date

This study has been explained to the participant and this form is signed voluntarily.

(Researcher's signature)

Date

Contact Information for the promoter

Professor Lesley Wood

Tel +27-18-299 4770

Mobile: +27 082 296 9202

Fax+27-18-299 4788

APPENDIX B:

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING EXERCISE

APPENDIX B1: “TURNING POINTS” EXERCISE

Appendix B1: Turning Points” Exercise

“Turning Points” Exercise

An activity for building relationships in small groups

Form small groups

Form small groups of *three (or at most four)* people. As far as possible, work with *people you don't know* rather than with people you do. Aim for groups that are as *diverse* as you can make them. *Exchange* people between small groups to improve the group composition.

Individual work

Think back over your life so far. Begin with your first memories and work towards the present. As you do so, identify “*turning points*” — events, or people, or both, who made a difference. As you identify a turning point, note it down.

When you have six or more turning points, choose *three* that you are willing to talk about in your small group. For each of these three turning points, prepare brief answers to these three questions:

- What happened?
- Why was it a turning point?
- What are the turning point's *present results* — what does it say about *you, now*? How are you different as a result of that turning point?

It's best not to write detailed scripts that you have to read. Keyword notes are enough.

Exchange information in small groups

Reassemble in your small groups. Each person in turn tells of *one* of their turning points. When each person has told of one turning point, go around the group for the second turning point. Repeat for the third turning point.

(In other words don't relate all three turning points at once. Go around the small group three times.)

When you're relating a turning point, *look* at the other people in your small group. When someone else is telling you of their turning point, give them *100 per cent* of your attention.

Debrief in small groups

At first individually, and then in discussion, answer these three questions:

- Did the exercise make a difference about your feelings towards your group colleagues?
 - If so, what difference did it make?
 - If so, what was it about the exercise that led to that difference?
-

APPENDIX C:
DATA GATHERING TOOLS USED BY THE
RESEARCHER

APPENDIX C1 :

NARRATIVE GUIDELINE FOR HODS AT SCHOOL ONE

Write a narrative about what is good and what is challenging in being an instructional leader using the following guidelines

What are your roles as an instructional leader?

Share your good experience about being an instructional leader.

Share the challenges that you experience as an instructional leader.

APPENDIX C1A :

PARTICIPANTS' NARRATIVE FOR SCHOOL ONE

PARTICIPANT 1

Participant 1

What are your roles as an Institutional leader. / To the learners:

- * Helping ~~slow~~ learners and diagnosing learning difficulties. *consoles/autocratic*
- * You are a pillar, a light that hold the future of the institution.
- * Maintaining close relations with school officials from the subject advisory to the M.E.C of the Department. *autocratic*
- * Keeping quarterly report cards i.e progress and tasks completed. *electronic job*
- * Talking with parents about children's progress.
- * Keeping in touch with the SGB. *principal/SMT duty*

To the Educators:

- * Building Co-operation of the Parents and the Community. *Principal/SMT duty*
- * Monitoring and Study newly produced laws / circulars
- * Training peer Tutors (induction)
- * Allow teachers to improve themselves by e.g. furthering their Studies.
- * Encourage high ethical standard to your staff.
- * Be a leader not a Boss.
- * Share any information with your staff.

Theme: Leadership Style

Theme: Administrative Issues

Theme: Administrative

Self-Aware

PARTICIPANT 2

Sharing of experience as an ideological leader.

1. Involve staff by means of mutual consultation in decision making.
2. Allow staff the freedom of choice with whom they would like to work with.
3. Motivate the staff throughout the year.
4. Communicate with the staff effectively - inform educators about what should be done, how it should be done and when it should be done, then to ensure effective delegation.

Challenges I experienced as an ideological leader.

1. Conflict resolution between learner-to-learner, learner-to-educator, and educator-to-educator. → Poor relationship
2. Educator failing to carry out instructions.
3. Budget planning → flexibility of S.B.B. to change the financial policy.
4. Subject specialists changing the planning for the school. - I do not understand this.
5. Absenteeism of educators and learners.
6. Withdrawal of a learner from school - because too long until it affects the prestige of the school. E.g. Grade 12.

Theme: Poor relationship

Theme: Administrative issues

Conflict amongst learners, teachers, educators

Authoritative

Ability of S.B.B. to change financial policy for budget spending change planning of the school

school admin issue

APPENDIX C1B :

RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Audrey Seobi

Reflections

March / April 2014

My write – up of chapter 4 helped me to notice the importance of writing reflections. During the first cycle of research, I was writing my reflections. I actually wrote such reflections with the main aim of updating my Promoter of “what happened” on the field, but I overlooked the bigger picture of the whole spectrum --- “why did that happened”. This “why” part that was missing in my reflections emerged during data analysis; and it was too late, after the withdrawal of the participants from the project. When I reported what I did and what happened on the field, I failed to reflect deeper on my actions, which means I did not consider how my actions could have been the cause of the participants’ withdrawal. I only thought of some minor issues that put me on the positive side. I was so confident that I treated the participants well --- I respected them, negotiated dates and times of meetings with them, I was friendly to them but I did not take note of how I worked with them --- my contribution during the action learning set. I only realised a lot of mistakes that I made after the participants had withdrawn from the project, but I eventually perceived those mistakes as my lessons.

I was engaged in a series of discussions with my promoter who acted as a critical friend, trying to find out why the project has collapsed. Those were the most painful moments of my professional life --- as a teacher, school support visit facilitator and now as a researcher. At the end, our discussions helped me to gradually realise that indeed, I was wrong, even though it was hard to understand and to accept that. I was eventually healed; and from the bottom of my heart I admitted all the mistakes I made without being forced to do that, but as a result of the evidence from data that “I” generated (with the participants) and “I” analysed myself, and the reflections that I wrote with my own hand. In one of our discussions we talked about the issue of me dominating the action learning sessions instead of facilitating them. This was the part where I thought I did not deserve to be answerable for the wrong doings. I strongly believed that I interacted well with participants. However, through our discussion and the analysed data of the transcriptions, I learnt that even though I was giving the participants some chance to talk, it was not enough. I dominated the whole discussion.

Our critical discussion made me aware that my education, my occupation and my past experiences had a negative impact in my study. I have twelve years of teaching experience and in addition to this; I worked as a school support facilitator for two years. A large amount of knowledge that I accumulated during these years especially the two years that I served as a school support facilitator, made me to realise that indeed teachers need instructional support. The cohorts of students who did Advanced Certificate in Education that I worked with included teachers, principals, HODs and even subject advisors. Having worked with all these stakeholders, gave me an experience that teachers lack instructional support from HODs and HODs too need to be developed in order for them to support teachers instructionally. I think this knowledge influenced me to dominate the interaction, instead of allowing the participants to develop by themselves. This means that I approached the participants with my mind being preoccupied with my prior knowledge --- that HODs need to be developed, and this is actually contrary to PAR practice. Even worse, when I requested the participants to explain what instructional leadership is, they were unable to explain the term, and I ended up giving the participants an explanation of the concept “instructional leadership” which I sourced from literature. Still, participants could not even give their own understanding of the concept. In the light of this, when I tried to help the participants to understand the concept “instructional leadership” from a transformative perspective, I ended up directing the discussion and I was unaware of this. This made me to learn that I did not work with participants in a participatory way. I directed the process too much to tell them what instructional leadership was; what they should be doing. This might have led them to feel inferior, and made them to lose interest in the study and withdraw, and I did not think about this. I mistakenly did all this due to prior knowledge I had. This knowledge led me to exercise my powers over participants, meaning that I contributed more than the participants did during the knowledge production process in the action learning set meetings.

After telling the participants what instructional leadership is, during the action learning set meeting of the 11th April 2013, there was no guarantee that they understood the concept of instructional leadership or their roles, and yet I expected them to go and start working with teachers. This could have been an unbearable situation for them, and I did not think of that frustrating situation that I was leading them into. Therefore, I learnt that rather than

spending more time on helping the participants to understand their roles in an experiential or interactive way, I pushed them into doing something they could not do – starting to work with teachers. It was impossible for the participants to start collaborating with teachers, given the fact that they did not really understand what leadership meant.

Another lesson that I acquired after several discussions with my promoter, was that the term instructional leadership is misleading. During the action learning set of the 11th of April 2013, I struggled to explain the concept of instructional leadership to participants in a way they could relate to. I simply quoted literature and told them what it meant. When I asked the participating HODs to describe instruction, they linked it to giving orders – and this is not what instructional leadership entails from a transformative perspective. I realised that I was perhaps confusing the participants by asking them to define the concept like this, “instruction” and leadership. Instruction is contrary to what I was wanting them to do. Participants explained instruction as “giving order”, “task to be carried out”; and it did not make sense to me and I was frustrated to hear these from them. I think it was at this point where I have undoubtedly allowed my prior knowledge to influence my behaviour when dealing with the participants --- dominating the discussion and tell them meaning of the explanation, still not noticing that I was doing injustice to them. After all this, I viewed the whole situation with a different perspective. Instead of seeing myself as a failure, like I did, I am proud about a rich knowledge that I acquired. I was ultimately amazed when I realise how immeasurable a researcher’s thinking can be. Thank you Prof, for having been so patient with me, you walked this long challenging journey with me up until the very last moment, where I noticed my development in my research path.

APPENDIX C2: STRUCTURED QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HODS AT SCHOOL ONE

The structured qualitative questionnaire for HODs from school two

1. What do you think your job entails?

.....
.....
.....

2. Describe what you do in staff meetings?

.....
.....
.....

3. How do you support teachers to improve the quality of teaching?

.....
.....
.....

4. What are the barriers that obstruct you from performing your duties successfully?

.....
.....
.....

5. What kind of help do you need to be a productive and resourceful HOD to your teachers?

.....
.....
.....

6. Share the professional developmental strategies that you are receiving and explain how you use those strategies to support teachers.

.....
.....
.....

7. If you do not receive sufficient professional development, give suggestions on how would you wish to be developed?

.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX C3: A SAMPLE OF THE CODED TRANSCRIPTIONS FROM THE ACTION LEARNING SET MEETING

6 February 2015

F: For you as HODs has it (project) helped

P1: For me it helped I was a new HOD. Although I have been doing some of the things, I did the course the previous year. A being here helped me to put some of the things into practice.

F: What course are you talking about?

P1: GMSA --- course for subject heads and HODs

F: Who do that, is it the government offering it?

P2: For me as well it went well, before we were working together, but now we are working as a unit, we are working as a team now.

TEAMWORK

F: for the first time you wanted to know what quality is, so did you go out and gather data, and analyse it?

P3: Yes we did.

F: You had 8 action steps, and worked with parents, teaching assistants, subject heads and individual teachers. So can you tell me what did you learn from that process? What did you do that was different from what you did before? You said you worked as a team as HODs.

P3: Before we worked with A, it was more of the HODs in the foundation phase that worked together and the HODs in the senior phase that worked together.

But when we went through the process with A, it came up that we need to sit together as a school, from foundation phase and senior phase.

F: why, what was the advantage of that?

P3: So that everyone should know or be on board of what is happening in school, because we are not two schools. Sometimes it looks like we are two schools because the other group will doing this and the others will be doing something different.

So we thought that what we do in foundation phase we can bring it to the senior phase and we work as a unit, and to the volunteers as well can have meetings with parents.

TEAMWORK

F: And would think that as a hassle if you would have not gone through the process?

P3: Not actually, not as HODs because we are now we are structuring teams of HODs and volunteers, HODs and the executives of volunteers and HODs and subject heads, etc.

Using teamwork
In school

F: So it helps a which was the idea of participatory action learning; and you had go through the process of identifying problems, "what is quality and you came up with answers and this is what I am reading from what she has written, the answer is quality education is holistic, is that right?

I want to check this against the findings. So what do you mean by holistic"?

P4: It means that education must not only be one sided, meaning that it must not only be academic.

P3: It means that all the stakeholders should be involved, the learners, the parents, the community, the politicians, the volunteers, which play a big role especially in the classes as TAS, the clinic, the administrators and.....

Learnt that need to involve all stakeholders to get quality teaching and learning

F: So what you say now is education should be a team effort. So working through this process have you managed to get those voices in?

P2: Yes we did.

F: Was it for the first time that you did something like that?

P1, P2: yes it was for the first time.

P2: Yes it was for the first time that we got the TAs and the volunteers' voices, of what do they want, what they expect from the school.

Process was inclusive

F: It looks like the school has been a success in the academics and suffering socially.

P2: Yes, and the two has to balance.

F: Yes but even so, the social has to come before the academics.

P5: I think we have been looking at quality at our context, that's what we wanted to achieve. We want to see academics more within, ...

P1: We don't want see necessarily high scores, but we want to see movement where we were. Although we had the voices of the volunteers informally before, we never approached them formally as HODs and ask them what you think is working, what do you need

process enabled them to listen to others

F: So you never meet and talk to them?

All Ps: Yes!

F: You just running around with files?

All Ps: Yes

F: But now you seem to be more of a structure.

All Ps: Yes

F: What does that structure look like, that's what I want you to comment on? You talked about quality education as a team effort, you had to look at education within the context and a link between the school/academics and the community and a school to be seen as a conducive place for teaching and learning.

And your next step was to have meeting with the stakeholders

P2: Yes!

P1: Something that is really new and we are focussing on is to work with the volunteers, volunteer leadership.

What we are doing now, is not only working with volunteers in classes, but where they can make a difference. If there is a volunteer that is not suited in the class we are going to take that volunteer out and give him something that suit him her better.

Able to see potential volunteers

F: So you are looking at selecting and training your volunteers. So you are going to look at your volunteers and give them tasks that match with their abilities.

P2: Yes

F: you are also out of this looking at developing a training programme for volunteers in classes.

But one of the issues was that some teachers did not want the volunteers. Have you done anything about that?

P1: It is only two who still don't want the volunteers in their classes.

F: That was a great improvement.

F: So working with subject heads, how was that different from before?

P2: We actually never had meetings with subject heads, we started working with them last year. We actually only got subject heads to know what is the learning area and what should they have for the learning area, to get them have files for the learning areas.

F: So before, you HODs never met with the subject heads individually?

P3: No, we met as collective group --- in phases.

F: So did the four of you meet together?

P4: No, two HODs of the same phase met together with the subject heads in that phase.

P4: But now we have been meeting with all the subject heads as a team.

F: Do you find it better now, why?

P1: To start off with, just to have a standard of what was expected of the subject heads, ... because the subject head is a new thing and we did not know what was expected of us.

P2: In the training that I had, they explained what was expected of us. Some of the subject heads have been doing the work, but some are just filling in the position, somebody has to do the job because they did not really know what to do.

they can now identify needs of subjectheads and use them more

P4: They need support.

F: From what you are saying, how is it improving the quality, how is it ruling down? Can you see the difference, in what your teachers are doing and in what subject heads are doing?

P2: Yes, because now subject heads know what they are supposed to have as subject heads, what all teachers teaching in that learning area should have. So if the teachers do not have for instance the overviews or whatever the subject heads have in the file, subject heads can give such materials to the teachers.

They can also support teachers with regard to curriculum.

subject heads now taking more responsibility to work with teachers and support them

P5: Are they doing it now, is it because of the intervention? I am asking because we are going to monitor that.

P3: In foundation phase, yes they are doing that.

P5: We have dates in place, where monitoring and moderation will take place in this quarter.

no structure

F: And you also worked with individual teachers, where started doing mentoring.

P4: Yes, we also worked with teachers individually.

F: How did that work?

P1: I worked with Ms Swarts for instance, and some of the HODs with assessment.

P3: I worked with Ms Stacey.

P1: Just before I came in now, Ms S came to me and she asked me if I will be her mentor. I take it from the mentoring that I have done with other teachers, so they are coming in and asking me if I can be their mentor.

teachers now approaching HODs for mentoring – asking for help

P5: So they come specifically to you,

P1: yes,

P5: That is a reflection that you can feel comfortable with.

F: So how did you approach that mentoring? What kind of relationship or values were in there?

P1: With other people?

F: No, with individual teachers.

P1: It was based on what they needed.

F: So did you ask them what they needed?

P2: No, no.

P1: What we saw they needed, we gently advised them. For instance Ms F. could not work on the computer, so I first had to do everything for her, because she had a task to do as a grade head. She also had to set an assessment task for life skills. So I first said to her I will give you a template and then I will show you how to do it.

From there she became so confident and she started teaching her TA. So it is a gentle thing and you first have to see what they need.	able to mentor teachers now
P4: From the beginning they were so reluctant, but eventually they cooperated.	
P5: So how was working with A, helped you shake the dices, because everything you learned helped you to shake lack of compromise or	
P4: In the sense of what we learned is that you must have a trust in the person,	
P2: We worked with them individually because in the group they were reluctant.	
F: So after opening up as individuals, did they feel comfortable in groups?	built trust with teachers
P2: Yes.	
F: So it was individuals, pairs and back to groups.	
So could you quickly tell me what did learn about relationship building?	
P1: To staff relation that we learned, to apply those relations we were sitting and thinking, throwing reflections and we found that we need to do this and we need to do that. But when we go out and do it, and then we need to sit back and think maybe this approach was not the right one, or maybe this approach worked with this one and not with this one.	
P5: So do you think you are reflecting more now, than before?	
P3: Yes, we are definitely reflecting more now in our practice.	learnt to reflect more and share their reflections in HODs group meetings
F: Did you work with the parents, or you worked with the teachers and they worked with the parents?	
P1: We actually did both.	
P4: The TAs are the parents.	
P3: We started the meeting with the group of volunteers and then we encouraged them.	
I could not get this clear from A' analysis.	
P1: That is why we said we worked with both. What we did before in the foundation phase we used to have a meeting, class teachers having the meeting with parents, but we took that to the phase, now we took it to the both phases. We set up the agenda, and before the meeting we agreed this is what we are going to talk about, and these are the things we need to tell the parents.	importance of working as a team - one voice
P5: Why did you do this, is it something that you did after the engagement with A, or was it something that was just continuing?	
F: Was it something that you agreed upon the session or why did you take this decision?	
P1: We worked with teachers first to establish a common voice, before we could all meet with the parents as a team of teachers and HODs – working collaboratively.	

P5: Having one voice was something that was lacking before at our school.

F: After involving other stakeholders, : Do you see your HOD job easier now, or what?

P1: For me I know more now, what I am supposed to do, I know now if I am not sure of something, and Ms Krause is not available, who is a foundation phase HOD like me, I can go to another HOD because we are now all on the same board as HODs.

see each other as
helping resources

F: Do you see your school functioning better now?

P2: Yes definitely because we are structured now. As HODs we met at the beginning of the year now, we have regular meetings now, to information back to our phases to discuss problems in our phases.

meeting as a team

P5: I like it that way because it shows consistency, even for yourself it is one message that you are saying or spreading to staff in the school instead of jumping into phases meetings, and it shows uniformity, team work.

F: the meeting of the 4 HODs has been written in, is the meeting of the phases written in, P4: Yes, ... and the P4 subject heads with HODs, P1: and the meeting with the TAS; P3: and the meeting with grades as well

F: And where do the TAs fit in?

P2: They meet once a month,

P4: It's a leadership of the volunteers.

F: you meet with the leadership?

P1: Yes,

F: Do the TAs go to the meetings as well, when you meet with teachers?

P1: We had a meeting yesterday, and they have requested me if I will be the HODs who will lead that meeting of the all the volunteers.

P5: The other way around is that should TAs be invited to the grade meeting?

F: Why not?

P2: No, we haven't thought of doing that yet.

F: Because you want those TAs to assist teachers, shouldn't they be part of the academic discussions in the meetings?

P4: But are they matured yet, in terms of relationships?

P2: I see resistance from the teachers.

F: So are not doing that yet, you want teachers to be more comfortable with working with TAS first.

But you are meeting with the TAS, as HODs?

P4: Yes

F: Well, I think you have done wonderful job!

Model

F: Let's look at this, because we need your input here.

Looking on the outskirts all round here we have the way you been working, the democracy, did you feel the democratic state, not telling everybody what they have to do. It shows that that's what you want your meeting to be like. This now equality, and participatory approach, And then you have critical reflections of all stakeholders involved, you have got relationships and trust, also important.

Are there any values or characteristics you could add here?

P1: We would actually like to add love.

P4: we can add diligence, loyalty

Values important to them

F: Yes, I agree because that is what I saw when I looked at that heart diagram that you had reflected on; and A did not analyse it. I told her that this screams love, it screams care. And I think that is important because some of the teachers nowadays are not connecting.

P5: Sorry, when you say love, you mean love of what, or love for whom?

P1: what we say is that when you love, love of your job and you have love for people whom you are working with, no matter what where they are from or what challenges they come with; love will help to overcome all the challenges.

love

F: So you have love for your job, for your people, and for your children.

P2: And for the colleagues.

F: So you have to model or embody love.

So that's the outside shaping everything you are doing.

F: So you were looking at how can you improve education in classroom and instructional leadership support?

So the first thing that A is having here is the ALS of HODs, and you went through the 8 action steps – using action research cycles. You worked with subject heads, and the action set of subject heads and teams of teachers. Did that happen as well?

P3: Yes, as well as in the subject meeting.

F: And after hearing it today, I see this pair of teachers and TAs—to be pair of HODs and TAs.

P4: Yes that is how it was.

It will go to pairs of teachers working with TAs, at a later stage, when teachers feel more comfortable to work with TAs, and when TAs have received more training.

F: So ideally you want subject heads to invite TAs to the meeting, is that right?

P4: Yes, but after training!

see need for a gradual process

F: Yes, the best way to train them is for them to sit in the meetings, to learn or to have an idea of what the teachers are doing.

Otherwise you come up with the decisions they must do and they become puzzled.

That will be great thing to train teaching assistants.

You started mentioning that they should help with discipline, well that is good, a step towards doing academic work.

When you do all these the outcome will lead to holistic education, and somehow maybe you will have to change the diagram and redo it to suit education in your context.

F: So would you add anything to this?

P5: Is there any space where we could add the hierarchy of the school? I see the action learning of the HODs. Where is the academic leader of the school? S/he is supposed to give the directive.

For example, Ms B. is the academic leader of the school, and she leads the HODs meetings.

So in the first cycle it is the academic leader with the HODs.

In the township schools, the deputy is accountable for the instructional matters because, as the principal it becomes difficult to handle everything, since we are leaders running the organisation and not the school, though at the end you as the principal you become accountable for school performance. That is why it is important for the Deputy Principal to be liaising with principal and take responsibility of the academics.

Instructional leader of school – principal not

F: So mean the deputy principal as the academic leader and the principal should be involved in this model?

All Ps: Yes!

P5: The principal will just manage it, but cannot lead it because it is impossible to lead it given all the organisational tasks that are going on in the school as an organisation, e.g. volunteer tasks and the like and all the daily challenges included.

It's a hierarchical structure and the deputy

APPENDIX D:
DATA GENERATION TOOLS: USED BY HODS
FROM SCHOOL TWO DURING THE ACTION
RESEARCH CYCLES

APPENDIX D1: QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAKEHOLDERS AT SCHOOL TWO

Questionnaire promoting quality in education, given to different stakeholders at the participants' school to be filled in or stimulate focus group discussion for:

1. Teaching assistants

How would you describe quality education?

How could you support quality teaching in our school?

What kind of support would you need to be able to do this?

2. Teachers

What does quality education mean to you?

What would quality education at Sapphire look like?

What challenges are you facing that hinder quality teaching in your daily practice?

Suggest strategies that would be suitable to support you in order to enhance quality teaching in your daily practice?

How can we evaluate quality in teaching and learning in our school?

APPENDIX D2

[illegible]

Figure 5D2 A participating HOD and the subject head modified FAL term plan by separating reading from phonics

APPENDIX D3

1. As directed by the curriculum, 6 hours of lessons must be completed for each subject.

SAPPHIRE ROAD PRIMARY		LIFE SKILLS LESSON PLAN			GRADE__ TEACHER: _____	
TERM 3 6 HOURS PER WEEK		MONDAY 21/07/14	TUESDAY 22/07/14	WEDNESDAY 23/07/14	THURSDAY 24/07/14	FRIDAY 25/07/14
BEGINNING KNOWLEDGE (1 HOUR)						
PERSONAL & SOCIAL WELL-BEING (1 HOUR)						
CREATIVE ARTS (2 HOURS)	PERFORMING ARTS					
	VISUAL ARTS					
PHYSICAL EDUCATION (2 HOURS)						
ACTIVITIES						

Figure 5D3 The participating HODs and the subject head modified term plan in terms of time allocation, 6 hours instead of 7