Principals' Leadership Abilities to Improve Learner Performance: A Case Study of Five Secondary Schools in Tshwane West Secondary Schools

Mungadi Nyelisani Justice[1], Khashane Stephen Malatji[2],
Meier Corinne [3]

[1] Department of Early Childhood Education & School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies,
College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa

[2] Department of Early Childhood Education & School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies,
College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa
steve.malax@gmail.com

[3] Department of Early Childhood Education & School of Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Studies,
College of Graduate Studies, University of South Africa

Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of leadership strategies on learner performance improvement. The study adopted a qualitative research approach. A case study research design was used with a pragmatic paradigm to evaluate the impact of leadership on school improvement as a means to enhance learner performance. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 participants that were made of principals, deputy principals, and Heads of Departments. Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews to elicit their views and experiences on the impact of leadership on learner performance improvement. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse data. Collegial leadership theory was used as a lens to guide the study to its intended results. The study revealed that most secondary school principals lacked leadership skills to mobilise staff members and school stakeholders to support their school improvement goals. The results indicate that principals' lack of leadership abilities to involve all staff members and stakeholders in school improvement hampers ownership and commitment of all staff members to school improvement activities. The study concluded that leadership plays an important role in the overall effectiveness of the school. The study recommends that principals should acquire leadership skills to adopt and adapt to the use of different leadership styles in their schools to address teachers' and learners'

needs. Principals should also acquire leadership skills to mobilise staff members to rally behind their improvement visions.

Keywords: leadership; stakeholders; abilities/skills; mobilising; improvement; vision.

Introduction and Background

Schools have been through a change process to improve learning, motivation of staff members as well as to increase parental involvement. Leadership is needed to provide opportunities to teachers to be acquainted with the variety of skills, information, attitude and conduct to cope with the ever-growing needs of modern education and the demands of the Department of Basic Education. To achieve these, leaders need to understand that leadership is a potential prerequisite to handle and manage school improvements. It is at the centre of directing all school improvements and planned change processes to enhance learner performance (Marishane & Botha, 2011:95).

It is however, important to note that schools today are complex and rapidly changing institutions trying to harness their internal capacities to improve learner performance. The pressure to perform at the expected level adds more pressure to schools' leaders to perform. Effective leadership has been identified as the critical success factor for any institution which seeks to compete internationally and keep a competitive advantage. There is a need for schools to invest in leadership development if they are to thrive and succeed. Schools will not be able to survive in this rapidly changing and technological-driven global environment unless they are well led (Simittchieva, 2013:20). Leaders exert a marked influence on the institution and its staff. They ensure staff members' engagement, motivation and create a conducive working environment (Mumford, 2010:20). Leadership involves working to achieve the goals of the schools through efficiently performing multiple tasks and adopting the use of different leadership styles, not only due to thorough prior planning and making continued use of the resources of the school.

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of leadership on school improvement with an aim to enhance learner performance?

Literature Review

According to Chauhan (2014:14), leadership is an engine for the school to achieve its goals. He further emphasises that "no ideology or political philosophy can improve school performance with less effort than effective leadership can". Prudent leadership is a key to maximising motivation, abilities and available mix of human and material resources. Marshall and Demock (2014:14) adds that leadership does not solely involve giving instructions to subordinates, making rules and laying down

regulations but it is rather encompasses the ability to decide the fate and determine the happiness of the entire staff members. This means that staff members have the powers to shape a school's destiny, and in doing so, that of the world. The ability and quality of leaders have a significant impact on the wellbeing of society and staff members as a whole (Ling & Ibrahim, 2013:174).

Visionary leaders

In Bush's view (2007: 14) school improvement needs leaders who are capable of setting clear values and beliefs, and influence and direct people towards achieving the improvement vision. Leaders must be able to articulate the vision to staff members and stakeholders to encourage commitment to achieve the schools' goals. They need to guide schools through various challenges in trying to achieve their vision based on shared values and focusing on improving the learning opportunities of learners (Bush, 2007: 148). Leaders must be able to define the school's vision to direct it towards success, and they must have the ability to engage all staff members and parents behind that vision. They must trust and empower staff members and allow them to do their job freely. As Greer (2011:11) states, leaders must continue to motivate, influence and give support to teachers if they are willing to direct schools to success. The ability of school leaders to work with teachers, parents and learners is the most influential factor in the equation to improve learning (UNESCO, 2013:9). The ability of the leader to implement and run the improvement successfully depends on the desire to build an effective school in which learners learn for a purpose (Workneh & Tassew, 2013:22). It is clear from what has been presented that a principal must facilitate the implementation of a school improvement programme that will enhance teachers' competence and the effectiveness of the school. They have to continuously plan and implement programmes focusing on improving learners' performance.

Role of leaders in learner performance improvement

Leaders play a very important role in learner performance improvement. They always plan to improve learner results. This shows that schools require leaders who are capable of providing the best education to their learners (Bush, 2008:6). Wasseenbeg (2000:158) maintains that leaders need to be able to unify staff members to work for a common goal. They must have the ability to bring teachers and parents together to work jointly to improve learner performance. Improving schools needs leaders who are creative and innovative in improving learner performance. Harris (2002:53) stipulates that leader must communicate values and morals to guide their schools towards success. They have to regard vision as an important element to direct the school to success. Vision is a fundamental constituent of leadership that is effective (Bush, 2008: 5). Bush (2008:5) and Ayalew (2009:23) emphasise that leaders need to have outstanding

vision for their schools and be able to communicate it to ensure commitment among the staff.

The principal's role is to ensure that school improvement does occur. They must be able to make a difference in improving teaching and learning. Their primary focus must be on discovering ways to assist teachers and learners to perform better so that school performance is improved (Ibrahim, 2012: 2). The success of schools thus depends on the ability of principals to handle school improvement programmes. They should be able to manage resources and support staff and teachers for improving learner performance (Abebe, 2012:6).

Leaders are able to establish relationships among staff members. They have the ability to influence staff members to behave in a desired manner towards change (Printy, 2010:9). School leaders need to focus on change to achieve quality teaching and learning. Leaders must create an effective school climate to achieve quality of teaching and learning (Firdissa, 2009:28). Bush (2008:29) states that leaders need to distribute their powers to other staff members to create a shared leadership vision in schools.

Leadership abilities of the principal

The leadership abilities of the principal are central to transforming and continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Naidu, 2008:34). Naidu explains that leaders have a powerful influence on staff members in improving learner performance. A crucial point is that school improvement is dependent upon the leadership qualities of the principal – leadership has a significant role to play in ensuring that school improvement programmes are implemented effectively (Bush, 2008:11). Bush (2008:8) concludes that the necessary changes for school improvement depend on quality leadership. Greer (2011:1) feels that leaders must have the ability to influence and attract followers to support their visions for improvement and that leaders who are committed, continue to seek opportunities that will assist staff members to improve, change and grow in their schools. There is a need to have staff members who are prepared to take risks and learn from past mistakes to achieve improvement.

The leadership skills that are required for school improvement include a good education, the ability to create a working environment that is conducive to performing well, public relations skills and the ability to communicate well with all stakeholders (Abebe, 2012:10). Principals are tasked with the responsibility to create an attractive school environment, which is motivating and encouraging for staff, to achieve learner performance improvement. These elements are vital to school leadership and lead to improved performance and productivity (Abebe, 2012:7).

Leaders need to have certain requisite knowledge and skills to understand and lead transformation. Leaders who understand change know how and

when to change to improve teaching and learning. Their personal experiences of the change process help them identify challenges that their staff members are experiencing, and help them to plan for programmes to assist in bringing solutions (Calabresse, 2002:44).

Research Question

What is the impact of leadership on school improvement?

Theoretical framework

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), a theoretical framework is a lens through which a researcher approaches and guides a study to its intended results. In this study the theory explains why a research problem exists and how solutions can be found. We used collegial leadership theory by Hazlewood and Bosher (2008) to guide this study to its intended results. The rationale for choosing this theory rests in its ability to bring genuine change as they are used to bring staff members together in schools to achieve sustainable school performance improvement. Collegial leadership as a theory encourages professional talks among staff members about teaching practices, sharing of knowledge, observation and the pursuit of the success of one another to bring about sustained change (Barth,2006) Collegial leadership theory enabled us to elucidate the path the research has taken, with the aim of making the findings more suitable and meaningful. The theoretical framework guided this study, and assisted us in data collection and data analysis (Abd-EL-Khalick & Akerson, 2007:33).

Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. A single case study design was used to achieve in depth and different understandings of participants' views regarding the impact of leadership on school improvement in their schools. Complex issues around the impact of leadership on school improvement to enhance learner performance were also explored. A case study design permitted us to explore and describe participants' views on the impact of leadership on school improvement in Tshwane West secondary schools to enhance learners' performance. The study used semi-structured interviews as data collection instrument. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. To guide this research study in its philosophical assumptions and define how we selected methods to use in this research, a pragmatic paradigm was selected.

Results

Principals, deputy principals and heads of departments are responsible with providing leadership to ensuring that schools' improvement visions are achieved. The focus of the study was on the impact of leadership on school improvement to enhance learner performance. The themes and sub-themes enhanced the interpretation and discussion of the qualitative

data. The research questions provided information on the perspectives, views, feelings and experiences of the participants regarding the impact of leadership on school improvement as a means to enhance learner performance. The results were interpreted for similarities and categorised in the themes selected from the literature review. Themes and sub-themes guided the discussion; hence the interview results are presented in themes and sub-themes. Collegial leadership theory and literature were used to confirm the findings.

Discussion

The main theme: The impact of leadership on school improvement

The findings reveal that not all principals have the leadership abilities needed to handle school improvement process. Some principals lacked leadership skills to mobilise all staff members to rally behind their improvement vision, hence it was difficult for all staff members to participate fully and take ownership of the process. To confirm the above finding, one of the participants raised a concern that "*as much as the SMT also lacks leadership knowledge and skills to capacitate teachers, SGB and parents, it will be difficult for all stakeholders to work together to achieve common improvement goals"*. The study revealed that the principals, deputy principals, HoDs are not able to train teachers, SGB members and parents to equip them with the knowledge and skills to participate fully in school improvement processes because they also lack knowledge. Although they lacked knowledge and skills, it emerged that school improvement planning was in the hands of the SMT, but other school stakeholders were left out. The SMT's failure to involve all school stakeholders in the school improvement planning, implementation and monitoring is an indication of the ineffective leadership towards the implementation of school improvement in schools. The finding is contrary with the view of Wasseenbeg (2000:158) who maintains that leaders need to be able to unify staff members to work for a common goal and they must have the ability to bring teachers and parents together to work jointly to improve learner performance. In this study, collegial theory emphasises a need for working together among staff members (Colleman, 2008). Malatji, Mavuso and Malatji (2018) argue that the success of school management depends of collaboration between key stakeholders such as principals, deputy principals and Head of Departments.

The interviews revealed members of the SMT were not able to explain what school improvement entails. It was a great concern to find that a person who is tasked with the responsibilities of guiding teachers does not have clear knowledge of this concept, and this indicates that the implementation of school improvement has challenges. One of the participants responded as follows: "*I am still new in the School Management Team, and not clear on what school improvement entails and how it could be implemented"*. The study revealed that although SMT members are responsible for the implementation of the school

improvement, they are failing to lead school improvement towards achieving its goals. Their lack of knowledge and skills on the implementation of school improvement strategies and processes hampers the objectives of enhancing learner performance. This finding is in contrary with Harris (2005:66) who states that principals need leadership training to be acquainted with the required knowledge and skills to manage and handle the improvement process. Collegial theory by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012:125) emphasises the importance of knowledge and skills to lead the collegial culture towards achieving school improvement goals.

The study also found that principals are failing to involve all stakeholders in planning and implementation of school improvement. Lack of leadership skills and knowledge to involve all school stakeholders defeat the mission of having all staff members rally behind the improvement vision. To support the above finding, one of the SMT members revealed *"that planning of school improvement is in the hands of principal, deputies, and heads of departments while teachers, parents and members of school governing body are not involved, thus why we still have teachers, parents and members of school governing body who do not understand what school improvement is and what it entails"*. The statements above are in contrast to Mitchell (2014:4) who says that school principals, deputy principals, HoDs, teachers and parents should all be involved and permitted to give input and participate fully in all school improvement processes. He further emphasised the need to be involved in the planning for improvement and states that the principal should focus on the school improvement agenda, driven through self-evaluation, and develop a plan for improvement and then communicate all the criteria to be followed to all members of staff. Collegial theory by Singh (2005) advocates the creation of a climate in which decisions are taken through consensus in finding ways towards achieving the objectives of the school.

The study suggests that once the SMT is done with the school improvement plan, the plan has to be discussed with all members of the staff to help them understand the school improvement vision. In a normal situation, before the school improvement plan is done, the SMT, teachers and parents need to have a series of discussions and assess their capacity to handle the improvement process and those who do not understand need to be trained so that they participate with an aim to encourage ownership and commitment among the staff members. Participants' echoed that "*if staff members do not share the process among them, there is a possibility of other staff members not to take ownership and will not adopt change*". We found that when people take ownership, they will also take part in the development of school's vision and everybody will be involved and allowed to give inputs towards improving teaching and learning. The findings are supported by Harris (2005:66) who states that the success of school improvement is dependent on leaders who rely on the input of their staff members and school stakeholders. He further

explains that staff members and stakeholders need to be part of the improvement planning and implementation to ensure that they own the improvement process. Hazlewood and Bosher (2008:xiv) posit that the ability of a principal to respond to change is a vital tool to cope with a rapid-changing environment. Collegial theory encourages schools to respond to transformation in a quick coherent manner and suggest that principals and teachers at a school have specifiable roles to play in achieving the schools' improvement vision.

School's self-evaluation and involvement of stakeholders emerged from the main-theme: "The impact of leadership on school improvement:"

School's self-reflection

The study reveals that principals with leadership skills focus on school's self reflection as the starting point for every proposal for improving learner performance. It was revealed that school requires an understanding of its current level of performance, and should inform its improvement planning. Participants revealed that school's self-reflection helps principals and schools to realize that certain actions are not paying dividends and needed to shift and try new ways of doing things. It was found that the school's self-performance reflection helps schools to plan for the best school improvement strategies, which will then help the school towards achieving its improvement objectives. Although the school's self-reflection is important, most staff members and stakeholders lack knowledge and skills, and this makes the implementation of improvement interventions difficult. Collegial theory by Singh (2005) encourages accountability from all staff members and participation to make school improvement a success. Madiha (2012:1243) notes that collegial practices are effective responses to rapid transformation that lead to a climate that values risk-taking and continuous improvement of teachers.

The finding emphasised that it is the responsibility of the principal and the SMT to assess and evaluate knowledge and skills of staff members and stakeholders before planning for improvement. This will help them to identify areas where improvement is needed and will also inform them of the kinds of interventions or training to be implemented to equip staff members and parents with the necessary knowledge. Whether school improvement strategies are a success or not, depends on the knowledge of staff and parents. This finding is in line with Ayoola (2017: 84) who insists that provision of knowledge and skills to staff members and parents is necessary to handle school improvement. Masters (2016) adds that effective decision-making relies on the understanding of the current school performance. Schools need to reflect on their recent status of performance to identify areas of concern to inform their school improvement planning. Shaha and Ellsworth (2014) also feels that schools need to have a clear understanding of their current performance to inform their plans to improve the existing practices to achieve learner

performance improvement. A collegial theory by Madiha (2012:1243) motivates teachers to become committed to their profession and make them willing to modify their classroom practices for effective teaching and learning.

Involvement of school stakeholders

Findings from the interviews revealed that teachers, parents and SGB members were not fully involved in school improvement. It was further disclosed that stakeholders lacked knowledge and skills on improvement planning, processes and implementation. Participant indicated that teachers, parents, and members of the SGB may play huge roles on school's improvements if they can be fully involved but highlighted their lack of knowledge as a factor hindering their full participation in the affairs of the school. These statements are in line with Hussain et al., (2014: 273) who states that "school stakeholders have an important role to play in the improvement of schools" and principals should involve teachers, parents and SGB members; encouraging them to share their perspectives and respecting their views and ideas. Collegial theory by Madiha (2012:1244) posits that a collegial culture appears to be the most unifying factor for all stakeholders to improve performance and characterises new developments in successful schools.

Participants echoed that stakeholders need to receive training to help them acquire more knowledge and skills on school improvement to perform their improvement roles effectively. We found that the responsibility of the principal and the SMT is to train and workshop members of staff, parents and members of school governing body to have the needed knowledge to handle the improvement processes aiming at improving learner performance. One participant highlighted: *"there is a lack of programmes in schools that help capacitate teachers, parents and members of the SGB to comprehend their roles and responsibilities relating to participating fully in all affairs of the schools."* These views are in contrast with those of Garland (2013:15) who explains that principals must create conducive conditions that allow teachers and parents committees to promote high standards of teaching and learning. Garland also indicates that the contribution of parent committees help to improve parents' involvement, which ultimately improves learner performance. Brundrett (2008) maintains that collegial theory encourages all stakeholders to acquire knowledge and skills to be able to play a significant role in developing and improving their operations and results.

Understanding of leadership in relation to school improvement

The interviews revealed that the participants understood what leadership is, and one of the principals disclosed that "*leadership is a prerequisite for any improvement strategy a school needs to embark on in an attempt to improve learner performance*". In addition, participants defined leadership as "*the ability of the leader to influence and direct followers towards achieving school goals*". They also defined it as the ability of a

leader to adapt and adopt different leadership approaches as the situation demands.

It was clear from most participants that leaders should possess the ability to change their leadership styles to suit a particular situation. They made it clear that one leadership style cannot be used for every situation. Every situation demands a particular style that suits it. They emphasised the need for leadership abilities to plan, organize, lead, control and give support to all staff members to realize school improvement goals. They clearly indicated lack of leadership abilities to direct and lead school improvement towards the school desired goal. These statements are in contrast with UNESCO (2009:11) which defines leadership as the capability of the principal to offer direction to staff members and to influence them to follow that direction and act accountable and responsibly towards achieving the goals that have been set. It was revealed that the inability to set a clear vision for school improvement is a challenge that many schools are facing. A lack of effective school improvement is attributed to a lack of leadership abilities to act in a required way. The study revealed a need for leadership training to provide members of staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to address some important aspects of school improvement. Leaders were found to still allowing emotions and pressure to triumph over their leadership abilities and deviating from acting in a way that is required, it was a sign that they still need training. According to Madiha (2012:1243), collegial leadership theory maintains that leaders fashion an atmosphere of cooperation that heightens levels of innovation and passion among teachers and provides ongoing support for the professional enhancements of staff.

The study revealed that school improvement initiatives need leaders who are visionary, set the tone, give direction, mobilise people behind the vision, are influential and inspirational, value people and are consultative. This finding is in line with Kouzes and Posner (2001:30) who define leadership as "an ability of the principal to mobilise members of the staff to want to strive for common goals". The credibility of principals affords them the opportunity to influence staff members to act in their direction. Leadership is a process by means of which the principal influences individuals and teams to attain common goals. Leaders use their knowledge and skills to direct their staff members towards achieving their improvement goals. It was mentioned that the principals and deputy principals need to be introspective to identify their weaknesses and strengths. Madiha (2012:1244) echoes that collegial principals consider the values and vision of their schools, set directions, build trust and enhance the performance of learners.

It emerged from the interviews that most principals lacked leadership skills to mobilise staff members and school stakeholders to support their school improvement goals. The study also found that principals' lack of leadership abilities to involve all staff members and stakeholders

hampered ownership of and commitment to school improvement activities. It was revealed that some of the principals could not align school improvement activities with the school improvement vision. Collegial leadership theory by Hazlewood and Bosher (2008) promote collaborative efforts and robust relationships among staff members and stakeholders to achieve school improvement goals.

We found that staff members become happy and motivated when participating in a school's decision-making. As such, when they are involved, teaching and learning become effective and results in improved teacher and learner performance. It was revealed that schools are not progressing because principals do not involve all staff members in the improvement plan of the school. This statement is in contrast to Singh (2013: 958) who suggests collegial leadership as a solution to effective school improvement. He states that it is predominantly participative and that school improvement is no longer the responsibility of the principal and SMT alone; rather, it is a responsibility that is shared among the staff as a whole.

Developing Leadership

The interviews brought to the fore the importance of developing leadership skills in staff members and stakeholders by empowering them to take on leadership roles in their own respective duties. Furthermore, staff members should be assigned duties to lead, so that they can develop leadership skills. Distributing leadership to all members of staff, and stakeholders, who are part of the school, develops leadership skills throughout the whole school community. This finding is in line with Bjorkman (2008: 46) who states that creating a community of leaders is necessary to improve schools from within, where everyone will be free to participate in collective responsibility to achieve school improvement desired goals. It was also revealed that leaders who delegate duties to staff members and stakeholders to perform certain leadership duties are more likely to help them acquire leadership skills. Delegation of duties needs staff members who are willing and committed to learn. There should be a will among all staff members to be assigned leadership responsibilities to help them to have positive attitude towards leadership development for the betterment of the school. Mbokodi, Singh and Msila (2003:35) point that collegial leaders empower teachers and school stakeholders in order to develop leadership skills in them to perform their responsibilities effectively.

This finding is grounded in the belief of Harris (2005:66) who retains that distributing leadership all over the school has the potential to enforce ownership of school improvement. Leadership capacity building, as explained by Bjorkman (2008:15) entails that principals and teachers together learn to master the knowledge and skills to manage the improvement process so that they can fulfil the objectives of their schools. Bjorkman (2008:16), in her study on school improvement, found

that capacity building of staff members is the foundation for every improvement effort because of its potential to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to staff members to handle the improvement. Some participants revealed that, there is lack of leadership capacity-building programmes in most of the schools. For staff members to manage and handle the improvement process in school, they need to have requisite knowledge and skills. This finding is in contrary with the views of Leithwood and Mascall (2008) who maintain that leadership should be spread throughout the school community to allow staff members to practice leadership in areas of their expertise and develop leadership skills. Collegial theory by SANCT (2007:22) plays a key role in staff development programmes for teachers and is a vehicle to enhance teacher knowledge.

Principals, deputy principals and HoDs agreed that it was their responsibility as SMT members to establish planned programmes to equip staff members with the needed knowledge and skills to handle the improvement process. It came out strongly that school management team should identify areas of concern and develop capacity building programmes to address those challenges as a means of developing staff members to have the needed knowledge and skills for improvement. It was agreed that without the necessary knowledge and skills, improvement cannot be realised. The findings reveal that school improvements are failing due to a lack of capacity in school improvement among staff members and stakeholders. They highlighted limited leadership capacity building in schools. It was indicated that the SMT's and teachers rely heavily on workshops, and other training organized by the department to capacitate staff members. Time constraints and a lack of leadership capacity-building programmes within the school and the time spent on workshops and training was found to be limited and cannot effect huge change of staff members' knowledge. Collegial theory by Singh (2005:12) explains that leaders are capable of serving others for a purpose larger than themselves and power is not only in the hands of principals but they ensure that they have to train others to acquaint them with leadership skills to become leaders within the school.

It was acknowledged that schools do not have planned or organised leadership capacity-building programmes to help furnish staff members with the knowledge and skills to handle the improvement process. One of the participants echoes that "*if staff members and stakeholders are capacitated for the improvement process, effective teaching and learning would take place and that this would ultimately improve school performance".* The importance of leadership capacity building was emphasised and it was concluded that it would help both the staff and stakeholders to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Capacity Building of Staff Members

Capacity building, as explained by Bjorkman (2008:15), entails that principals and teachers together learn to master the knowledge and skills to manage the improvement process so that they can fulfil the objectives of their schools. Participants revealed the lack of capacity-building programmes in most of the schools. It emerged that for staff members to manage and handle the improvement process in school, they need to have requisite knowledge and skills. Principals, deputy principals and HoDs agreed that it was their responsibility as SMT members to establish planned programmes to equip staff members with the needed knowledge and skills to handle the improvement process. The study suggested that the school management team should identify areas of concern and develop capacity building programmes to address those challenges as a means of developing staff members to have the needed knowledge and skills for improvement. Bjorkman (2008:16), in her study on school improvement, found that capacity building of staff members are the foundation for every improvement effort because of its potential to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to staff members to handle the improvement. Brundrett (2008:310) maintains that when staff members have positive attitudes towards improvement, this will improve staff relations, teachers' professional satisfaction and teaching and learning.

The finding reveals that without the necessary knowledge and skills, improvement cannot be realised. We also found that school improvements are failing due to a lack of capacity in school improvement among staff members and stakeholders. Participants indicated that there is limited capacity building in schools and remarked that "*we rely heavily on workshops, and other training organised by the department to capacitate our staff members".* Lack of capacity-building programmes within the school, was found to be a huge challenge and could the possibility to effect huge change of staff member knowledge. This finding is in contrary with Bjorkman (2008:16), who states that capacity building of staff members is the foundation for every improvement effort because of its potential to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to staff members to handle the improvement. Madiha (2012:1243) states that collegial theory is a significant energy provider for teachers; it has been claimed that when teachers have robust emotional ties with colleagues which ultimately enhance their energy.

Participants acknowledged that schools do not have planned or organised capacity-building programmes to help furnish staff members with the knowledge and skills to handle the improvement process. It was revealed that when staff members and stakeholders are capacitated for the improvement process, effective teaching and learning take place and that this will ultimately improve school performance. The importance of capacity building was emphasised, and it was concluded that it would help both the staff and stakeholders to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. These findings are supported by Firdissa (2008:105) which

states that schools need to have programmes that have the objectives of equipping staff members with the knowledge and skills to cope with improvement changes. Cemm (2011:166) states that collegial theory stimulates a more positive attitude to teachers towards teaching; it enhances unrestricted communication among colleagues, stimulates a higher morale and increases the use of trustful statements on improvement initiatives.

Conclusion

The aims and objectives of this study have been to explore the impact of leadership on school improvement as a strategy to enhance learner performance. To achieve these objectives, a qualitative approach, comprising face-to face interviews was used. This study established that there are a multitude of factors affecting or constraining the impact of leadership on school improvement in secondary schools in Tshwane West. There is thus a need to use leadership strategies to help secondary school principals to improve learners' performance in schools. The findings presented in this study demonstrate that leadership has a significant role to play in improving learner performance. The findings also revealed that leadership strategies have a fundamental role to play in improving the performance of learners in schools. Literature on leadership and the empirical research evidence reveals leadership as the best strategies to enhance learner performance.

Recommendations

- **Leadership strategies**: recommendations to assist principals with leadership strategies have the potential to add value to learner performance improvement. It is recommended that principals need to acquire the ability to adopt to use of different leadership styles in their schools to be able to address teachers' and learners' needs. Leadership of principals should vary depending on the situations.

- **Collegial leadership**: The study also recommends that principals need to apply collegial leadership theory, which encourages openness and allows for staff, parents and SGB members to give their inputs and suggestions on school improvement initiatives.

- **Leadership skills**: It is also recommended that leadership skills should be embedded in the vision and philosophy or culture of the school.

- **Training and workshops:** Training and workshops on leadership skills should be a component of the school's culture, aiding principals, SMTs and staff members to have the necessary leadership skills to allow them to handle the improvement initiatives.

Bibliography

1. Abd-El-Khalick, F. & Akerson, V. (2007). On the role and use of theory in science education research. Science Education 91(1): 187-194.
2. Ayoola, R.O. (2017). Continuing professional development of accounting teachers in Nigeria: Implications for democratic citizenship education. Published dissertation (PhD.). Cape Town. South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
3. Barth, S.R. (2006). Improving relationships with the schoolhouse. Educational Leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development 63 (6): 29-33.
4. Bjorkman, C. (2008). Internal Capacities for School Improvement. Principlas' Views in Swedish Secondary Schools. Pedagogiska Institutionen: Umea Universitet.
5. Brundrett, M. (2008). Collaboration, collegiality and leadership from the head: The complexities of shared leadership in primary school settings'. Management in Education, 22(2):11-16.
6. Cemm, L. (2011). The leadership of collaboration in primary school settings. Unpublished dissertation (Phd.), University of Birmingham.
7. Chauhan, S.P. (2014). Neonatal brachial Plexus Palsy: incidence, Prevalence, and temporal trends, Texas: Houston.
8. Coleman, M. (2008). Trust in Collaborative Working, The Importance of Trust for Leaders of School Based Partnership. Nottingham:NCSL.
9. Firdissa, J. (2008). Indicators and challenges to quality in higher education institutions: Global experience and implications. Journal of Educational Research 1-30.
10. Garland, R. (2013). School Improvement Planning: Implementation Guide. North Caroline: State Board of Education Department of Public Instruction.
11. Goldsmith, M. (2010). Sharing Leadership to Maximise Talent. Harvard Business Review: HBR.
12. Gray, J.A. (2011). Enabling School Structures, Trust and Collective Efficacy in Private International Schools. Florida: Buffalo University State.
13. Harris, A. (2005). Leading from the chalk-face: An overview of school leadership. Leadership 1(1): 73-87.
14. Haussain, A., Salfi, N.A. & Virk, N. (2014). Leadership Strategies for School Improvement. Journal of Social Sciences for Policy Implications 2 (2): 45-67.
15. Hazlewood, P. & Bosher, M. (2008). Leading the Leaders for the Future: A Transformational Opportunity. London: Continuum.
16. Hopkins, D., Stringfield, S., Harris, A., Stoll, L. & Mackay, T. (2011). School and system improvement: State of the art review. 24th International Congress of School Effectiveness and School Improvement. Limassol, Cyprus: Cnference Paper.
17. Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T. & Smith, K. (2007). The state of cooperative learning in post secondary and professional settings. Educational Psychology Review-Springer Science & Business Media 19 (1):15-29.
18. Kavale, S. (2016). Effects of Leadership Style on School Performance of Secondary Schools in Wadajir District, Mogadishu. Mombasa: Moi University.
19. Kouzes, J.M. & Posner, B.Z. (2001). Bringing leadership lessons from the past into the furure. In Bennis, W., Spreitzer, G.M. & Cumming, G. (eds.). *The Future of Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

20. Ling, L. & Ibrahim, M. (2013). Transformational Leadership and Teacher Communitment in Secondary Schools of Sarawak Sii. A survey based on conceptual

21. Madiha, S. (2012). *The Importance and Benefits of Teacher Collegiality in Schools-A Literature Review.* Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya.

22. Maree, K. (ed.). First Steps in Research. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

23. Marshall, E & Dimock, M.E. (2014). Administrative Law and Bureaucracy. Administrative Journal: Sage.

24. Masters, G.A.O. (2016). Five Steps to School Improvement. Melbourne:ACER.

25. Mitchell, R. (2014). The implications of school improvement and school effectiveness research for primary school principals in Ethiopia. Educational Review 67 (3): 328-342.

26. Mumford, M. (2010). A leadership perspective on decision making in organisation:Cappelen Academic, pp.123-143.

27. Shaha, S.H. & Ellsworth, H. (2014). Predictors of success for professional development: Linking student achievement to school and educator success through on–demand. Online Professional Learning. Journal of Institutional Psychology 40(1):97-110.

28. Siagian, S.P. (2010). Teori dan Praktek Kepemimpinan. Jakarta:Rineka Cipta.

29. Simittchieva, D. (2013). Management Development Programme-Case: Organization X:Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu. *https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi: amk-2013061013682:*Tiivistelma

30. Sutrisno, E. (2010). Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia. Jakarta: Kencana.

31. Ravitch, S.M. & Carl, N.M. (2016). Qualitative Research, Bringing the Conceptual, Theoretical Methodological. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

32. Uche, N.E. (2012). Optimising E-learning Opportunities for Effective Educational Service Delivery. Enugu: Timex.

33. UNESCO. (2009). The International Working Group on Education. New York: UNESCO.