

Investigating the Barriers to Implementing Instructional Strategies by Primary School Principals - A Qualitative Inquiry

Sameera Ismail and Mmalefikane Sylvia Sepeng,
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This article reports on barriers to implementing instructional strategies by primary school principals in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The research was done in schools in Tshwane South Province of Gauteng, in South Africa; and it utilizes a qualitative study approach involving an interview with fifteen experienced school principals. The research used purposive sampling in selecting 15 school principals that are highly experienced from among 131 primary schools. This study is an endeavour to explore the idea of instructional leadership performed by principals of these schools. The findings are pertinent and valuable for those who are involved in the field of education, such as policymakers, researchers, and school principals. The identified challenges highlighted in the study are limited resources, non-compliance, inflexible processes, communication problems and lack of adequate technological skills. Moreover, the personal beliefs defined by past experience, educational system changes and school management alongside insufficient program training programs refer to obstacles of strategy implementation for principals. Finally, this paper provides recommendations for policymakers and principals on addressing the various barriers to implementing instructional strategies in primary schools in Gauteng Province. The study provides a deep understanding of the complicated field of instructional leadership in primary schools that seeks to enrich policy and practice for effective education results within Gauteng province.

Keywords: instructional strategies, leadership, professional development, primary school principals, professional development.

Introduction

This article explores the challenges that primary school principals faced in the Gauteng Province while implementing instructional strategies. To be successful, strategy implementation needs certain essential elements like resource support and training. Nevertheless, numerous obstacles, derived from local contextual considerations, socioeconomic situations and cultural limitations besides scarcity of human resources and capital mostly prevent this progress (Kalangi et al., 2021).

Some scholars divide management and leadership, although others see them as interconnected. This study distinguishes leadership from management. Nindie (2022,

p. 72) defines leadership as “doing the right things” while Grissom and Condon (2021, p. 95) define management as “doing things well”. Management involves planning, organising, leading/activating, supervising organisational members’ actions, and guaranteeing efficient and effective resource usage (Ridwan, 2021, p. 54). Leadership involves planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, managing, problem-solving and establishing predictability and order. A principal must both manage and lead to improve teaching and learning at their schools.

Nindie (2022) argues that school growth depends on leadership. Leaders define directions, strategies and plans to achieve it, growth that aligns with teachers by selling the vision and strategy and motivates and inspires teachers to pursue the purpose of the school. The Personnel Administrative Measures say principals run schools. This study focuses on instructional leadership because it influences student performance. Grissom and Condon (2021, p. 97) say principals must guide students and focus on performance. Ridwan (2021) demonstrates that administrators’ involvement in various activities demands assigning some jobs to school leaders like head teachers (P.5). Today, instructional leadership involves everyone, not just principals.

Principals as Leaders

The Gauteng Province’s educational system in South Africa needs reform to succeed, but no one-size-fits-all programme, academic initiatives, or trends, will bring about this transformation. Enhancing human potential is the only way to improve schools (Karakose, Polat and Papadakis, 2021, p. 107). Numerous studies have shown a connection between a school’s quality and the calibre of its educators. There is no doubt that teachers considerably affect students’ academic achievement, yet they cannot significantly boost students’ success independently (Arifin & Adha, 2021, p. 50). In addition to fulfilling their role as educators and mentors who bring value to their students’ learning, teachers also have a responsibility to their students (Pratiwi & Warlizasusi, 2023, p. 23). However, just as qualified teachers’ contributions are crucial in raising the educational standard in classrooms, so too is the role of school principals in instructional leadership. In actuality, there are no cases of significant change that occurred without the direction of an outstanding principal. According to research by Alazmi and Al-Mahdy (2022), the influence of the school principal is second only to teaching among elements associated with schools in terms of its impact on student learning (Chabalala & Naidoo, 2021, p.96). Leadership is crucial in ensuring that schools adapt to the needs of the twenty-first century in addition to the teachers’ knowledge, work and energy (Ho, Shaari & Kang, 2021).

The education system will only be transformed by exceptional leaders who love to lead, serve passionately, and are dedicated to continuously learning new information and abilities (Alazmi & Al-Mahdy, 2022). According to Smith, Reinke, Herman and Sebastian (2021, 50) “the power of the principal assisting in driving organisations and systems transformation is entrenched in the key to the speed and quality of change.”

Barriers to the Implementation of Instructional Strategies: Paucity of Resources

Resource constraints hinder the implementation of instructional strategies by primary school principals in Gauteng Province. These constraints include inadequate funding, technologies, material and personnel. For instance, according to a study conducted in Gauteng Province by Chabalala and Naidoo (2021, p. 88), principals lack

access to sufficient resources to support the implementation of instructional strategies. Another study by Alazmi and Al-Mahdy (2022, p. 46) showed that the limited number of trained personnel, lack of instructional and learning materials, and limited access to technology hindered the ability of principals to implement instructional strategies. However, lack of adequate support and training for principals creates barriers to implementing instructional strategies. According to a study by Sophonhiranrak (2021, p. 89), lack of adequate training for principals was a significant problem that hindered the successful implementation of instructional strategies in Gauteng Province primary schools. Furthermore, many principals need more support from stakeholders such as the school management and district administrators, who are responsible for providing guidance to the principal to ensure the effective implementation of instructional strategies. In addition, there is a need for more clearly communicated policy guidelines on instructional strategies. A lack of clarity on policies inhibits principals from developing effective strategies.

According to a study by Bego, Ralston and Thompson (2022, p. 10), principals have limited opportunities to engage in professional development activities on instructional strategies, and the current opportunities are often costly and limited to participants from wealthier schools. In addition, many principals in Gauteng Province primary schools need access to the necessary resources and materials to use new teaching strategies (Howell & Maddox, 2022, p. 32). They need to improve their ability to adequately implement new instructional strategies in their schools. Another barrier to implementing instructional strategies by primary school principals in Gauteng Province is the need for more understanding of strategies that need to be implemented (Sophonhiranrak, 2021, p. 46). The research further showed that principals need to fully understand the strategies' foundational elements or consider the particular context of the school and the students (Martin & Kumar, 2021, p. 92). Additionally, the lack of timely feedback loops for the strategies implemented can affect the understanding and effectiveness of the strategies.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) (2023) high-quality education is essential to both society advancement and personal empowerment. Fundamentally, a high-quality education goes beyond basic reading and math to include a comprehensive curriculum that develops critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. It works to guarantee that everyone, regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, or place of residence, has inclusive and equitable access to education. Sustainable progress, the eradication of poverty, and harmonious cohabitation within societies are all made possible by high-quality education, which produces a generation of knowledgeable and competent people. Addressing the barriers to implementing instructional strategies by primary school principals in Gauteng Province that is implementing the high-quality education according to the goal.

SDG 4's further emphasis on raising the caliber of learning and teaching settings is a crucial component. This means making investments in highly qualified teachers, endorsing cutting-edge teaching strategies, and allocating sufficient funds to facilitate successful learning results. Additionally, Furthermore, excellent education goes beyond the walls of conventional classrooms to include chances for lifelong learning that meet people's changing needs in a world that is changing quickly. SDG 4 seeks to provide

people with the means to prosper in the global knowledge economy by promoting a culture of ongoing education and skill development.

In order to overcome systemic barriers to education and promote educational equity, governments, civil society, and the corporate sector must work together to achieve SDG 4. In order to close the achievement gap and guarantee that no one is left behind, investments in educational technology, teacher preparation programs, and infrastructure might be extremely important. Furthermore, establishing collaborations with nearby communities and utilizing creative funding methods can support initiatives to provide access to high-quality education, especially in underprivileged and marginalized areas. Prioritizing high-quality education as a basic human right allows society to realize each person's full potential and create a more just and sustainable future for future generations (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), 2023).

Skills Required for the 21st Century

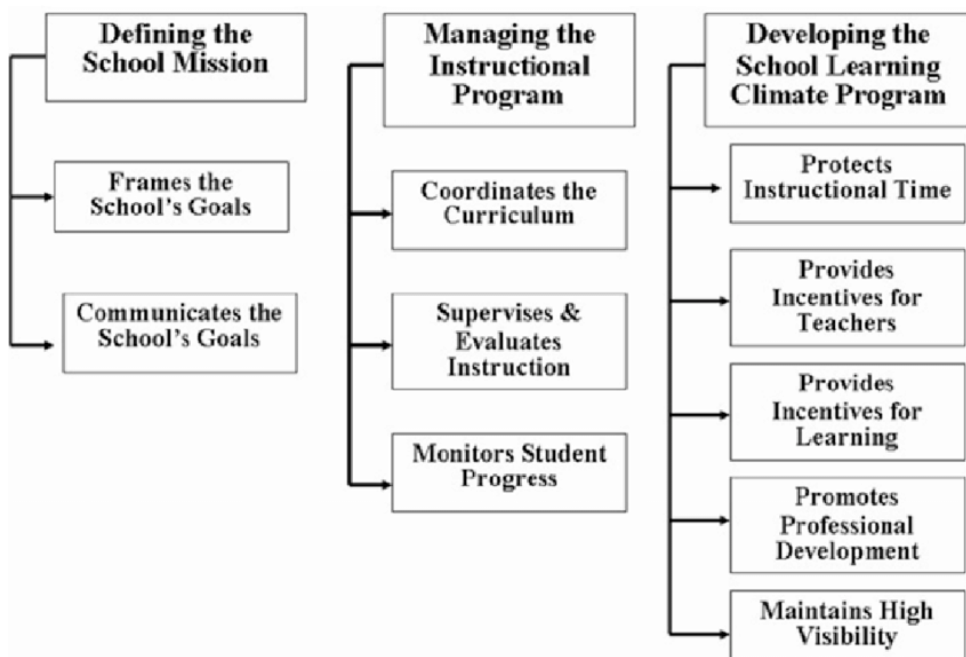
According to Haug and Mork (2021) the modern raw materials for prosperity are various skills. Numerous abilities have been consistently identified and included in theoretical framework research, including problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, effective communication, global awareness and digital literacy (Valtonen, Hoang, Sointu, Näykki, Virtanen, Pöysä-Tarhonen, Häkkinen, Järvelä, Mäkitalo & Kukkonen, 2021). However, twenty-first century learning skills may differ slightly amongst theoretical frameworks. If Gauteng Province students are to have a chance to compete in this new environment, the education system in Gauteng Province needs to embrace twenty-first century capabilities (Zaragoza, Díaz-Gibson, Caparrós & Solé, 2021). If they do not, the economy will suffer and they will not be leading the world they worked to create.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is presented from the perspective of the instructional leadership theory. Instructional leadership, in its interpretation by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), is seen as a critical component of principals' job because their effort for instilling professional development among teachers largely impacts student performance. The model demonstrates three key dimensions of the principal's role: Hiring duties include developing its mission, overseeing the curriculum, and even many aspects of creating a constructive school culture. Such a framework helps in understanding the principal's vital and diverse roles within the creation of an effective learning setting.

Figure 1

Instructional leadership framework. Source: Hallinger and Murphy (1985)



Furthermore, the findings of Goddard et al., (2017, p. 35), Sebastian, Allensworth and Huang (2016, p. 87) and Martin (2018, p. 105) also give further insights into how school leadership impacts learner performance and how it is incorporated into follow-up. For the components of instructional leadership, they include a clear vision in relation to instructional leadership, understanding and identification of roles and elements of instructional leadership, as well as recognition associated with various aspects related to that areas model. The study discusses the activities that principals initiate in implementing instructional leadership, which include facilitating interaction among teachers, ensuring autonomy in learning areas of choice between students and themselves, providing feedback on performance based on their work, and making tactical resource allocations. The practices that we base our discussion on are consistent with the theoretical assumptions of instructional leadership; they centre on how principals continually influence their schools' learning climate and achievement levels.

Research Design and Methods

This research was carried out in schools in Tshwane South, Gauteng Province, South Africa. Tshwane South was chosen as a research area because it is a diverse demographic population and an integrated educational landscape that represents urban and suburban contexts in the broader Tshwane region. This selection focused on widening the scope of understanding obstacles for primary school principals in education settings differentiated from one another and, as a result, bringing into play an insightful application of instructional approach impediments. Moreover, Tshwane

South specifically identity features that were considered best suited to the provision of knowledge and reflection relevant for a broader educational environment in Gauteng Province. This research used qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews with 15 principals from the Gauteng Province. The initial step in analysing qualitative interview data is frequently reading the transcripts of the interviews (Lewis, 2022). It is essential to take in-depth notes during the interview or, ideally, to have recorded the session and transcription to obtain stated transcripts. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in research projects to verify data from other sources (Maxwell, 2021). They are relatively short in terms of timespan and usually consist of the participant answering predetermined questions. It also makes it possible to probe and elaborate on answers. Qualitative research was used in this research article because of its numerous advantages. In qualitative research, there is a significantly lower chance of getting an inadequate response because of misunderstanding (Levitt et al., 2021). Fifteen school principals in Tshwane South out of 131 primary schools were sampled. All 15 principals in this research were experienced with experience ranging from 4 to 20 years.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were highly prioritized throughout the research process. Informed written consent was obtained from each principal involved, ensuring they agreed and understood the study's purpose, operating procedures, researcher contact points and possible outcomes. Confidentiality has been strictly adhered to with the participants' being anonymous and even data collected strongly protected. The study followed the principle of beneficence, the empirical research provided beneficial results that could shed light onto educational practices with minimizing harm. With respect to autonomy, the study assured that participants could withdraw in any stage of the process with no harm done to them. It was the communication and debriefing process that was given a priority, informing participants about the outcomes of the research and how their contribution has led to these results. The approval to undertake the research was granted by University of South Africa as well as Gauteng Department of Education, which proved that it did meet ethical standards. In general, the process of research was based on the highest ethical values and was aimed at providing safety for each participant in order to protect his or her welfare and rights.

Findings: Challenges in Implementing the Instructional Strategies

Participant 15 stated that meetings are useful for the teachers, and they must attend all the meetings to develop their instructional strategies. The health and life skills classroom includes group discussions as a key component. They are crucial for providing background on particular topics, inspiring students, arousing their interests and providing a platform for expressing and exploring novel concepts and information. However, another participant commented stated that:

"I would suggest when you have to try one, two, three, four strategies and if the person fails, then I will be able to provide more quality or ways to solve the situation."

Principals thought that students benefit more when teachers use several different instructional tactics rather than just one or two. Students will not have a chance to

become bored thanks to all the different activities. Additionally, students will be exposed to teaching strategies appropriate to their specific learning preferences. If students are exposed to various teaching techniques, they will learn more effectively and are more likely to maintain their attention for a longer time. In the end, a teacher needs to ensure that the instructional tactics they are using align with the students they are working with and the material they are presenting to them. Because not every educational method will be an ideal fit for every circumstance, teachers need to develop the ability to evaluate which strategy will be the most effective fit.

Even the Zoom meetings are useful for teachers, as stated by one participant:

I think the challenges will be there. All teachers who don't see any value for them to attend training and meetings because they will be going for pension soon. Then the new ways of doing things, of course, they just don't feel like, you know, it becomes a problem. Then you just have to encourage them. The old teachers, then the new newly appointed educators. You must ensure that they attend those meetings. They give you the report, the feedback on a regular basis after they have attended the Zoom meetings and whatever. So that's, you know, really what is transpiring in in terms of the development of their instructional teaching, etc.

The amount of time spent presenting in the classroom means that most of a teacher's time is taken up by evaluating students, developing lesson plans and completing other administrative tasks. Attending professional development seminars can help teachers better prioritise their tasks and keep things organised. In the long run, this makes instructors more productive and gives them more time to focus on the children instead of the paperwork.

Rigid Practices and Noncompliance

The principals stated that some teachers did not comply with the school's learning material, or they did not want to adapt to the changes as they were scared of delivering lectures that are not appropriate. One principal stated that:

Like I said, there are some teachers who are very headstrong. Like they want to do things in a certain way. Some of them are afraid to change. So, they don't really want to change, they don't really want to adapt.

When it comes to the implementation of changes, fostering collaboration among educators assumes paramount significance. The reassurance of teachers becomes imperative in order to dispel any notion that past practices were flawed due to impending classroom modifications. It is crucial to identify the specific forms of support that instructors necessitate to embark on changes without succumbing to overwhelming sentiments. During staff meetings, it is beneficial to share important information, and afterwards, educators should share the knowledge they gained from workshops or professional development activities like reading articles, to help them understand and absorb the material.

The first crucial quality of interventions that influence teacher transformation is for instructors to reflect on their previous views regarding teaching and learning, including beliefs about how to run a classroom. Because of this quality, treatments may circumvent the barrier presented by instructors' prior beliefs, which prevents them from changing. One participant stated that:

It sometimes is noncompliance from some of the teachers, you know, because you check and you guide according to those peers and because the visits are not done regularly."

As per another principal, teachers do not comply as they are comfortable in the way of teaching, they have been for so long, and they are best at doing that.

"It's trying to get them to change their mindset on how they teach our children in the class, particularly now after COVID-19 and the fact that we have got this whole new way of teaching children now. So, I think firstly, it's the teacher's mindset. Sometimes teachers are so old-school that they're not willing to change the manner in which they've always done things. So, for me, that's a big challenge. Also, getting teachers to do to try new things and to see what works in the classroom and what doesn't work. So, it's being more innovative in trying to think out of the box because they're so set in their ways of how they want to do things and not be prepared to listen to new ideas and put themselves out there to try new things. They don't like change."

However, another principal insists that the teacher must use rubrics when instructing a learner. It is important not only for teachers but also for students.

If you look, you wouldn't have to learn as an instructional leadership. You've got to lead by example. You have to ensure that if you instructing leaders to do or learn this example, learners in the class to complete an assignment or project. You must ensure that your planning is that detail. You must ensure that you have a rubric to ensure that this is how you're going to assist that instruction. In fact, the same with the teachers in instructional leadership being set up to attend workshops.

Rubrics will bring to the teacher's attention that many pupils are not displaying enough achievement of a certain skill. It is possible to track changes in student performance as you improve your teaching thanks to the uniformity added to the evaluation process by using rubrics. A good example of how rubrics can be helpful is in determining whether or not incorporating activities that require students to work together to solve problems helps students enhance their analytical skills. Sometimes the performance criteria are determined in advance by the instructor or a professional organisation. However, at other times, they can be created by the students in a course, particularly if the assignment is new to the instructor. In most cases, the performance criteria are determined in advance by the instructor or a professional organisation. It is possible to achieve several goals by having students develop the criteria that will be used to evaluate their success. Another participant stated that:

We must be able to create rubrics. We must be able to just be creative in doing them. And so as a result, it would be good to test if they are unable to do those things.

Learning is also directly enhanced by creativity, by boosting motivation, enhancing the depth of comprehension and fostering enjoyment. The creative process depends on

pupils pursuing meaningful goals to foster the type of intrinsic drive that is crucial to the process. The term “create” stands at the pinnacle of Bloom’s taxonomy for a good reason: creative thinking can assist deeper learning across academic disciplines since it helps students recognise bigger patterns and link content from other academic fields.

The principals also said teachers must ask students to generate ideas or thoughts during the brainstorming process, a form of lateral thinking that can be useful in developing creative solutions to problems. During this process, students may be asked to develop ideas or thoughts that, at first glance, may appear crazy or shocking. Afterward, participants can alter and improve their ideas, turning them into something fresh and valuable. The definition of an issue, the diagnosis of a problem, the identification of alternative solutions, or the resistance to proposed answers can all be helped by brainstorming.

Communication, Technological Skills and Other Issues

Principals today must work expeditiously due to their demanding workloads. “Principals of elementary schools’ work, on average, 20 hours for 39 weeks per year” (Annie, 2015, p.35). Additionally, principals are encouraged to pursue greater leadership roles in education and the community. They must concentrate on teaching rather than developing their management skills. A principal note that lack of communication becomes a barrier when instructing teachers to comply with the latest digital technology. *One of the factors that hinder the application of the instructional strategies by the primary school principal, like, for example, you know, with the resources issues, would there be communication issues with support teachers, with instructional methods?* By attempting to contact parents, schools show that they respect their viewpoints. It reassures parents who would otherwise be hesitant to reach out that they are free to do so. Once schools have established that initial connection, parents and educators can work together to help children reach their academic potential. Therefore, the participant stated that: *We need parental involvement in school, and we’ve got our way of communicating. Our official way of communicating is through the district’s communicator.* Regular communication between parents and teachers is becoming less common, particularly as pupils get older. Parent-teacher communication instantly decreases when children go from preschool to kindergarten. Some 59% of parents say their children’s elementary school instructors never call them. Even worse, less than half say they are “extremely satisfied” with how they communicate with their parents. Despite the positive effects on student’s academic performance, neither parents nor instructors appear to use the tool of communication.

However, when parents and educators work together, they can help children prepare for academic success. The benefits of communication go beyond students alone. It frequently serves as the foundation for ongoing parental participation. Parents are more likely to trust instructors and see their impact when parents and teachers communicate. In addition, educators who have positive interactions with parents report feeling happier and having more faith in their capabilities. Establishing healthy parent-child relationships begins with open lines of communication between the generations. Teachers should see improving their classrooms as a major duty.

According to one principal, the issue is that parental participation and communication tend to decrease as student’s advance through their education. Teachers go above and beyond to connect parents with what happens in the classroom when pupils are enrolled in elementary school. Teachers and schools employ various

communication tools, including newsletters, social media, apps and weekly emails, to keep parents informed about their children's education. When students enter middle school, it is frequently believed that they will start to take on more responsibility, limiting the amount of information sent home to parents. Unless there are behaviour or academic difficulties, communication is typically only sent home for significant, school-wide events, leaving parents in the dark about what is occurring in their children's classrooms. Most studies that looked into the benefits of communication with parents at the middle school level found that it has a beneficial effect, but few of them specified which kind of communication worked best for getting along with parents.

Technological Skills

Technology aids educators in creating cutting-edge teaching strategies. However, a significant barrier in this area is that most teachers lack computer literacy. Studies show that while many teachers frequently use technology in their daily lives, they rarely use it in the classroom. Furthermore, many teachers would continue to teach in more traditional ways even if schools offered enough technology and software. The main barrier to instructors using technology in their lesson plans in the classroom is their inability to do so. Therefore, teachers with technological skills without a plan for execution risk having insufficient technology integration in their classrooms. One principal agreed that the goal of technology integration in the classroom should not be to improve teachers' technological proficiency but to assist them in effectively fusing effective teaching methods with necessary subject-matter expertise. For effective technology use in the classroom, it is also critical to have subject-matter expertise and the capacity to integrate instructional methodologies. Therefore, it is important to encourage teachers to integrate their technical skills with their subject-matter knowledge and teaching strategies.

Regarding their views on integrating technology in the classroom, instructors are typically split into two groups. The first group of educators includes those that embrace technology integration and believe that it improves student engagement and interdisciplinary knowledge demonstration and makes the instruction more efficient and effective. In contrast, the second group of educators thinks that technology unintentionally dilutes students' attention to their studies and interferes with their learning ability. Although most instructors know the advantages of using technology in the classroom, a lack of positive experiences may hinder their desire to do so. In order to encourage instructors to use technology in the classroom, successful technology integration experiences should be created. One principal stated that teachers should be trained in order to comply with the latest technologies: *"Teachers will have to be properly trained to ensure that the learners know exactly what to do. We have to provide a level of guidance and support."*

For instructors to engage in successful and pedagogically meaningful teaching activities, subject knowledge alone is insufficient. Teachers today must make every effort to develop creative approaches that not only facilitate but also maximise students' learning to the fullest extent possible. The use of technology in education is pervasive; therefore, when considering its incorporation, it may be helpful to consider the issues that need to be resolved and how technology could be used to help. Principals have had trouble implementing technology in their instructional strategy. This is attributed to the absence of a framework for educating instructors in the knowledge and abilities

necessary to properly use digitalisation pedagogy, involve students and boost academic performance.

Planning

Planning is essential for teachers; it helps in delivering lectures. One principal supported this as she stated that:

Sometimes you may get teachers at a distance, not all of them, especially if you want to have what's up on during the week. Always have the teachers say that they have been there for planning in advance. It is very like, you know, you have to give teachers ample notice to go to have make sure that your plan is a devised time.

Student performance has been proven to improve in schools where learning is encouraged through participation in the classroom, *"You have overcrowded classrooms. All those kinds of things are playing a role. But now you have to try and encourage people and make them positive in a situation we sometimes feel may be very negative."* (P11)

Barriers with Technology

Some studies attribute this issue to teacher-centred learning instead of student-centred learning, teachers using students' first languages in the classroom, teachers relying on more traditional methods of instruction, and students who lack the motivation to learn the language. A principal stated that: *"The focus of teaching problem, where you like to see the kid beyond your classes, such as further grades or university... mainly as to how you teach yourself."*

That participant wanted to emphasise that some schools are preparing groups of pupils to offer elementary-level IT help for the school. These students participate in staff technology training, support teachers when a class uses a novel or difficult technology, and even lead training sessions for students and teachers. The hired tech support staff can concentrate on the more difficult problems if students are taught how to address and prevent the lower-level issues. Another participant stated that:

"You know, it's always important that teachers must always be kept abreast. I encourage them to study. I mean, the timing of it, the teacher diploma degrees these days is not and need to also you know I encourage them to at the department also always awarded both of these to teachers... If we find something that needs development within you, we will decide on solutions."

The development of technology has made several previously impenetrable knowledge doors open. Teachers now risk being surpassed by their students as the younger generation becomes more competent at using technology. Even though it is always a reason for celebration when students perform better, a pattern of poor performance by students also causes them to have far less regard for their teachers. Teachers must become comfortable using technology in the classroom to avoid these hazards.

Personal Beliefs and Prior Experiences

The fact that personal beliefs are influenced by prior experience can be learned from the response of one principal who highlighted that: *"The older principals or the older generation are suffering to make it through to achieve our visions and missions at school because of the type of teacher with the type of parents."* Teachers might be one of the most challenging problems for instructional leaders. Apart from failing to produce the necessary results, subpar teachers' bad behaviour can hinder others from finishing their work and depress staff morale. They occupy a substantial portion of the principal's time and displace other workers who would be more advantageous to the business. It is estimated that ineffective teachers comprise between 5 and 10% of the teaching workforce. Although this situation is widespread across all countries and cultures, school officials find it extremely difficult to either fire or improve the performance of the underperforming instructors. The current study investigates the causes of instructors' potential underperformance.

Curriculum Changes

Our curriculum is developing piece by piece. The training structure is rarely solid, from the trainers' training layout to the online and flip classrooms. The framework, tactics, and pedagogical skills of education have also been impacted by globalisation and have been seen to evolve quickly. Educators should also be informed of advancements and changes when teaching has the potential to change lives. How would educators have handled these changes in the absence of technology? People now live in a world of virtual cultures due to the globalisation brought about by technological breakthroughs over the past several decades.

School Governance

The success of an organisation depends on its board of directors and its customers. A similar situation exists in education, where teachers and students are regarded as the two fundamental building blocks of an educational system. This system is efficiently run by an administration block that looks after these two blocks.

Training Programmes

As crucial as student teaching and learning are, so are teacher education programmes. Every day the world moves closer to technological development, which results in the discovery and production of new ideas in every field of practice and education. Teachers must continuously update their knowledge to give students the greatest instruction possible. In order to refresh and upgrade their knowledge, they must enrol in specialised training programmes.

Discussion of Findings

In order to address the resource constraints affecting the implementation of instructional strategies, it is essential to increase the access to resources available to schools. This can be done by introducing more secure and sustainable funding sources, creating more vital systems to facilitate access to resources and materials, and

providing access to technologies such as computers and other digital tools (Crick, 2021). Additionally, policies should be implemented to ensure that only quality resources and materials are used to implement instructional strategies. However, to successfully implement instructional strategies, it is essential to provide adequate support and training to principals. This can be achieved by ensuring that district and school management are well-informed about the process and objectives of strategy implementation, guiding principals in implementing instructional strategies, and offering training and workshops (Arifin & Adha, 2021).

Additionally, clear policy guidelines should be provided so principals can understand the objectives and process of strategy implementation. Further, due to the lack of professional development opportunities for principals, it is essential to create more cost-effective and accessible opportunities (Ridwan, 2021). This can be done by providing access to online professional development courses, offering tailored courses to reflect the individual needs of various schools and regions, and providing flash training and webinars for principals to help them stay up to date with new strategies (Bego, Ralston & Thompson, 2022). Furthermore, mentorship and support from experienced educators can help principals develop the knowledge and skills needed to implement instructional strategies successfully.

Rigid practices and noncompliance of primary school principals can negatively affect school culture and student achievement. Principals with rigid practices and a lack of flexibility may prevent teachers from having autonomy in their teaching methods and decision-making, leading to teacher burnout and a lack of motivation (Grissom & Condon, 2021). Additionally, this rigidity may create a perception among students that the principal and school need to be more supportive of their educational needs, without which there will be lower academic performance, greater absenteeism and dropout rates and more disciplinary referrals. Additionally, rigid practices and noncompliance by primary school principals can have long-term adverse effects on the overall school environment (Chabalala & Naidoo, 2021).

Further, prior experiences can heavily influence the personal beliefs of primary school principals. These prior experiences could range from their own experiences as teachers or the experiences of other primary school principals with whom they have worked. This could be seen in how they manage staff, create lessons and interact with students (Valtonen et al., 2021). Through studying the experiences of other successful primary school principals, a new principal can gain insight into what successful practices look like and strive to emulate those (Martin & Kumar, 2021). Experiences of failure can also inform a principal's personal beliefs, allowing them to reflect on what did not work in the past and focus on what could be improved in the future.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the barriers to implementing instructional strategies by primary school principals in Gauteng Province. These barriers include a lack of adequate resources, a lack of support and training opportunities, a lack of technological know-how, and difficulties at the district level., a lack of professional development opportunities, and a lack of understanding of instructional strategies. However, a variety of techniques were shown to be effective in assisting primary school principals in applying instructional strategies methodologies. For instance, some participants reported using the school committee, workshops, one-on-one coaching, booklet production, healthy dialogue with all stakeholders, surveys and team-building activities

on weekends. It also includes district-level activities, such as ensuring that schools are inclusive and host workshops for new teachers as part of their induction.

As instructional leaders, principals must create and share a clear vision and directive for student accomplishment in their schools. The heads of the schools should oversee the allocation of resources and ensure that the instructors have access to everything they require to deliver the quality education to the children. To ensure effective methods are used in the schools, principals who are instructional leaders should support teachers in their work by promoting professional development and offering coaching and mentoring. If a principal acts as an instructional leader, they enhance the school positively which will affect the learning outcome of the students in their school.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for principals. These solutions include improving resources and support, creating clear communication of strategy implementation objectives, and offering enhanced professional development opportunities for principals. The development of curricula and classroom procedures should receive more attention. Training programmes for new teachers should focus on enhancing their effectiveness in managing the curriculum and conducting lessons. Development programmes offered in schools should be closely supervised. Finally, policymakers and practitioners should address the various barriers to implementing instructional strategies in primary schools in Gauteng Province. Principals could improve school performance by ensuring that their vision and purpose statements are developed, accepted and effectively communicated to all stakeholders. To keep teachers and students, respectively, reminded of their objectives, every classroom and staffroom should have a copy of the vision and mission statements posted on the walls. In addition to the National Teachers' Awards, the researchers suggest that the Department of Basic Education through the district officials could inspire teachers and students by starting district and cluster award ceremonies for outstanding academic accomplishments. The researchers also suggest that the Department of Basic Education offer leadership professional development programmes in light of the numerous changes being made to the South African curriculum. Principals would be able to further and recognize their leadership and professional abilities as a result.

References

- Alazmi, A.A. and Al-Mahdy, Y.F.H. (2022). Principal authentic leadership and teacher engagement in Kuwait's educational reform context. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(3), 392-412.
- Annie, M.C.C. (2015). Early childhood education and care pedagogy review: England. OECD Publishing. site: www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood.
- Arifin, I., & Adha, M.A. (2021). Dominance one-roof school's principal excellent leadership in the digital age in Indonesia. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 93, 199-218.
- Bego, C.R., Ralston, P.A., & Thompson, A.K. (2022). Improving performance in a large, flipped barrier mathematics course: a longitudinal case study. *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology*, 53(7), 1916-1933.

- Chabalala, G., & Naidoo, P. (2021). Teachers' and middle managers' experiences of principals' instructional leadership towards improving curriculum delivery in schools. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 11(1), 1-10.
- Crick, J.M. (2021). Qualitative research in marketing: what can academics do better? *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(5), 390-429.
- Goddard, R. D., Skrla, L., & Salloum, S. J. (2017). The role of collective efficacy in closing student achievement gaps: A mixed methods study of school leadership for excellence and equity. *Journal of education for students placed at risk*, 22(4), 220-236.
- Grissom, J.A. and Condon, L., 2021. Leading schools and districts in times of crisis. *Educational Researcher*, 50(5), 315-324.
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Accessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217-247.
- Haug, B.S., & Mork, S.M. (2021). Taking 21st century skills from vision to classroom: What teachers highlight as supportive professional development in the light of new demands from educational reforms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 100, 103286.
- Ho, J., Shaari, I., & Kang, T. (2023). Vice-principals as leaders: Role ambiguity and role conflicts faced by vice-principals in Singapore. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(3), 575-593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211002527>
- Howell, J.B., & Maddox, L.E., 2022. Geographic inquiry for citizenship: Identifying barriers to improving teachers' practice. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*. In Press.
- Kalangi, S., Weol, W., Tulung, J., & Rogahang, H. (2021+). Principal leadership performance: Indonesian case. *The International Journal of Social Sciences World*, 3(2), 74-89.
- Karakose, T., Polat, H., & Papadakis, S., 2021. Examining teachers' perspectives on school principals' digital leadership roles and technology capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, 13(23), 13448.
- Kilag, O.K.T., & Sasan, J.M., 2023. Unpacking the role of instructional leadership in teacher professional development. *Advanced Qualitative Research*, 1(1), 63-73.
- Levitt, H.M., Morrill, Z., Collins, K.M., & Rizo, J.L., 2021. The methodological integrity of critical qualitative research: Principles to support design and research review. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 68(3), 357.
- Lewis, L., 2022. Finding the stories: a novice qualitative researcher learns to analyse narrative inquiry data. *Nurse Researcher*, 26(2), 14-18. doi: 10.7748/nr.2018.e1578
- Ma, X., & Marion, R. (2021). Exploring how instructional leadership affects teacher efficacy: A multilevel analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(1), 188-207.
- Manaseh, A. M. (2016). Instructional leadership: The role of heads of schools in managing the instructional program. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 4(1), 30-47.
- Martin, M. E. (2018). Qualities of instructional leadership among principals in high-performing Christian schools. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 27(2), 157-182.
- Martin, F. and Kumar, S., 2021. Barriers in online education and strategies for overcoming them. In Miller, C., Pina, A., Molneda, M.H, Harris, P.H. Loclee, B. (Ed.), *A guide to administering distance learning* (pp. 43-60). Brill.

- Maxwell, J.A., (2021). Why qualitative methods are necessary for generalization. *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(1), 111- 118.
- Moore Jr, D. L., Kuofie, M., Hakim, A., & Branch, R., 2016. Teachers' perceptions of principals as instructional leaders and student academic achievement in elementary schools. *Journal of Marketing & Management*, 7(1), 126-131.
- Newby, P. (2010). *Research methods for education*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Nindie, A. (2022). Leadership management of school principles: A case study of public elementary schools in Bogor Regency. *AKADEMIK: Jurnal Mahasiswa Humanis*, 2(1), 19-28.
- Oates III, R. B. (2023). A qualitative case study of SC teachers' perceptions on differentiated instructional strategies and barriers in South Carolina middle school classrooms (Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University). <https://search.proquest.com/openview/e6fe20f8c76d1f1a9a125e12186b56d8/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Pratiwi, D. P., & Warlizasusi, J. (2023). The effect of principal leadership and work motivation on junior high school teacher performance. *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 2(1), 18-25.
- Ridwan, R., 2021. The effect of leadership on performance: Analysis of school management ability and attitude. *AKADEMIK: Jurnal Mahasiswa Ekonomi & Bisnis* [Journal focusing on the study of economics & business], 1(2), 59-67.
- Sebastian, J., Allensworth, E., & Huang, H. (2016). The role of teacher leadership in how principals influence classroom instruction and student learning. *American Journal of Education*, 123(1), 69-108.
- Smith, T.E., Reinke, W.M., Herman, K.C. and Sebastian, J. (2021). Exploring the link between principal leadership and family engagement across elementary and middle school. *Journal of School Psychology*, 84, 49-62.
- Sophonhiranrak, S. (2021). Features, barriers, and influencing factors of mobile learning in higher education: A systematic review. *Heliyon*, 7(4), 1-10.
- United Nation Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org) (2023), <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.
- Valtonen, T., Hoang, N., Sointu, E., Näykki, P., Virtanen, A., Pöysä-Tarhonen, J., Häkkinen, P., Järvelä, S., Mäkitalo, K., & Kukkonen, J. (2021). How pre-service teachers perceive their 21st-century skills and dispositions: A longitudinal perspective. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 116, 106643.
- Wallin, D., Newton, P., Jutras, M., & Adilman, J. (2019). I'm not where I want to be: Teaching principals' instructional leadership practices. *The Rural Educator*, 40(2), 23-32.
- Zaragoza, M.C., Díaz-Gibson, J., Caparrós, A.F., & Solé, S.L. (2021). The teacher of the 21st century: professional competencies in Catalonia today. *Educational Studies*, 47(2), 217-237.

All correspondence related to this paper should be addressed to: Mmalefikane Sylvia Sepeng, Associate Professor, College of Education Department of Educational Leadership and Management Office, Pretoria, South Africa, e-mail: sepenms@unisa.ac.za, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4472-169X>.