The influence of distributed leadership on the improvement of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools in Capricorn district, South Africa

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial subjects are being phased out in some Limpopo schools in South Africa because of poor performance of learners in such subjects. This study examined the relationship between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation in secondary schools. The study used the quantitative research method, and the cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data from 115 respondents. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results indicated significant positive relationships between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation in secondary schools Recommendations to improve distributed leadership in secondary schools include developing strategies that allow all teachers who are capable and willing to get an opportunity to lead certain areas of the school even if it is for shorter periods of time. Furthermore, there is a need to review and revisit the teacher's provisioning model and ensure that entrepreneurial subjects are taught by a person who specialized in such a subject.

Key words: Distributed leadership, Curriculum implementation, Regression, Correlation, Secondary school

1. INTRODUCTION

The school system in South Africa is extremely inefficient, chronically underperforming, and egregiously unfair (Spaull, 2013). The primary contributor to the education system's issue can be attributed to the government's failure to provide necessary school resources, such as teaching personnel and teaching and learning materials, combined with a lack of proper facilities. The consequences of such a crisis are manifested in reduced performance in commercial topics, which threatens the extinction of commercial streams in the impacted schools. According to Kruger (2018) conducted a study on pedagogical content knowledge on Economics Education in secondary school, "learners do not perform well in the Economics examination in the annual National Senior Certificate examinations, which explains the decline in the number of learners who choose Economics as a school subject." Commercial subjects are being phased out in some rural Limpopo schools due to a decrease in the number of learners choosing to pursue this path (Ngwenya, 2014), and this change leads to the extinction of such subjects.

According to Williams (2011), imposing distributed leadership in schools without taking into account the prevailing conditions in which these schools operate is risky. He recognises, however, that varied degrees of distributed leadership may be appropriate in some institutions. De Villiers and Pretorius (2011) discovered that South African teachers embrace the concept of and are ready for teacher leadership in a study to examine teachers' opinions of and preparation for teacher leadership. Nevertheless, the actual practise of leadership beyond the classroom is restricted. Using a mixed method approach, Naicker and Mestry (2011) discovered that leadership practises in Soweto schools are "rooted in traditional leadership practises and that a shift from autocratic styles of leadership, hierarchical structures, and non-participatory decision-making is required if distributive leadership is to thrive." Yet, quantifiable evidence showed a shift towards distributive leadership.

According to Murphy et al. (2009), distributed leadership requires many principals to reconfigure themselves as leaders, which would compel them to reframe their own conception of leading from'reliance on bureaucratic and institutional lenses towards viewing schools as community-anchored organisations'. On the other hand, it frequently implies that new abilities must be cultivated with a "new set of performances" that are not necessarily linked with school leader education. According to Harris (2012), it entails relinquishing some authority and control, which is a difficult undertaking, as well as redefining the role from exclusive leadership to one that is more concerned with brokering,

facilitating, and supporting others in driving innovation and transformation. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) believes that principals should be held accountable for the leadership and management of the schools to which they are assigned (DBE, 2016). Schools are, however, complicated organisations, and it would be foolish to expect one person to have the skills or the time to properly head every department of the school. As a result, principals must share leadership responsibilities with teachers (DBE, 2016). The ability to organise and motivate others to achieve an organization's or group's goal is the primary attribute of leadership today. According to Ngwenya (2014), leadership is essential for school-based innovation. It is widely understood that a strong school is headed by a good leader who creates an environment in which students can reach their full potential, use their skills, and maximise their prospects.

According to Thaba-Nkadimene and Mmakola (2020), many schools and circuits in Limpopo province are phasing out entrepreneurial subjects since they are recognised as destructive subjects in such schools and do not receive assistance or experience adjustments in such subjects. There are several reasons for Limpopo rural schools to phase out entrepreneurial topics, including poor teacher performance, a teacher shortage and a lack of support staff, a hostile working climate created by work overloading, and a lack of strategic school resources and infrastructure (Thaba-Nkadimene & Mmakola, 2020). According to Kruger (2018)'s study on pedagogical content knowledge in secondary school Economics Education, "the percentage of learners who enrol for NSC Economics at the start of the year, but do not write the final NSC Economics Examination, has increased sharply in the last year, indicating that there is an urgent problem that needs to be addressed." Commercial subjects are being phased out in several Limpopo schools, which has resulted in fewer learners opting to pursue this path, and this development leads to the eradication of such subjects (Ngwenya, 2014). According to Harris (2013), student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership resources are distributed throughout the school community and teachers are encouraged to pursue areas of expertise. This emphasis on distributed leadership informs the growing emphasis on teacher leadership and the development of teacher involvement in making decisions regarding approaches to educating pupils (Bektaş et al., 2020). From the standpoint of dispersed leadership, successful principals not only string together a succession of individual activities, but also systematically disseminate leadership by incorporating it into the structure of school life (Lin, 2022). Distributed leadership may be critical for strengthening the curriculum implementation of entrepreneurial courses in

secondary schools, if the school management team is phasing out commercial subjects (SMT).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contingency theories, as proposed by Ahmed (1973), recognise that schools operate in varied situations and that leadership styles must be tailored to the contexts in which each school operates, rather than taking a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. It focuses on contextual factors such as leadership style, followers, and scenario (Bush, 2011). When confronted with the many contexts of South African schools, the school management team and teachers who take on leadership positions must develop a wide range of possible leadership skills and methods. Tsvara (2013) contends that school administrators' management practises may have a direct or indirect, but substantial, influence on teacher performance, which in turn might increase teachers' work satisfaction levels.

2.1 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is an important idea to comprehend how various organisational stakeholders, such as principals, teachers, learners, and parents, exercise leadership (Spillane & Healey, 2010; Lin, 2022). Distributed leadership is widely recognised for facilitating an extended perspective of school leadership prior to the actions of school principals. It enables academics to view leadership as a dynamic interaction rather than a fixed functional representation. Using a survey of the literature, Tian et al. (2016) distinguished distributed leadership from other leadership concepts. According to them, distributed leadership implies that organisational leadership is a sensitive, engaged process that necessitates group-forming players. This process has rising and falling hierarchical consequences (Bush, 2018). Its mission is to guide and encourage one another within the company in order to achieve the institution's goals. From the standpoint of distributed leadership, various persons can participate in leadership and management to fulfil a community's shared goals (Klnç, 2018). Furthermore, this definition of leadership differs from others that associate it with informal leaders, enriching the concept of leadership (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Tam, 2018).

2.2 Curriculum implementation

Curriculum implementation refers to how teachers offer education and assessment using specified curricular resources. Curriculum designs often include instructional

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recommendations, lesson plans, assessment alternatives, and scripts that are linked to a set of objectives. Such designs emphasise uniformity in order to assist teachers in successfully implementing and maintaining the curricular structure in order to accomplish a variety of objectives (Wiles & Bondi, 2014). According to Wiles and Bondi (2014), horizontal alignment is defined as "similar instructional practises and curriculum use between teachers in the same grade level, and vertical alignment is defined as similarities in instructional practises and fidelity of curriculum implementation between the previous and following grade levels". Curriculum alignment between the same grades and the grades preceding and following them indicates consistency in supporting learning objectives and expectations meant to facilitate student readiness and growth (Tweedie & Kim, 2015).

2.3 Distributed leadership and curriculum implementation

It is consequently the SMT's responsibility to ensure that their separate departments run smoothly and that systems are in place to grow each member of staff to a specific level of competence. According to Clark (2007), the greatest and most successful workshops are those held in-house, where individual teachers with significant competence share ideas and best practises with younger, less experienced teachers. Distributed leadership is expected to yield beneficial effects in schools where teachers are encouraged to take on several tasks and where the school's official leadership structures remain accountable for the school's performance.

There is evidence that teachers use curriculum materials in a variety of ways in their classrooms (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015). Several studies of teacher principles about various curricula have revealed that having principles that are consistent with the philosophy of the curriculum materials being utilised appears to result in such teachers following the curriculum more closely than other teachers (Badugela, 2012; Hord & Roussin, 2013). Differences between ideas presented in curriculum materials and teachers' personal attitudes, on the other hand, may help explain teachers' persistence in adopting some curricular materials (Bowzer, 2008; Chávez, 2003). The preceding considerations support the following hypothesis:

H1: Distributed leadership is positively related to curriculum implementation.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilised the quantitative research design. Data was collected from the respondents through the cross-sectional survey method. The sample population was all

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secondary school in Capricorn district in South Africa. Before the actual survey, a pilot study was conducted with the principals, deputy principals, departmental heads and teachers of twenty secondary school. Two academics in the area of Educational studies and Curriculum studies also examined the questionnaire. Based on the results of the pilot study, minor adjustments were made in developing the final version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, demographic variables, distributed leadership, and curriculum implementation. The participants in the survey were conveniently sampled.

Self-administered questionnaire was employed during the data collection process. The participants in the survey were, principals, deputy principals, departmental heads (HOD) and teachers found in Capricorn district in the Limpopo province. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and the names of the school were not requested nor included in the questionnaire. The participants in the survey were reminded weekly to complete the questionnaire through follow-up phone calls and emails. If no response is received after two months, it was treated as a nonresponse. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies with acceptable psychometric properties. The cover page of the questionnaire contained information about the aim of the study and that participation is voluntary. The study used descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression for data analysis.

3.1   Measures:

Distributed leadership was measured using the 28 items. Distributed leadership questionnaire was adapted from a previous study by Sharp et al. (2011). The five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree" was used as the response category. The Cronbach's alpha for distributed leadership is 0.84. Curriculum implementation was measured using the 10 items. Curriculum implementation questionnaire was adapted from a previous study by George eta. (2013). The five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree" was used as the response category. The Cronbach's alpha for curriculum implementation is 0.87.

4.   RESULTS

Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed, and one hundred and fifteen questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 46%. The results indicate that the majority of the participants in the survey are females, have been teachers for between elven

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and fifteen years and in the 31-40 age bracket, most of the teachers were in possession of an advanced certificate in education (ACE).

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and Cronbach alpha

Dimensions	No. of Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha	
Distributed leadership	28	3.71	1.04	0.84	
Subject related leadership role	18	3.73	1.01	0.85	
Time	10	3.69	1.07	0.82	
Curriculum implementation	10	3.77	1.01	0.87	

Table 1 illustrates the results of distributed leadership based on subject related leadership roles and time. The scale mean for subject related leadership roles is 3.73 and the scale mean for time is 3.69. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the constructs are above 0.70 indicating a satisfactory internal consistency of measures. Furthermore table 1 illustrates the results of curriculum implementation. The scale mean for curriculum implementation is 3.77. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all the constructs are above 0.70 indicating a satisfactory internal consistency of measures.

Table 2: Correlation of distributed leadership and curriculum implementation

Variable		**Distributed leadership**
Curriculum implementation	Pearson Correlation	0.721
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
N		**115**

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 points out a positive correlation between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation, which is highlighted with curriculum implementation (r=0.721, p=0.000). The results of Pearson correlation between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation is very strong since the Pearson's r value is closer to 1. The results conclude

that changes in distributed leadership strongly correlates with changes in the curriculum of entrepreneurial subjects.

Table 3: Linear Regression of distributed leadership and curriculum implementation

Variable	Unstandardised B	Standard error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Curriculum implementation	0.825	0.276	0.204	2.670	0.004

SIG<0.05

Table 3 shows the results of the linear regression that there is a significant (B=0.204, P<0.05) relationship between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation. Furthermore, the results indicate a positive relationship between distributed leadership and curriculum implementation.

5.   DISCUSSION

It is evident that there is a definite expectation that leadership should be distributed in schools to the different post levels in various forms, as is clear from the emphasis on shared leadership in the Standard for Principals. It is, however, noteworthy that the expectation of distribution of leadership to the broader staff component in schools relates mainly to staff professional development and organisational improvement. The study investigated the effect of distributed leadership on curriculum implementation in secondary school. The results indicated that distributed leadership has a significant positive relationship with curriculum implementation. The results are consistent with the findings of Williams (2011) and Muijs (2011) that pointed out that there is growing recognition of the positive correlation between school improvement and distributed leadership. Furthermore, the findings of this study are strengthened by research by Hallinger and Heck (2009) explored the impact of system policies on the development of distributed school leadership and school improvement. Their quantitative analysis and results supported a relationship between distributed leadership and the school's capacity to improve. They concluded that distributed leadership was an important co-effect of school improvement processes. A study by Chang (2011) explored the relationship between distributed leadership, teachers' academic optimism and student achievement in learning. The study established that not only

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did distributed leadership have a positive influence on academic optimism, but it also indirectly affected student achievement.

6. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that principals must develop strategies that permit all teachers who are skilled and willing to get an opportunity to lead certain areas of the school even if it is for shorter periods of time. Formal leadership positions should remain constant but there are several other areas within the entrepreneurial subjects that need good leaders. A few examples of such roles will be the head of extra-murals, setting internal tests and examinations to prepare learners, organizing, and monitoring extra classes (morning and afternoon), monitoring of written work and lesson plans. The roles and responsibilities of these heads must be made clear by the principal who must monitor and support them.

Induction and training of new teachers and SMT members should follow immediately after the appointment of teachers into new positions whether these are entry level teaching positions or promotional posts. DBE's responsibility to ensure that newly appointed incumbents are fully trained for their positions. A well-structured, thorough, high quality training programme should be developed and extended to every teacher so that every school can function optimally. Furthermore, it is recommended that schools must monitor the work of all teachers irrespective of the role they play. This will guarantee that curriculum is accurately implemented for entrepreneurial subjects.

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