
The gist of instructional leadership practised in Swaziland primary schools

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Abstract

A growing body of scholarship links instructional leadership to effective teaching and learning. This article looks at the ‘what’ of instructional leadership as practised in Swaziland primary schools. A qualitative investigation was undertaken based on individual and focus group interviews conducted at eight primary schools in the Hhohho region of Swaziland. The findings show that demonstrative leadership accompanied by collaborative support and recognition for achievement are important features of an effective instructional leadership programme. The main limitations to optimal learning are the collection of school fees during school hours and balancing English as the language of instruction with preserving the indigenous language. The findings emphasize the importance of mutual effort as the main component of effective teaching and learning.

Introduction

The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to pupils’ academic performance (Robinson, 2007: 21). This statement encapsulates instructional leadership as the relationship between teacher effectiveness and learner performance and the quality of leadership provided to achieve such teaching and learning (Bush, 2013; Drysdale and Gurr, 2011; Spillane, 2006). Instructional leadership is motivated by the demand on school leaders for efficiency and accountability for classroom achievements that are mainly defined by academic outcomes in standardized tests. School leaders account for this efficiency by ensuring that the support and development of competent teachers are realized through the implementation of effective organizational processes to achieve optimal learning in the classroom.

In practice, instructional leadership is not the sole preserve of the school principal. Teachers representing different authority levels at school all perform tasks to accomplish the goal of instructional improvement (Bush, 2013). Also, as a socially distributed task, variations of context are acknowledged as an important factor in how instructional leadership is constructed and implemented (Hallinger, 2011). Part of a varied context, for example, is the distribution of instructional leadership by subject area in that the demands of the specific subject and how it is valued within the broader curriculum influence the kind of support provided to teachers (Spillane, 2006).

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