

Distributed leadership in three diverse public schools: Perceptions of deputy principals in Johannesburg

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This article explores the perceptions of deputy principals of formerly segregated township schools in South Africa on the concept of distributed leadership. In the apartheid dispensation, school leadership style was hierarchical and centralised on the principal, but now distributed leadership has gained global attention because it allows different leadership roles to be allocated over multiple members of the school, for the purpose of improvement of learner achievement. The paper is based on a case study research of three deputy principals in three schools in Johannesburg. The schools were selected on the basis that they were historically disadvantaged, hence they are designated here as former Indian, Black and Coloured schools. A qualitative approach was employed in which semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The findings revealed that all the three deputy principals understood distributed leadership as sharing responsibilities and working collaboratively for the sake of learners' achievement. Although two deputy principals strongly believed in the benefits of empowering teachers to make decisions concerning the school, the deputy principals showed a lack of trust in teachers' ability to take leadership and believed that if teachers are given that power, they may abuse it. It is recommended that formal leaders in schools build trust relationships in which teachers feel entrusted to make good decisions for the school. This promotes a more suitable and comfortable working environment for every stakeholder in the school.

Introduction

The government of South Africa under apartheid was characterised by unequal societies, with social and economic discrimination against black South Africans, and schools were divided along four racial lines. According to Coetzee (2014), the policy of institutional segregation under apartheid led to administration by departments that were racially segregated. There were White schools, Black schools, Indian schools and Coloured schools. Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2009) observed that the Black, Indian and Coloured schools received less funding than the White schools. For example, the funding spend on Black schools amounted to 19% of the funding spent on White schools. As a result of the differential funding, White schools management was superior to Black schools management.

Apartheid schools and schooling was deeply patriarchal and sexist (Mahlase, 1997). The school management was dominated by men as leaders (William, 2011) and women occupied only about 10% of school management positions, mainly in primary schools (Kiamba, 2008). Truscott (1994) also observed that women teachers were paid less than their male counterparts and did not enjoy the benefits that male teachers enjoyed, for example, housing subsidies and pensions. Wolpe et al. (1997) also noted that female teachers taught in the lower grades and did not teach mathematics and science, while the male teachers taught the higher classes and taught mathematics and science.

The colonial legacy is so deeply entrenched in the South African education system that transformation of education has been a challenge. Some transformation that has happened includes improvement in access, improvement in school infrastructure, improvement in distribution of resources, improvement in student-teacher ratios, the introduction of school nutrition programs in some schools, and improvement in democratically elected school governing bodies (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). However, challenges in transformation still remain in the diverse schools owing to their segregation by race, geographical location and socio-economic status (Biko, 2013). The poorest schools are in the Black communities and in rural areas while the better resourced schools are in the White communities. The Department of Education (2009) observed that 5000 schools in South Africa have no water supply, over 4000 schools do not have proper electricity, 11000 schools have pit latrines and 1000 do not have toilets at all. About 80% of schools do not have libraries or computer centres. There are also still fewer women in leadership positions than there are men. For example, in Gauteng Province in 2012, only 727 of the 2164 (34%) principal posts were occupied by women (Reynecke, 2012).

In terms of performance by learners, former White schools still outperform former Black schools. Hence, South Africa has succeeded only in providing access to education, but the majority are not receiving quality education (Christie, 2008).

The South African education system is also trying to transform school leadership which, during the apartheid era, restricted wide participation and ensured political control by the top formal leaders (African National Congress Education Department, 1994) and where decision-making was done solely by the principal. Williams (2011) observed that in this leadership style, school principals dominated and had power over teachers and school activities. This hindered many teachers' potential to lead in areas that they were good at. The South African education system is now promoting distributed leadership in which leadership and interaction takes place between all the school staff as they share their views in the different aspects they lead. Research has shown that this concept of distributed leadership has not yet been embraced in most schools in South Africa where this research was done (Williams, 2011; Adams & Waghid, 2005; Naicker & Mestry, 2011; Grant, 2008). This study therefore, sought to explore the conceptions of distributed leadership held by deputy principals of three former segregated schools in Johannesburg, given that the concept has not attained good implementation in most schools in South Africa. The focus was on the deputy principals because they sit at the intersection between the principals, who have always wielded power in apartheid type leadership, and teachers, whose role has been restricted to that of implementation of decisions made by others. In that regard, most Deputy Principals perform both administrative and teaching duties which make their perceptions of distributed leadership significant.

Statement of the problem

This study is premised on the belief that the legacies of apartheid still influence what goes on in schools more than two decades after its demise. That influence has not spared the management and leadership of the schools. Given that the apartheid school leadership was authoritarian, patriarchal, centralised, with all power and authority belonging solely to

the principal, and teacher participation in decision-making and leadership was minimal, a study on the current leadership's conception of distributed leadership is worth pursuing. It is important to find out what school leadership perceives of the increasing call for distributed leadership which has been found to contribute to the progress in learner achievement. This study is also premised on the understanding that the contextual circumstances of a school shape and influence its leadership and management. The study therefore, seeks to explore the perceptions of deputy principals on distributed leadership in the former segregated schools. Given the context of their schools, what do they think about distributed leadership? Do they think teachers should be given decision-making responsibilities beyond their own classrooms and do they believe that leadership does not reside solely with the principal? While many factors influence learners' academic achievement, the nature of school leadership can have a significant contribution to students' academic achievement.

Literature on distributed leadership

School leadership, among other factors, affects learner achievement. Hogg (2011, p. 85) described leadership as "a process of influence that enlists and mobilises the involvement of others in the attainment of collective goals without the use of coercive power". Traditionally, the leadership process was autocratic and one individual at the top of the hierarchy led others in all areas. In that case, one individual was the most powerful and had the most influence on individuals as well as the whole group (Yulk, 2002). Recently, however, leadership has shifted to a democratic style of distributed leadership, an approach which proposes that "shared leadership is required since educational institutions are too complex to be managed with only one individual" (Göksoy, 2015, p. 110). In distributed leadership, the responsibility for managing various roles and tasks in a school is distributed among multiple individuals with different skills and potentials, and successful principals call for, and develop on, contributions from others in their contexts (Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien & Hunt, 2012). This distribution of leadership does not undermine the vital role of the principal in the school, but rather shows that leadership is more a collective than an individual practice (Spillane, 2006).

Spillane et al. (2004, p. 11) defined distributed leadership as "[the leadership] distributed over leaders, followers and the school situation or context". For Spillane et al. (2007, p. 109), distributed leadership has two aspects: "leader-plus" and "practice". The "leader-plus" in a school implies multiple individuals, like the deputy principal, heads of departments, sports masters and teachers, not just the principal of the school, while "practice" is what is done in a particular time and place. According to Spillane et al. (2007, p. 110), the practice is the "product of interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation". Harris (2014) saw distributed leadership as concerned with interactions and dynamics of leadership practice and not centralised power by formal leaders. This practice of distributed leadership is found in schools where there is good leadership between the principal and teachers, and staff members are happy since they acknowledge and trust each other that they can lead in one way or another (DoE, 2008; Masekoameng & Zengele, 2015; Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodly & Somaroo, 2010). It is therefore, important that the staff members support each other in the different tasks that they lead.

Spillane and Diamond (2007) described distributed leadership as a collaborated, collective and coordinated distribution. These terms are explained as follows.

Collaborated leadership

In collaborated leadership, the practices are shared tasks for two or more leaders, who work together in a situation (Spillane & Orlina, 2005), for example, a group of teachers discussing students' results. Teachers are asked to engage as leaders and their hidden talents and leadership skills are identified. Through working collaboratively, teachers contribute to classroom achievement, and consequently to school reform (Northouse, 2016).

Collective leadership

In collective leadership, two or more leaders work separately but interdependently. In school activities like teacher development, monitoring and evaluation, teachers work separately but interdependently for the development of the school (Harris, 2013). Each member of the school shares leadership responsibilities in a collective manner depending on what they are good at. There is reciprocity in which the 'leader' sometimes takes the major leadership role and at other times the 'follower' takes the primary leadership role.

Coordinated leadership

Here the distribution of leadership includes leadership routines which consist of two or more activities by leaders that they have to perform in a particular sequence (Spillane & Orlina, 2005).

In many South African schools, there is still a leadership crisis whereby most school principals still practise hierarchical, centralised and authoritarian leadership styles (Neicker & Mestry, 2011; Kwindu, 2012; Maja, 2016). Williams (2011) therefore, suggested that distributed leadership should be seriously considered as a means of addressing this leadership crisis. Implementation of distributed leadership can only be done if the formal school leaders, the principals and their deputies know what it is and the benefits of sharing responsibilities in the school. Grant et al (2010) argued that the main idea underpinning this view is that leadership is not individual or positional, but instead it is a group process in which a range of people can participate. According to Singh (2014), some teachers have great skill and talents and it is the duty of an effective leader to encourage the teachers to implement these skills for the benefit of the school.

Without this knowledge, principals are likely to maintain the traditional leadership style of centralised leadership and leading to a cycle of under-achievement on learners' side. This study explored the conceptions of deputy principals on distributed leadership in order to establish their knowledge of it and its benefits on teaching and learning.

Research question

The study was guided by the following research question:

What are the perceptions of distributed leadership held by deputy principals in the three selected high schools?

Method

Research design

A qualitative case study research approach was used to explore the teachers' perceptions of distributed leadership. Yin (2009, p. 18) defined case study as an approach to qualitative research that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context". From this definition, it is apparent that a case study focuses on a single object of analysis in order to understand its complexities. In this case, the object of analysis was deputy principals' perceptions of distributed leadership. The study was interpretive and it sourced qualitative data. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) described interpretive research as research that seeks to understand a phenomenon, in the case of the present study, deputy principals' perceptions of distributed leadership. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) noted that in interpretivism, researchers find reality through the views, background and experiences of the participant. Hence the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour rather than to generalise and predict causes and effects (Neuman, 2000). Therefore, in this study I was engaged in double-hermeneutic interpretation. This is when a researcher makes sense of what is happening to the participant, and the researcher's sense making is second order, having access to the information only through the participant's account (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This study sought to interpret the deputy principals' interpretations of the phenomenon of distributed leadership. According to Thanh and Thanh (2015, p. 25), interpretivist research "accepts multiple viewpoints of different individuals from different groups." Willis (2007) believed that because external reality is different, therefore, there should be multiple perspectives of the world.

Sample

Three deputy principals from three diverse secondary schools in Johannesburg were purposively selected because it was deputy principals' perceptions of distributed leadership that this study wanted to explore. These deputy principals were selected on the basis of being at formerly segregated schools, namely former Indian, former Black and former Coloured schools, as the study aimed to explore what leaders from formerly segregated schools now understand by distributed leadership. The schools are hereafter named School A, School B and School C, for Indian, Black and Coloured respectively. The deputy principals from these schools are also hereafter named Deputy Principal A (from School A), Deputy Principal B (from School B) and Deputy Principal C (from School C).

The three schools served relatively less affluent sectors of the community in the Gauteng Province. Schools in each of the South African provinces are classified into five groups (Quintiles) from the most poor (Quintile 1) to the least poor (Quintile 5). Schools B and C are Quintile 3 schools. Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools are not allowed to charge fees and are often referred to as no-fee schools. The quintile to which a school was assigned was based on the rates of income, unemployment and illiteracy within the school's catchment area (Kanjee & Chudgar, 2009). School A is Quintile 4 which charges students a small amount, R150 per month, according to the Deputy Principal. Quintile 4 and 5 schools are expected

to supplement their state allocation through the charging of school fees and fund-raising (Kanjee & Chudgar, 2009).

The three schools were among the first schools that were built in the areas by the then apartheid government to cater for the educational needs of the non-white communities. The school that was "Black", is now mainly Black with a few Coloureds. The Indian school is still mainly Indian with a few Blacks and Coloureds. The Coloured school is also mainly Coloured and a few Blacks. The schools were all public secondary schools. All the three schools had only one deputy principal. School A had an enrolment of 605 students and 22 teachers, School B had 564 students and 19 teachers, while School C had 623 students and 25 teachers. According to the deputy principals, all three schools had libraries but the libraries did not have enough reading materials. The schools' laboratories were poorly resourced. All the schools had a room designed as a computer centre but they were under-stocked with 10-20 computers for the whole school and there was no Internet access.

In-depth interviews were used to source data from the three respondents, seeking their perceptions on distributed leadership in schools. The interviews were conducted during 19 to 22 September 2017, each lasting 30-45 minutes, done in the afternoon after school, with responses recorded and transcribed.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thus, the identified "... patterns in the data are important or interesting, and used these themes to address the research or say something about an issue" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). Semantic themes were identified. These are themes emerging whilst the researcher was not looking for anything beyond what the participants said or what was written (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Transcripts were read over and over again and then coded at an individual level, and then analysed and coded at a level of comparison. Data was analysed by means of content analysis. Recurring key words, phrases or concepts were considered as a way of presenting the experiences and perceptions of the participants. After that themes and patterns emerging from the data were identified, the themes were reviewed and it was ensured that they fit the available data. The themes were then defined and named.

The deputy principals' responses are discussed under five themes:

- Respondents' understanding of distributed leadership;
- Distributed leadership' contribution to improved student learning;
- Decision-making beyond classrooms;
- Collaboration of teachers;
- Leadership residing solely with the principal.

For each theme, an analysis was made, together with a story that the data told in relation to the research questions. Data extracts are provided to demonstrate the prevalence of the themes.

Findings and discussion

Respondents' understanding of distributed leadership

The participants raised a number of aspects which they understood to be part of distributed leadership. The assorted responses from interviews with the three deputy principals tended to agree in many ways. On his understanding of distributed leadership, Deputy Principal A responded that distributed leadership is “*decision making and all the roles played by each individual so that collectively we achieve something.*” This response highlights the essential part of distributed leadership as involving decision-making by other staff members who are not in leadership positions. There is also the issue of achieving goals collectively, as posited by Harris (2013) who saw distributed leadership as a collective form of leadership whereby teachers develop expertise by working together. The aim of distributing leadership is to achieve the goal of learner achievement. Harris and DeFlemis (2016) confirmed that distributed leadership leads to improved learning outcomes.

Deputy Principal C responded:

Like I said before, I think distributed leadership for me it's some sort of empowerment. It makes the running of the institution effective when you distribute your leadership to other people and then people feel empowered and production takes place in a speed form.

Like Deputy Principal A, Deputy Principal C also believes that distributed leadership is about empowerment of other members of the school to do decision-making. Deputy Principal C also believes that when one is empowered, there is professional growth and work is done faster. This accords with Spillane (2006) who observed that the main ideas in distributed leadership are to assist in the improvement of schools, making the principal's job easier, and empowering and increasing student achievement (Botha, 2016). Work is done faster because every member will be having a responsibility and will be accountable for the responsibility given to them. Cook (2014) also confirmed that all teachers have the potential and entitlement to contribute meaningfully towards leadership. Deputy Principal B responded that “*I think it's sharing responsibilities within the school.*” The idea that the respondents brought up as defining distributed leadership was sharing leadership roles. None of them, however, mentioned that distributed leadership is based on trust and expertise, and requires distribution of leadership tasks by senior leadership, rather than just delegating tasks to anyone without considering their expertise in the area, as Grant (2006) suggested.

Hence the understanding of the three teachers is that distributed leadership has to do with sharing responsibilities, professional growth and empowerment of other members, effective running of institutions and decision-making, collectively. Of the four features of distributed leadership that Spillane (2005, p. 143) highlighted (transforming the school's culture, contributing in turn to greater teacher satisfaction, higher teacher expectations for students, and improved student achievement) only two were identified by two of the

Deputy Principals and none by one Deputy Principal, which shows partial understanding of the concept. For example, they did not mention the issue of transforming the school's culture and teacher satisfaction, which are also important factors.

Distributed leadership contributes to improved student learning

Distributed leadership leads to improved student learning in one way or the other. All three deputy principals agreed to this. Deputy Principal A believed that work becomes easier when responsibilities are shared and it becomes easier for the principal to run the school. He responded thus:

If different individuals are responsible for doing the work, it makes it much easier for the school to run much smoothly and this causes even the learners to get better teaching and learning to take place and so on.

When teachers share responsibilities, they teach better than they do when they are overloaded with responsibilities. Also, the job of the principals is improved by making their responsibilities more manageable (Cook, 2014). Deputy Principal B revealed that there are benefits in distributing leadership because firstly, each teacher who has been assigned some responsibility ensures that it is done. Secondly, teaching and learning takes place and thirdly, all learners are benefiting from the responsibilities the individual teachers have been assigned.

Deputy Principal C felt that learners get empowered by different teachers who have been given or volunteered roles that they have expertise in. Deputy Principal C explained:

The effectiveness like I was saying, I think it helps a learner in the form of learner being a whole person. They get different empowerment from different teachers, and from different leaderships in the school".

He therefore saw distributed leadership as an effective way of bringing up learners who are 'whole', as he put it. Hence, the skills and talents of all members of the school staff are brought together and the expertise of the school community can be driven to targeted areas. Botha and Triegaardt (2014) argued that distributed leadership leads to improvement of schools by improving the learners' achievement, teacher morale, efficiency and pedagogy.

Decision-making beyond classrooms

On the participants' perceptions about whether teachers should be given decision-making responsibilities beyond their classrooms, all three participants felt that teachers should be allowed to make decisions, but for two of them, this should be done only to a certain extent. Both agreed on the need for teachers to be given leadership positions and the benefits that accrue from such empowerment. However, they differed on the extent to which leadership should be invested in the teachers, with Deputy Principals B and C saying there is a limit to the kind of responsibilities teachers could be trusted with, while Deputy Principal A thought the teachers' empowerment needed to be complete without reservations.

Deputy Principal A argued that:

Yes. Its not a problem. You see, its not only classroom based duties that they have to perform. They have to perform things like extra duties for the whole school and can make some decisions on what they need to do. You see each teacher may be talented in different areas and ... they can perform better roles if they just don't stick themselves to one, the classroom itself.

He understood very well the importance of empowering teachers to make decisions, that they do well in the areas where they are talented and skilled, which promotes learner achievement. This is consistent with literature which states that a trusting relationship appear to be a strong predictor of successful teacher participation in shared decision making (Sibanda, 2017). When teachers are trusted to make good decisions, their participation in all aspects of leadership is promoted. Deputy Principal A's belief is also consistent with Northouse's (2016) observation that empowering teachers to make decisions improves the culture of the school, which leads to an increase in student achievement. Deputy Principal A, having been a leader at a former Indian school, probably understood better that centralising authority burdens the principal and deputy principal and therefore, it is important to "stretch-over" the decision-making powers to other teachers (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Former Indian schools were better performing schools during the apartheid era and their leadership style was superior to Black and Coloured, thus it was less centralised (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2009). Maintaining that culture of leadership at Deputy Principal A's school could partly explain why their students perform better than students from former Black and Coloured schools, according to Deputy Principal A. MacBeath (2005, p. 355) affirmed the view that distribution of leadership involves "relinquishing one's role as ultimate decision-maker, trusting others to make the right decisions." Thus Deputy Principal A felt that teachers should be given more authority to make decisions. It is important to note that teachers are satisfied by participative decision-making since they can contribute to matters which affect them inside and outside their classrooms and their contributions contributes to effective functioning of the school (Emmanouil, Osia & Paraskevi-Ioanna, 2014).

Like Deputy Principal A, Deputy Principal B felt that teachers should be given decision-making powers but Deputy Principal B lacked trust in teachers. He argued that "...but the decision should not disadvantage especially the learner or maybe bringing the school into disrepute". This statement shows that although two Deputy Principals strongly believed in the benefits of empowering teachers to make decisions concerning the school, the Deputy Principals showed lack of trust in teachers' ability to take on leadership roles and believed that teachers may abuse this power. As discussed earlier, apartheid Black schools and schooling was deeply patriarchal and poorly managed (Mahlase, 1997). Deputy Principal B, being a leader at a former Black school probably still held to the culture of former Black schools which were patriarchal and lacking trust in teachers (Mahlase, 1997), although he believed in empowering them to make decisions. This is inconsistent with what MacBeath (2005, p. 355) observed, that distributed leadership involves: "... trusting others to make the right decisions and a belief in the potential and authority of others, listening with the intent to understand that allows trust for leadership to be shared." There

is need to trust that others can make the right decisions, if the school staff are to work collaboratively towards one goal. Lack of trust for each other creates an environment in which teachers are not free to express themselves, or demonstrate their abilities in different areas. Botha and Triegaardt (2014, p. 311) explained that “trust in leadership is not only appreciated, but key to the school-wide implementation of distributive leadership as a school improvement tool.”

The same lack of trust is revealed by Deputy Principal C who felt that sometimes teachers wrongly used the authority they are given to lead outside their classrooms. As a result, for him, decision-making should be limited. Since he did not trust teachers with decision-making, close monitoring should therefore, be done and the teachers should account for their actions. Thus he argued:

There I think it depends. It [decision-making] will depend on the circumstances. But I feel teachers can be given that opportunity provided they do not abuse it. They need to be monitored and they need to take accountability also. They should know that if they are given responsibilities it must come with accountability.

Like Deputy Principal B, Deputy Principal C also lacked trust in teachers. Both Deputy Principals, being in schools that had hierarchical structures with legitimate power vested in the principal as the positional leader during apartheid, they probably still maintained the former leadership style and they probably find giving teachers decision-making responsibilities a threat to the status quo (Harris & Muijs, 2004).

Collaboration of teachers

The deputy principals were asked about their perceptions of whether learners’ learning is enhanced when teachers work together in different activities in the school. All three agreed that teacher collaboration enhances student learning. They revealed that collaboration of teachers benefits learners, for example, when teachers come together to discuss learners’ results, they know where learners are struggling and where teachers need to focus as they teach. Deputy Principal A explained that:

So when they analyse, in fact I have made up a template which each teacher uses to analyse question by question, how the learners are performing. So they know in class how each individual learner is performing in a particular topic. So by analysing the results they do change, they do interventions and strategies that improve those results.

When they collectively discuss how to assist students, the students benefit because different ideas put together can be very powerful. From their discussions, they can collaboratively solve the problems that their learners experience. As a group, the teachers can “*be able to identify the problem learners ... and address them collectively and it becomes easier.*” In other words, discipline of students is easier when teachers work together, than when working individually.

All three deputy principals acknowledged the benefits of collaborative work. As deputy principals who, together with principals, take a lead in transforming education in schools,

it is critical that they are well-educated about the importance of distributed leadership. Professional development meetings for principals and deputy principals assists to change their leadership styles and improves their relationships with teachers in the schools (Mestry & Singh, 2007).

Leadership residing solely with the principal

In the apartheid education system, leadership solely resided with the Principal who made all decisions and had absolute authority over the staff members. In this study, however, all the three deputy principals revealed that leadership cannot reside in one person, the principal. Deputy Principal A argued that:

If everybody plays a role, their role, ... and they also take up leadership positions, it becomes easier to manage the whole school.... It cannot come only from the principal.

Deputy Principal B said:

Yes, as I have said that leadership, everybody within the school environment is a leader in her own space.

Deputy Principal C went further to say that:

As a teacher you need to take responsibility of your environment, your classroom is your castle, you need to take charge and lead. The principal cannot lead alone.

This brings in Spillane and Diamond's (2007) idea of 'leader-plus' whereby the principal does not lead alone but is assisted in leadership roles by the deputy principal, heads of departments, sports master, senior teacher, and many others. This means all members at some point lead, depending on the situation. It is the principal's duty to "create leadership positions that allow capable and willing teachers to work in a more focused leadership capacity" (Loeser, 2008, p. 3). Harris (2005) argued against over-reliance on the leadership of the principal alone which she believed can be damaging to continued school improvement. When that principal retires or becomes sick for some time, it means the school will come to a standstill. Furthermore, the workload of the school principal is very complex and not manageable by one person. Hence, other staff members can assume some of the principal's duties, playing very significant leadership roles in the schools (Spillane & Healey, 2010).

Conclusion and recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the deputy principals perceptions of distributed leadership practices in three diverse schools in Johannesburg, using interviews were used to elicit information.

The study focused on how these deputy principals perceived distributed leadership, which has been found to contribute to progress in student achievement. Given the context of their schools (former Indian, former Black and former Coloured), it was of interest to see

whether the deputy principals, as formal delegated leaders, have embraced a distributed leadership style. This study indicates that the three deputy principals understood that distributed leadership is all about sharing leadership roles and working collaboratively for improved learning in their schools. They revealed that leadership does not solely reside in principals or deputy principals alone but every staff member can be a leader in one way or another. Two of the three deputy principals believed that although teachers may be given leadership roles, they cannot be fully trusted to make decisions because some of them may abuse the power. Hence there is lack of trust for teachers. However, the literature indicates that teachers cannot perform at their best in an environment where they are not trusted with decision making. Such an environment does not promote unity, satisfaction, hard work, collaboration, high morale and a collegial atmosphere. It is probable that these deputy principals, as formal leaders from schools which used to have central leadership styles, still maintain elements of this style, and do not empower their teachers extensively with decision-making, as they do not fully trust the the teachers.

All three deputy principals agreed that when teachers work collaboratively, students benefit because all the ideas from different teachers put together will be used to enhance their teaching. Even disciplining students becomes easier when teachers work together.

It is recommended that formal leaders in schools build trusting relationships in which teachers feel supported in making good decisions for the school. Further research may focus on the practices of leadership in former segregated schools to find the extent to which distributed leadership is being practised. Other research in a Soweto primary school by Naicker and Mestry (2011) revealed that distributed leadership in some schools is still a theory, not yet put into practice. It is high time that hierachical, authoritarian leadership styles are replaced by distributed leadership and everyone in the school can practice leadership roles in areas of their expertise.

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