

# Instructional Leadership for Quality Learning

## *An Assessment of the Impact of the Primary School Management Development Project in Botswana*

**Nkobi Owen Pansiri**

### ABSTRACT

A descriptive study using questionnaires was conducted in 2004 to assess the effectiveness of instructional leadership displayed by primary school management teams following the implementation of the Primary School Management Project in Botswana. Leadership skills, Coordination of instructional activities, management of curriculum and quality of learners were key variables that guided the study. Respondents were 240 primary school teachers including school heads and 575 learners. Data were analyzed descriptively through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program using frequencies and percentages. The results reveal school management teams' lack of interpersonal skills necessary for classroom supervision, inability to mobilize parents to participate in school instructional improvement activities, teachers' unauthorized use of corporal punishment and lack of creativeness and innovativeness for management of curriculum change. Regarding quality of learning, the study identifies learners' inability and lack of freedom for self-expression and inadequate acquisition of basic literacy skill at varying degrees between rural and urban schools.

**KEYWORDS** *instructional leadership, instructional supervision, pedagogical leadership, school improvement, transformational leadership*

### Introduction

Botswana is a sovereign state in Southern Africa that became independent from the British Government in 1966. Since then it has committed itself to improving its education system in a variety of ways including policy change. The country's Presidential Commission on Education of 1993 led to the promulgation of the Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 (RNPE). The Policy emphasizes that:

The heads as the instructional leaders, together with the deputy and senior teachers, should take major responsibility for in-service training of teachers within their schools, through regular observations of teachers and organizational

workshops, to foster communication between teachers on professional matters and to address weaknesses. (Republic of Botswana, 1994: 47)

This position recognizes the fundamental role that school leadership plays in ensuring the quality of continued school based teacher development activities. It mandates a school head to engage all those who are in school management positions to actively participate in improving teacher competencies for enhanced learner performances. The policy proclamation came at a time when the Ministry of Education (MoE) was working on the re-organization of primary school staffing. The new arrangements introduced the concept of a school management team (SMT). A 'scheme of service' was introduced for primary school teachers, which expanded the school management structure from school head, deputy and senior teacher posts to school head, deputy, heads of department, teacher advisors grade 1 and senior teachers grade 1 and 2 posts of responsibilities (Republic of Botswana—TSM—Directive no 3 of 1994). The scheme of service also supported the 1994 policy, which further required that 'the Ministry of Education should develop guidelines for head teachers, clearly defining their roles both as instructional leaders and administrators of schools' (Republic of Botswana, 1994: 19–20). The new development meant that a small school would have at least three posts in the management structure while large primary school would be run through 13 posts of responsibility (Republic of Botswana, 1996).

The implementation of the RNPE with its clear focus on improving the quality of primary school leadership re-activated the commitment of government towards improving the quality of education. In terms of the interpretation of the policy, the school management teams were viewed as critical forces that needed professional skills to foster change and quality in schools. Consequently, the MoE through the department of Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) with the support of the UK Department for International Development (DfID) engaged a team of three consultants to run a Primary School Management Development Project (PSMDP) in July 1999. The team spearheaded the training of the SMTs. The consultancy was coordinated from TT&D. To facilitate the implementation of the project, another two-person consultancy was put in place in the same year, to carry out a baseline survey to inform the project on the state of management in primary schools in Botswana (Republic of Botswana—MoE Report, 2000). The overall goal of the PSMDP was 'to improve the quality of primary education in Botswana by providing effective management training and support for school management team' (Republic of Botswana—MoE Report, 2002: 4).

The baseline survey report (Republic of Botswana—MoE, 2000) highlighted a number of problems. Some of the problems were that primary school managers were unable to develop school development plans; weaknesses in teacher management which were counterproductive given the desire for improved classroom-based learning; lack of induction of teachers; poor interpersonal

skills among the SMTs and teachers including weak professionalism among the teaching staff; poor communication and consultation techniques used in schools; and poor systems of resource (supplies) management. Pupils' interpersonal relations were found to be poor and the SMTs did not have a pastoral role. Parental involvement in school curricula or co-curricula activities was minimal. Priority areas for management training that can be identified from the report include leadership skills, coordination of leadership functions, curriculum management, learner-achievement and learner behaviors.

According to Siduna (2003), the PSMDP was reinforced with the creation of 30 new professional advisory positions in MoE for trained personnel to support SMTs in carrying out the project. Subsequent to this, 30 primary school heads were identified and trained as Primary School Management Advisors (PSMAs). The PSMDP team first developed Training of Trainers (ToTs) materials to train PSMAs. The project then used the findings from the survey to develop three Management Training Units (Management Units 1–3), which were used to train senior SMTs (heads, deputy and heads of department) for quality school leadership. A cascade model was adopted; so that when the SMTs were trained they would in turn run school-based training to train senior teachers/teacher advisors and other teachers in areas of curriculum leadership and implementation respectively. The PSMDP technical team took all PSMAs through ToTs' series of workshops. They were also introduced to Management Units 1–3. PSMAs then took all SMTs through all the management units. By the end of the project it was reported that the area of *instructional leadership* was not adequately treated in the management units and in training sessions (Siduna, 2003). However, no formal evaluation was made to assess the impact of the project. I therefore conducted this study in 2004 to investigate how instructional leadership was reflecting in schools after the project had concluded in 2002. The MoE supported the study by producing copies of the questionnaires, distributing them to schools and ensuring their administration.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to assess the status of the instructional leadership in primary schools in Botswana since the launching of the PSMDP. The study covered the following objectives:

- (1) to determine the level of instructional leadership skills displayed by the SMTs;
- (2) to assess the level of coordination of instructional activities in schools;
- (3) to assess how schools perceive the status of management of curriculum matters including resource;
- (4) to assess how schools perceive the current level of instructional leadership influence on learner achievement and learner behavior.

The results of the study could be used by the MoE to develop another Management Unit Training Module for primary school SMTs on 'instructional leadership'. The study could also assist schools especially SMTs to identify their expected level of performance as instructional leaders and help them to re-focus their leadership approaches for school improvement. The study was expected to also raise questions for further research among educators, educationists and researchers in education.

## **Literature Review**

Instructional leadership as a concept needs to be understood in the context of education management. Two key words are 'leadership' and 'instruction'. Leadership is defined as a process that involves interaction between one who leads and those that are led (Horner, 1997; Pfeiffer and Dunlap, 1982; Reichwald et al., 2004). Most critical to this definition, is the fact that a leader applies more of the motivational strategies to energize the interest and support of the group or followers towards action. In this context Mastrangelo et al. (2004) said that leadership is to do with creating an environment in which people are motivated to produce and move to the direction of the leader. Mastrangelo et al. (2004: 438) introduced the concept of professional leadership, in which they suggest that it involves 'providing direction, process, and coordination to the members of an organization for the purpose of altering the organizational goals'. The key words in this definition are 'direction', 'processes' and 'coordination'. These three words suggest that leadership encompasses setting the organizational vision and mission, establishing systems to attain the organizational goals and objectives, organizing and collaboratively marshalling the personnel and other resources for operations and implementation. In a school set up, communication remains a critical factor in creating relationships between a leader and his/her group. In whatever condition, good leadership is associated with effective communication skills. In contemporary discussion on the concept of leadership, a construct of transformational approach to leadership emerges. In this view, leadership is associated with positive influence on the group's effort and satisfaction and that it is necessary to the 'gaining of confidence and coping with stress among teams' (Neumann [1992] in Pounder, 2002: 8). Leadership involves the ability to communicate the vision of the school as well as focusing the effort of the group towards achieving the collaboratively set vision. The transformational approach to leadership encourages innovation, creativity and teamwork while at the same time it stimulates team members to maximize their full potentials. Against this context, growing school reforms on school improvement consistently encourage transformational leadership in school management. In addition to professional leadership, Mastrangelo et al. (2004) suggest that personal behaviors such as expertise, trust, caring, sharing and morals are essential attributes in performing responsibilities of professional leadership. The SMTs therefore would be required to demonstrate these behaviors in their daily operation.



The word instruction fits well in the activities of a school situation. It defines interaction among the staff, between the staff and learners, among the learners and between the school and its community. Instruction also means interaction between teachers and curriculum materials towards developing a quality learner in a learning environment. According to Harris et al. (1985: 6) 'activities of the staff are primarily instructional' and that the 'unique activity of the school is instructional'. The daily and routine activities of a school are basically teaching and learning including leading a class into learning purposes. Further, Harris et al. (1985: 8) define instruction as:

... any and all activity carried on within an organized context that directly relates to the learning processes that is occurring or being projected, whether it relates directly to the student or adult, materials, facilities, schedules and so on.

This makes it clear that a school is the focal point where interactions of all its facets that facilitate learning (be it physical or human resources) constitute activities that make up instruction. One may safely conclude that the quality of instruction should influence the quality of the learning outcomes.

Having explored the two concepts (Leadership and Instruction), one has to connect the two to understand instructional leadership. Glickman (1985) in Seifert and Vornberg (2002: 166) describe instructional leadership as 'working directly with teachers, group improvement, professional development, curriculum improvement and action research implementation'. In this view instructional leadership is more of a coordinating function. One sees the role of a school head as that of a chief coordinator of the school functions and activities. The idea is further clarified by Glickman (1992) in McEwan (1998: 103) saying, 'the principal of successful school is not the instructional leader but the coordinator of teachers as instructional leaders'. More often teachers would not refer to themselves as leaders but instead expect the school management members to be attached that value or responsibility. Glickman et al. (2001) argue that instructional leadership plays a pivotal role for instructional improvement. It endeavors to make teachers effective instructional leaders for instructional improvement. They define instructional improvement as:

... helping teachers acquire teaching strategies consistent with their general teaching styles that increase the capabilities of students to make wise decisions in varying contexts (with regard to peers, adults, academics, and life). (Glickman et al., 2001: 105)

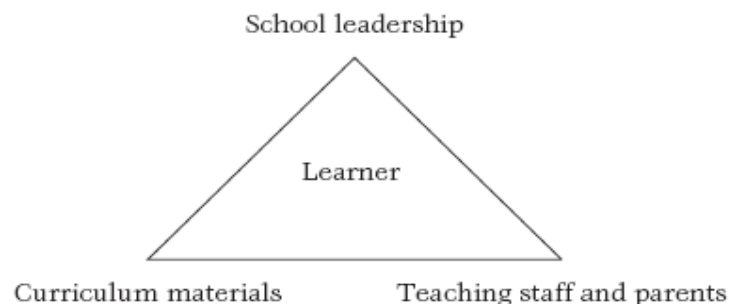
In essence teachers are indeed instructional leaders and have a significant responsibility to provide quality instruction. They have to be effective communicators if they are to be good leaders of their own classes. Instructional leadership therefore is that art which works to develop teachers' competencies and build their confidence for effective teaching. Sergiovanni (1987) in Blasé and Blasé (1998) says that instructional leaders are pedagogical leaders and have a responsibility to build a learning community. In recognition of this position,

the role of the head would, however, be to ensure teachers' involvement in a continuous cycle of discussing, implementing, planning and reviewing curricula and instruction leading to improved learner-achievement (see Blasé and Blasé, 1998; Glickman et al., 2001; Harris et al., 1985; McEwan, 1998).

From the literature reviewed one can explain elements of instructional leadership diagrammatically, in a tripartite function as per Figure 1 with a learner as the central focus.

The school leadership group consisting of the school management team (heads, deputy, HoD and senior teachers or teacher advisors) is the coordinator of all the school instructional activities. The population of the children in a primary school is used to determine the school management structure. For example the biggest primary school (1000+ children) has 13 members in the SMT whereas the smallest (less than 51 children) has three members in the SMT (Republic of Botswana—TSM—Establishment Register, 1996). Despite the size of a school, SMT members need certain leadership skills, attitudes and knowledge in order to function more professionally, effectively and to lead a school successfully. Conversely, classroom instructional management is duty for all teachers. Teachers therefore, need good coordination and regular training so that they continuously renew their skills, attitudes and acquire new knowledge to become effective classroom practitioners. Most importantly, activities of instructional leadership include procurement, management and ensuring effective utilization of curriculum materials and other resources that facilitate learning. Effective management and coordination of these resources are critical for effective learning. This function involves selection, procurement, distribution/allocation, usage and proper care of curriculum and or instructional materials. When these three levels interconnect, they produce a learner with the desired attributes by which the quality of education is measured. In this view, instructional leadership is described as the effective professional interactions in a school where the school management and staff work together with an appropriate curriculum for the purpose of improving student learning. Figure 1 emphasizes the moral purpose of the function of instructional leadership towards the learner. Contemporary views towards school leadership favor

**Figure 1** The moral purpose of instructional leadership



a shift from instructional leadership to transformational and pedagogical leadership (Webb, 2005). The argument is that, while instructional leadership is a strategy with which SMTs pursue the agenda of national policy and program through vision and missions statements, pedagogical leadership is connotes a practical strategy where SMTs work with teachers in their classrooms to make sure learner achievement and quality of learning is enhanced. In this context, teacher-leadership and learner-achievement were key purposes underpinning the PSMDP as an innovation for school improvement. However, Webb (2005) argues for the combination of instructional and pedagogical leadership if the agenda of school improvement is to be achieved holistically. It is against this understanding that a tripartite approach illustrated by Figure 1 is drawn.

Parental involvement is critical in the activities of an instructional leader. Research has established that parental involvement in children's education leads to effective teaching and learning. Parental involvement has been found to be a weapon towards improving student's attainment and parents' understanding of schools and education (Dunne, 2004). However, there are several indications that low-performing and resourced schools have minimal involvement of parents (Hester, 1989; Lam, 2004). It has also been established that there are a lot of barriers that prevent parents from participating in school activities. Moore (1991) reports barriers such as distance between teacher and parent, lack of adequate teacher training, while Lontos (1992) further sees the barriers as teachers' perceptions of parents, passive role of parents, cultural differences between teacher and parents. All these authors (Hester, 1989; Lam, 2004; Lontos, 1992; Moore, 1991) maintain that limited skills and knowledge and restricted opportunities for a meaningful exchange of ideas between parents and their teachers is also a barrier towards parental involvement in school activities.

Instructional leadership for school improvement should essentially accommodate collaborative processes of teacher leaders-leadership, strategies of parental mobilization and involvement and effective management of resources. In the final analysis, learner-achievement should be raised and their quality of learning enhanced particularly when transformational and pedagogical principles of leadership are embedded in instructional leadership.

## **Methodology**

The study was descriptive in approach and used a quantitative research methodology. This approach was chosen because of its manageability, especially its efficiency in the use of time. Questionnaires were used to collect data from schools. Questionnaires were developed from four sub-themes namely leadership skills, coordination of leadership functions, curriculum management, and quality of learners. These were the key components of the PSMDP, which were meant to improve instructional leadership and eventually help improving leaner achievement.

The Botswana primary education is managed through six regions. The study was carried out in the South Central Region. The region is the biggest in geographical area and contains the largest number of primary schools in the country as well the highest number of both teachers and learners. The region was selected because it also has very remote, remote, peri-urban and urban locations, and so contains examples of all the different areas in the country. The study involved six schools from each of the above-mentioned categories. This is consistent with the idea that researchers in 'effective schools' should recognize differences between schools various attributes such as location, socio-economic status and learner ethnicity.

Respondents in the study were primary school management team members, teachers and learners in standard 5–7 classes. Twenty-four government primary schools were selected from the region that had a total of 170 government primary schools, which is 41 percent of the population of the primary school in Botswana. The study was limited to government primary schools because this is where the PSMDP focuses. The schools were selected through the convenience sampling methods on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the region. At each school, probability sampling methods of cluster and simple random (Bryman, 2001; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Seaman, 1997) were utilized to select learners (pupils) and staff (teachers including school heads).

Two sets of attitudinal questionnaires, one for staff and the other for learners were used for data collection. The questionnaires were in the Likert-scale form and they included simple demographic data section for the target group. The one for the staff had four sections. Section one focused on instructional leadership skills. Section two addressed the SMTs coordinating functions. Section three dealt with issues related to curriculum management. The last section sought information on how the staff perceived the quality of their learner upon completing Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Under each section a respondent was asked to suggest strategies that they felt could be used to improve standards in schools. The learners' questionnaires had only one section that assessed their general perception of their school. The MoE staff through the office that coordinates PSMDP participated in sampling, data collection by handling the process of distributing and collection of instruments to and from schools. The MoE also circulated communication to schools to clarify the issues of anonymity and confidentiality so as to gain access and trust from respondents and learners.

Data were analyzed using the SPSS program to allow easy description from tables, graphs and charts on frequencies. The tables and charts were then used to interpret and discuss the findings. Comments and suggestions from teachers were clustered according to variables used such as location of schools. The comments were used in the discussion to illustrate their perceptions.



## Results

This section discusses findings and analysis of teachers' and learners' perceptions as per their responses to the questionnaires and comments that teachers wrote justifying their views. The discussion first explores the demographic data to create an understanding of the respondents' variability. The findings and discussion follow the four sub-themes namely, leadership skills, coordination of leadership functions, curriculum management, and quality of learners. An additional subsection on learners' perceptions of their school leadership is also included. This section is considered essential given the current trends of moving from instructional leadership to transformational and pedagogical leadership.

### Demographic Data

The demographic data presents the selected characteristics of the participants in the study. Participants in the study were teachers including school heads and this group is referred to in this study as respondents. The selected variables for teachers include location of school, qualification, age and experience in teaching as per Figures 2 to 5. Teachers responded to the four research questions. Pupils were also involved and they are referred to as learners. For them, only two variables were used as per Figures 6 and 7. These are locations of schools and standards/classes that they were in. Learners' questionnaire focused only on the one sub-theme or the fourth research question, which assessed their perception of the schools' level of instructional leadership influence on their learning.

According to Figure 2, 240 teachers participated in the study. This population is representative of all the socio-economic locations of the region. The urban areas involved 33 percent, peri-urban covered 30 percent and that remotest schools included 28 percent. The representation is considered positive enough to provide a reasonable and acceptable balanced picture of teachers' perception in the education region.

As per Figure 3, primary school teaching in Botswana was predominantly made up of teachers trained at certificate (Cert) level of qualification (65 percent). Consequently, most of the members of the SMTs were teachers who had trained more than eight years ago at a time when the primary teaching qualifications were Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) or Primary High Teaching Certificate (PH) or Primary Lower Teaching Certificate (PL) or Elementary Teaching Certificate (ETC). These teachers would not have received any formal or college-based leadership training during their pre-service program. Any leadership training they received would have been on-the-job through in-service workshops. Diploma (Dip), degree and masters qualifications are fairly new programs for primary school teachers that were introduced in the mid-1980s through a collaborative initiative between the MoE and the University of Botswana.

Figure 2 Teachers by school location

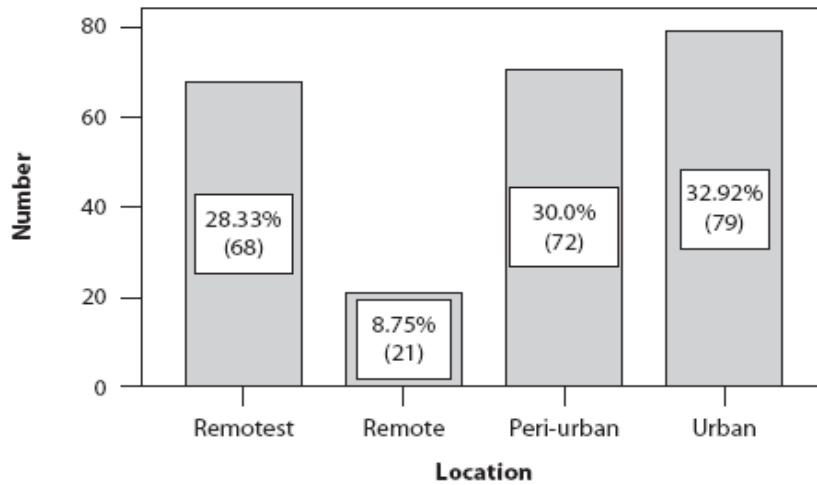
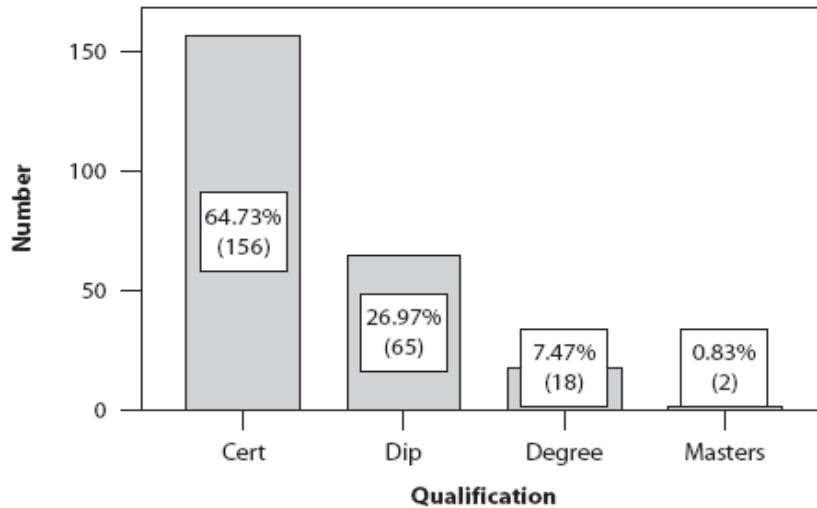


Figure 3 Teachers by qualification



According to Figure 4, a middle-aged group of teachers dominated the primary education teaching profession. The majority (44 percent) of the respondents were between 31 to 40 years old. One can safely conclude that these are the teachers who were in most of the leadership positions and they had a long way to go because the teachers' retirement age is 65 years (Republic of Botswana, 1977). It is a category that could not be overlooked in terms of training for future school leadership.

Figure 5 expresses the teaching experiences of the respondents. The majority (41 percent) had more than 16 years of teaching experience in the field and 22

Figure 4 Teachers by age

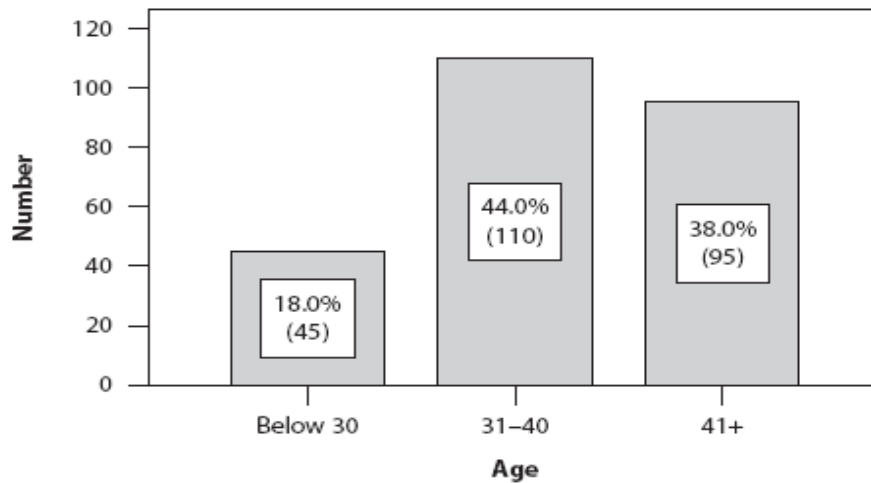
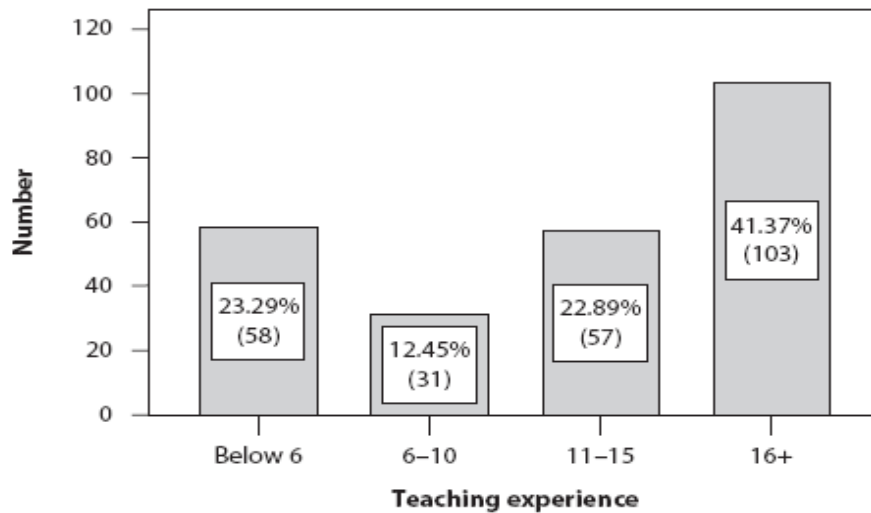


Figure 5 Teachers by teaching experience (years)



percent had between 11 and 15 years experience. These groups included most of those who were holding posts of responsibility, most of whom did not have formal school leadership training. Usually people on leadership positions would have developed a culture of running their organization. So change or adapting to new innovations may not be that easy but possible.

The study involved 575 learners and these were also selected from the four socio-economic environments as per Figure 6, with the majority (43 percent) from remotest area schools. This balances well since the urban and peri-urban present closely similar socio-economic factors. Some learners who

Figure 6 Learners by school location

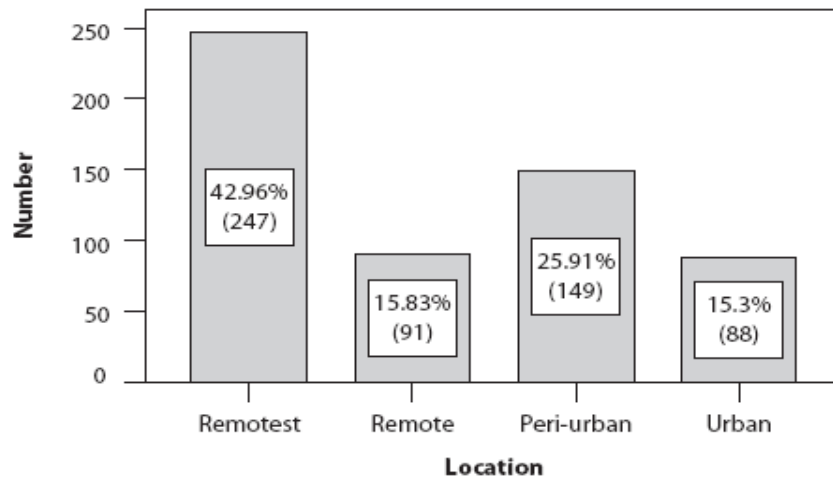
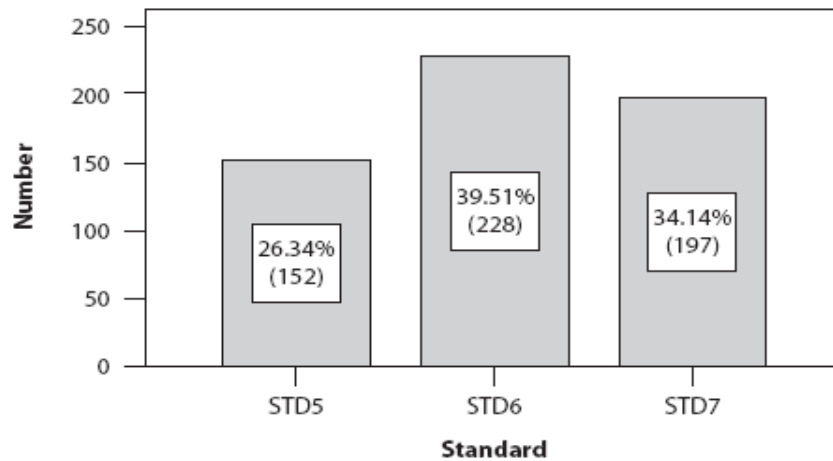


Figure 7 Learners by standard



lived in urban areas went to schools that were located in peri-urban and vice versa.

As presented on Figure 7, the study involved learners from standard five to standard seven classes. These were selected on the understanding that they could read a questionnaire and could independently express their opinion. It turned out that most (40 percent) of them were the standard six learners, followed by those in at standard seven (34 percent) and about to complete primary education. This was also a good representation of the learners in primary school system in the region.



## Leadership Skills

The key skills tested under this section are interpersonal behavior for human relations and cooperation, innovativeness and creativity, conflict management and delegation. These are considered very essential components in teacher-leadership. The PSMDP paid significant attention on training the SMTs on these skills through their three units (Siduna, 2003).

The study revealed that 70 percent of the teachers indicated that the SMTs praised their teachers for the good work that they were doing for their schools. This is an indication that members of the SMTs maintained a cordial relationship with their teachers. They (76 percent) also reported that SMTs listened to them and that they were accessible and approachable. The majority (77 percent) reported that they trusted their supervisors. Further, 81 percent of the teachers indicated that they were given the opportunity to suggest agenda items for curriculum meetings and to also chair school such meetings. These results suggest that SMTs were displaying good leadership skills.

Cooperation is another essential attribute of effective instructional leadership. The study however revealed that 57 percent of the teachers felt that cooperation among the staff and between staff and parents in the primary schools was not high. One respondent echoed, 'SMTs should consult with teachers and parents.' Another respondent proposed, 'Headteachers must create good working relationships with every one in the school!' The teachers' perception of cooperation in schools shows that the SMTs were not skillful enough to meet the needs of their staff. If improvement of instructional practices is influenced by the level of cooperation that exist in the school, then this is an aspect of school management where SMTs needed work-based skill training. Gordon and Gordon (2001) and Glickman (1992) in McEwan (1998) view school leadership as pivotal for instructional improvement. Data and teachers comments suggests that despite the training that SMTs received in the PSMDP activities, teachers still felt that interpersonal skills for enhancement of teacher-parent cooperation still needed to improve so that SMTs-teachers-parent interaction could contribute towards raising learner achievement.

Harcher and Hyle (1996) found out, teachers needed good teacher-administrator working relationship. The teachers' comments suggest that the teachers did not feel that they received adequate support and attention from the SMTs. Harcher and Hyle (1996: 26) have called for collaborative power in instructional leadership 'to balance power inequalities in the school and school community'. They suggested that the quality of a school is derived from its vision, respect, trust and collegiality that bond school members together. This is what teachers desired to experience in their schools.

On the issue of teachers' degree of creativity and innovativeness, 51 percent of the respondents said that the teachers as individuals initiated some innovations in their schools. Results also indicated that a significant number (49 percent) of the teachers reported that they were not competent enough to

manage their own classrooms. While the SMTs were expected to function as pedagogical leaders (Blasé and Blasé, 1998; Webb, 2005), this data indicates that a significant number of the teachers felt that they were not innovative enough in their classroom practices. They needed intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Pounder, 2003) so that they could competently and confidently face classroom challenges.

Questions of competence in conflict management also arose. While the teachers agreed that the SMTs attended to their differences, 55 percent of the teachers felt that their supervisors were not usually fair in handling teachers' differences and grievances. One respondent commented, 'Teachers should not be treated like kids!' Another one commented that, 'Individual differences and opinions must be catered for!' Repeated comments from several respondents suggested that the SMTs should be transparent in making decisions that affect the staff. Some comments also suggested that SMTs were not paying adequate attention to the issues of confidentiality on personal matters that affected the staff. There were also indications that SMTs were not sensitive to teachers' cultural differences. These are indications that some members of SMTs were still inadequate in communication and conflict management skills.

The PSMDP considered delegation as one of the critical management functions in instructional leadership. Delegation helps to make employees develop, grow and become innovative (Mastrangelo et al., 2004). Data shows that 53 percent of the teachers said that their SMTs were not delegating duties and responsibilities to them fairly. One respondent suggested, 'All teachers should be given a chance to prove themselves and the teachers who are lagging behind should be motivated to work hard, motivation should not be biased or go to other teachers while others are not seen.' Another respondent commented, 'SMTs overload themselves, they should learn to delegate!' The teachers' views suggest that the concept of delegation is not understood by all members of the SMT despite its importance in contemporary organizational leadership and management.

### **Coordination of Leadership Functions**

This section tested the schools involvement in school development planning, parental involvement and teacher involvement in resource management. These are considered essential elements in effective instructional leadership.

It is argued that SMTs are coordinators of teachers' activities (McEwan, 1998). One tool that is used in the coordination is the school development plan (SDP). The results revealed that 77 percent of the teachers viewed the SMTs as coordinating the development of the SDP well. It revealed that 68 percent of the teachers felt that SMTs were doing well in coordinating the implementation of the SDP. Some teachers (62 percent) also indicated that SMTs reviewed their SDPs regularly with their teachers. On monitoring of the

implementation of the SDPs, the study revealed that only 55 percent of the teachers who said that SMTs coordinated the monitoring and also participated in the exercise. However, 60 percent of the respondents felt that SMT evaluated their school activities. The results suggest that SMTs were more competent in implementing the SPD but weak in monitoring the implementation.

According to data, most members of the SMTs were not involving parents into the schools' activities. For example, 68 percent of the teachers felt that parents did not participate in school activities. One respondent commented, 'Our school lacks parental involvement as parents do not meet all teachers. We should all work with them.' Another respondent emphasized, 'We should work hand in hand with parents and fully involve them.' Yet another respondent said, 'Parents should not only be called for PTA meetings, we need them to meet us.' At least 51 percent of the teachers felt that SMTs did not explain the school goals to the community. One respondent suggested, 'SMTs should consult PTA and the community more seriously.' Another one said, 'Teachers and parents should meet together to talk about how they can help their children.' A comment from peri-urban teacher read, 'SMTs should expose parents to the school vision and mission.' Several teachers in remote schools suggested that parents should be taught about education so that they could help their children to learn. From the teachers' comments, a clear distinction between urban and remote/rural schools on the level of parental involvement surfaced. The views from teachers in rural/remote area are that SMTs do not consult with parents on matters of school development planning, while those in urban view the trend differently. The study reveals that parents in urban schools have a better chance to participate in the school activities while those in rural/remote have little chance.

On resource materials allocation, 56 percent of the teachers indicate that the SMT did not distribute materials to teachers on time. Some (59 percent) indicated that they did not have all the teaching materials that they needed for their classes. One respondent commented, 'Resource books are not enough.' On identification and selection of teaching materials 53 percent of the teachers said that the SMTs did not involve them in the school system of supplies procurement. Some (53 percent) indicated that teaching materials including textbooks and stationery were not properly managed in their schools. Only 22 percent of the teachers felt that teachers had all teaching materials they needed. One respondent commented, 'Teachers should have access to school materials, that is, use of photocopier and A4 paper and we need classrooms for teaching lower standards.' Another respondent lamented, 'We must be given chance to select books that we want use in our classes.' Data and teachers' comments suggest that teachers felt that the school resource management systems were not effective. SMTs did not involve their teachers in resource management and in decisions on textbook selection.



## **Curriculum Management**

Skills on curriculum management involve instructional supervision, classroom visitation and school-based professional development activities (Blasé and Blasé, 1999; De Grauwe, 2001; Glickman et al., 2001). This section discusses how these skills are perceived in schools.

Regular classroom visits and praising teachers are critical function in instructional leadership (Blasé and Blasé, 1999; Quinn, 2001) and pedagogical leadership (Webb, 2005). The study revealed that 75 percent of the teachers were of the view that SMTs planned class visits with them. One respondent suggested, 'Class supervisors should visit us fortnightly and the headteacher should visit us monthly.' On supervision, 70 percent of the teachers indicated that SMTs praised them for the good teaching they demonstrated. Again 70 percent indicated that SMTs provided them with constructive feedback during teaching assessment. Data suggests that the PSMDP has done reasonably well because STMs, at least, carry out classroom supervision quite positively.

As for coaching and demonstration, 71 percent of the teachers indicated that SMTs neither gave demonstration lessons nor coached their supervisees on how to handle certain topics or lessons. One respondent suggested, 'SMTs should always demonstrate to us what they want us to do.' The study revealed further that 60 percent of the respondents felt that SMTs did not train class teachers on how to manage curriculum change in their classrooms. One respondent proposed, 'We must be trained on how to teach remedial children.' On several times respondents suggested that supervisors should provide demonstration of lessons to guide teachers on better methods of handling a class. Teachers expressed the desire for developmental approach to supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2003), so that they could be assisted to perform better as classroom practitioners. The teachers' views are consistent with De Grauwe (2001) that supervision should encourage them to be creative and innovative. Most of the comments suggested that teachers should be allowed to specialize in teaching so that they could concentrate on teaching areas that they were competent at. It comes out evidently clear that, while SMTs visited classrooms under the auspices of instructional supervision, they were unable to provide professional guidance to their clients (teachers). In their study Blasé and Blasé, (1999: 132) found out that effective instructional leadership involves 'talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth'. Some of the activities that teachers preferred from their supervisors included receiving feedback, getting examples and demonstration and coaching. By the same token the study confirms what Blasé and Blasé found about effective instructional leadership because teachers were suggesting that SMTs should use classroom supervision to help them. Further to this, Mastrangelo et al. (2004) have indicated that a professional leader has expertise and competencies that win the confidence and admiration of the followers. In the teacher's view, SMTs still lack the required professional expertise.



Instructional leadership is also about teachers' continuous professional growth as recognized by the RNPE. However, the study revealed that 58 percent of the teachers indicated that subject panels were not functioning well in the primary schools. However, 83 percent indicated that schools ran school-based workshops to address the curriculum needs of teachers. The study also revealed that 73 percent of the teachers felt that they were given the opportunity to facilitate in school-based workshops. These data is an indication that the PSMDP has responded very effectively on developing a culture of school-based continuous professional development.

To sum up this discussion, one borrows from Blas Blasé and Blasé (1999) that instructional leadership involves integration of the tasks of direct assistance to teachers, for group development and teachers' growth. In improving leadership skills, coordination of school management activities, curriculum matter and management of school-based training, Blasé and Blasé (1999: 135) said that school leadership would result in 'increased teacher motivation, self-esteem, efficacy, and reflective behavior such as risk taking, instructional variety, and innovation/creativity'. Webb (2005) argues for the combination of instructional leadership, transformational leadership and pedagogical leadership if school improvement is to be realized.

### **Teachers Perceptions Learner Quality**

Instructional leadership essentially aims at improving the teachers' quality of classroom work with an ultimate goal of raising learners' achievement as well as improving their attitudes and behavior towards school work and their personal life. With this understanding, the study explored the perceptions of the teachers towards the quality of their learners.

The Botswana education curriculum and literacy programs use and emphasize English as official language and Setswana as a national language. With the exception of Setswana subject, all subjects (English, mathematics, social studies, science, religious education, agriculture, home economics, music, art and physical education) are taught in English in all schools. Not to overemphasize the importance of English in Botswana, the language plays a vital role in the economic and communication systems. Given its value and role in the country's economy and in view of the trends of globalization, poor performance in English is one major indicator that the school systems are not responding adequately. Failing English language can be a serious disqualification from any future learning or active participation in the economy.

At primary education level, the two language subjects are given a lot of emphasis. The study revealed that 52 percent indicated that over 80 percent of their Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) candidates were unable to read and write English. This suggests that the majority of learners transit from primary to secondary schools before they develop literacy skills in English. Common comments were raised by most of the respondents that English

should be taught properly from lower classes. On Setswana language, the study revealed that 79 percent of the respondents indicated that over 80 percent of the PSLE leavers were able to read and write the language. This suggests that teachers were better in teaching Setswana than English. A teacher in remote school where both English and Setswana are second languages commented, 'Pupils should be given more time to learn English and Setswana since they meet these subjects at school only!' However, the study shows that the development of learners' literacy skills in English language was lower than in Setswana in both urban and remote areas.

Blasé and Blasé (1999: 135) said instructional leaders should emphasize the study of teaching and learning as a strategy to promote teachers professional growth. Therefore 'staff development' opportunity is a necessity that can get teachers to address their needs, which should culminate into improved learner academic performance. While teachers report their active involvement in staff development, this is not consistent with learners' academic performances in English language.

The study revealed that 53 percent of the teachers said that learners were neither open nor free with their teachers. A respondent in remote school commented, 'Pupils fear teachers and they are shy, they should be taught to take teachers as their parents!' In a way, teaching methods have not helped teacher-learners interaction to develop learners' ability to freely relate with their teachers. On whether learners initiated projects or clubs in their schools, 72 percent of the teachers indicated that learners in their schools did not. Data suggests that little was being done in schools to develop independency and creativity in learners in the schools. Teacher-centered methods are likely to be dominating in the classrooms especially in remote schools. This is so because repeated comments from respondents in remote schools suggested that pupils in remote areas should be financed to take educational tours to towns and other development centre to learn and experience new ideas. Remote areas schools did not have adequate facilities and opportunities to engage in teaching through educational excursions.

### **Learners' Perceptions of Instructional Leadership Influence**

The base-line survey that led to the PSMDP identified weaknesses in learners' interpersonal skills and self concept (Republic of Botswana—MoE, 2000). To test the teachers' instructional influence in the classroom, the study explored learners' perceptions. In this way, the study gathered learners' perceptions towards the influence of instructional leadership on their learning. This was considered necessary in order to measure the impact of the PSMDP.

The results suggest that learners have some positive perceptions of their school leadership. For example, 86 percent of the learners felt that their school heads visited them in their classrooms to see how they were doing. The majority (83 percent) of learners indicated that they participated in making

their class rules. Most learners (80 percent) indicated that they participated in choosing their class monitors. Learners (98 percent) felt that they enjoyed coming to school every day. They (93 percent) also reported that their class teachers helped them to do their schoolwork. As for reading materials, 72 percent of the learners reported that they had required textbooks in their classroom. This is an indication that whilst most schools had adequate supply of their order, a few schools or classrooms experienced shortage of reading materials. This confirmed some teachers concern that they ran short of teaching materials. Regarding usability of the textbooks, 98 percent of the learners felt that they liked the textbook they had and were able to read in their schools. These are good indicators of a successful picture in instructional leadership from the learners' voice.

Learners' views also suggested some instructional management aspects that SMTs and teachers needed to pay attention. For example data shows that 61 percent of the learners felt that they were not given an opportunity to go out to interview people in the community. With regard to responsibility for morning assembly, 57 percent indicated that they did not participate in conducting or leading the assemblies in their schools. However, the majority (72 percent) of learners indicated that their class teachers punished them through the use of a cane during their teaching for failing to follow the teachers' instruction. The same learners indicated that they did not want to be beaten.

The results of the study show that some good instructional management strategies were used in schools because pupils were happy with some aspects of school practices. It also shows that there were still other factors that needed teachers' attention such as involving learners more in schools decision-making forum. In their study Harcher and Hyle suggested that children have the ability to exercise self-control and develop natural curiosity. Therefore learner-friendly school environment recognize the importance of involving them in decision-making activities. Schools play an essential role in nurturing children's social development. Unfortunately, as reflected in the study, the learners' voice is not accommodated in the school instructional leadership systems. Learners do not accept the use of corporal punishment. Most schools do not make them free independent decision makers. Teaching methods are teacher-centered.

## **Discussion**

This section mitigates between findings and literature review and draws lessons learnt from the study. In doing so, specific issues emerging from the study are singled out. Such issues will be interpreted to inform the next section as conclusion and recommendations for consideration to improve both policy and practice.

The study revealed that Botswana primary education sector is predominantly made up of teachers who are above 31 years old. The majority of them trained at certificate qualification and was more than 16 years of teaching. They did



not have formal training on school leadership and management. Those in SMTs learnt about instructional leadership through the PSMDP.

While instructional leadership could mean different things to different people, its functional definition has been accepted to imply school-based leadership that focuses on helping teachers to do their work in the classroom more effectively (Blasé and Blasé, 1998; Glickman et al., 2001; McEwan, 1998; Seifert and Vornberg, 2002). It is against this understanding that the PSMDP was incepted. The major purpose of the project, as an educational reform strategy was to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore all activities of the project tried to help SMTs to improve teacher quality through regular school-based training.

On the basis of the results of the baseline study (Republic of Botswana—MoE, 2000), the project intended to alter teachers' beliefs and practices in order to assist them to develop new attitudes and acquire better skills for improving their classroom instruction (Siduna, 2003). From the perspective of both teachers and pupils, significant impact of the project is identifiable. The reported outputs of the projects include regular classroom visits by SMTs, availability of operational plans, adequacy of teaching materials and the humility with which SMTs apply themselves. In that way, instructional leadership is a successful school management innovation in Botswana.

Notwithstanding the positive development in schools, due to instructional leadership as an innovation, there are issues of leadership function that require attention. For example, while SMTs could be doing well in planning, supervision and coordination on one hand, on the other, learner achievement is low, as it has been reported that over 80 percent of primary school leavers progress to secondary education before they acquire basic literacy skills in English language. The issue of English language, which is a second or in some locality a third language, is beyond the control of the school leadership. Schools are controlled by an education policy that makes English an official language and the medium of instruction in classroom. This policy is also influenced by the role that English language plays in the Botswana's and global economies. However, instructional leadership needs to ensure school-based training of class teachers in the teaching of English as a second or third language depending on the local situation. Another specific emerging issue is that teachers lack the ability and confidence to initiate new teaching approaches in their classrooms. Instructional leadership that emphasizes school-based in-service programs could solve this problem.

On broader aspects, teachers' experiences and perceptions vary in a lot of ways perhaps influenced by the location in which they teach. It shows that teachers in some cases lack sensitivity to the situations of their learners and the environment they work. This explains itself in the frequently reported cases of corporal punishment that learners in both remote and urban schools have lamented to. The unpopularity of corporal punishment with children and its continuous use in schools, against the policy or official guidelines features



in quite a number of studies in African countries (Akyeampong, 2003; Lefoka and Sebatane, 2003; Pryor and Ampiah, 2003). The same studies have found that conditions of teachers especially in remote areas were not quite favorable and teachers in those areas 'express disdain for rural situation and are at pains to differentiate themselves from the village people' (Pryor and Ampiah, 2003). This raises the issue of multi-cultural approach to school leadership training. Both the SMTs and the class teachers need better skills to handle the diverse cultural societies that they find themselves working with. Dachi and Garret (2003) have established that education systems do not train teachers to accommodate the needs of their learners. As such teachers are unable to conceptualize and make use of local experiences in their teaching. In the absence of cultural sensitivity and lack of understanding of multicultural education approach, teachers apply the idea of sameness, for example treating learners in remote area to whom English is a third language the same as those learners in urban area who are exposed to modern technologies such as computer and televisions, and to some, whom English is a first or second language. Instructional leadership training may have been devoid of the pedagogical emphasis and perhaps the cultural context. The combination of instructional, transformational and pedagogical perspectives of leadership is becoming essential in this case.

In remote schools, methods of teaching are restricted to the school or classroom so much that outreach instructional activities are limited or never planned. This is an indication that teacher-centeredness is predominant in schools. Marginalization of parents from school instructional management systems is an issue especially in remote schools. Studies have revealed the importance of parental involvement and consequences of failure to work with parents as well as ignorance of cultural contexts (Dunne, 2004; Hester, 1989; Lam, 2004; Liontos, 1992; Moore, 1991). In addition to the role of parents in learner development, Harcher and Hyle (1996) emphasize that teachers need to provide a nurturing environment for learners and that teacher–learner relationship is critical in shaping the behavior of children. Instructional leadership has therefore a duty to create an enabling environment for parent–school relationships and teacher–learner relationships.

## **Conclusion**

The PSMDP was a capacity building strategy for the SMTs and teachers so that in the final analysis, their habits, attitudes and practices were altered to something professionally better for the enhancement and improvement of learners' level of achievement. The project has made significant impact in the primary education management system. However, the study reveals that there is still some work to be done to improve instructional leadership for improved learner-achievement.

A primary or secondary school is a deliberately established young person's development centre. Continuous professional development to improve

leadership and personal qualities is therefore critical for those who lead schools. Given the apparent weaknesses in primary schools management and students performances, it is recommended that MoE should develop an in-service training program for SMTs and teachers on *Instructional Leadership that combines transformational and pedagogical perspectives of leadership*. Such a program should embrace professional and personal leadership concepts, skills and practices. The program should aim at assisting the primary schools to improve instructional supervision, processes of monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning activities for improved learners' achievement.

Most teachers hold primary teaching certificate as their highest level of training. They lack school management and research skills. Drawing from some comments by teachers particularly in remote and rural schools about conditions in schools, it is clear that some teachers have given up or reigned themselves into problems and conditions that exist in their schools. Against this observation, one fundamental aspect that the project needs to enhance is to train both the SMTs and teachers in skills of carrying out action research at their own levels so that they better understand and appreciate the situation better. Instructional leadership, which is not guided by research, may not address the actual problems. School-based and or classroom-based action research leads to evidence-based decision-making system that encourages practitioners to take into account local values and cultural experiences and use those to improve teachers', learners' and parents' attitudes towards classroom work. Another advantage for evidence-based approach is that it influences change in policy since all arguments are concrete and proven at practitioner level of delivery. It also enhances teacher professional growth and development. It is therefore recommended that MoE should come up with a policy that encourages school-based and classroom-based action research. This is necessary in order to empower both SMTs and teachers with skills that they could use to make better pedagogical improvement decisions.

This study is not conclusive on the school improvement issues that require further attention to improve school effectiveness and learner achievement. It is recommended that MoE should engage in further research and consultancies on management of curriculum change, teaching of second languages, development of learner-friendly schools, strategies for parental mobilization, and training classroom teacher as transformational and pedagogical practitioners. Research on these areas would inform the education system on better ways to address innovations on school improvement and effective classroom management.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank the anonymous referees for the helpful comments on my earlier drafts. Any remaining errors are my own. I would also like to thank Mr S Basiamang (Director of Primary Education—Botswana) and his staff for administering the questionnaires in schools, as well as teachers and learners who participated in the study.

## References

- Akyeampong, K. (2003) *Teacher Training in Ghana—Does it Count: Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project*. Sussex: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Blasé, J. and Blasé, J. (1998) *Handbook of Instructional Leadership: How really Good Principals Promote Teaching and Learning*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Blasé, J. and Blasé, J. (1999) 'Effective Instructional Leadership: Teachers' Perspectives on How Principals Promote Teaching and Learning in Schools', *Journal of Educational Administration* 38(2): 130–41.
- Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1994) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Dachi, H.A. and Garrett, R.M. (2003) *Child Labour and its Impact on Children Access to and Participation in Primary Education: A Case Study from Tanzania*. Sevenoaks: Department for International Development (DFID).
- De Grauwe, A. (2001) *Teacher Supervision and Teacher Development. Complex Couple*. Paris: IIEP Newsletter, International Institute of Educational Planning.
- Dunne, L. (2004) 'Parents and Teachers: A Partnership in Education'. Available at: <http://www.pandf.org/LEO.htm>
- Harcher, R.L. and Hyle, A.E. (1996) 'Collaborative Power: A Grounded Theory of Administrative Instructional Leadership in the Elementary School', *Journal of Educational Administration* 34(3): 15–29.
- Harris, B.M., McIntyre, E.K., Jr Littleton, C.V. and Long, F.D. (1985) *Personnel Administration in Education: Leadership for Instructional Improvement*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Hawkins, P. and Shohet, R. (2003) *Supervision in the Helping Professions: An Individual, Group and Organisational Approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hester, H. (1989) 'Start at Home to Improve Home-School Relations', *NASSP Bulletin* 76(513): 23–7.
- Horner, M. (1997) 'Leadership Theory: Past, Present and Future', *Team Performance Management* 3(4): 270–87.
- Glickman, C.D., Gordon, P.S. and Gordon, R.J. (2001) *Supervision and Instructional Leadership: A Developmental Approach*, 5th edn. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Lam, L. (2004) 'Parent Engagement', *Educational Leadership* 6(8): 46–7.
- Lefoka, J.P. and Sebatane, E.M. (2003) *Initial Primary Teacher Education in Lesotho: Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project*. Sussex: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Liontos, A. (1992) *At-Risk Families and School: Becoming Partners*. Eugene: Eric Clearing house.
- Mastrangelo, A., Eddy, E.R. and Lorenzet, S.J. (2004) 'The Importance of Personal and Professional Leadership', *The Leadership and Development Journal* 25(5): 435–51.
- McEwan, E.K. (1998) *Seven Steps to Effective Instructional Leadership*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Moore, E.K. (1991) 'Improving Schools Through Parental Involvement', *Principal* 71(1): 17–20.
- Neumann, A. (1992) 'Colleges Under Pressure: Budgeting, Presidential Competence and Faculty Uncertainty', *Leadership Quarterly* 3: 191–215.
- Pfeiffer, I.L. and Dunlap, B.J. (1982) *Supervision of Teachers: A Guide to Improving Instruction*. Encanto: Oryx Press.
- Pounder, J.S. (2003) 'Employing Transformational Leadership to Enhance the Quality of Management Development Instruction', *Journal of Management Development* 22(1): 6–13.
- Pryor, J. and Ampiah, J.G. (2003) *Understanding of Education in an African Village: The*



- Impact of Information and Communication technologies*. Sussex: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Quinn, D.M. (2002) 'The Impact of Principal Leadership Behaviours on Instructional Practice and Student Engagement', *Journal of Educational Administration* 40(5): 447-67.
- Reichwald, R., Seibert, J. and Moslein, K. (2004) 'Leadership Excellence: Learning from an Exploratory Study on Leadership Systems in Large Multinational', *Journal of European Industrial Training* 29(3): 184-98.
- Republic of Botswana (1994) *The Revised National Policy on Education. Government Paper No 2 of 1994*. Gaborone: Government Printers.
- Republic of Botswana (1996) *Teaching Service Management—Establishment Register for Primary School—Ministry of Education*. Gaborone: Government Printers.
- Republic of Botswana (1977) *Unified Teaching Service Code of Regulations Governing Teachers*. Gaborone: Government Printers.
- Republic of Botswana—Ministry of Education (2000) *Primary School Management Development Project: Baseline Study Report*. Gaborone: Department of Teacher Training and Development—Botswana.
- Republic of Botswana—Ministry of Education (2002) *Primary School Management Development Project: Impact Evaluation Report*. Gaborone: Department of Teacher Training and Development—Botswana.
- Republic of Botswana—Teaching Service Management (1994) *TSM—Directive No 3 of 1994: Scheme of Service for Primary School Teachers*. Gaborone: Department of Teaching Service Management—Botswana.
- Seaman, C.H.C. (1997) *Research Methods: Principles, Practice and Theory for Nursing*. Virginia: Appleton and Lange.
- Seifert, H.E. and Vornberg, J.A. (2002) *The New School Leader for the 21st Century: The Principal*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press.
- Siduna, A.V. (2003) *Primary School Management Development Project: Final Report*. Gaborone: Department of Teacher Training and Development—Botswana.
- Webb, R. (2005) 'Leading Teaching and Learning in the Primary School: From Educative Leadership to Pedagogical Leadership', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 33(1): 69-91.

### **Biographical note**

NKOBI OWEN PANSIRI is a lecturer in Educational Management in the Department of Primary Education at the University of Botswana. His diverse career in Education Management includes ten years as a teacher, seven years as a District Education Officer, and seven years as a Principal Education Officer heading Primary Education Inspectorate.

### **Correspondence to:**

NKOBI OWEN PANSIRI, Department of Primary Education, University of Botswana, 4775 Notwane Road, Gaborone, Botswana. [email: primary@mopipi.ub.bw]